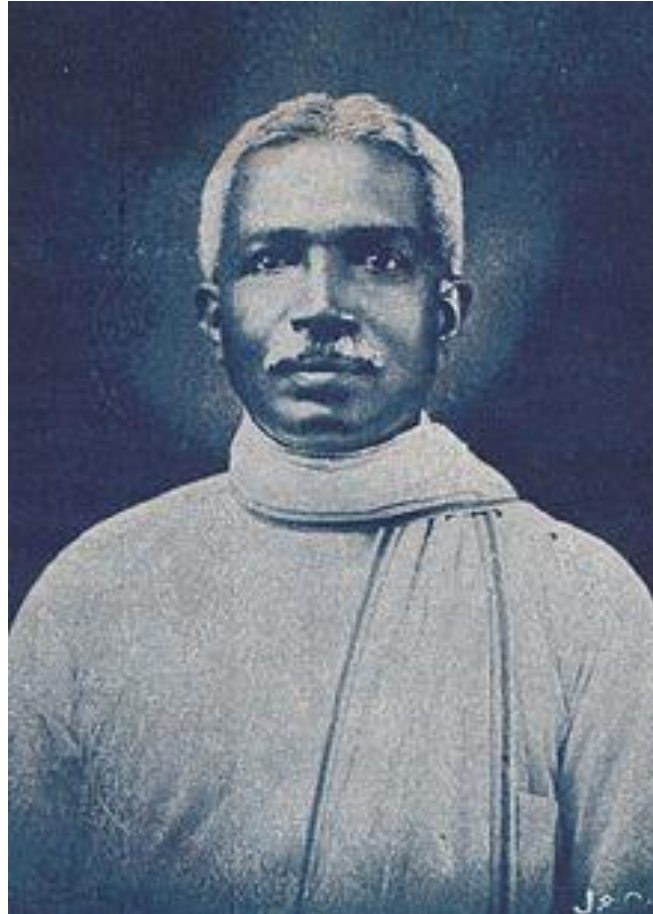


Colonial Education:

A case study of education in late-colonial Ceylon from the 1930s until independence.



'Father of Free Education', C. W. W. Kannangara (1884-1969)

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Date: 17 August 2018

Word count: 23.038



Universiteit Leiden

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Introduction

Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it.¹

In this fragment, written by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, education is displayed as a political instrument. Through education, an individual can gain access to a certain discourse. This thesis forms a case study of British colonial education in the late-colonial period. Many historians have argued that education was one of the main instruments of colonialism.² Education forms people and gives them access to the language of the colonizer or makes them more eloquent in their own voice. Access to education in a colony divides people and makes the differences between social, religious and other groups even bigger. Access to education with an English medium, gave access to better paying jobs with a high social status. Who decided which people belonged to which group? And how was decided which group did or did not get access to education in a colony?

Foucault's analogy of an 'instrument', to describe an educational system, suggests that a clear and straight forward political objective can be unfolded through looking at this system. When writing about education policy, or policy in general, people tend to speak of 'one general British colonial education policy'. This implies that the British colonial government accepted one settled course for education, which they planned and put into action. Historian Whitehead argues instead that a policy is rather settled through various interacting factors.³ Therefore, one uniform 'British colonial education policy' does not exist. Whitehead writes that, because of the size, nature and diversity of the empire, no one really ruled it in any direct sense.⁴ Instead, there are different 'shapers' of education policies active at the same time. This creates an interaction among men, forces, ideas and institutions.⁵ In line with Whitehead, an education policy in this paper will be approached as a policy shaped by the interaction of different factors influencing each other. The actors included in this research are colonial

¹ M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & the Discourse on Language* (New York/London 2002) 227.

² For example: R. Cribb, *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and economic foundations of the Netherlands Indies 1880-1942* (Leiden 1994) 2. N. Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History* (London 2014), 42. L. Jayasuriya, *Taking Social Development Seriously: the experience of Sri Lanka* (New Delhi 2010), 70.

³ C. Whitehead, 'The Concept of British Education Policy in the Colonies 1850-1960, *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 39:2 (2007), 161-173, resp. 161.

⁴ *Ibidem*, 165.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 165.

institutions, advisory committees, influential individuals, local circumstances and the context of global developments.

For a long time, most historians saw modern education as a bridge between colonialism and nationalism. In their view, colonial education brought forward a small educated elite group to function in most administrative tasks.⁶ In one chapter of her book *Cities in Motion*, historian Su Lin Lewis chose to extend the scope of this narrative about colonial education.⁷ Lewis shifted attention to the role of Asians in the shaping of new educational initiatives and by doing this, she moved away from the dominant view that Asian people in the colonial period were sent to English-language schools or educated abroad and therefore were 'Westernized'.⁸ In her words: 'to label them within such a binary category is to rob them of agency, to flatten the complexity of educational experience, and to ignore the tensions around cultural authenticity and education that emerged in both the private and public sphere'.⁹ In this thesis, different factors of agency in the shaping of colonial education in Ceylon will be analyzed in a global context of the late-colonial period.

An example of a person who cannot be categorized as a 'Westernized Asian' is Christopher William Wijekoon Kannangara (1884-1969). Kannangara was a lawyer and politician in Ceylon and became the first Minister of Education of Ceylon in 1931. He had many opponents, such as the British governance and opponents within the Members of the State Council for example.¹⁰ Kannangara proposed the idea of free education, in which education would be free 'from Kindergarten to University', for every citizen of Ceylon.¹¹ It meant that every pupil was free of paying any fees for education. It took him 16 years of lobbying and advocating in the State Council, before his plan of free education became reality in Ceylon in 1945. The implementation of this free education scheme made an end to the social inequality that was inherently promoted by the colonial education system. For this reason, Kannangara is remembered as 'the Father of Free Education' in Sri Lanka nowadays.¹² Based on his fight to establish free education in Ceylon, other actors that influenced this policy will be discussed.

A lot has already been written about education in the Commonwealth Countries.¹³ For unclear reasons, Ceylon always seems to be left out of these studies. This is remarkable since a system of 'free

⁶ S. L. Lewis, *Cities in Motion: Urban Life and Cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia, 1920-1940* (Cambridge 2016) 182.

⁷ Lewis, *Cities in Motion*, 181-226.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 182.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 182.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 4.

¹¹ M. U. Sedere, 'Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara Memorial Lecture in Commemoration of his 121st Birthday: Context of Educational Reforms Then and Now', Ministry of Education (13 October 2005) 2-17, resp. 2.

¹² Sedere, 'Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara Memorial Lecture in Commemoration of his 121st Birthday', 2.

¹³ A. Windel, 'British Colonial Education in Africa: Policy and Practice in the Era of Trusteeship', *History Compass* 7/1 (2009) 1-21. Whitehead, 'The Concept of British Education Policy in the Colonies 1850-1960'. H. J. A. Bellenoit,

education' was set up in Ceylon in the 1930s and implemented in the 1940s. The 'system' refers to all the primary and secondary schools in Ceylon and other forms of education that were offered, for example the University of Ceylon which was established during this period as well. An important outcome of the implementation of free education, is that the literacy rates in Sri Lanka have become very high compared to other Commonwealth Countries like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.¹⁴ Nowadays, the literacy rate in Sri Lanka is much higher in comparison with the world-wide standard.¹⁵ The period in which the fundamentals of this system were laid is therefore important to analyze.

How is it possible that this system of free education had been implemented in 1945 in Ceylon? To answer this question, it is necessary to answer these two questions first: What were the factors that shaped the implementation of free education in 1945 in Ceylon? To what extent was there agency in the shaping of the colonial education system in Ceylon by these factors? In this thesis, the focus lies mainly on the primary and secondary schools, because they provided education to the gross of the people. With every new policy, there are many factors contributing in one way or another to the final tenor of the policy. In this thesis, the most important factors that shaped the implementation of free education in Ceylon will be discussed. It starts and ends with the man who proposed the idea of free education, Christopher Wijekoon Kannangara. His life will form the entrance into the analysis of the different factors of agency within colonial education in the late-colonial Ceylonese society. Different institutions and people were working with or against Kannangara and these will be discussed.

The following sub-questions will help to answer the questions asked above: What kind of schools existed and what does this say about the type of education in Ceylon? Which actors were involved in shaping the education system? What were the main points of discussion about education in the State Council and in the public debate? The question about the type of schools shows which institutions had the most influence within education. An analysis of the actors involved in shaping the education system will provide an image of the interplay between people and institutions. The main points of discussion about education in the State Council reveal which people represented which institution and the points they fought for. Newspaper articles about education in Ceylon between 1930 and 1947, reveal how the Catholic Church and other institutions fought against the new proposals in education from the State Government. In conclusion, the agency of these institutions criticizing Kannangara and educational reforms will be discussed.

Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920 (London 2007). F. Jenz, 'Missionaries and Indigenous Education in the 19th-Century British Empire. Part II: Race, Class and Gender', *History Compass* 10/4 (2012) 306-317.

¹⁴ S. N. Gamage, 'Chapter 11: Sri Lanka: An Overview', in: H. Lethamanan, D. Dhar, *Education in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Islands* (London/New York 2018), 203-224, resp. 203.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 203. Sri Lankan Department of Census and Statistics, 'Social Conditions of Sri Lanka' (version 2001), <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/social/social%20conditions.pdf> (April 2018).

Was Kannangara unique in his radical proposal for free education in the late-colonial period? And was the implementation of free education in Ceylon in 1945 a singular event? Or did the same sort of policy changes happen in other colonies? To answer these questions, the last part of this thesis compares Kannangara and education in late-colonial Ceylon with another reformer from another colony. Ki Hajar Dewantara, born in Java in 1889, has been remembered as ‘father of education’ in nowadays Indonesia.¹⁶ Why will the Dutch East Indies be compared with Ceylon? First of all because Ki Hajar Dewantara reached lots of people in the colony with the implementation of a new type of school. He is often referred to as a ‘nationalist fighter’, but I will argue in this thesis that he was more than just a ‘Westernized Asian’.¹⁷ To compare both fathers of education, the same questions will be asked: Who was this father of education? What were his ideas? How were his ideas received? And which of his ideas were put into practice?

By answering all these questions, a clear image will be provided of the people and institutions that were involved in shaping and changing education in primary and secondary schools in late-colonial Ceylon and in Java. The following set of sources will be used in the analysis of Ceylon: the Administration Reports about education in Ceylon, the Ceylon Sessional Papers, the Hansard – written transcripts of parliamentary debates in the State Council - and newspaper articles from this period. This thesis provides a qualitative analysis, relying mostly on sources from the Sri Lankan National Archives. One book of historian Sumathipala has been used often.¹⁸ It is a quantitative publication of sources related to the life and work of Kannangara. Some of the ‘raw’ quotations from newspapers will be used from this book, to give a more complete image in combination with the sources mentioned above. The part about schools on Java and Ki Hajar Dewantara has been based upon secondary literature, because lots of research has already been done on this subject. The main focus in this thesis, lies on education in late-colonial Ceylon. The comparative part provides a larger context in which Kannangara and the education reforms of Ceylon can be compared with another case from another colony. Zooming out, it is possible to compare a case study of late-colonial education in a British colony with a case study of late-colonial education in a Dutch colony.

I will argue against the dominant, simplistic narrative about the late-colonial period and colonial education. The late-colonial period is often described as a period of rising nationalism, caused among other things by ‘Westernised’ Asians whom received Western education and afterwards used Western ideas and discourse to fight for independence in the colony. By focusing too much on the rise of nationalism, the framework of analysis becomes narrow and leaves out any other possible

¹⁶ N. Juliastuti, ‘Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara’, in: W. van Oldenborgh, *A Well Respected Man, or Book of Echoes* (Berlin/New York 2010) 83-94.

¹⁷ Juliastuti, ‘Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara’, 85.

¹⁸ K. H. M. Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon 1796-1965* (Colombo 1968).

outcomes. In this thesis, I will complicate this narrative about colonial education and take historical contingencies into mind. Furthermore, this thesis will compare the case study of colonial education in Ceylon with an example of education in the late-colonial Dutch East Indies.

Historiography

I will argue in this thesis that the 1930s as a period are important to explore on itself, because necessary foundations were laid for the period thereafter. The period from the 1930s until independence is often underexposed in historiography about colonies. Generally, the 1930s are used only to serve as a run-up to the Second World War, or to the start of the process of decolonization. The danger of framing history in such a way, is that it leaves only one outcome. Historian Robert Cribb studied the late colonial state in Indonesia.¹⁹ In his book, he explained this phenomenon in which the 1930s only serve as a run-up to the Second World War and decolonization. Cribb concluded that the nature of the colonial state remains less understood when writing history in such a way, due to a 'dead-end', which the colonial state seemed to represent.²⁰ With this dead-end, Cribb explains that everything in the analysis of this general historiography is written towards the final moment of decolonization. His conclusion is that: 'the result was a colonial establishment bypassed by History, doomed to powerlessness and eventual destruction because it failed to deal realistically with the forces of nationalism.'²¹ This form of history writing thus detains this period from any historical probability.

To avoid such a teleological way of history writing, the analysis in this research highlights the 1930s as a period itself, considering as much outcomes as possible. One way to do this, has been proposed in the book of historians Bandeira Jerónimo and Costa Pinto.²² They explain that attention must be given to the 'historical contingency and local particularities'. This can pose an alternative to the dominant narrative of decolonization.²³ It can be done by using a different framework of continuity and change, to understand the 'multiple and overlapping chronologies of decolonization'.²⁴ In this thesis, the way two empires reacted against diversity in their empire will be analyzed within the context of the 1930s. This global context not only looks at similarities and differences between the

¹⁹ Cribb, *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia*, 2.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 2.

²¹ *Ibidem*, 2.

²² M. Bandeira Jerónimo, A. Costa Pinto, *The Ends of European Colonial Empires: Cases and Comparisons* (Lisbon 2015).

²³ Bandeira Jerónimo, Costa Pinto, *The Ends of European Colonial Empires*, 2.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 2.

empires, but also takes connections into mind. This way, the narrative moves beyond merely a story of rising nationalism.

Kannangara is nowadays remembered as the 'Father of Free Education' in Sri Lanka. He will be compared with Ki Hajar Dewantara (1889-1959), who is remembered as 'Father of Education' in Indonesia.²⁵ Dewantara was an important educational reformer in the late-colonial period in the Dutch East Indies. He set up the Taman Siswa-schools and was a well-known nationalist fighting for independence in the colony.²⁶ Much has already been written about Ki Hajar Dewantara by historians, and this literature will be compared with a case study about Kannangara in this thesis. Four questions are central to this comparison: Who were Ki Hajar Dewantara and Christopher Wijekoon Kannangara? What were their ideas about education? How were these ideas received? Which ideas were put into practice, and how? These questions will provide an image of both educational reformers in the 1930s, moving away from the dominant narrative of 'rising nationalism' caused by Westernised Asians, because of the Western education they received.

Not only the period, also the place of analysis is important. A large historiography has been written about British colonial education policy in India and Africa.²⁷ Ceylon always seems to be left out in these works. This is remarkable, since the creation of a free education system in a British colony is rare, if not exceptional. Furthermore, it has had big consequences for the high literacy rates and social standards of the country. Historian Jayasuriya writes that there is a growing significance of Ceylon for those engaged in the field of Empire Studies.²⁸ This renewed interest, according to Jayasuriya, arises from the fact that Ceylon as a colony was used as a testing ground for 'British political ideals of constitutional liberalism'.²⁹ This was visible in a range of social and political institutions such as the freedom of assembly and religion, free and fair elections, the rule of law and a judicial system. For instance, Ceylon was one of the first colonial countries to have a jury system and universal franchise just seven years after it was introduced in Britain.³⁰

²⁵ Juliastuti, 'Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara', 85.

²⁶ D. Radcliffe, 'Ki Hadjar Dewantara and the Taman Siswa Schools; Notes on an Extra-Colonial Theory of Education', *Comparative Education Review* (June 1971) 219-226, resp. 219.

