

TRAINING TO BE FARMERS; WHILE WE WERE YET FARMERS: A DECOLONIAL READING OF THE PRIMARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN BRITISH CAMEROONS 1916-1961

Loveline Yaro

Department of Curriculum Studies and Teaching
Faculty of Education
University of Buea, PO Box 63, Buea
SWR, CAMEROON

ABSTRACT

There is an established link between education and manpower development (Mbua, 2002; World Bank 1989; Thompson, 1981). The kind of education dispensed in every society determines the type of man power that the society intends to produce and consequently the kind of economy it hopes to establish for the future. In this regard, there has been a proliferation of literature regarding the type of primary education as the base for man-power development that the British colonial authorities implemented in their dependences and how it contributed to (under)development of an efficient/qualified personnel for all sectors of the colonial economy. None of such literature, known to the researcher however, has made mention of the application of British education policy on the Cameroons; a territory which was under their administration for about forty-five years. This analysis of the approach to primary education is established with the goal of filling the gap while questioning the motivations, relevance and impact of Britain's educational policy on the natives as a whole. My methodology is historical and I have relied on primary data from the National Archives Buea (NAB) Cameroon and Decolonial theoretical literature to establish this analysis.

INTRODUCTION

After a two year long assault on Germany in her colony of *Kamerun* during the First World War (1914-1916), Britain and France, following the failure of a joint administration resorted to partitioning the territory in 1916. Each of them established administrations over their spheres and in 1922 pledged to the League of Nations to administer the people in ways that will ensure 'peace, order, good government, the promotion of the material and moral wellbeing as well as the social progress of the inhabitants' (in Tazifor, 2003, 148). This commitment included the provision of educational facilities to make the people more efficient in their condition of life and train them in the management of their own affairs (Colonial office 1925:3). These ideas directly or indirectly impinged on the type of education which was to be made available to the Southern Cameroonians and the developmental impacts it was expected to have on the territory.

However, a reading of colonial education studies and the impact it is said to have had on the territories remain, as Whitehead (1995) has argued, the subject of on-going controversy. Some scholars (mainly of the modernity background) hold that Western schooling promoted enlightenment, the growth of modern societies and was most certainly motivated by the concept of good government or enlightened paternalism (Kallaway 2009, 2005; Hall 2008; Whitehead 2005, 1995; Ball 1983). Meanwhile, critics of modernity have argued with equal conviction that education was used as a means to perpetuate subservience through the promotion of a colonial mentality. It is this second position that I take in this paper (Ndille 2014; Aissat and Djafirin.d; Bude 1983).

By my location in the South and having studied and lived in the aftermath of British colonialism in the Cameroons (a kind of he who wears the shoes and knowing how terrible it pinches), I postulate that British activities in the Southern Cameroons including their policy on primary education were merely part of the structural, systematic, cultural, discursive and epistemological pattern of domination and exploitation that has engulfed Africans since their conquest. This pattern of domination continues to make the Southern Cameroons and other ex-colonies to languish at the subaltern level where norms and rules are routinely handed down to them from the metropolitan capitals of the industrial North, making it impossible for them to climb the ladder of global power hierarchy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b). By taking this position, I privilege the Decolonial line of thought which, while accepting the existence of a colonial discourse, completely questions the possibility of a sincere humanitarian, civilizing and modernizing British Mission to the Southern Cameroons and use data on primary education policy in the Cameroons to justify its stance.

British Policy of Education in the Cameroons

Britain took over the administration of the Southern Cameroons in 1916 and for administrative convenience attached the territory to its colony of Nigeria. Her takeover of the Cameroons coincided with observations that colonial education was heavily characterized by borrowing from England and America. These criticisms emanated from the 1910 World Missionary Conference which held in Edinburgh and the 1919 Pan-African Congress held in Paris which demonstrated an urgent need for investigations into the colonial systems of education (Aka 2002). Such investigations found sponsorship in the Phelps-Stokes Trust established in 1911 by Miss Caroline Phelps-Stokes for the advancement of Negro education in African and the United States. The Phelps-Stokes Commission thus established was a brain child of nine Foreign Missions Societies of North America and Europe (FMS) (Jones, 1925, xxvi). It made two fact finding missions to Africa in 1920 and 1921.