²⁷ The earlier mentioned articles of Windel and Whitehead give an overview of British Colonial Education in Africa and refer to standard works: Windel, 'British Colonial Education in Africa', 1-21. Whitehead, 'The historiography of British Imperial education policy', 441-454. The article of Bellenoit offers an introduction into British education policy in late-colonial India: Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920*.

²⁸ Jayasuriya, *Taking Social Development Seriously*, 15.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 15.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 15.

Method

When using a comparative framework, it is possible to overcome a conclusion that merely links the education system and policy of a colony to typical 'British' or typical 'Dutch' governance. Developments within the education systems of both colonies can be linked to each other as well as to other colonial education systems within the empires. According to Sebastian Conrad, the advantages of a comparative approach are not difficult to see.³¹ The comparative approach can move beyond single cases and therefore: 'opens up a conversation between different historical trajectories and experiences', as Conrad described it.³² Furthermore, historians studying the late-colonial period and the ends of European empires often use comparative history as a method.³³ In this thesis, case studies of education in two different empires reveal what happened in the late-colonial period in both empires. By comparing them with other regions within the empire, an international context is provided.

The second advantage of using a comparative approach has been pointed out by the historians Bandeira Jerónimo and Costa Pinto in their volume about the ends of European colonial empires. They claim that comparative history 'permits appreciation of processes of inter-imperial and inter-colonial cooperation and competition'.³⁴ Both of these processes are being reviewed in this thesis, in the comparison with Commonwealth Countries and Java. Bandeira Jerónimo and Costa Pinto explain that such a way of history writing further questions 'singular and exceptional self-serving national narratives'.³⁵ This exceptional self-serving national narrative is something Conrad warns about as well. Writing about the historical trajectories can cause a 'narrative of uniqueness' and means that somewhere in history, one society will follow a deviant path which creates a *Sonderweg*.³⁶ The comparative approach itself produces these narratives of uniqueness.³⁷

It is possible, according to Conrad, to get rid of this teleological form of history writing. The two units of comparison – in this case the education in two colonies – must not be situated as separate and given, but they must be placed in the context of a common global situation.³⁸ When the two different forms of colonial education are provided with a common global context, then the comparison itself becomes part of the approach of global history. In the late-colonial period, worldwide

³¹ S. Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton 2016) 39.

³² Conrad, *What is Global History?* 39-40.

³³ For example: F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 2005). M. Shipway, *Decolonization and its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the Ends of Empires* (Oxford 2008). Bandeira Jerónimo, Costa Pinto, *The Ends of European Colonial Empires*.

³⁴ Bandeira Jerónimo, Costa Pinto, *The Ends of European Colonial Empires*, 5.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 5.

³⁶ Conrad, *What is Global History?* 41.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 41.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, 40-41.

phenomena such as the economic depression of 1930 had an impact on all colonies and made them interdependent of each other, and the world economy. That is why the point of departure in this research will be the context of the 1930s, against which both education systems could evolve. Within this analysis, focus will be given on this point by looking at connections between the empires and colonies. The inquiries at the end of the research will, again, be put against a background of the same global context. This way, the interconnectedness of the world is both the starting and ending point of this research.

Material

The primary sources used in this thesis come from the Sri Lankan National Archives (SLNA), vested in Colombo. The sources about education in Ceylon are Sessional Papers, Administration Reports, the Hansard and newspaper articles. The Sessional Papers between 1920 and 1947 contain various reports of Commissions and Committees that were appointed to investigate the state of education in Ceylon. The most important one is the Sessional Paper of 1943, which contains the 'Report of the Special Committee on Education'.³⁹ This Committee, with Kannangara as chairman, made a comprehensive review of the education system and policy in Ceylon of the last ten years. They proposed far-reaching educational innovations, of which the free education system was their main goal.⁴⁰ This report is important because, with only few small modifications, it would become the foundation for the Free Education Scheme of 1945. In total, 11 Sessional Papers have been analyzed.⁴¹ In these years Committees and Commissions in Ceylon wrote about different subjects of education. One example is the Sessional Paper of 1936, about the report of the Commission on Scholarships. There were also more general reports that gave an overview of the entire educational system in Ceylon.⁴²

The Administration Reports of Ceylon are substantial reports about matters concerning social welfare. The main issues are matters of labor, healthcare and education.⁴³ The Administration Reports about Education in Ceylon, between the years 1920 and 1947, are analyzed in this thesis. The arguments that have been made in these 25 reports (two years are missing) were divided thematically. In the analysis, the themes will be discussed chronologically to see the evolving patterns over the years. Within such a period, it is possible to see gradual changes within the education system. This 'system' of education refers to an interplay of forces within primary, secondary and academical education. In

³⁹ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper XXIV' (Colombo 1943).

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper' (Colombo 1920, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1940, 1943).

⁴² SLNA, 'Sessional Paper IV' (Colombo 1936).

⁴³ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1920-1947).

this research, the focus lies mainly on primary and secondary education, because the Ceylon University provided access only to a small minority within the colony. This small minority were often children from elite families living in the colony.⁴⁴ The research is a quantitative analysis, in which matters of concern are extracted chronologically and then evaluated in range of importance and size. The biggest issues are discussed, within the context of the late-colonial state. Administration Reports are a useful source, because they reveal an interplay between both ideas formulated in education policy and how these turned out to be implemented.

The Administration Reports about education in Ceylon between 1920 and 1947 contain two interrelated subjects. First, it reports the issues about education that were of importance for the colonial government. In Ceylon, for example, the medium of instruction used on primary and secondary schools proved to be an important point of discussion. Education in the 'native tongue' was implemented in the Free Education Scheme of 1945. However, there was a big discussion within the parliament as well as in the public media, that showed not everyone agreed with this new implementation.⁴⁵ The Administration Reports wrote every year about the medium of instruction used on all the schools in Ceylon. Second, the reports reveal how earlier implemented educational policies have developed over time. The observations from these reports, about the development of education policies, were used to draw new lines of policy. Important issues from the reports were for example the situation and division between government and aided schools and the introduction of free mid-day meals introduced during the Second World War.⁴⁶

The analysis of the Reports starts in 1920 when, in Ceylon, the colonial government was still in hands of the British colonial officials. Constitutional reforms in 1931 lead to the Donoughmore period. This period has been marked by a gradual change from imperial towards self-rule of the colony. The 1920s are chosen as starting point for the analysis, because both periods – before and after 1931 – can be compared with each other. Furthermore, it is possible to note the gradual changes that happened over a decade, when including the 1920s in the analysis. New implementations of policy often needed a couple of years to settle into the existing structures of education. The comparison between Ceylon and Java has been based mainly on these Administration Reports on Education in Ceylon and secondary literature about the education policy and renewals on Java in the Dutch East Indies.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History*, 29.

⁴⁵ For example: *Times of Ceylon*, 'A test of responsibility' (25 October 1938). *Times of Ceylon*, 'The Education Bill' (12 November 1938).

⁴⁶ For example: Sri Lankan National Archives (SLNA) *Administration Report of Ceylon*, 'Part IV. Education, Science and Arts. Report of the Director of Education for 1930' (Colombo 1931) 8-9.

⁴⁷ J. E. A. M. Lelyveld, *Koloniaal onderwijs en onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië 1893-1942* (Utrecht 1992). F. Gouda, *Dutch culture overseas: colonial practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942* (Amsterdam 1995). Groeneboer, *Weg tot het Westen*.

The *Times of Ceylon* was an English-written daily newspaper of Ceylon. It contained very negative articles about Kannangara in the 1930s and 1940s. Historian Sumathipala investigated more newspaper magazines of Ceylon which wrote negative about Kannangara.⁴⁸ The historian concluded that the reason for this negativity was the fact that that conservative powers were afraid of losing their power in the existing old system of social hierarchy.⁴⁹ By spreading negative news about Kannangara, they hoped to maintain their own status and position in society. From the *Times of Ceylon*, 117 newspaper articles about education and Kannangara were used, to compare them with other newspapers. Sumathipala published extensive quotations about newspapers in his book, which will be used to compare these articles with.⁵⁰

The Hansard is a transcript of all the Parliamentary Debates in Ceylon, of which the debates about education are extracted for this research.⁵¹ These have been analyzed in the years of and before the two educational reforms of 1939 and 1945.⁵² Debates about education have been extracted from these transcripts and the arguments are divided into four categories: political, economic, religious and remaining. The Hansard of 1945 contained a transcript of an enormous speech of Kannangara, about the entire history of education in Ceylon. In this speech, he promoted the Free Education Scheme which was drafted in the previous years.⁵³ The newspapers, together with an analysis of useful debates from the Hansard, provide an insight into the debate about education and education policy in Ceylon.

⁴⁸ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 349, 372.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 349, 372.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*. SLNA, *Times of Ceylon* (Colombo 1930-1947). SLNA, *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (Colombo 1930-1947).

⁵¹ SLNA, 'Hansard' (Colombo 1938).

⁵² SLNA, 'Hansard' (Colombo 1938, 1939, 1944, 1945).

⁵³ SLNA, 'Hansard' (Colombo 1945) 843-925.

Chapter 1: History of Education in Ceylon

Ceylon had a long tradition of education. This chapter gives a description of all the different forms of schooling while looking at the emergence of different schools on the island. First, a short summary will be given of the emergence and developments of education based on secondary literature.⁵⁴ By looking at the history of education on the island, it is possible to track down traditions of education and long-term tensions that existed between different educational institutions. This chapter will answer the question: How was education organized in Ceylon, from the early colonial period until the twentieth century? This will be done through an analysis of the Administration Reports from Ceylon together with secondary literature. The analysis of the Administration Reports has been done by asking the sub-questions: What kind of schools existed in the 1920s in Ceylon? What were the main issues of importance in the colonial education reports? What does this say about the type of education in Ceylon? The history of different schools will be used as a context, against which the tensions in education in late-colonial Ceylon can be sought. The general attendance on different schools will show the distribution of education in Ceylon over the different institutions that organized certain forms of education. The focus lies on primary and secondary education, because this provided education for the gross of the people. The actors involved in shaping the education system on Ceylon will be discussed in the next chapter, just as the main points of discussion about education in both the State Council and public debate of the late-colonial state.

1.1 Portuguese and Dutch legacy

Before the first colonialists arrived, religious education was already present on the island. Buddhist monk and Hindu scribe provided main education which was well established when the Portuguese entered Ceylon.⁵⁵ According to historian Yasmine Gooneratne, the religious and educational institutions that were present in Ceylon before the Portuguese, were sufficiently enough to provide the right foundation for English judicial and educational institutions.⁵⁶ Whether this was true, could be debatable. However, it is important that the old religious Hindu and Buddhist schools in Ceylon continued to exist throughout the entire colonial period. They remained an institution with a strong voice and influence to participate in discussions about education.

⁵⁴ K. M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981). P. Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka: the Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations* (2006). M. Y. Gooneratne, *English Literature in Ceylon, 1815-1878* (Colombo 1968).

⁵⁵ Gooneratne, *English Literature in Ceylon, 1815-1878*, 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, xiv.

The Portuguese colonists entered Ceylon in 1505. European missionaries followed them soon afterwards. Around 1600 different missionaries, such as the Franciscans, the Jesuits, the Dominicans and Augustinians had established themselves on the island. Historian de Silva explained how free education was given through monasteries and parish schools. Their main goal was to convert the people on the island.⁵⁷ The biggest legacy of the Portuguese occupation however, was the influence of the Catholic Church. They managed to remain powerful during both Dutch and British rule. According to de Silva, the 'tolerant regime' of the British even led to the expansion and further development of this Catholic education.⁵⁸ Both historians, de Silva and Gooneratne, wrote that education was used by the Portuguese as a medium of conversion and that their remaining influence on the island was the establishment of the Catholic Church.⁵⁹ The legacy and influence of the Catholic Church would remain important throughout the entire colonial period. The third chapter will be an analysis of the main Catholic newspaper in Ceylon and the ways in which the Catholic Church tried to behold influence on education will be discussed.

The Dutch took over the maritime provinces from the Portuguese in 1658 and the government founded the Scholarchal Commission in both Galle and Jaffna. This protestant Christian body was appointed by the government and investigated all schools in Ceylon, including those from other religions. Gooneratne wrote that this Commission regulated the schools from the Maritime area.⁶⁰ The Scholarchal Commission was a constituted board which interfered with the native community. Historian de Silva explained that they inspected the schools, examined pupils, but also settled matrimonial disputes for example.⁶¹ Their own schools provided free education and the medium used in these schools was the vernacular. European children received education on separate schools such as the Orphan, Parish and Private schools. At the same time education was given in the Seminary, a training school for future missionaries.⁶² A few students were sent to Leiden or Amsterdam, at Government expense, where they could complete their education. Most of them were sons of prominent Sinhalese or headmen of districts.⁶³

Different ethnic groups lived next to each other during this colonial period in Ceylon. Gooneratne described how the *Mudaliyar* class, a group of mainly Sinhalese people, profited from the Dutch occupation.⁶⁴ They received awards such as gold medals, honorary titles and insignia and worked in the local administration. In turn the Dutch encouraged the *Mudaliyar* to compete against one

⁵⁷ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 2.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, 3-4.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, 3-4.

⁶⁰ Gooneratne, *English Literature in Ceylon*, 3.

⁶¹ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 11.

⁶² Gooneratne, *English Literature in Ceylon*, 3.

⁶³ Ibidem, 3.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, 3.

another. This group of people gradually started to distance themselves from other Sinhalese people in society. They identified themselves more and more with Western ways of life.⁶⁵ Another difference grew between the Sinhalese people living in the Westernized low-country and people living in the Kandyan Kingdom. The latter remained their own kingdom under both Portuguese and Dutch occupation. When the British arrived on the island and occupied the entire island, the Sinhalese already had 150 years of living under colonial rule. That is how the Sinhalese were already familiar with western educational institutions provided by missionaries, in contrast to the people living in the Kandyan Kingdom.⁶⁶

The Dutch were interested in profitable trade and therefore, the old agrarian system in the coastal areas got replaced.⁶⁷ Gooneratne wrote that the foundations for a western educational system were present when the British arrived. Factors of missionary works were visible in the educational structure on the island.⁶⁸ The British found a multi-racial community, because besides the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslim traders two additional religious groups were left on the island by the Portuguese and the Dutch. They spoke two different languages and accepted Roman Catholic and Presbyterian forms of Christianity.⁶⁹ Multiple institutions provided education before the British arrived in Ceylon.

Old Buddhist and Hindu institutions provided education, before colonialists were present on the island. The biggest legacy of the Portuguese was the establishment of the Catholic Church in Ceylon. When the Dutch entered Ceylon, the Christian Church founded the Scholarchal Commission. The Dutch colonial government reinforced differences between groups in society, for example by favoring the *Mudaliyar* class. These different educational institutes got mixed up even more when the British arrived in Ceylon.

1.2 British colonial education in Ceylon

In 1796 the British officially took over Ceylon and with this, an end came to the Dutch rule in Ceylon. Historian Patrick Peebles wrote that, with the Kandyan Convention in 1815, the entire island was officially colonized and slowly transformed into a hybrid society.⁷⁰ The British rewarded allies among the people with titles, land grants and positions of power in administrative offices, just as the Dutch had done with the *Mudaliyar* class. Education was uneven spread and one result was that an

⁶⁵ Gooneratne, *English Literature in Ceylon*, 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 3.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, 3-4.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 4.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, 4.

⁷⁰ Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka*, 52.