The first of the two commissions came to Nigeria and the Cameroons amongst other British West and Central African dependencies. It visited schools in towns and villages, interviewed people of all walks of life- from farmers to teachers, pupils, parents, colonial governors and other administrators. Its report confirmed that the too frequent charges of the failure of native education policies of European governments and Missions in Africa are 'traceable in the lack of educational adaptation to native life' (Jones, 1925: 17) and concluded that

There are insistent demands amongst European and American educators...that school programmes should prepare the youth to deal wisely and effectively with problems of their country and their generation.... Japan long joined in the demand. China and India are now beginning to add their voices to the appeal. Surely Africa and Africans must be included in plans for educational adaptation (Jones, 1925, 17).

The Phelps Stokes Commission's survey of education in Africa coincided with the signing of the Mandate Agreement in 1922 in which the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) of the League of Nations strictly observed that;

There is not only a moral obligation resting on the governments in Africa to enable Africans develop their capacities to the full and to open as widely as possible the doors of knowledge to those who can profit by an advanced education, but the general progress of the people depends on...highly trained African leaders in all walks of life (File Ba/a/1935/6 NAB, 45).

In this light, by signing the Mandate Agreement, Britain as administering authority committed herself to ensure that education in the Cameroons would be a vital instrument for meeting their responsibility of bringing Cameroon to the level where it would be ready to manage its own affairs. In a bid to follow up this commitment, the Colonial Office set up the Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical African Dependencies in November 1923. The Committee had as mandate to advise the secretary of state for colonies on matters related to native education in British Africa. After close to eighteen months in the field, it submitted its first Memorandum on Education on March 3, 1925. The Memorandum stated that;

In view of the widely held opinion that the results of education in Africa have not been altogether satisfactory, the Committee feels that education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples.... Its aim is to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life, whatever it may be, and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole through the improvement of agriculture, the development of native industries, the improvement of health, the training of the people in the management of their own affairs, and the inculcation of true ideals of citizenship and service. It must include the raising up of capable, trustworthy, public spirited leaders of the people, belonging to their own race (Colonial Office 1925, 4).

One could see clearly that, most of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee were a careful repetition of those of the Phelps Stokes Commission. According to Foster (1971:156), 'the Phelps Stokes Reports were so completely accepted by the British colonial government that the policies produced by the Advisory Committee resembled in a large degree, the conclusions of the American Organization'.

The Application of Adaptation in Primary Education in Cameroon

Except for minor details, all the policies on the development of education in British Cameroons throughout the colonial period were based on adaptation as the central philosophy. No one who is interested in the history of education as a solution to the problems of economic and social backwardness of Africa would have failed to be impressed by the noble and inspiring ideas of adaptation. However, a philosophy and its application are two different things, especially within the colonial context. Therefore, a careful examination of the application of the philosophy in primary education in the Cameroons reveals that there was more to it than Britain fulfilling her responsibilities to the League of Nations or its own colonial objectives of humanitarianism, civilization and modernization. The application of this philosophy in the Cameroons left a lot to be desired as the ideas that guided the philosophy were carried too far. In fact they were abused in the Southern Cameroons.

Adaptation drew a distinction between urban and rural communities and accordingly recommended a two-tract schooling system; one for the rural and the other for the urban communities. While Education in the urban areas provided for a complete primary school course that of the rural communities was to be exclusively junior primary. First, the highest class a rural school could reach was Standard IV; being six years of schooling for those which could afford the facilities. This means that the rural schools did not have opportunities for

pupils to take the end of course examinations; the First School Leaving Certificate Examination. A pass in this exam guaranteed the native a job in the administrative, missionary and commercial sectors or access to secondary education. Second, by limiting the rural schools to junior elementary levels, adaptation sustained their rural existence through a unique curriculum that emphasized the acquisition of skills and knowledge of rural life. Adaptation therefore did not preview that rural pupils would admire a life other than that provided by their immediate communities.