Anglicized elite emerged, whom grew increasingly isolated from the rest of the people. At the same time, Buddhism and Hinduism went through a period of revival.⁷¹

The British set up schools with a Western curriculum, to produce schooled workforces. Their goal was to create a low-cost English-speaking staff to work in the lower levels of bureaucracy. The English language proved to be the factor of success. Throughout the nineteenth century the demand grew much bigger than the accessible jobs for English-speaking, educated people.⁷² The Dutch Burghers profited from the fact that English-speaking people had a comparatively high advantage in society. The Burghers were a group of Protestant Christians and spoke English, Tamil and Sinhalese. They were descendants from the Portuguese and the Dutch, but some came from Ceylon originally.⁷³ In the early British colonial period, the Dutch Burghers dominated the legal, medical and clerical professions. Peebles explained how this changed slowly when English-educated Sinhalese and Tamil began to outnumber the Dutch Burghers in both government services and the private sector during the nineteenth century. Consequently, tensions between different groups of people started to divide society even more.⁷⁴

During the early 1900s, British colonial policy was focused on keeping the rural population on the land. The medium of instruction on schools was important. Linguistic researcher Janina Brutt-Griffler wrote an article about the British colonial language policy, in which she made a comparative analysis of both Ceylon and Basutholand (Lesotho), another British colony in Africa.⁷⁵ She explained how the socio-economic structure of Ceylon 'served as the fundamental base for the development and implementation of education language policy in the colony'.⁷⁶ Brutt-Griffler argued that the colonial government in the early 1900s tried to prevent too many people from receiving education in the English language, because the British needed enough manual labor forces in Ceylon to maintain their labor-intensive agricultural society. That is why the 'status quo' was retained, in which education for the majority was designed in such a way that people would practice becoming an estate worker and education would not interfere with the economic production.⁷⁷ The medium of instruction on schools would remain a main point of discussion in Ceylon.

⁷¹ Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka*, 55, 58.

⁷² Ibidem, 62.

⁷³ Ibidem, 65.

⁷⁴ Ibidem, 65.

⁷⁵ J. Brutt-Griffler, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Language Rights: An Analysis of British Colonial Policy in Lesotho and Sri Lanka and Some Implications for Language Policy', *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* 1:3 (2002) 207-234.

⁷⁶ Brutt-Griffler, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Language Rights', 214.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, 218.

1.3 Schools in Ceylon

To answer the question how education was organized in Ceylon during the 1920s, an analysis of the Administration Reports of education in Ceylon has been made. Different types of schools coexisted in Ceylon in the early 1920s. The Administration Reports about education made a division between un-aided and aided schools by the government and between English and Vernacular schools.⁷⁸ The medium of instruction on English schools was mostly English. However, some English schools provided education in the vernacular language and vice versa. That is why an extra distinction was being made which were the so-called Anglo-Vernacular schools. From 1932 onwards, the Anglo-Vernacular schools were categorized as 'bilingual' schools, but the meaning of these schools remained the same.⁷⁹ The Administration Reports of Ceylon, from 1920 until 1947, contain several recurring subjects. The four most important ones are the attendance of pupils, education for girls, caste differences on schools and the language of instruction. Based on these four themes, the state of education and the developments within the education systems in Ceylon will be discussed. The first three themes will be discussed in this chapter, the last theme is discussed in the second chapter together with the adoption of new educational reforms.

Attendance

The yearly decrease or increase of pupils attending to primary and secondary schools depended heavily upon the primary living circumstances. The Reports in both the 1920s and 1930s report often about an outbreak of diseases among the people as well as periods of food shortages.⁸⁰ In the report of 1920 was written that the outbreak of influenza, in combination with the shortage of food, caused a decrease in the number of pupils attending to school. In 1919 there were 409,736 pupils attending to school in Ceylon, in 1920 these numbers were reduced to 397,950. In 1920 was reported that: 'in some districts prosecutions for non-attendance at school were temporarily suspended.'⁸¹

There were several reasons for children not to attend at school. In 1922, the Director of Education wrote: 'Malaria continues to be the greatest health problem in English schools, both in regard to the pupils and in regard to the staff. In many cases half the staff and half the pupils are affected'.⁸² Historian Jayasuriya wrote a book about the social development in late-colonial Ceylon.⁸³

⁷⁸ Sri Lankan National Archives (from now: SLNA), *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1921) a1-a9.

⁷⁹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1932) a4.

⁸⁰ For Example: SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1920, 1924-1927, 1929, 1930, 1934).

⁸¹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1920) a4-5.

⁸² SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1922) a1.

⁸³ Jayasuriya, *Taking Social Development Seriously: the experience of Sri Lanka*.

He explained that the control of malaria was one of the most serious health issues at the time. Severe outbreaks happened regularly and affected the entire population.⁸⁴ Also, in the mid-1930s a severe drought caused another food shortage in Ceylon.⁸⁵ These food shortages effected the attendance on schools severely and the government took measures against it. In 1920, for example, an experiment was started to provide free meals for the poorest children living in school towns around Colombo.⁸⁶ Despite the provision of these free meals however, the attendance remained unsatisfactory. An explanation for this was given in the same Report:

This is due to the fact that the majority of the pupils are drawn from the poorest working-class homes, where the children are required to make themselves useful almost as soon as they can talk, while the older children have to go out and earn their living. (...) Thus, both in Colombo and the rural districts, regulations for compulsory attendance had to be relaxed by reason of the heavy economic pressure on the poorer classes.⁸⁷

In 1922 a divisional inspector from the Northern Division reported: 'For the last mentioned it may in many cases be kinder to ensure food rather than education, by withdrawal from school'.⁸⁸ For the poorest classes in society, children were needed to work for their family. The shortage of food in combination with several outbreaks of malaria caused great numbers of absence of these children on the schools in Ceylon.

In 1936, free mid-day meals to poor children were introduced again and according to the Administration Report of 1940 had proven to be 'very beneficial'.⁸⁹ The free feeding of school children started as an anti-malarial relief measure. The idea was to provide children with a midday meal, so that they were stronger and better able to recover from the symptoms of malaria.⁹⁰ A scheme to feed school children was used to encourage schools to grow much of the food in their own school gardens. The Director of Education in 1936 wrote: 'It is hoped that in the course of time Ceylon's food supply will be largely supplemented by what is grown in the school and home gardens.'⁹¹ During the Second World War, the food production campaign got extended. In 1941, an officer in the report concluded that: 'Free midday meals have contributed greatly to the health of the pupils'.⁹² The Administration Reports show that in Ceylon, increasingly attention was given to the health of students in the late-

⁸⁴ Jayasuriya, *Taking Social Development Seriously: the experience of Sri Lanka*, 70.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 70-71.

⁸⁶ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1920) a2.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, a10.

⁸⁸ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1922) a6.

⁸⁹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1940) a3.

⁹⁰ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1947) a5.

⁹¹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1936) a14.

⁹² SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1941) a1.

colonial period. Measures were taken to improve attendance through the provision of mid-day meals for the poorest pupils.

The Administration Reports about education in Ceylon were written by government officials. Therefore, it seemed not surprising that the reports were more positive about government (aided) schools. One example can be found in the Report from 1920, in which the introduction reported a general decrease in the attendance of pupils throughout all the schools in Ceylon, due to a food shortage that same year.⁹³ One of the consequences of this food shortage was a decrease in the number of unaided schools throughout the colony. The officer writing this Report wrote that this development was 'not unsatisfactory'.⁹⁴ About the conditions of these schools was written: 'with very few exceptions, schools which do not satisfy requirements as regards staff and accommodation'.⁹⁵ More of these impressions were given throughout the reports in the years after. The influence of these unaided schools, which were mostly from religious institutions, cannot be underestimated. Their establishment on the island and within the education system in Ceylon has been explained in the previous part. They maintained a factor of influence within the development of education in Ceylon, despite these negative connotations in the Administration Reports.

The Administration Reports often mentioned overcrowded classes. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s these types of messages occurred often.⁹⁶ In 1928, one government official wrote: 'The pressure of overcrowding in Government schools is partly accounted for by the demand for admission to these [English-medium] schools on the score of better education being imparted in them.'⁹⁷ This suggests that better education was given on government schools. It was mainly due to the popularity of English-medium instruction on primary and secondary schools that these classes were often overcrowded. This form of education attracted most students throughout the 1920s and 1930s and caused overcrowded schools.⁹⁸ There were thus overcrowded classes, but also periods of decreasing attendance from pupils. This decrease was mainly due to food shortages or the outbreaks of diseases such as malaria. Another important theme, that had to do with the attendance on schools, was the attendance of girls on schools. Most boys received education, but the number of girls was far less.

⁹³ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1920), a1.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, a1.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, a1.

⁹⁶ For example: SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1924, 1926-1928, 1930-1934).

⁹⁷ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1928) a13.

⁹⁸ For example: SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1924, 1926-1928, 1930-1934).

Education for girls

The second central theme within the Administration Reports of education in Ceylon was the education provided for girls. In the 1928 an officer wrote in the Administration Report: 'the lack of interest in the past in the education of girls is being gradually overcome.'⁹⁹ In the years before this report, small attention was given to the education of girls. According to the Report of 1921 'the percentage of girls attending to school was probably less than half the percentage of boys'.¹⁰⁰ Exact numbers of girls were never mentioned in the reports but starting from 1928 onwards the attention to girls receiving education increased in the reports. The economic depression and malaria outbreaks in the beginning of the 1930s caused a general decrease in the attendance of pupils in schools. Notions were made that the percentage of girls was growing again starting from 1935 onwards.¹⁰¹ Exact numbers were never given. However, reports contained phrases such as 'an enormous increase in attendance of girls' was marked in both bilingual and English schools.¹⁰²

Schools in Ceylon were mostly mixed with boys and girls. In 1938, Kannangara set up a Housecraft Scheme for Girls and a Rural Scheme for Boys, in which pupils got practical education which they could apply to their function in society when they would become older. Despite his new 'schemes', the gross of the schools remained mixed and at the end of 1945 the number of girls attending school was still growing.

These two themes, attendance at school and education for girls, both show whom were in- and excluded from education. Far less girls than boys received education but compared to the British themselves this was not strange. In the United Kingdom itself, until 1975, it was completely normal to ban women from certain forms of education due to their gender.¹⁰³ What was noticeable was that education provided for girls was an issue worth mentioning in the Administration Reports of education.

Schools and Caste

In 1928, the Director of Education wrote:

It having been brought to the notice of the Board that differential treatment was being accorded to children in certain schools on account of caste, the Board strongly recommended that no such

⁹⁹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1928) a13.

¹⁰⁰ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1921) a1.

¹⁰¹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1935) a24.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, a24.

¹⁰³ Colombo Catholic Press, 'Newspapers: The Messenger' (version 2015)

<http://www.colomboarchdiocesancatholicpress.com/archive-messenger.php#> (12 Jun 2018).

differential treatment should be shown and that provision should be made in the Education Ordinance to prevent it.¹⁰⁴

This general remark in the Administration Report over the year 1928 lead to the following adjustment in the Education Code of 1929: 'no pupil who is in attendance at any school should receive differential treatment on account of race, caste, nationality, or creed.'¹⁰⁵ This new policy gave rise to some forms of resistance. Mainly on local level, some districts reported different forms of opposition throughout the island.¹⁰⁶ The Administration Report of 1930 concluded that this new policy: 'resulted in certain cases of schools being burnt down by the opponents of the policy of the Department'.¹⁰⁷ Further details about the forms of opposition are missing in these reports. The conclusion in 1930 was that:

The objections of the admission to school of children of certain castes is deeply rooted in the traditions of certain areas of Ceylon, but notable progress has been made in overcoming this long-standing prejudice, and the indications are that in a very short time the principle of giving equal educational opportunities to all children irrespective of race and caste will not only be accepted but appreciated by the bulk of the population.¹⁰⁸

Two years later, the report of 1932 concluded that this new rule received more acceptance among the different castes.¹⁰⁹

Ceylon had a long tradition of religious education. Sinhalese, Tamil, Buddhist and Muslim education was already present before the Portuguese entered the island and introduced Catholic missionary education. The Education Code of 1920 required that both denominational schools and Government schools were to provide moral and religious instruction.¹¹⁰ In the years afterwards, the Administration Reports concluded that the plea for more schools to meet the religious needs of pupils gave rise to increasingly more costs.¹¹¹ Religious instruction on denominational schools proved to be only sufficient for children with the same religion as the religious bodies which provided education on these schools. In 1936, the Administration Reports concluded the following about children with deviant religious backgrounds: 'In their case the moral and ethical side of education is entirely neglected or is taught so indirectly that it is almost ineffective.'¹¹² On Government schools was expected that moral

¹⁰⁴ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1928) a7.

¹⁰⁵ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1929) a8-9.

¹⁰⁶ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1930) a8.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, a8.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, a8-9.

¹⁰⁹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1932) a5.

¹¹⁰ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1920) a32.

¹¹¹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1936) a10.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, a10.

training was given without aid of religion. However, in the 1930s grew the argument that this form of 'indirect moral training' was not successful and sufficient enough.¹¹³ Therefore 'arrangements have been made, with the permission of the Director of Education, in several Government schools for religious training to be given to the pupils before or after school hours by some minister of religion.'¹¹⁴ After the educational reforms of 1945, the traditional neutrality of the Government in respect to the teaching of religion on schools was abandoned. The consequences of this new rule will be discussed in the paragraph about the Advisory Committee on Education in the next chapter.

¹¹³ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1936) a10.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, a10.

Chapter 2: Actors and Agency

In this chapter, the actors influencing education in Ceylon will be discussed. Historian Whitehead wrote down five broad operating principles of education in the British Empire, which will be compared with the situation in late-colonial Ceylon.¹¹⁵ Second, the life, ideas and influence of Kannangara on education in Ceylon will be analyzed based on the Administration Reports on Education from Ceylon, Sessional Papers, the Hansard and oral statements given by Kannangara. Third, the Report from the Advisory Committee on Education will be discussed through analysis of the prevailing education system in Ceylon and the proposed changes by the Committee.¹¹⁶ The last part of this chapter discusses the implementation of the major reforms in education in Ceylon in 1945, based on an analysis of the Administration Reports from 1945 until 1947.¹¹⁷

2.1 Actors in education

The emergence of education within a colony, and the developments that changed education over time, are dependent on an interplay between people, forces, ideas and institutions. Before the interaction of these different actors can be discussed, it is necessary to determine what these factors were and why these were of importance for the education renewals in late-colonial Ceylon. One example of a person that changed education in Ceylon was Kannangara. He proposed new reforms for education in Ceylon together with the Advisory Committee on Education. Other actors also influenced the outcome of a new policy. The members within the State Council for example, whom had to agree with the proposals of Kannangara before these could be implemented. There were also conflicting actors such as the Catholic Church in Ceylon. This religious institution tried to maintain their influential position in education in Ceylon by spreading negative news about the new proposals in education.

To find out which operating principles influenced the development of education in Ceylon the article of historian Whitehead will be used as a framework.¹¹⁸ Whitehead wrote an article about the broad operating principles that shaped the development of education within the British Empire. He sums up a list of five broad operating principles that shaped the development of education in the colonies and protectorates which were called the colonial empire after 1918. Whitehead explained that the British, just like any other empire, did not carry out one settled policy as far as education concerned. Instead, a policy was shaped by different actors. According to Whitehead: 'only detailed

¹¹⁵ Whitehead, 'The Concept of British Education Policy in the Colonies 1850-1960',

¹¹⁶ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper XXIV' (Colombo 1943).

¹¹⁷ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1945-1947)

¹¹⁸ Whitehead, 'The Concept of British Education Policy in the Colonies 1850-1960', 161.

case studies can unravel the full story behind the progress or otherwise of education in individual colonies'.¹¹⁹ That is why a comparison will be made between education in late-colonial Ceylon and Whiteheads' list of broad operating principles. Through the comparison it is possible to analyze which factors that influenced education in the late-colonial society were typical 'British' and which ones were only locally applicable to Ceylon.