Third, within Nigeria, the whole territory of British Southern Cameroons was classified as a rural zone (Aka 2002). Education in the territory was therefore mostly junior elementary with all its implications. In 1927, following the beginning of the implementation of the 1926 Nigerian Education Ordinance in the Cameroons, reports from the Southern Cameroons confirmed that;

The curriculum has been changed in content during the year... *with* a considerable effort to produce a change of emphasis so that the education given may be as little as possible academic... so that education...may have instead a practical bearing on the problems and needs of the Cameroons' communities (File Ba/a/1927/1 NAB, 93).

In addition to these developments, the British Colonial Authorities published new school syllabuses to show their commitment to the Adaptation philosophy. The minimum number of periods suggested for each subject per week was determined by the emphasis that the colonial authorities placed on it. This put Practical Agriculture and Handicrafts at six periods a week and English and Arithmetic at five followed by Nature Study and Hygiene. While the junior rural schools had 32 periods a week, the senior elementary schools had 30 periods. In the senior classes colonial education was expected to focus on training for colonial administrative assistantship. So, emphasis was more on classical literacy.

An analysis of the timetable of the Kurume Native Authority School for the year 1938 helped to further elucidate the extent of the application of adaptation. Kurume NA was a junior village school with four classes (Infants I and II, standards I and II) in the Kumba Division; one of the four that made up Southern Cameroons at this time (File Sb/a/1934/2, NAB, 73-74). I observed that in the Infant classes, while the school spent the mornings (8-10am) on Arithmetic, English and Moral/Religious Studies, the rest of the day was reserved for rurally oriented subjects (Gardening, Handwork, Laundry, Nature Study). While the morning subjects lasted between 25 and 30 minutes, the rurally oriented subjects lasted between 35-40 minutes. The infant school ended at Midday while the junior elementary school closed at 1:30 pm giving more time for the practice of rural education subjects. Friday afternoons were devoted exclusively to gardening and Handwork. The schools even devoted whole days for practical agriculture especially during the farming season (Southern Nigeria, 1930a, 3).

Adaptation was expected to be achieved not only by allocating a higher proportion of the school day to Agriculture and Handicrafts but by ensuring that the contents of such subjects made sense to the environment in which the school was located and the life that the graduate would be expected to lead in the particular community. Through subjects like Gardening, Nature Study, Practical Agriculture, Nature Observation/Reading the adapted school was to give the pupil skills in what the Phelps-Stokes Commission termed the 'use of soil and animal life'. School programmes were to provide such instruction in gardening as was

necessary to develop skill in the cultivation of the soil and its appreciation as one of the great resources of the world (Jones, 1925, 17).

A textbook for Agriculture in schools in Southern Nigeria detailing the value of school gardens, farming methods and crop preservation, pests and methods of control was prepared by the Director of Agriculture which was widely circulated in the Cameroons. As a form of community service, the Syllabus also required that school farms should serve as model farms and that pupils and their teachers, should go round the village to give technical advice to farmers (Southern Nigeria, 1930b,7). After an inspection tour of some schools in the province in 1934 the Superintendent of Education W.N Tolfree, emphasized that

Improved agriculture in the villages is required to replace the system of exhausting the virgin soils and then leaving to natural influences alone the work of reparation. The village school must lead in this regard as a community service. Head teachers must therefore develop detailed schemes of Work for this subject. In addition charts should be kept in each classroom showing the times of planting, germination, flowering, fruiting etc of the various crops in the garden and area, and the class teachers must show that progressive work, following a properly thought out scheme, has been carried out in class and in the field. Vague schemes are valueless. If a class has 40 lessons a year, you must give the subject of each of the 40 lessons. A comparison of the daily dairy and the schemes will be made when the schools are visited (File Sb/a/1934/2, 33 NAB)

Because of such emphases, it was reported that most schools had vegetable gardens and that vegetable farming flourished in most villages. Schools in the Cameroons province were said to have also established cash crop farms (cocoa and coffee) and those in the Bamenda Province all had orchards in addition (United Kingdom 1958).