The first operating principle was the authority of religious organizations, whom established and controlled schools. Their primacy included providing religious and moral instruction in the school curriculum throughout the British Empire.¹²⁰ Whitehead wrote that colonial administrations obtained more responsibility for educating themselves during the 1920s.¹²¹ However, religious organizations and missionary schools remained an important authority within the development of education. Prior to the First World War, most of the education was given on either missionary schools or Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic schools in Ceylon. The latter established themselves on the island long before the British officially came to power.¹²² The Christian mission schools entered the island during the Portuguese occupation of the island.¹²³ After the First World War, tensions between the colonial government and private education organizations became part of the daily events. Especially the Catholic Church fought publicly to behold their influence. Discussions about education were fought in the public debate, visible in the newspapers of the 1930s. One of these newspapers was the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, a weekly published newspaper written in English since 1869.¹²⁴ This Catholic newspaper openly criticized all the reforms of Kannangara.¹²⁵ Despite the growing authority of the colonial government in education, the religious organizations and missionary schools remained an important factor within the development of education during the entire colonial period in Ceylon. The missionary schools were afraid that new reforms could be a threat to their authority.¹²⁶ The extent to which denominational schools had an influence on educational reforms in Ceylon will be analyzed in the third chapter of this thesis.

The second operating principle was the existence of a long British tradition of supporting private initiatives in education. According to Whitehead this was due to a long history of British 'suspicion' against state dominated education systems in centralized states, such as France and Prussia

¹¹⁹ Whitehead, 'The Concept of British Education Policy in the Colonies 1850-1960', 165.

¹²⁰ Ibidem, 163-164.

¹²¹ Ibidem, 163.

¹²² Ibidem, 163.

¹²³ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 2, 412.

¹²⁴ Colombo Catholic Press, 'Newspapers: The Messenger' (version 2015)

<http://www.colomboarchdiocesancatholicpress.com/archive-messenger.php#> (12 Jun 2018).

¹²⁵ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon 1796-1965*, 350.

¹²⁶ Ibidem, 349.

in the nineteenth century.¹²⁷ The idea behind this tradition was to prevent standardization and a strict uniformity of education. Private initiatives would generate a variety of aims and methods instead. The colonial state could uphold the principle of freedom for everyone to establish schools with the help of grants-in-aid and school fees.¹²⁸ The great variety of schools that existed in Ceylon throughout the entire colonial period suggests that this principle was applicable to the island. Because lots of different schools were apparent in Ceylon, such as government and government-aided schools, missionary schools, private schools and religious schools such as the *pirvenas* (Buddhist religious schools).¹²⁹ The diversity of schools meant that there were different teaching methods apparent. Historian de Silva wrote that one major point of discussion would become the medium of instruction in both primary and secondary schools.¹³⁰ According to Whitehead this issue was of importance within all British colonies.¹³¹

The third point of Whitehead was the reflection of the British hierarchy and social class in education.¹³² Parents had the freedom of choice in schools and therefore the upper classes were able to behold their social exclusivity. The upper classes in society sent their children to high fee-paying schools which were inherently unavailable for the lower classes. This phenomenon was characteristic for all the British colonies and the United Kingdom itself.¹³³ With the example of education in late-colonial Java will be shown that this was not only characteristic for the British colonial society. Other empires - such as the Dutch East Indies - appeared to have the same reflection of the hierarchy of society within the schools and education. This will be discussed further in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

Whitehead explained in his fourth principle how the colonial government tried to bring the content of education more in line with the rural lifestyle of people in the British colonies in the 1930s.¹³⁴ The reason for this change was the fear of the British government, because of a revolt that had happened in India in the nineteenth century. This was the result of a policy which made education better accessible for the middle class in society. More people received better and longer education. The middle class in India profited from this accessibility to better education. They all wanted English-medium education, because this would provide access to better-paying jobs. Due to the better and longer training of the growing middle class in India, job opportunities related to this level of thinking slowly reduced in number. This new class did not accept the simple rural lifestyle anymore. That is why

¹²⁷ Whitehead, 'The Concept of British Education Policy in the Colonies 1850-1960', 164.

¹²⁸ Ibidem, 164.

¹²⁹ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 412.

¹³⁰ Ibidem, 413.

¹³¹ Whitehead, 'The Concept of British Education Policy in the Colonies 1850-1960', 164.

¹³² Ibidem, 164.

¹³³ Ibidem, 164.

¹³⁴ Ibidem, 165.

these people became militant and turned against the Indian government.¹³⁵ To prevent such a revolt in the future, the British government tried to adapt the education in the colonies to the rural lifestyle of the people.¹³⁶ Historian de Silva wrote that the same thing happened in Ceylon in the 1930s, where more 'practical' schools were proposed by the colonial government.¹³⁷ Kannangara himself was a great promoter of this idea in Ceylon and tried to establish dozens of these practical schools.¹³⁸ However, it is debatable whether this was a British characteristic, because the same fear was apparent in the Dutch East Indies. This will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

The last principle of Whitehead was that British education had been traditionally conceived of in a liberal-humanist tradition.¹³⁹ This point was not of much relevance for Ceylon, because the British never had a main educational philosophy, in contrast to the French for example.¹⁴⁰ It is questionable whether this point was of relevance for Whitehead's argument. Due to the great variety of schools, the medium of instruction and religion that stood central, it is impossible to speak of one 'tradition' within British education in the British Empire. This last point will not be considered further in the analysis. Now that the general factors of British education policy have been compared with the specifics of Ceylon, there is one more important factor to analyze.

2.2 Global Setting

The global setting of the 1930s and 1940s had a big impact on the late-colonial state. One of the most far-reaching events of the 1930s was the Economic Depression, with its world-wide consequences. Several historians have pointed out that colonies were economically tied to their motherland and that the late-colonial state was linked to the world-economy.¹⁴¹ In the 1930s, the ups and downs of the Western economic sector were felt in the colony itself, just like the fluctuations of the world economy. Historian de Silva argued that the effects of the Great Depression had a deep impact on Ceylon, because their economy was based on producing primary commodities.¹⁴² Also the Second World War had an impact in Ceylon. The British fought against Nazi Germany and in Ceylon the threat of a Japanese invasion was high.¹⁴³ Besides these two events, the world was growing more

¹³⁵ Whitehead, 'The Concept of British Education Policy in the Colonies 1850-1960', 165.

¹³⁶ Ibidem, 165.

¹³⁷ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 474.

¹³⁸ Ibidem, 474-475.

¹³⁹ Whitehead, 'The Concept of British Education Policy in the Colonies 1850-1960', 166.

¹⁴⁰ Ibidem, 164.

¹⁴¹ Bowen, H. V., *The Business of Empire. The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006). de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 462-463.

¹⁴² de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 464.

¹⁴³ Ibidem, 465.

interconnected. This caused people in the colonies to get into contact with new ideas and opinions about colonialism of which two important ways will be discussed now.

The first important instance of such a global setting was the rise of nationalism created by the rise of the Japanese empire as an equal to the Western colonial powers. Dutch Historian Kees van Dijk explained this in his article on the suppression of the Javanese.¹⁴⁴ He explained how new ideologies reached the colonial states in Asia in the first decades of the twentieth century. This was due to the example of Japan, the first Asian country which had proved to be equal to the nations in Europe.¹⁴⁵ In 1904, Japan declared war on Russia in a conflict over Korea and Manchuria. Russia was unable to maintain their position in Manchuria and the Japanese won. In the First World War, Japan joined forces with the United Kingdom and succeeded in taking over German possessions in both China and the Pacific Ocean. Finally, the international stature of Japan was recognized at the peace talks in Versailles where Japan entered as one of the five great powers.¹⁴⁶ It has often been pointed out by historians that the role of Japan stimulated the rise of nationalism in Asia.¹⁴⁷ In the words of van Dijk 'Japan was the first Asian country which proved itself to be equal of, if not superior to, the nations of Europe'.¹⁴⁸ The Japanese example provided a fresh perspective on the way colonial relations were being received.

The second way people in the colonies got to know new ideas was through the introduction of new philosophical and political ideologies. These ideologies provided new ways to describe the traditional relationships within a colonial society.¹⁴⁹ New terms were used to describe the colonial society in terms of oppression by the Western capitalist society, for example in communism. Philosophical movements, such as modernism, envisaged a future of modernization and progress. The submission to Western countries faded in this new worldview.¹⁵⁰ Therefore van Dijk linked these ideologies to the rising ideals of modern nationalism in the colonies. The introduction of new ideas will be discussed in the next paragraphs, taking this global context into consideration.

2.3 Agency

Very recently, multiple historians whom study the late-colonial era in Asia, have argued that it is necessary to move away from the national framework as reference for analysis.¹⁵¹ Historian

¹⁴⁴ K. van Dijk, 'The Threefold suppression of the Javanese: The fight against capitalism, the colonial state, and the traditional rulers' in: R. Cribb, *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and economic foundations of the Netherlands Indies 1880-1942* (Leiden 1994) 261-279.

¹⁴⁵ van Dijk, 'The Threefold suppression of the Javanese', 161, 166.

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem, 266.

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem, 266-267.

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem, 266.

¹⁴⁹ Ibidem, 261.

¹⁵⁰ Ibidem, 261-262.

¹⁵¹ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 18. Shipway, *Decolonization and its Impact*, v.

Frederick Cooper wrote in his book *Colonialism in Question* that every form of opposition to colonialism was framed in 'a narrative of growing nationalist sentiment and nationalist organization'.¹⁵² This happened often in historiography because historians already knew the outcome of the late-colonial period. Such a one-sided view in history is the result from a 'backward-gazing' approach.¹⁵³ Cooper argued that this can and should be overcome. At the abstract level this meant that it is necessary to look at the context in which concepts and ideas emerged. More practically, it implied to look at the debates out of which these concepts and ideas emerged, and in what ways these were turned aside and appropriated.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the historical context must be taken into mind. Historian Lewis wrote more specifically about this phenomenon within education in the late-colonial society. She implemented Coopers' argument in her research about late-colonial Asian schooled elite. Lewis moved away from the dominant narrative in history about 'Westernised' Asian elites whom got western education and afterwards applied these Western thoughts and ideas to fight for independence. She argued that framing people in such a way was to eliminate them from their own agency. Therefore, Lewis argued that these Asian students were neither simply 'Westernised elites' or 'proto-nationalists'. Instead 'they emerged within a pluralist and transnational educational framework in the 1920s and 1930s'.¹⁵⁵

To prevent such a 'backward-gazing' approach in history, Kannangara will be approached as a Ceylonese intellectual and educational innovator. His life and influence on education will be analyzed by asking the following questions: Who was Kannangara? Where did his ideas come from? How were these ideas received? Which ideas were put in practice, and how? First an overview of his own life will be given, to understand his background and the places and people where he extracted his ideas from. His ideas on education will be put into this context. These ideas will be extracted from his writings in the Sessional Papers, his speeches in the Hansard and additional information from secondary sources. The actions of Kannangara will be analyzed by looking at his suggestions for educational renewals in Ceylon and the bills and ordinances that he got through. In the fifth chapter, the same questions will be asked to look at the educational changes Ki Hajar Dewantara made in late-colonial Java and afterwards these two men will be compared with each other.

2.4 A pearl of great price

Kannangara came from a middle-class family of nine children. His father lost his job when he was about to enter secondary education, but his excellence on primary school ensured him with

¹⁵² Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 18.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, 18.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 19.

¹⁵⁵ Lewis, *Cities in Motion*, 226.

education. He won the foundation scholarship of Richmond College in Galle, which was one of the best English secondary schools at that time.¹⁵⁶ In school, he was a brilliant student and carried away a lot of prizes while being a student. Not only in class, but also in extracurricular activities such as leading the Cricket eleven, playing for the football eleven, being a member of the debate team and made name as an actor at Richmond.¹⁵⁷ Kannangara failed for his scholarship examination and after leaving school he worked as a Mathematics teacher to afford going to Law College part-time. When he became an Attorney at law in 1910, he set up his first law practice in Galle.¹⁵⁸ Kannangara's mother was a Christian and he was raised as such. His father was Buddhist himself, but he agreed in marriage to raise his children as Christian. On Richmond College, Kannangara started to study both Buddhism and the Sinhalese language, two subjects which were not educated on school itself. In 1917 at the age of 33, Kannangara formally embraced Buddhism.¹⁵⁹ Historian Sumathipala called this a 'strange choice' for a future politician, because it was much easier for a Christian to win one of the only seats available for Ceylonese in the Legislative Council at that time.¹⁶⁰ But Kannangara probably did not know he would end up in politics at the time he changed his religion.

One person that had an impact on Kannangara was his mathematics teacher on Richmond College.¹⁶¹ This teacher, J. H. Darrell, saw a great promise in Kannangara and signed him up for one of the most difficult tests in Ceylon at that moment. Only a few people dared to participate, because it was known as an exam that was almost impossible to make. Historian Sumathipala wrote that Kannangara's teacher Darrell was probably most inspirational because of his devotion to Christianity, his great sense of duty and selfless nature.¹⁶² According to Sumathipala, the attitude and devotion of his teacher was an influence throughout the rest of the life of this educational reformer.

Kannangara defended multiple people that involved in the Riots of 1915. This was an ethnic riot of Sinhalese Buddhists and ethnic Moors whom got brutally oppressed by the British colonial authorities. Kannangara got more involved into national politics and won a seat in the Legislative Council during the elections of 1923.¹⁶³ In 1931 he became the First Minister of Education in Ceylon and until 1938 he studied the education system in Ceylon. In 1938 his educational reforms started with the implementation of a new Education Bill. The biggest reformations found place after he wrote the report on education in Ceylon together with the Special Committee on Education. The Report of the

¹⁵⁶ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon 1796-1965*, XV.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, XVII.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, XVII.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, XV.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, XVI.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, XV.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*, XV.

¹⁶³ *Ibidem*, XIX.

Special Committee on Education in 1943 proved to be the blueprint for the implementation of the free education system in 1945-46 and will be discussed below.¹⁶⁴

Despite a successful career, Kannangara had strong opponents among the Members of the Council as well as in the national press. Influenced by the Roman Catholic hierarchy and a 'denationalised' minority, these newspapers tried to belittle Kannangara and his achievements.¹⁶⁵ Ian Sandeman was the successor of Kannangara. In 1947 he wrote about Kannangara in the preface of the Administration Report on Education:

A hostile press left no stone unturned to destroy his personality. He received all types of names. A whole cloud of dust was created around him. Sooner or later that dust will clear and this 'pearl of great price' will glitter dazzling even his bitterest opponent.¹⁶⁶

The reference of 'a pearl of great price' has been used often to describe Kannangara.¹⁶⁷

2.5 Free Education from Kindergarten to University

If it was not for the determination of Kannangara, most of his far-reaching educational reforms probably would have never made it through the State Council. Even Kannangara's opponents respected his intelligence and well-expressed arguments during his speeches in the State Council.¹⁶⁸ The new Director of Education, Ian Sandeman, wrote: 'These changes would have been impossible without the personality and drive of the Minister of Education, the Hon. C. W. W. Kannangara, without whose force and initiative this chapter in the educational history of Lanka might have been very different'.¹⁶⁹ The enormous determination of the Director of Education is something not only his colleagues, but also future historians would ascribe to him as one of his most remarkable character traits.¹⁷⁰

In 1943, Kannangara wrote the next words in the Report of the Advisory Committee on Education:

¹⁶⁴ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper XXIV' (Colombo 1943).

¹⁶⁵ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon 1796-1965*, 349, 372.

¹⁶⁶ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1947) a1.

¹⁶⁷ Sedere, 'Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara Memorial Lecture in Commemoration of his 121st Birthday', 2.

¹⁶⁸ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon 1796-1965*, XIX.

¹⁶⁹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1947) a1.

¹⁷⁰ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon 1796-1965*, XIX. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 467. SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1947) a1.