From the practical outdoor activities that the syllabuses insisted on, Nature Study enabled the children to know the chief characteristics of the trees, plants, insects, birds, animals and outstanding physical features of the country near the school. In the syllabus, lessons on care of plants; the collection of leaves, flowers, feathers, seeds, shells was encouraged. These were mounted on cards and hung on the classroom walls. Teachers were warned not to turn the subject into Botany and Zoology with long names and things that were unreal to the child (Southern Nigeria 1930b, 16).

All the schools were also reported to have taken interest in rural industry. This was mainly in the subject Handwork and Drawing. Handwork from inception had been targeted to be the second most important subject to rural communities. It was based on the simple handicrafts required in the kraals and villages instead of the high technical trades as practiced in the city workshops on the long-time apprenticeship bases. The Phelps-Stokes Commission had instructed that

The primary handicraft needs of the natives in Africa are those that will prepare every teacher and native worker to go out into the little villages and teach the natives how to make better use of the wood, clay, cane, hides, iron, or other products which may be discovered in sufficient quantities to be useful. Formal manual training (city apprenticeship) is usually too far removed from the

life of the simple people to serve any useful purpose (Jones 1925, 21).

Practical Work in this domain involved pottery or clay moulding for making pots, jugs, mugs, bowls etc; weaving of grass, raffia and cane for making ropes, baskets, bags, mats, small trays; cotton spinning and dyeing, fishing net making as well as bamboo and woodwork (adze work). A visiting carpentry instructor had been posted to the province in August 1927 (File Ba/a/1927/1NAB) following the introduction of adapted schooling. Handwork was based on the crafts of the respective areas where the schools were located and the availability of the materials in the area. Cooperative models of village, market, school were established with each child contributing something. For Drawing, the infant classes started with free drawing on boards to technical and map drawing in the senior classes. These activities provided opportunities for children to apply their work to the real needs of home and farm (United Kingdom 1949).

As far as Home life was concerned, the initiators of adaptation had complained that the regular school system of the world (literary curriculum) had rarely given adequate consideration to the school's responsibility in preparing the youth to become helpful members of the home. The home, the Commission reiterated

was the fundamental institution of human society with varied and vital responsibilities for all, and the schools for primitive people must make definite provisions for the fulfilment of this responsibility. Even though it is granted that the civilized home is self-sufficient, it must be admitted that the primitive family lacks many of the most vital requisites of healthful home-life, including often, even the decencies that are required for the training of the children. The school must therefore plan to make use of every school activity for the training of the youth in the essentials of home life. (Jones, 1925, 22)

Domestic Science, the subject to meet these demands of home management was to cover Needle Work, Laundry and Cookery (File Sb/a/1934/2NAB, 73). Although Needlework featured on the Syllabus in the villages an examination of the rural school time-tables didn't show that they did it. This was an activity for urban schools. Needle work involved the learning of mending stitches and the making of handkerchiefs, tray cloths, cushion covers and dressing table covers for the junior classes. In the senior classes it involved more elaborate work in hemming, running and over-sewing stitches, knitting, pattern design, embroidery, care of sewing machines and the making of simple garments, underclothes, shirts and night dresses. As early as 1923, the urban schools in the Cameroons had begun doing needle work with the posting of a domestic science teacher to the province (File Ba/a/1927/1 NAB). Domestic Science in such schools also involved learning to cook, bake bread and cakes, make tea, wash clothes and manage homes. By 1958, the government was operating eight Domestic Science Centres in the Southern Cameroons located in the eight senior primary schools (United Kingdom 1958).

Even for subjects like History and Geography the Phelps-Stokes Commission had strictly observed that;

Even the usual subjects of instruction should not escape the tests of adaptation to the needs of the individual and of the community. These have largely in the past been taught on traditional basis determined by the requirements of urban and commercial activities in Europe and America. Educational slavery has been painfully apparent both in retention of certain conventional subjects that have excluded others much more applicable to life and in the teaching of school contents that should long have given way to results of modern research related to life of the pupils in the communities (Jones, 1925, 23).

In the junior classes, emphasis was on the school and community environment. Contents included the making of clay models and sand work of school and community structures; local crops, their methods of cultivation, names and habits of wild animals; care of domestic animals, characteristics and uses of local trees, talks about the local market and cardinal points. In class two pupils studied the local natural phenomena such as the direction of prevailing winds during the wet and dry seasons with significance on local farming seasons and probably the construction of houses. History and Geography at this stage also included times of planting crops, reaping, and different methods of cultivation. In class three the focus was on the organization of village life in Nigeria while in class four they were introduced to how man developed his civilization from the life of the most primitive savage communities in Africa, India and Australia. These were to be contrasted with lessons on industrial countries with emphasis on how they have manifested their influence on the pupils environment (Southern Nigeria 1930b, 20). The Phelps-Stokes Committee had stressed that

All the illustrative examples for this course to be taken from what the children themselves know and the course should really be one to make explicit the ideas which are implicit in the life all the children led.

In the senior elementary, history and geography moved from an education for a functionally literate peasantry to one of knowledge of the British Empire, Europe and the Western World. Here the objective of education had moved from maintaining the people in their rural setting to one of service to the colonial administration and its mission and commercial stakeholders. Knowledge of the West was therefore necessary to subjugate, dominate and impart subservience and servility amongst the natives for their effective use in the colonial service. Topics for study included the regional geography of the world; tropical forests; savannah, hot deserts, monsoon lands, the Mediterranean; temperate forests, white men and their occupations especially industry; their seasons etc. In history the senior classes began with the study of prehistory; hunters; Palaeolithic man and moved to the History of the British Empire.

Impact: The Philosophy of Adaptation and Educational Development

The philosophy of adaptation was highly successful in maintaining a structure of primary education and curriculum that guaranteed a farmer's education and existence. For close to 30 years, no significant alteration in the structure of the primary education took place. Similarly, no significant revision of the curriculum had taken place. Apart from speaking English and doing some arithmetic, what a majority of people who had been to school in the villages in Southern Cameroons knew was how to make good farms and articles for home use. A majority of them were uncultivated and in matters of urban life and the working of

government, Southern Cameroonians, although they had been to school, were relatively ignorant. Adaptation had intended to close their eyes to what did not pertain to village life and had in fact, succeeded greatly.

But for whose benefit was this success and what impact did it leave on the territory and its people? A careful consideration of the state of education vis-à-vis the development of the territory at independence would implicitly answer these questions. By 1954, it was evident that Nigerian and British personnel in the Cameroons would be required to leave the territory immediately after independence. The new indigenous Southern Cameroons government assessed the situation and lamented that there were no Southern Cameroonians available in sufficient quantity and quality to man government services. This gross man-power shortage was not unconnected to the British successful implementation of the policy of limiting access to senior primary school. As of 1954 the year of internal self-government there were 358 primary schools in the territory with only eight being complete primary schools (United Kingdom 1954, 114). No new school had been created, meaning that only 03 new applications for schools upgrade were approved between 1945 and 1954 as there were already six at that time (with one later taken over by a Native Authority) (File Sb/a/1958/4 NAB).

Adaptation therefore greatly limited access to complete primary education in Southern Cameroons, prevented a huge majority of the pupils from obtaining the First School Leaving Certificate and consequently, limited chances for white collar employment and further education. The total school going population in 1954 was 37,307 pupils but only 1,753 pupils were in Standard V and VI (West Cameroon 1962, 16). By the policy of adaptation, the colonial government had carefully ensured that less than 0.1% of the school pupils get to the final class each year and write the end of course certificate examination (West Cameroon 1962). There were over 35,554 pupils scattered in the remaining 350 rural schools for which only a farmer's specialization was certain for them (United Kingdom 1954, 112-113). A majority of the Native Authority (NA) and Mission schools in existence since 1922 remained at best, Standard IV junior elementary schools after over 30 years of existence no matter how well they fared. None of the NA schools was offering the complete eight years primary school course by 1954 (United Kingdom 1954, 115).