Few will disagree with the proposition that education in a democratic society should be free at all stages. Talents and ability are not confined to any social class or group and any social system must provide for their emergence by the provision of equal educational opportunities. (...) The type of education which each child is to receive must be determined by a process of scientific selection and not by the consideration of economic or social status. Stated briefly, not only on the ground of justice to the individual, but also on the ground of social inefficiency, it is demanded that the educational system should provide for the training of the proper men and women for filling the proper places in the life of the nation.¹⁷¹

This fragment shows the goal of Kannangara to provide equal opportunity in education for all children. His proposal for 'free education from Kindergarten to University', derived from this strive for equality in education.¹⁷² The concept of free education was important, because it would prove to have a powerful effect on the electorate. Free education implied equality of opportunity and social justice.¹⁷³ In reality, this concept meant a free tuition for all students. This required a tremendous change and reform, but nevertheless must be considered in its context. The implementation of free education would not provide full equality in education, which is something politicians struggle with even nowadays.¹⁷⁴

Kannangara's strive towards more equality in education had much to do with his own life. In 1944, the *Daily News* described Kannangara as: 'a small man who was denied the advantage of a good education'.¹⁷⁵ The first part about a 'small man' was an attempt of the *Ceylon Daily News* to decline the influence of Kannangara. The latter part in this fragment says something about the reason to fight for equal opportunities within education. Kannangara almost missed out on secondary education, because his family did not have the financial means. He studied part-time at Law College, so he could work and earn his living.¹⁷⁶ Kannangara was against privileges confined to individuals or groups and discrimination in any form within education. As a lawyer, Kannangara had a strong sense for justice. This was visible in his ideas about education as Director of Education. If Kannangara would have come from a capitalist family, as Sumathipala argued: 'he would have had a brilliant university career'.¹⁷⁷ But his fight for equality in education would have probably been less if Kannangara did not have to work as hard as he did to be able to study.

¹⁷¹ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper XXIV' (Colombo 1943) 2-3.

¹⁷² Ibidem, 4.

¹⁷³ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 467.

¹⁷⁴ For example see: 'World Inequality Database on Education' (2018) <https://www.education-inequalities.org/> (July 2018).

¹⁷⁵ SLNA, *Ceylon Daily News* (27 June 1944).

¹⁷⁶ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon 1796-1965*, XVIII.

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem, XVIII.

Equality in education and a scheme for free education were not the only important proposals of Kannangara. He pleaded for the implementation of a system of public education in the State Council. If this plan would become reality, all denominational schools had to become state supervised schools. Denominational schools were already under attack in Ceylon, starting at the beginning of the twentieth century. Especially the Buddhist movement criticized these schools.¹⁷⁸ They argued that Christian organizations used their schools to convert children. The Buddhist movement advocated for a main responsibility in education from the state. In the 1930s, the denominational system came increasingly under attack. The primary argument remained the accusation that Christian schools had a proselytizing character.¹⁷⁹ Despite Kannangara's call for reforms, this idea about losing all denominational schools was not advocated by the Advisory Committee of Education, of which he was the director.¹⁸⁰ But even if this idea would get accepted by the Advisory Committee of Education, the State Council probably would have never agreed with this reform. One of the biggest public discussions at the time was the question who should have control over education. Lots of Members in the State Council were educated in denominational schools and not ready to give up on this system of schools.

During Kannangara's career, two important Education Ordinances were proposed in 1939 and 1947. In 1939, lots of his proposals did not make it through the State Council. A lot of opponents between the Members of the State Council voted against Kannangara's reforms. Most of these members were fighting for the denominational interests of religious organizations.¹⁸¹ In 1939, when the Education Ordinance was discussed in the State Council, the debate about denominational schools and governmental schools really started. This controversy, as the Members of the Council themselves admitted, slowly turned into a controversy between the Christian community against the Buddhist and Hindu community.¹⁸²

2.6 Advisory Committee of Education

The Advisory Committee of Education was initially put together to examine and review the increasing annual costs of education, by an independent authority. A commission was appointed to analyze both the financial aspects and the educational policy in general.¹⁸³ The Advisory Committee, led by Kannangara, consisted out of 18 members from every district in Ceylon. Their goal was: 'to investigate the defects of the present education system and to recommend measures of reform

¹⁷⁸ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 412.

¹⁷⁹ Ibidem, 412, 467.

¹⁸⁰ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper XXIV' (Colombo 1943) iv-v.

¹⁸¹ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 467.

¹⁸² SLNA, 'Hansard' (Colombo 1938) 3742.

¹⁸³ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon 1796-1965*, 268-269.

necessitated by the changed conditions in the country'.¹⁸⁴ In the report was not broken with the tradition of British education. Rather, the members of the Committee tried to incorporate the benefits of this tradition into the proposal of a new system: 'Without losing the advantages that have been gained from the application of ideas elsewhere [i.e. the British education tradition], we can, by adopting them to our languages, cultures and circumstances, make certain that our education system is suited to the people for whom it is intended.'¹⁸⁵ The Report contained 21 chapters discussing topics from the aims of education to methods of teaching. According to the Report itself, the goal was: 'to help the individual achieve the 'highest degree of physical, mental and moral development of which he is capable irrespective of his wealth or social status'.¹⁸⁶ And resulting from this education, the individual: 'should be able to use his abilities for the good of the nation in the fullest possible measure and should be able to pass judgment on affairs of State and exercise intelligently the franchise that the State has conferred upon him'.¹⁸⁷

The Report of the Advisory Committee on Education in 1943 was intended to advise the State Council on the adoption of a new education policy. The Committee itself did not have any executive power, but this Report turned out to be the blueprint for the educational reforms of 1945.¹⁸⁸ The advice and influence of this Committee and its report will be discussed in this order. The Committee did research for over three years and formulated three general aims to achieve the right mental and spiritual development of the pupils. The first aim was the mental development of the pupils, the second one was bringing an awareness of culture and character and the third one was receiving efficiency in training for citizenship and future careers. Four 'major defects' were found in the education system, on which the new proposals for reforms were based.¹⁸⁹

The first and foremost problem was the difference in the medium of instruction, because there were vernacular, English and bilingual schools. Vernacular schools had a Sinhalese or Tamil medium of instruction. These schools encompassed the great majority of pupils. There were also 'English schools' and attempts at making 'mixed' or bilingual schools. The Sessional Paper reported that there were 625,699 pupils attending to Vernacular schools against 83,219 in English and 20,156 pupils in Bilingual schools in 1938.¹⁹⁰ The biggest problem was that English schools provided better education because they had better buildings, equipment and teachers.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, education in English was

¹⁸⁴ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper XXIV' (Colombo 1943) 9.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 10.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 9.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, 9.

¹⁸⁸ F. J., Clatworthy, 'The Formulation of British Colonial Education Policy, 1923-1948' (Ph.D, University of Michigan 1970) 2-3.

¹⁸⁹ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper XXIV' (Colombo 1943) 22.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 22.

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, 23.

important because it was required for all the better-paid posts in society. The Report concluded: 'English is the language of the Government and of most of the important commerce of the island. It is, therefore, the path to affluence.'¹⁹² English was, according to the Report, a 'badge of social superiority' and people were prepared to pay more for English-instructed education.¹⁹³ The extra money made it possible for the English schools to hire better teachers and provide the best education. The advice of the Committee was to change the medium of instruction into the mother-tongue. English would become an optional language on primary schools. In secondary schools, English was the main form of instruction in the oldest classes.¹⁹⁴ The implications of this new rule were more profound than expected and will be discussed below.

The second problem was an 'excessive uniformity' of the educational system in Ceylon, according to the Advisory Committee.¹⁹⁵ Despite the differences in the language of instruction, there was too much uniformity within the program of primary and secondary education. The academic character of education did not relate to any practical aspects of life. Differentiation was thought of improving the different needs of both the pupils and the country. That is why the Committee proposed to implement Practical Schools. These schools would provide practical training in two or more industries. Pupils could learn practical skills which they could apply in their work in the local industries when they finished from school.¹⁹⁶

The third major defect was the absence of equality of opportunity. This was mainly an attack on the differences between schools which required an additional fee and schools that did not. Schools that required additional fees provided better education. They could hire better teachers, pay them more salary, provide better buildings and equipment.¹⁹⁷ That is why the Free Education Scheme was proposed by the Advisory Committee. This meant that no fees were implemented for all schools in Ceylon 'from Kindergarten to University'.¹⁹⁸

The fourth major defect was that 'compulsory' education was in substantial measure not compulsory. In the Education Ordinance of 1939, the compulsory age for education was between 6 and 14 years. The new recommendation expanded this to pupils between 5 and 14 years old. In the final acceptance of the Free Education Scheme the maximum age was extended from 14 to 16.¹⁹⁹ Another important factor was the continuation and extension of the provision of free midday meals

¹⁹² SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper XXIV' (Colombo 1943) 22-23.

¹⁹³ *Ibidem*, 23.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 119.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 23.

¹⁹⁶ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1946) a13

¹⁹⁷ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper XXIV' (Colombo 1943) 23

¹⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, 8.

¹⁹⁹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1945) a4.

for the poorest children on schools. This would cause an increase of the number of school-going pupils, especially in the poorest districts.²⁰⁰

The Report contained an extensive list of additional defects in the education system. The most important ones were the inadequacy of school grounds and buildings, the domination of curricula by examinations, the narrowness of curricula, the unsuitable nature of external examinations, the shortage of books (and often also lack of quality) in Sinhalese and Tamil, a lack of sufficient provision for the blind, deaf, dumb, epileptic, crippled, mentally deficient and backward children and the abnormal percentage of withdrawals of pupils at the end of the primary stage.²⁰¹ Many of these problems were a direct effect of the shortage of funds for education in Ceylon.

2.7 Major Reforms

The Free Education Scheme was adopted by the State Council on June 6, 1945.²⁰² Some small modifications were made to the recommendations that were published in the Report of the Advisory Committee of Education in 1943. The most important modification was that the system of both state and denominational schools would continue to exist. The state would become the only one to provide new schools where necessary. About the religious instruction on schools was decided that this would be provided in all denominational and government schools. The Administration Report from 1945 wrote about this new rule: 'The traditional neutrality of Government in respect to the teaching of religion in its schools has been abandoned (...) The broad principle now adopted is that pupils should be taught their own religion.'²⁰³ The religion of the parents of the child would be maintained and individual parents had the right to withdraw their children from religious instruction with a written request. The Administration Report noted that: 'There was a widespread religious revival in schools. Large-scale 'sil' campaigns were held and Buddhist Sunday schools were inaugurated.'²⁰⁴

The change in the language of instruction on primary schools had several consequences for the schools in Ceylon. Teachers had difficulty with adapting to the new situation, because they often had to change the language in which they originally learned to teach. In the Administration Report of 1945 was written:

²⁰⁰ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1945) a4.

²⁰¹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1943) a23-25.

²⁰² SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1945) a4.

²⁰³ *Ibidem*, a17.

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, a17.

The 'mother-tongue' in relation to any pupil, whose parents are not both Sinhalese or both Tamil, is taken to be that one of the three languages Sinhalese, Tamil and English, which is ordinarily spoken in the home of that pupil, or which, in the case of a Muslim pupil, is approved by the parents of the pupil.²⁰⁵

The new language policy caused a big demand for the inclusion of English in the curriculum of vernacular schools. Furthermore, a tremendous migration was reported of children who moved from vernacular to English schools. This was a consequence of the free education fee. The primary reasons for the movement of pupils were: 'the superior buildings, equipment, staff and reputation of the English schools which, however, were not able to cope with the unprecedented number of applications for admission and had to refuse it to large numbers.'²⁰⁶ Not only English schools dealt with the increase of pupils, there was a general demand in Ceylon for primary education. The entire school-going population almost doubled, from 553,701 pupils in 1931 to 1,025,836 in 1947.²⁰⁷ As a consequence, the number of schools, teachers and the expenditure on education grew as well.

Another consequence of the reforms was that English education had become the main standard in secondary education. The successor of Kannangara, Ian Sandeman, wrote: 'Simultaneously with this movement towards the English medium, there is a very strong movement away from it towards replacing English by the national languages. The two movements are not mutually antagonistic because English is meant to be a scaffolding to serve until the national languages are developed as vehicles for modern scientific learning.'²⁰⁸

The biggest consequence was however the following, written in the Administration Report of 1946:

The segregation of pupils in the primary classes on a basis of language, has had one unfortunate result, viz., that of rousing a feeling of national differentiation between the groups. In the old days when English was the common medium this feeling was in abeyance. Children belonging to different language groups now tend to avoid one another. This constitutes a problem that must be solved in the future.²⁰⁹ (...) Peculiar situations developed as a result of the efforts of parents and pupils to adjust themselves to the new order. Not a few parents of children from Jaffna transferred them from other parts of the Island to schools in the Jaffna district and there was an exodus of Sinhalese and Burgher children from Jaffna.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1945) a4.

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, a11.

²⁰⁷ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1947) a10.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, a13.

²⁰⁹ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1946) a5.

²¹⁰ *Ibidem*, a10.

Chapter 3: Religious tensions

In the 1930s and 1940s, one of the biggest issues on education was the question who should have control over education in Ceylon. This discussion was fought in public, with the publication of very strong opinions in newspaper articles as well as by members of the State Council during their meetings. Members of the State Council, including Kannangara, often referred to opinions that were voiced in the national press. People and institutions from both sides of the dual system – the state-provided, public education and denominational education – were standing opposite of each other. The factors that played a role within state-provided education have been discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter analyzes the different voices of criticism against the proposals from Kannangara and his Committee for education renewals in Ceylon.

According to multiple historians, the denominational schools still had a lot of power in society.²¹¹ These denominational powers however, did not manage to stop the implementation of free education in 1945. How was it possible that these denominational powers were unable to prevent the free education scheme from being accepted by the State Council? It could be that general historiography is wrong, to ascribe such agency to the denominational schools in late-colonial Ceylon. To find an answer to this question, the following two sub-questions will be asked: What were the interests of the denominational ‘powers’? In what ways did they tried to stop the new educational reforms proposed by Kannangara and his Advisory Committee? There are many ways, both in public and ‘under the radar’, for the denominational powers to work against new proposed plans in the government. This chapter is based upon an analysis of three newspapers from Ceylon.

Historian Lewis wrote that newspapers reached a large part of the population in Asian colonies during the twentieth century.²¹² Newspapers were not only read, but often read out in coffee-shops, which resulted in an even bigger audience of listeners as well as readers. Lewis warned for a ‘classic linear model’ between print and nationalism.²¹³ She wrote that this vision would obscure a multi-layered perspective on print culture. Lewis’ argument that newspapers were a ‘multi-voiced medium’, will be tested in this chapter. The three newspapers from which articles are extracted are the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, the *Times of Ceylon* and the *Ceylon Daily News*. Articles about education in Ceylon, new educational reforms and Kannangara have been used from these newspapers, between the years of 1930 and 1947. Some quotes from the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* and the *Ceylon Daily News* are

²¹¹ For example: Jayasuriya, *Taking Social Development Seriously*, 70-71. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 467. Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, XVI.

²¹² Lewis, *Cities in Motion*, 138.

²¹³ *Ibidem*, 139.

extracted from the quotations in the book of Sumathipala.²¹⁴ He quoted extensively from these newspapers in his book, and wrote that: 'this is a preliminary study only, and the emphasis has been quantitative (collecting as much material as possible) rather than qualitative (assessment of a critical nature).'²¹⁵ That is why in this analysis, sources from the Sri Lankan National Archives are supplemented with quotes deriving from his book. When an article has been used from his book, reference will be given in the footnotes.