The 1926 Nigerian Education Ordinance guaranteed the upgrade of junior schools which met the required conditions to senior schools (File Ba/a/1927/1 NAB). But these conditions were hardly met as a result of the British successful application of the philosophy of adaptation. A school that applied for upgrade of its structures to senior elementary level amongst other things, would have shown proof of availability of Grade II teachers whose rank, by law permitted them to teach senior primary. But until 1944, opportunities for the training of Grade II teachers were not available in Cameroons. Even when the Elementary Training Centre (ETC) Kumba was upgraded to a Higher Elementary Training Centre (HETC), it trained only twelve Grade II teachers a year (Ndille 2014, 20).

This state of affairs also belated the development of secondary-technical education which was dependent on a considerable number of children obtaining the First School Leaving Certificate. In 1954, there were only 426 pupils in the two Mission Secondary Schools in the territory (United Kingdom 1954, 116) and throughout the colonial period opportunities for higher education and specialized training were unavailable (Aka 2002). By British West African standards, the Southern Cameroons was the territory with the highest level of educational wastage as a result of British successful application of adaptation. The

Africanization of the civil service was not only slow but was made virtually impossible in some sectors. By 1961, because of the British strict observance of adaptation, there were not more than 20 Southern Cameroonian university graduates in the territory (File Sb/a/1958/1, 13 NAB). The economic and political leadership and destiny of the state was left in the hands of people who at best had had less than 14 years of schooling. The Prime Minister was a Grade II teacher. Over 90 per cent of his executive and legislative councils were men of a similar calibre or worse (Aka 2002, 146). Failed projects, corruption and political miscalculations became the norm among the top circles of administration in the West (former Southern) Cameroon State (Dervish 1968) since a greater part of their training within the adapted school system did not provide for a schooling in the rudiments of government.

Justification for Adaptation: A Decolonial Perspective

One may view the entrenchment of a farmer's education in the Cameroons as a display of Britain's commitment to African education meeting the local realities- since she was basically a farming economy. However, based on her UN status of a Trust Territory with future hopes of self-government, Britain's successful entrenchment of adaptation affected the Southern Cameroons negatively and gives room for an alternative understanding of Britain's decision to quickly buy and replicate the ideas of the Phelps-Stokes Commission in her colonial education policy. On an epistemic note, it lays bare the earnestness of the Modernity claims of Western schooling promoting enlightenment and the growth of modern societies and the irrationality of their idea of 'colonial rule most certainly being motivated by the concept of good government or enlightened paternalism' (Whitehead 1995, 15)

In adopting the rural education policy Britain had based her instincts on the fact that economic development of agriculture would generate a demand for such education amongst colonial people (Bude 1983). This was based on the age-old imperialist prejudice that African societies were static and traditional (Mukherjee, 2003) and their people were 'disabled beings characterised by deficits (Ndlocu-Gatsheni, 2013a, 337) 'naturally suffering from laziness, moral depravity and intellectual infirmity (in MacOjong 2008). They believed that education adapted to rural settings fitted well with such natural dispositions. This unfortunate assumption was however, only used to shroud the tacit neo-liberal understanding of the economic motive of colonialism which was to 'fuel the wheel of industry at home' (Aissat and Djafrind, 4). From the onset Lord Lugard had carefully expounded that British colonialism was a *Dual Mandate* which was not to be viewed as

a mere sentimental expression of Humanitarian Conscience. *Because* it did not ignore the claims of the congested populations of Europe to sharing in the bounties of nature in the tropics, or *the* just and proper claims of those who have spent capital and effort in reaping their reward in Africa (Lugard 1965, p.151).

Meeting these requirements meant a drastic re-organization of the productive system in which colonized people had to play the role of the primary producers of raw materials for European industries and consumers of their manufactured goods. Only an agricultural and craft education could have equipped the natives to fulfil this responsibility within the colonial matrix of power (Grsfoguel 2011). The Phelps-Stokes Report clearly stated that 'there are also the demands of the commercial environments which must be frequently supplied by school instruction' (Jones, 1925,20).