In late-colonial Ceylon, a large debate about education was played out in the daily newspapers and during the debates of the State Council. The Catholics stood against the Buddhist and Sinhalese powers in society. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the denominational system in Ceylon was already under attack. The Buddhist movement criticized these schools. Their main argument was that Catholics tried to use education as a means of conversion to Christianity.²¹⁶ Kannangara converted from being a Christian to Buddhism himself. He pleaded for a state system of education. His primary argument was the accusation that Catholic education tried to convert their pupils.²¹⁷ Kannangara wanted to put an end to the existence of the denominational schools, but even within the Advisory Committee of Education not everyone agreed with this plan. If Kannangara would have been able to get this idea accepted by the Committee, it is questionable whether the State Council would have agreed. Lots of Members in the State Council had received education on denominational schools themselves and they were not ready to give up on this system of schools.²¹⁸

3.1 Catholic Church

Throughout Kannangara's career as Director of Education in Ceylon, the Catholic Church pleaded against every proposed reform such as the system of direct payment for teachers, the Rural Scheme, the establishment of the Advisory Committee on Education and the free education scheme.²¹⁹ The Catholic Church had fought hard to establish the denominational system of education in the nineteenth century. By the time of 1931, they had established a big network of aided schools in Catholic districts as well as in Buddhist and Hindu districts. According to Sumathipala, they had become a 'vested interest' in 1931 and were persistent in preserving the status quo in the education system of Ceylon for as long as they could.²²⁰ To understand how the Catholic Church tried to prevent new

²¹⁴ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*.

²¹⁵ *Ibidem*, viii.

²¹⁶ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 467.

²¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 412.

²¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 412, 414.

²¹⁹ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 350.

²²⁰ *Ibidem*, 349.

reforms from happening, five themes of discussion have been used that occurred throughout the 1930s and 1940s. First, the ways in which the Catholic Church responded on new educational proposals and reforms in the newspapers will be discussed. Second, the question will be asked if anything changed in the policy proposal or implementation after these messages were published.

The first theme was a series of complaints that accused Kannangara of being biased towards the Buddhist cause in education. One of the first actions of Kannangara as Director of Education was the implementation of a new policy meant to revive the *pansala* schools in Ceylon. These old Buddhist schools were put into use again in the early 1930s. There were about 400,000 children in Ceylon receiving no education at all during those years.²²¹ The goal was to provide elementary education for children in Ceylon living in remote villages instead of receiving no education at all.²²² The fact that this were Buddhist schools caused much upheaval from the Catholic side. That is why the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* reported about this issue in 1933:

The Government cannot subsidize religious education. All schools receiving Government support must be open to all children. Only schools imparting an approved secular education under approved conditions as judged by the State's authorized educational authority are entitled to aid from public funds. (...) They are principles that must be maintained at all costs and upheld against all odds.²²³

The Catholic Church referred to its own schools and education as 'approved secular education'. The *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* hoped to maintain the traditional Catholic authority in education, by emphasizing the conventional course of events in education.

Three years later, the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* reported about the state support for *pansala* schools and responded to the governmental support of *Pirivenas*, which are training schools for Buddhist monks: 'These features of the ministerial policy (...) can only point to one thing: to the distinctly Buddhist trend of the educational policy of to-day. Are we at the commencement of a subtle campaign of peaceful penetration?'.²²⁴ Between 1932 and 1935 about a dozen more of these messages were published by the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, accusing the Government of Ceylon and Kannangara of being in favor for the Buddhist cause.²²⁵ These newspaper articles however, did not prevent the establishment of the *pansala* schools nor did it cause any changes in the support towards *Pirivenas*.

²²¹ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 351.

²²² Ibidem, 351-352.

²²³ *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (29 August 1933), in: Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 352.

²²⁴ SLNA, *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (6 November 1934).

²²⁵ For example: SLNA, *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (20 August 1935). Also in: Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 351-353.

The second issue in the newspapers was caused by a new rule which stated that teaching of religion was allowed on government schools, accepted by Kannangara in 1935. Until this year, religious education was a matter left to religious institutions governing the denominational schools. The *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* reacted on this rule as follows:

By whom are the government schools empowered to include religious instruction in their curriculum? By the Minister of Education himself? Is the minister then above the law? Is he empowered to set the law at naught and make and enforce laws of his own against the letter and spirit of statutory law? This is not merely an educational question. It is a constitutional question as well.²²⁶

Similar arguments that accused Kannangara of 'promoting Buddhist education' followed in the years after 1935.²²⁷ The religious motive was still in order here, but these messages were aimed more towards Kannangara as a person. The *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* also reported about issues that were not related to religion in education. One example was a plan from Kannangara to expand the Rural Scheme in 1934. The idea was to provide education that would be more in lines with the rural lifestyle of many people living in Ceylon. The *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* wrote about this proposal:

We fear, however, that the cry for an educational training for a practical purpose is repeated too often. Too often, because while the phrase sounds reasonable enough, when we inquire what is meant by practical, we usually find that practical means money-getting. But to make money-making the sole or principal object of education would be to lower education to the plane of rank materialism.²²⁸

The biggest complaints about education reforms and Kannangara began after the New Education Bill was introduced in 1938. Even before the Bill was officially presented in the State Council, it received criticism based on rumors. The *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* wrote: 'There are signs, omens and prognostications that the dark horse of the Ministry of Education is at last about to be trotted out'.²²⁹ After the Education Bill of 1938 was announced, more newspapers started to publish negative news about the education reforms and Kannangara. The *Times of Ceylon* for example, which was a newspaper written for British colonials living in Ceylon. This newspaper generally supported the Christian point of view according to Sumathipala.²³⁰ The *Times of Ceylon* published critical articles about the Board of Ministers and the State Council in general and until 1938 Kannangara was no more

²²⁶ SLNA, *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (26 August 1935).

²²⁷ *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (4 April 1943), in: Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 352.

²²⁸ SLNA, *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (14 December 1934).

²²⁹ *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (11 February 1938), in: Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 352.

²³⁰ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 372.

attacked than other ministers.²³¹ After the Education Bill however, Kannangara received more criticism than any other member in the State Council. Sumathipala argued that the *Times of Ceylon* started to collaborate with the Catholic Church to attack this bill and the Buddhists supporting it.²³²

The third theme concerned one of the new rules from the Education Bill of 1938. It was a decree that made forbid teachers without a Ceylonese nationality to be employed on any school in Ceylon. This was a big problem for all denominational schools, since many foreign missionaries worked there as teachers. The *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* published an article to defend these teachers in 1939:

The new mandate of the Ministry of Education (to employ only Ceylonese) is a betrayal of the interests of parents, of tax-payers. (...) The Church must be allowed perfect liberty to employ religious teachers, regardless of their nationality whenever she deems their presence necessary for maintaining the desired Catholic atmosphere of a school. And we certainly think it would be an act of high-handedness for government to refuse to recognize any religious teachers without previous reference to the Catholic authorities.²³³

The Catholic Church tried to defend their interests by publishing negative articles in the press. It made sense that the Catholics pleaded against this rule. From the 1940s onwards, the articles got a different character. Until these years, the political interest behind these articles was mainly to protect the privileges of the Catholic Church and to preserve the existence of denominational education in Ceylon as it existed before the 1930s.

The fourth theme concerned the plan of Kannangara to establish Central Schools in Ceylon in 1943. These Central Schools were modelled on the Royal College of Colombo and meant to provide secondary education. About this idea, the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* published:

More than once before this we have tried to draw public attention to the totalitarian drift of Mr. Kannangara's educational policy. Certain facts mentioned in the report of the Auditor-General for 1940-41 greatly strengthen our case and point to the urgency of concerted action against the ministers Caesarean or perhaps we should rather say Hitlerian attitude.²³⁴

The analogy between Kannangara and dictatorship was made often, starting at the end of the 1930s. This has been illustrated in an article published in the *Times of Ceylon* in 1938. The article was called 'Death to the Denominational Education' and the author wrote that the reforms from the New

²³¹ Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 372.

²³² *Ibidem*, 373.

²³³ SLNA, *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (14 July 1939).

²³⁴ *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (14 March 1943), in: Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 363.

Education Bill were 'framed on lines of dictatorship' and that: 'So far as the public is concerned, there is little to choose between a Minister functioning as sole dictator and a Minister and Executive Committee acting as supreme educational authority.'²³⁵ References to Kannangara as a dictator were being made often in the 1940s. The *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* concluded in 1940 that: 'Mr. Kannangara, at least it will be seen has mastered the technique of Hitler's strategy.'²³⁶

The fifth theme was the establishment of the Advisory Committee on Education. This became the next big issue to receive criticism after the New Education Bill from 1938. Right after the Committee was officially established, the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* published:

There was ever the persistent cry: 'Give us a Commission'. What does the Minister now do? He strikes a Napoleonic attitude: he gets into the shoes of a Clemenceau. *A moi*, he shouts to his Old Guard, his own committee; *A moi*, he trumpets out to be heard by all his critics, opponents and enemies; *A moi*, come to me, gather round me, together we shall enter into a *union sacree*, together we shall discuss all our educational difficulties, together, under my leadership we shall solve all our educational problems.²³⁷

More of these messages were published in all three newspapers and comparisons with Hitler were being made more often.²³⁸

The articles from these newspapers may suggest that criticism only came from the Catholic Church. However, there were other groups and institutions in favor of the denominational system in Ceylon besides the Catholic Church. Historian de Silva wrote that many members of the State Council were proponents of the denominational system, even though they were Buddhists themselves.²³⁹ Many were alumni of mission schools and susceptible to the influence of missionaries. Their ties to these missionary schools went further than the 'old school tie', as de Silva formulated it.²⁴⁰ The positive achievements of the mission schools made them susceptible of the new radical reforms proposed by Kannangara. Furthermore, managers and principals of Buddhist and Hindu schools were also in favor of the denominational system. Some of them were part of the Board of Ministers and had great influence. They tried to protect the status quo by favoring the old system.²⁴¹

²³⁵ SLNA, *Times of Ceylon* (29 September 1938).

²³⁶ SLNA, *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (17 May 1940).

²³⁷ *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (19 April 1940), in: Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 361.

²³⁸ For example: SLNA, *Ceylon Daily News* (15 June 1940). Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 356, 360-362.

²³⁹ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 468.

²⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, 468.

²⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 468.

Kannangara received lots of criticism from the Catholic press from the beginning of his career as Director of Education onwards. His educational reforms were all contested and criticized, just as his line of policy was often compared with characteristics of dictatorship. The arguments that were used in the articles became rather personal. The policy of Kannangara and the Advisory Committee on Education were both questioned in these articles. The question remains how these articles affected new educational policies. To answer this, it is necessary to find out first if these articles did have effect on the formation of new education reforms and policies at all.

3.2 Free Education

All the previously discussed educational issues were pushed through the State Council, despite the negative articles in the press. What was then the effect of this negative spread of news? Did these newspapers have any effect at all? Sumathipala wrote that the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, the *Times of Ceylon* and other newspapers such as the *Ceylon Daily News* started to report more frequently about education and Kannangara since the 1940s.²⁴² This had to do with the establishment of the Advisory Committee on Education, the publication of their report in 1943 and the idea of free education which they proposed. These reforms required an enormous rise in the costs for education. One article was published in the *Times of Ceylon*, named 'Free Education; Director's Estimates', in which the following was written:

The spirit of incredible levity which has characterized the Free Education stunt of the Special Committee is seen to reach its climax in the motion which the Minister of Education proposes to move at the next meeting of the State Council. (...) Those who have succeeded in this move may claim that they have staged a clever tactical turn. More responsible persons must however count it no small disaster a matter of such deep import should be dealt with in this light-hearted fashion.²⁴³

The small disaster in the last sentence referred to the tremendous costs which the educational reforms required. Further along the article, Kannangara was being blamed of bringing the 'entire educational structure beyond repair'.²⁴⁴

There is one way to see that the articles did have effect on Kannangara himself. When Kannangara started to speech in favor of the proposed educational reforms, he started referring to the negative newspaper articles. When Kannangara gave a long speech in the State Council about the

²⁴² Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 372.

²⁴³ SLNA, *Times of Ceylon* (11 March 1944).

²⁴⁴ Ibidem.

Education Report from 1943 for example, this enormous speech contained several references about the 'misleading reports in the newspapers'.²⁴⁵ He felt the need to defend himself from the attacks made on his educational plans in the newspapers and started with the following words:

With a view to removing misrepresentation by newspapers, especially the *Times of Ceylon*, to adduce evidence and to go into the history of education, as to how some of the defects appear in our system. If I make mention of these defects, perhaps I will be charged with trying to raise a religious cry. I will be told that at this time when England is at war, Ceylon must put its best foot forward, must not speak about the history of education. So I thought it best to quote extensively from a very authoritative work, not by a non-Christian, but by a great divine of the Catholic Church – the Rev. Father S. G. Perera, S. J.; so that I would not be raising a religious cry, but simply voicing his sentiments.²⁴⁶

More of these rhetoric tools, such as the reference to a Catholic work, were common throughout this speech of Kannangara. With this, Kannangara tried to defend himself from the public accusations that he was promoting Buddhism. These reactions in Kannangara's speeches seemed to have been the only impact these newspapers have had, because all the reforms were pushed through with only a few small modifications.²⁴⁷

3.2 Conclusion

The Catholic Church tried to spread negative news about both the education policy and Kannangara in the press to prevent new policies from being implemented. It started as a religious issue in which the Catholics were against any Buddhist influences within education. The start of the Advisory Committee on Education and their published Report changed the debate. The *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* alienated Kannangara as a person. The analogy between Kannangara and Hitler and other dictators had been used often. Kannangara felt the need to respond to the articles, but no changes were being made to the new reforms in education.

The analysis of these newspaper articles showed how the Catholic press fought to behold their agency in education in the late-colonial state. There was a gradual shift from religious arguments in the 1930s towards a personal attack against the Director of Education. This shift started after the Advisory Committee on Education was established, from the 1940s onwards. After the free education resolution was passed by the State Council in 1945, the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* wrote:

²⁴⁵ SLNA, 'Hansard' (Colombo 1938) 843-925.

²⁴⁶ SLNA, 'Hansard' (Colombo 1944) 843.

²⁴⁷ SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1946) a1.

We quite agree that Mr. Kannangara has won a great political victory. And so to his own self-congratulations we add ours also. He has fought hard for this victory and he deserves credit for it as a notable political achievement. But to pretend that he has also won a great educational victory is we think, rather premature and to expect people to burn incense before him at this juncture is, it appears to us, to underrate their intelligence. The framers of the denominational system we dare say, were as firmly convinced of the soundness of their scheme as is Mr. Kannangara of the soundness of his reforms.²⁴⁸

This article shows how the Catholic press regarded their own criticisms as the means in a battle against new educational reforms and Kannangara in order to preserve their own power. Despite the connotation that historians such as Jayasuriya, de Silva and Sumathipala have made - that the Catholic Church was a great factor of influence in the late-colonial state of Ceylon – the Catholic Church was unable to prevent any new educational reform from being implemented in late-colonial Ceylon.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (8 July 1945), in: Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 369.

²⁴⁹ Jayasuriya, *Taking Social Development Seriously*, 70-71. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 467. Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, XVI.

Chapter 4: Colonial Education in late-colonial Java

This chapter analyzes colonial education on Java in the late-colonial period. The island of Java is central in this analysis, because on this island colonial education was the most expanded by the Dutch. Java was longer and more intense under Dutch control than the other islands from the Dutch East Indies. To compare the case study of late-colonial education in Ceylon with Java, the following two questions will be answered in this chapter: What kind of schools existed in Java and what does this say about the type of education? Which actors were involved in shaping the education system? After the comparison has been made, the life and influence of the Javanese Ki Hajar Dewantara will be discussed in the fifth chapter. His influence on education in late-colonial Java will be compared with the case study of Kannangara. In conclusion, a final comparison can be made in which the exceptionality of the free education initiative in Ceylon will be compared with the case study of late-colonial education in Java.

4.1 Colonial Education in the Dutch East Indies

Education was already present in the islands of Indonesia, before the first colonists set foot on the islands. The area that is known as Indonesia nowadays, consisted out of many kingdoms. Muslim merchants in the thirteenth and fourteenth century spread the Islam throughout the Indonesian archipelago. On the eastern part of Java, Hindu and Buddhist influences prevailed and were brought by the *Majapahit* kingdom.²⁵⁰ In 1512 the Portuguese set foot on the Indonesian islands and got control over the spice trade. Catholicism was spread over the island in the form of missionary schools.²⁵¹ In 1602 the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC)* – the Dutch East India Company – entered the islands. Their goal was to monopolize the spice trade and the Dutch built their center in Batavia while trying to establish their goal.²⁵² Batavia was located on Java and is nowadays known as Jakarta. After the VOC went bankrupt, the Dutch government took over control of the islands in 1816. The Dutch East Indies became part of the Dutch Empire and one of their main islands was Java.²⁵³

The *cultuurstelsel* (cultural system) was introduced by the Dutch Governor-General Johannes van den Bosch into the Dutch East Indies in the early nineteenth century. This cultural system involved a tax system, in which native people were obligated to use parts of their land to grow products for the European markets, such as tea, sugar and coffee. Historian van Anrooij wrote that profits were made

²⁵⁰ T. Wangsalegawa, 'Origins of Indonesian Curriculum Theory and Practice: Possibilities for the Future', (Unpublished Dissertation, Chicago 2009) 2.

²⁵¹ Wangsalegawa, 'Origins of Indonesian Curriculum Theory and Practice', 2.

²⁵² *Ibidem*, 3.

²⁵³ *Ibidem*, 3.

at the expense of the people, whom suffered from poverty and famine because of this system.²⁵⁴ After a constitutional change in the Netherlands in 1848, more criticism on this system arose from different areas in Europe. Historian Groeneboer explained how the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies was under authority of the Dutch King. That is why he was unable to change this system himself.²⁵⁵ The authority of the Dutch king remained until the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1870 came an end to this system, due to a set of laws that made way for private companies to invest in the Dutch East Indies. Starting from these years, the Dutch colonial policy was mainly based on liberal-economic principles.²⁵⁶

A few decades later, new ideas came up about colonial rule. Critical notions were being made in the European media about the one-sided relationship between motherland and colony, in which the former gained profit at the expense of the latter. This proved to be the start of a new period of colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies around 1900, which has become known as the *Ethische Politiek* (Ethical Policy). The idea was that the colony would do something back for the *inlanders* (native people), from which they had profited for over decades. They would do this by bringing 'civilization' to the colony in exchange for the profits that were being made from these people.²⁵⁷ The word 'Ethical' implied that this policy would work towards a better cause for the native people, but this was almost never the cause.²⁵⁸ The Ethical Policy has been much-discussed as a concept among historians.²⁵⁹ In reality, this new policy was first and foremost a way to expand Dutch imperial rule. Historian Locher-Scholten explained that the Dutch tried to legitimize their imperial power with a form of paternalism towards people in the colony. This came into expression with the Ethical Policy.²⁶⁰ One thing most historians have agreed on has been the fact that one of the key factors in this process was education.

Schools in Java

Colonial education was introduced in the Dutch East Indies from the beginning of the Dutch rule onwards. Missionaries were already present on the islands before the government established itself in the educational structure by setting up government schools. In these government schools, education was provided for both Indonesians, whom were called *inlanders* (natives), and Dutch or

²⁵⁴ F. van Anrooij, *Groeiend wantrouwen; Onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië onder gouverneur-generaal D. Fock (1921-1926)* (Amsterdam 2000) 22.

²⁵⁵ Groeneboer, *Weg tot het Westen: het Nederlands voor Indië 1600-1950*, 237.

²⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, 237.

²⁵⁷ E. Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten: vijf studies over koloniaal denken en doen van Nederlanders in de Indonesische Archipel 1877-1942* (Utrecht 1981) 177-178.

²⁵⁸ Groeneboer, *Weg tot het Westen*, 239.

²⁵⁹ An overview of this debate can be found in: Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten*, 177-178.

²⁶⁰ Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten*, 177.

European pupils. Historian Wangsalegawa explained that one of the main reasons for the colonial government to provide schooling for Indonesian children was the fact that the government needed schooled workforces to maintain their political and economic interests in the area. The gross of the children received education to work as a plantation laborer. Only a small part received education in the Dutch language, so that they could work as an employee for the colonial government.²⁶¹

Historian Radcliffe distinguished four main elements of education under colonial rule.²⁶² First were the European schools for expatriate children of colonial rulers. Sometimes exceptions were being made for children of the local elite, whom were also being accepted on these schools. The medium of instruction was Dutch. Second were the 'Vernacular schools', created to educate the mass of the people. The medium of instruction was one of the local languages. Third were 'Native schools', these were schools provided by other institutions. Most of them were from religious institutions that already were present on the islands before the colonial period started.²⁶³ Fourth and last were the 'wild schools'. These schools came up from local initiatives during the colonial period, to provide better education to the gross of the people.²⁶⁴ These schools will be discussed further in this thesis, during the discussion about Ki Hajar Dewantara.

In the 1920s and 1930s, more schools were founded. The amount of 'wild schools' grew rapidly, but also government schools were expanded. Historian Lelyveld investigated the Colonial Education Reports from the Dutch East Indies during the nineteenth and twentieth century.²⁶⁵ He explained that the 'native' schools were divided according to social-economic 'class'. The *Eerste Klasse Scholen* provided education for European children and for parents whom could afford the high fees. Others were sent to the *Tweede Klasse Scholen*, in which a lower fee was required. The difference between the schools was the amount of years a pupil would receive education and the language of instruction. In second class schools, the language of instruction was mostly regional such as Javanese or Malaysian.²⁶⁶

4.2 Which actors were involved in shaping the education system?

Not only the colonial government played a role in the shaping of education in the Dutch East Indies. Two of the most important actors will be discussed here. These were the mission schools and

²⁶¹ Wangsalegawa, 'Origins of Indonesian Curriculum Theory and Practice', 43.

²⁶² Radcliffe, 'Ki Hadjar Dewantara and the Taman Siswa Schools; Notes on an Extra-Colonial Theory of Education', 219.

²⁶³ Ibidem, 219.

²⁶⁴ Ibidem, 219.

²⁶⁵ Lelyveld, *Koloniaal onderwijs en onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië 1893-1942*.

²⁶⁶ Ibidem, 5.

initiatives that came from local people. Both were related to the inability of the Dutch colonial government to provide education for all the people living in the colony.

Groeneboer wrote that in the 1920s, the Ethical Policy received a consolidating and conservative character.²⁶⁷ The expenses of the education system were rising, because the number of pupils going government schools was growing. The colonial government had to slow down the founding of new government schools and the aim of the government to make education a key feature of colonial policy came under pressure in the 1930s. The growing number of pupils and the Economic Depression in the 1930s caused a shortage in available funds for education. Historian Lelyveld concluded that the quality of education was going in a downward spiral.²⁶⁸ Cuts were being made on all levels of education: the salaries of teachers, the fees for housing, a shrinking in the amount of schools.

The colonial government also feared that too many people would learn the Dutch language. Groeneboer described this as the fear for a 'negative sphere of half-intellectuals'.²⁶⁹ They government was afraid that too many people would demand to get access to better-paying jobs. That is why the focus in education that was provided by the government, would lie on education for the European pupils. The 'Vernacular', the 'Native' and the wild schools received far less attention and money from the colonial government.²⁷⁰

Historian Lelyveld wrote that the mission schools were private initiatives, mainly from the missionaries that were already present since colonization started on the islands.²⁷¹ On Java and parts of Sumatra however, public education had become the main form of education. In other parts of the Dutch East Indies these mission schools had more influence, especially on the Outer Islands. The government did decide in these areas where the protestant Christian church and other mission institutes could work to provide education. The government hoped they could prevent unrest with this regulation among the Islamic people as well as between Christian churches among each other.

There were also educational initiatives from locals that came up in the twentieth century. One of these initiatives was *Boedi Oetomo*, an association of Javanese regents that was founded in 1908. They wanted to provide a bigger spread of western oriented education.²⁷² The educational reformer Ki Hajar Dewantara, whom will be discussed in the next chapter, also became a member of this organization. Another organization was the *Sarakat Islam*. They also pleaded for more schools in native education. Both organizations were not against Western education. The government wanted to meet

²⁶⁷ Groeneboer, *Weg tot het Westen*, 238.

²⁶⁸ Lelyveld, *Koloniaal onderwijs en onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië 1893-1942*, 10.

²⁶⁹ Ibidem, 237.

²⁷⁰ Ibidem, 237-238.

²⁷¹ Ibidem, 8.

²⁷² A. Nagazumi, *the Dawn of Indonesian nationalism. The early years of Budi Utomo 1908 – 1918* (Tokyo 1972).

the wishes of these organizations, but not at the costs of the quality and exclusivity of Western education. Lelyveld concluded that Western education was the primary concern of the colonial government and all the 'native' and other schools were of secondary importance.²⁷³

Throughout the colonial period in the Dutch East Indies, centralization was and remained a key feature. Historians have concluded that a clear hierarchy was apparent in the educational structure and the intention of the government was to focus on educating Dutch children the best.²⁷⁴ The bureaucratic system made it almost impossible for parents and teachers to influence anything in education policy.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Lelyveld, *Koloniaal onderwijs en onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië 1893-1942*, 5.

²⁷⁴ Ibidem, 5. Wangsalegawa, 'Origins of Indonesian Curriculum Theory and Practice', 49.

²⁷⁵ Wangsalegawa, 'Origins of Indonesian Curriculum Theory and Practice', 46.

Chapter 5: Ki Hajar Dewantara

Brothers! Please free yourself from this slavery! Soon I will pay for such frank words that emerge from the bitterness of my soul; when the court punishes me for of this act of bravery, I will express such gratitude to Allah for offering his justice, that he will bless me with great happiness, happiness in exchange for the sacrifice I am making for the sake of my country!²⁷⁶

These were the last words written by Soewardi Soerjaningrat, before he got expelled from the Dutch East Indies by the Dutch colonial government. After living his years of exile in the Netherlands, Soewardi came back to Indonesia and established *Taman Siswa* ('Garden of Students') in 1922, an organization promoting national education. In 1929 Soewardi Soerjaningrat changed his name into Ki Hajar Dewantara, which means 'a well-respected man who teaches and is the messenger of God'.²⁷⁷ In current Indonesian schoolbooks, Dewantara is remembered as 'the Father of Education' in Indonesia.²⁷⁸

In this chapter, four questions about the life, ideas and influence of Dewantara will be asked: Who was Ki Hajar Dewantara? Where did his ideas come from? How were these ideas received? And finally, which ideas were put in practice, and how? By answering these questions, it will become clear that Ki Hajar Dewantara was more than a 'Westernized Asian' and a nationalist fighter. After these questions have been answered, both the ideas and practices of Dewantara and Kannagara can be compared with each other.

5.1 The life of Raden Mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat

Raden Mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat was born in 1889 in Yogyakarta, Java. Soewardi came from the *Paku Alam* family and received the title 'raden mas', a well-known title given to people from Javanese royal families. According to historian Juliastuti, members of this family: 'almost all received first-class education provided by the best institutions that had ever existed in the colony.'²⁷⁹ This is very likely to have been true, since it is well-known among historians that the elite in colonial societies

²⁷⁶ Translation from Dutch: 'Broeders, verlost U van de slavernij! Wanneer ik straks moet boeten voor mijn krasse woorden, uit een verbitterd gemoed gesproken; wanneer de justitie mij voor mijn moedige daad straft, dan zal ik Allah danken voor zijn Rechtvaardigheid, dat hij mij in mijn veroordeling, een groot genot zal schenken: het genot dat ik zal kunnen offeren voor mijn Vaderland!' K. H. Soewardi, 'Als ik eens Nederlander was' (Indonesia 1913).

²⁷⁷ Juliastuti, 'Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara', 85.

²⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, 85.

²⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 86.

got access to the best educational institutions.²⁸⁰ Soewardi's aristocratic background gave him access to the Dutch-sponsored medical school of Jakarta, which he attended to in 1908. He became part of the nationalist political movement called *Boedi Oetomo* during his years in medical school.²⁸¹ *Boedi Oetomo* means 'high endeavor'. Historian Radcliffe wrote that this movement never became political and that their interests were more regionally Javanese instead of aiming towards the needs of the whole Indonesian community.²⁸² The membership of this movement remained small and was drawn mainly from the educated Javanese aristocracy. As was explained in the previous chapter, *Boedi Oetomo* pleaded for the spread of more western education throughout Java. This membership became the start of Soewardi's political activities and his fight to provide better education.

Soewardi became one of the three founders of the *Indische Partij* ('Indies Party') together with Tjipto Mangunkusumo and Douwes Dekker in 1912.²⁸³ The *Indische Partij* (IP) was widely acknowledged as a radical political party based on the idea of 'Hindia for Hindia'²⁸⁴, in which Hindia referred to the Dutch East Indies freed from Dutch colonization. The ideas from members of the IP were printed in *de Express*, a newspaper written in Dutch and founded by Douwes Dekker in 1912.²⁸⁵ This newspaper was the main medium for members of the IP to express their opinions about colonial rule. These writings were political and written in a 'strong voice', according to Juliastuti.²⁸⁶

One of these writings was the text 'Als ik eens Nederlander was', which means 'If I were A Dutch-man'. The text was written by Soewardi and translated into Malay by Abdoel Moeis in 1913.²⁸⁷ The article was a protest of Soewardi against plans from the Dutch government to celebrate the hundred-year anniversary of the Dutch Kingdom and their victory over Napoleon. The Dutch colonial government decided that all people living in the Dutch East Indies had to contribute to this celebration by paying for the festival.²⁸⁸ Soewardi wrote:

If I were a Dutch-man, I would not celebrate the independence in a country, where we withhold the people of their independence. (...) Yet, I am not a Dutch-man, I am merely a brown son of this tropical island, a native of this Dutch colony and therefore, I will not protest. (...) Praise the Lord, for I am not a Dutch-man.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁰ For example: Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History*, 43-44.

²⁸¹ Radcliffe, 'Ki Hadjar Dewantara and the Taman Siswa Schools; Notes on an Extra-Colonial Theory of Education', 220.

²⁸² *Ibidem*, 220.

²⁸³ Juliastuti, 'Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara', 84.

²⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 92.

²⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 91.

²⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 84.

²⁸⁷ Soewardi, 'Als ik eens Nederlander was'.

²⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁸⁹ Translation from Dutch: 'Als ik Nederlander was, zou ik geen onafhankelijkheidsfeest vieren in een land, waar wij het volk zijn onafhankelijkheid onthouden. (...) Doch, ik ben geen Nederlander, ik ben slechts een

According to historian Radcliffe, the text was: 'a clever attempt to make political capital out of the Dutch celebrations of a century of national independence since the rule of Napoleon'.²⁹⁰ And Juliastuti wrote that it was written: 'loudly and fearlessly in front of the Dutch colonial government, with dignity as much as an overwhelming sarcasm'.²⁹¹ Because the text was translated into Malay, it reached a far bigger audience than any Dutch writings had done before.

The Dutch colonial government recognized this text as a threat against their rule and ordered for the arrest and tribunal of Soewardi as well as for Dekker and Mangunkusumo.²⁹² He reached an agreement with the Dutch government to spend his sentence in the Netherlands instead of on the Banda Islands. During his banishment, he focused on education and politics and became fascinated by the teaching theories of Maria Montessori and the Indian philosopher Rabindranath Tagore. After Dewantara came back to the Dutch East Indies from his banishment, historians have noted a 'switch' in both his writings and attitude towards the colonial government.²⁹³ Before he got expelled, Dewantara wrote a lot of political articles aimed against the colonial government. Afterwards, his writings were directed towards the subject of education. It is not clear whether he was forced to stop writing these articles by the colonial government, or if he made a tactical switch. It was probably a combination of both.²⁹⁴

In 1918, Soewardi returned to Java and in 1922 the *Taman Siswa* organization was founded with the intention to promote national education. Despite opposition from the Dutch colonial government, the number of Taman Siswa schools kept growing throughout the late-colonial period. Soewardi changed his name into Ki Hajar Dewantara at the age of 40 and kept on educating and producing writings in which he slowly changed from political themes to national education.²⁹⁵ After independence, Dewantara became the first Minister of Culture and Education in the government of Indonesia.

bruine zoon van dit tropisch land, een inboorling van deze Nederlandsche Kolonie, en daarom zal ik niet protesteren. (...) Goddank, dat ik geen Nederlander ben.' Soewardi, 'Als ik eens Nederlander was', 68.