According to Ngome (2014) the teaching of agriculture in the Nyasoso and Ndum elementary schools in the then Kumba Division improved agricultural production in the area as graduates of these schools returned to their respective villages and became what he calls 'community extension workers'; their farms, models for what Jones (1925, 22) termed the 'farm demonstration movement' and their teachers 'agricultural inspectors'. Their impact is seen in what Ngoh (1987, 177) calls 'a steady increase in Southern Cameroons agricultural exports to Britain and Germany'. Like Aissat and Djafri, one can conveniently observe that having subordinated the economy of Southern Cameroons to the industrial needs of Europe, it was not in the best interest of Britain to revise the school system as it would have obstructed this pattern of economic development.

From another angle, 'Coloniality of Being' expresses a European classification of Negro Americans, Africans and all other colonized people as the *damnes*, the condemned people or the wretched of the earth' (Maldonado-Torres 2007). Consequently what they saw as good for one was good for the other. This mentality justified the transfer of the educational orientations of Negro communities in the United States into Africa. There, education was restricted to the acquisition of agricultural and local technology skills as a means of bringing about an improvement in their material condition. However, as King (1971) has noted, it was more of 'diffusing potential societal conflicts by means of curriculum manipulation' than placing the black population on an equal political footing with the white population. This attitude was to be transferred to Africa in order to maintain the African in the same status vis-à-vis the Europeans as the Negroes were to the White Americans (MacOjong 2008).

A system of education which is relevant to the needs of one society cannot necessarily meet the needs of another society unless the two societies are identical in their standards, patterns of socio-economic development and political aspirations. The failure of adaptation in Cameroon could therefore be seen from such a misconception of two distinct societies as egalitarian. Southern Cameroons as a Category B Mandate of the League of Nations and American Freed Slave Communities shared different political aspirations. Being inspired therefore by such false analogies, the Adaptation philosophy, neglected the unique needs of a territory to be prepared for self-rule such as man-power development. It is true that British colonial authorities in the Cameroons during the inter-war years did not contemplate the possibility of independence for the territory but those in the late 1940s and 1950s had begun facing the reality with the upsurge of nationalism and demands for self-government. In 1948, the Resident of the Cameroons province even confessed that African Americans lived in a society whose present and future circumstances were different from those of a Trust Territory like Cameroon (United Kingdom 1948). The failure to follow such revelations with definitive revisions in the school system completely puts to question Britain's commitment to good government and self-rule in the Cameroons.

After the Second World War, it was evident even amongst colonial authorities that the 'basis of attraction for the colonial school' had changed (Ball, 1983). From the late 1940s through the 50s, a vast majority of the divisional headquarters, semi-urban and coastal towns in Southern Cameroons were expanding economically and attracting those natives who saw opportunities for employment within the expanding administrative, missionary and commercial sectors of the colonial economy. With these changing circumstances, it was evident that the school would have to move from improving agricultural skills to meeting employment demands in these areas. Such revisions never occurred.

Besides the above, there were many instances which showed the natives' disapproval of the philosophy of adaptation to which Britain remained very insensitive. In their visit to the Cameroons in 1920, the Phelps-Stokes Commission revealed that most educated African natives were deeply opposed to any departure from the existing conventionalized school systems for fear of any movements for segregation of the black people as past experiences had convinced them that 'departures from the Whiteman's methods, have too frequently meant an inferior provision for the black people' (Jones 1925, 18). They were therefore 'naturally suspicious of adaptation as the entering wedge for educational segregation and opposed it from the beginning'. The Commission had also observed from their chat with the pupils that 'English, Arithmetic and Writing were the most popular subjects while hygiene, nature study, or agriculture had no place in the curriculum' (Jones, 1925, 17). The Report further mentioned that 'it didn't seem to be a problem to many pupils and their parents' as it fitted well with what they hoped to become in future; clerks, teachers, and produce buyers as against farmers, carpenters or blacksmiths'. Even the British colonial authorities complained severally that

The large proportion of the *teachers* has no training in cottage industries. Experience also tends to show that village arts and crafts are better promoted in the village than in the school. In the making of dyed grass, mats and bags, cotton, spears and cutlasses, pottery and baskets, which are all well and cheaply manufactured in this province, the village craftsman and woman has nothing to learn from the school teacher or even from the European....Agriculture continues to be one of the subjects least appreciated by the pupils (File Ba/a/1925/5, 45).