²⁹⁰ Radcliffe, 'Ki Hajar Dewantara and the Taman Siswa Schools; Notes on an Extra-Colonial Theory of Education', 221.

²⁹¹ Juliastuti, 'Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara', 84.

²⁹² Ibidem, 84.

²⁹³ Ibidem, 84. Radcliffe, 'Ki Hajar Dewantara and the Taman Siswa Schools; Notes on an Extra-Colonial Theory of Education', 222.

²⁹⁴ Juliastuti, 'Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara', 85.

²⁹⁵ Ibidem, 85.

5.2 Where did his ideas come from?

During his life, multiple people, events, institutions and ideas influenced the thoughts of Ki Hajar Dewantara. Soewardi grew up with many privileges, being part of an important aristocratic family. His first political activity started with membership of the *Boedi Oetomo* party, while he was studying in medical school. His political ideas developed further, and in 1913 he was one of the founders of the *Indische Partij*. Soewardi's writings were directed against the colonial government and mainly involved issues around politics. His most important work 'If I were a Dutch-men', translated into Malay, caused him to be exiled to the Netherlands. During exile, Soewardi developed more ideas about education while getting to know the education theories of both Maria Montessori and Friedrich Fröbel as well as the writings of philosopher Rabindranath.²⁹⁶ Slowly, his attention shifted from politics towards education of the people, which is visible in his written articles. The establishment of *Taman Siswa* was one of the most important factors that influenced education in the late-colonial Dutch East Indies.

According to historian Radcliffe, *Taman Siswa* was an open-minded attempt to establish an indigenous education system, accepting from the West whatever was of value. Therefore, it cannot be categorized as a purely traditional, anticolonial reaction.²⁹⁷ Radcliffe explained the central principle of *Taman Siswa*, which was the concept of *system among*.²⁹⁸ This concept involved a child-centered approach, by making maximal use of a child's own self-educational instincts. The principle of *system among* also implied unity of the Indonesian culture. Therefore, family structure was important to this educational philosophy and the *Taman Siswa* schools were meant to depict structures of family life.²⁹⁹ The last important idea was that Soewardi wanted the medium of instruction to become Malay, because this was the language of unity within the diverse groups of islands.³⁰⁰

The Dutch colonial government regarded Dewantara as a danger to their authority. Especially after Soewardi's publication was translated into Malay, because this could reach a far larger and different public than before. Therefore, he was expelled to the Banda Islands. Efforts from Dekker and Mangunkusumo made it possible for him to go to the Netherlands instead. Dewantara was influenced by Western ideas and thoughts during his banishment. He read a lot about the educational thoughts of both Montessori and Fröbel.³⁰¹ He also read about non-Western thinkers however, such as the

²⁹⁶ Juliastuti, 'Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara', 85.

²⁹⁷ Radcliffe, 'Ki Hadjar Dewantara and the Taman Siswa Schools; Notes on an Extra-Colonial Theory of Education', 221.

²⁹⁸ Ibidem, 222.

²⁹⁹ Ibidem, 222-223.

³⁰⁰ Groeneboer, *Weg tot het Westen: het Nederlands voor Indië 1600-1950*, 33.

³⁰¹ Juliastuti, 'Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara', 86.

Indian philosopher Rabindranath Tagore. This philosopher merged aspects of both Indian and Western culture in his works. Describing Dewantara as 'Westernized' takes away the possibility to understand what influenced him during the period of exile. In the work of Rabindranath for example, the philosopher combined knowledge from the Indian and Western culture in his works.³⁰² Most important is the ways in which Dewantara's plans were put into practice.

5.3 Taman Siswa

Dewantara was able to set up the Taman Siswa institution after he came back from the Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies. The goal of these schools was to provide education for all children, mainly from the local people. The successes of these schools were one of the greatest achievements of Dewantara. The Dutch colonial government categorized *Taman Siswa* schools as 'wild schools'. Historian Groeneboer analyzed the existence of wild schools in the Dutch East Indies and explained how they arose out of private initiatives from the local people.³⁰³ They were founded to provide primary education in Dutch for the 'native' people living in the colony.³⁰⁴ The motives for the foundation of these schools could be political, religious, educational, cultural-nationalistic, economic and sometimes even commercial.³⁰⁵ The private initiatives were to provide the need for better schooling among the local people.

When the budget from the colonial government was unable to establish more primary schools in the 1920s, the number of wild schools started growing with the growing demand for primary education amongst local people. The Dutch colonial government was not content with these initiatives but were unable themselves to provide enough schools and education for all the people living in the colony. The two main concerns were the ideological character of some schools and the political consequences of a growing Dutch-speaking population. The government assumed that these people would also start to prefer the better-paid jobs, which were only accessible in the Dutch East Indies for Dutch-speaking people. Despite these fears, the government was unable to prevent the wild schools from being established. The institution of Taman Siswa managed to set up multiple Taman Siswa schools in the 1920s. In 1930 there were 54 Taman Siswa schools with approximately 6500 students, which grew to 180 schools in 1942 with the amount of 18,000 students.

After Indonesia proclaimed its independence in 1945, Dewantara became the Minister of Culture and Education in the new government. He pleaded for equality in education and availability

³⁰² Juliastuti, 'Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara', 86.

³⁰³ Groeneboer, *Weg tot het Westen: het Nederlands voor Indië 1600-1950*, 365-370.

³⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, 365.

³⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, 366.

for all people. After he stepped down from his job as minister, his birthday has been and will be celebrated as the 'National Day of Education' in Indonesia.³⁰⁶

5.4 Comparison and Connections

The establishment of *Taman Siswa* was one of the biggest accomplishments of Dewantara during his life. Regarding *Taman Siswa* as only a nationalist movement against the colonial government leaves out one of the most important goals of both Dewantara and the organization: equality of education. The movement strived towards equal education for everyone and as historian Radcliffe described it: 'It was consciously progressive an open-minded, accepting from the West whatever was of value and a positive contribution to Indonesian life, but seeking to graft this onto a healthy and thriving indigenous stem.'³⁰⁷

The goal of equal education had a lot of similarities with the goals written down in the Report of the Advisory Committee of education in Ceylon from 1943.³⁰⁸ Both Kannangara and Dewantara wanted to provide more equality in education in the late-colonial state. Dewantara tried to establish this by setting up a new institution to provide schools and education. Kannangara tried to establish this by proposing new educational reforms, striving towards free education during his career as Director of Education in Ceylon.

One important difference between the two late-colonial reformers was the way their ideas and actions were received by the colonial government. The British started during the Donoughmore Period in 1931 with slowly accepting more local influences in the colonial government. Therefore, it was possible for Kannangara to be elected as the new Director of Education. This position granted him with the privilege to propose all sorts of new educational reforms. The mixed late-colonial government in Ceylon pleaded the way for more self-control of the colony. The approach of the Dutch government was almost completely the opposite. The Dutch government did not accept any Indonesian people to govern their colony. Indonesian people could work for the government, but a stark hierarchy made it impossible for them to break into the highest positions within the bureaucracy. After Indonesia proclaimed itself of being independent, it was possible for Dewantara to become minister of Education and Culture. During the colonial period, Soewardi was regarded as a threat against the Dutch colonial rule. His political writings caused him to be exiled to the Netherlands. When Soewardi came back, he was able to set up *Taman Siswa* and the growing number of schools showed that the influence of this

³⁰⁶ Juliastuti, 'Remembering Soewardi, Thinking about Ki Hajar Dewantara', 84.

³⁰⁷ Radcliffe, 'Ki Hadjar Dewantara and the Taman Siswa Schools; Notes on an Extra-Colonial Theory of Education', 221.

³⁰⁸ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper XXIV' (Colombo 1943).

educational institute was growing. The more gradual transition in the British colony was a great contribution towards the implementation of a system of free education in Ceylon.

Both Kannagara and Dewantara were more than 'Westernized Asians'. Kannagara became a government official through which he could implement educational reforms. Dewantara was not only fighting for Indonesia's independence, but trying to establish a better education institute while accepting from Western education what they regarded as useful and making a mix with local traditions. Furthermore, both the ideas of Kannagara and Dewantara did not derive only from 'Western' thinkers. Dewantara expanded his thoughts about education during his banishment in the Netherlands, where he came in contact with both Western and Asian sources and thinkers. Both men were living in an age when newspapers for example, reached a large public. Colonies knew from each other's existence and there was a far larger 'international' community, then just a fight for independence in the colony happening at the time.

Conclusion

In 1945 a system of free education was implemented by the colonial government in Ceylon. All children between 5 and 16 years old were granted free from any fees in education from Kindergarten to University. In this thesis, a case study of colonial education in late-colonial Ceylon has been made based on sources from the Sri Lankan National Archives.³⁰⁹ Ceylon generally has been left out of studies about education in the Commonwealth Countries in historiography which is remarkable, since the implementation of free education was unique within the British Empire.³¹⁰ In this thesis, an attempt has been made to emphasize the importance of this education renewal in the late-colonial state. That is why this case study of education in Ceylon has been compared with both the characteristics of education policy in the British empire and with a case study of late-colonial education in Java. The comparisons help to understand what were important features that helped implement free education and understand how it was possible that a system of free education could be implemented in 1945 in Ceylon.

In the first chapter, the Administration Reports of Education in Ceylon have been analyzed from 1920 until 1947. This chapter looked at the different types of schools that existed in Ceylon during the 1920s. Both the Portuguese and Dutch colonists had left an educational legacy on the island, mainly with the establishment of the Catholic Church and missionary schools. During the early British colonial period a dual education system was founded. This dual system was a mix between government provided schools and denominational schools. The latter were schools from mostly religious institutions. The analysis of Administration Reports of Education in Ceylon showed how the attendance on schools was fluctuating. Huge drops in attendance were observed due to both food shortages and the outbreak of diseases such as malaria. In 1936, an experiment with free mid-day meals was provided for the poorest children. In the years after, this had proven to be successful for the attendance of pupils on primary and secondary schools. Education was provided for both boys and girls. The number of attending girls was much lower compared to the boys. At the end of the 1930s more attention was given to education for girls. The percentage of girls however, kept being much lower than the percentage of boys attending school. People from different castes were living in Ceylon and in 1928 a remark was made in the Administration Report about the differential treatment of children from

³⁰⁹ The following sources have been used in this thesis: SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper' (Colombo 1920, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1940, 1943). SLNA, *Times of Ceylon* (Colombo 1930-1947). SLNA, *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (Colombo 1930-1947). SLNA, 'Hansard' (Colombo 1938-1939, 1945-1947). SLNA, *Ceylon Administration Reports* (Colombo 1920-1947).

³¹⁰ Windel, 'British Colonial Education in Africa: Policy and Practice in the Era of Trusteeship', 1-21. Whitehead, 'The Concept of British Education Policy in the Colonies 1850-1960'. Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920*. Jenz, 'Missionaries and Indigenous Education in the 19th-Century British Empire. Part II: Race, Class and Gender', 306-317.

different castes in school. A new rule was accepted in 1929, which did not accept differential treatment in schools and the years after more attention was given to this subject in the education reports.

In the second chapter, the different factors that helped to establish the free education scheme in 1945 in Ceylon have been analyzed. The protagonist was the Director of Education, Christopher William Wijekoon Kannangara. The former lawyer who tried to establish an education system in Ceylon in which each pupil would receive equal opportunity. He started his career with some new educational reforms and the Education Bill from 1938. When Kannangara was convinced that a big transformation was needed in education, he founded the Advisory Committee on Education of which he made himself the director. The Advisory Committee on Education in Ceylon did research for over three years and in 1943 their findings were published in a big report, which was supposed to advise the State Council about the state of education in Ceylon.³¹¹ The Report from the Advisory Committee on Education concluded that four major defects were found in the education system of Ceylon, which were the medium of instruction, the excessive uniformity on schools, the absence of equality of opportunity and compulsory education which was in practice not compulsory enough.³¹² Based on these defects, new recommendations were being made. The Committee was initially granted with an advisory function, but their recommendations would form the blueprint for the new educational reforms of 1945 in Ceylon. With very small modifications, the recommendations from the report were being accepted.

Opponents of these proposed reforms were the institutions in control of the denominational schools in Ceylon. Missionary schools were present from the early colonial period onwards. The dual education system that existed in Ceylon meant government schools existed side by side with denominational schools. The Catholic Church had established an influential position in the educational structure of Ceylon during the nineteenth century.

The analysis of newspapers in the third chapter showed how the Catholic Church wrote negative articles about almost every reform that was proposed by Kannangara. The argumentation in the articles was mainly focused on religion during the 1930s. A gradual shift has been noted in the argumentation of the Catholic Church. From the 1940s onwards, their messages started to alienate Kannangara in person. The accusations against Kannangara became worse and more often his line of policy was compared with dictatorship.³¹³ The shift in argumentation from the Catholic Church seemed to be an indication of the decrease of influence from the Catholic Church. Their violent articles against Kannangara had no influence on the implementation of new educational reforms. The only thing they accomplished, was some references made by Kannangara during his speeches.³¹⁴ In these speeches,

³¹¹ SLNA, N/5/8, 'Sessional Paper' (Colombo 1943).

³¹² Ibidem.

³¹³ For example, visible in: SLNA, *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* (14 March 1943).

³¹⁴ SLNA, 'Hansard' (Colombo 1938) 843-925.

Kannangara felt the need to defend himself against the negative articles, especially those written by the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*. The rise of complaints in the articles seemed to increase as the agency of the Catholic Church was decreasing. From the 1930s onwards, there was not much left of the authority of the Catholic Church on education in colonial Ceylon.

In the fourth and fifth chapter, the education system in the Dutch East Indies and education renewals from Ki Hajar Dewantara have been compared. Both colonial governments had a completely different attitude towards the initiatives of local people and institutions in education and a different way of ruling the late-colonial state. The British gradually accepted more local governance, for example by granting more seats for Ceylonese people in the State Council from 1931 onwards. More responsibility was laid in the hands of Ceylonese people in the late-colonial state. The Dutch government tried to hold on to their hierarchic system in education. Their primary concern was providing education for European children and in the colonial government, only Dutch officials could take a seat. Ceylon was, in comparison with Java, already a colonial state in the transition towards self-rule. Java was still very much under control of the Dutch government.

The differences of colonial rule were visible in the attitude towards two educational reformers. Both Kannangara and Dewantara were striving towards the same ideal, which was equality in education. The question how their ideas were received showed the main difference in both colonies. Kannangara was able to become Director of Education in Ceylon and his seat in the State Council granted him with enough power to pursue new educational reforms. Dewantara was not granted such freedom in the Dutch East Indies. After the publication of his ideas in 'If I were a Dutch-man', he was banished from Java. His ideas were put in practice by the establishment of *Taman Siswa*, without any help from the colonial government. Thus, the ideas of both reformers were not so different but the attitude of the colonial government towards these men caused two different outcomes.

The story of Kannangara showed that he worked from within the colonial government to accomplish his goals in education. He was not 'Westernized' and did not use a nationalistic discourse. He was an educational reformer instead. By analyzing sources about education in Ceylon in this thesis, it has become clear that education in the late-colonial state was shaped by different actors. The interplay of these actors in late-colonial Ceylon have been described. The system of free education in Ceylon that was implemented after the Economic Depression of the 1930s and the Second World War, has proven to be a unique educational reform compared to other colonies in the British Empire and compared with Java in the Dutch East Indies.

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