This apathy for rural education grew worse after the Second World War. During the visit of the Elliot's Commission on Higher Education to the territory in 1944, the Cameroon Youth League (CYL) blamed Britain for the neglect of education for manpower development through her policy of adapted rural education and called for its abandonment. The CYL showed with statistics that a very limited number of Southern Cameroonians were in senior administrative positions in the territory because of the policy and warned of an impending man-power crisis if the policy was to persist. It called for the upgrading of all primary schools in the territory to full primary schools and the revision of the rural curriculum to make room for wider academic experiences. It also insisted on the setting up of government secondary and technical schools (Southern Cameroons 1944).

More than ten years later, in 1954, the evaluation mission of the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development continued to report gross manpower shortages in the Cameroons (Ndille 2014) and called for an urgent revision of the educational system in favour of man-power development. The situation on the ground would have therefore dissuaded Britain from continuing with the philosophy but Britain maintained the Phelps-Stokes Commission's wish that 'the overwhelming majority of the Africans must live on, and by the soil, and that training *must ensure* this important element of life' (Jones 1925, 18). By the 1940s it was the experience in Nigeria that the schools turned out more graduates than the economy could absorb. Colonial authorities therefore used the adapted curriculum and school structure to serve an economic function of curbing unemployment (Ball 1983). However until independence such a phenomenon had not been experienced in the Southern Cameroons due to the belated nature of education.

Britain's persistence with the rurally oriented education in the Cameroons at a time when the territory had been warned of gross manpower shortages makes for a convincing argument that adaptation was a colonial strategy to maintain social control over the natives. Contrary to the argument that adaptation was aimed at solving unemployment problems, it is widely held within the Decolonial perspective that the policy was sustained because of the 'fear of the emergence of disaffected, pseudo-intellectual proletariat or 'babu' class with nothing better to do than attack the government such as had bedevilled India' (in Whitehead 2005, 442). The fear of literary education serving as a tool for political and cultural emancipation of the native led to the sustenance of rural education. Adaptation was therefore a masked attempt to keep Africans uneducated and powerless.

A primary criticism of adaptation was therefore its being established on modernity/coloniality precepts of superior/inferior zones of being for whites and non-being for blacks respectively (Santos 2007, 45). Even Jesse Jones, the spiritual father of adaptation feared nothing more than 'the political activation of the black population which he hoped to 'immunise' by means of his education concept' (Bude 1983, 351). Abernathy (1969, 165) confirms that well trained Africans... were difficult to accommodate within the colonial system... nor could the British envisage employing a substantial number of them in the colonial administration. This would have threatened the job security of British administrators and undermined the prestige of the Whites. From this position, it is not therefore surprising that the British colonial authorities took up this concept and sustained it as official education policy till they handed power to the natives in 1954.

CONCLUSION

The paper aimed at demonstrating that there could be an alternative and objective epistemological rendering of British education policy to that popularised by the colonial discourse. I have also shown that by limiting the school structure to the junior elementary level and by a curriculum which produced farmers instead of future leaders of the territory, adaptation led to the underdevelopment of Southern Cameroons. I believe that this outcome was not accidental but a result of 19th century European carefully thought-out considerations of Africa, its people and the kind of relationship they planned to have with the continent; a consideration which, from the onset, did not view the African with egalitarianism and justifies not only the havoc that was wrecked on Africa on all sides during the colonial period but sustains the postcolonial/neocolonial organization of world populations into a hierarchical order of superior and inferior people (Grosfoguel 2007).

One can therefore confidently conclude against the position of European humanitarianism, civilizing mission, good government and development that adaptation was an arm of Western Modernity; an African predicament and a sustained aspect of colonial matrix of power (Ndlovu-Gatshei, 2013b). From the application of adaptation in the Cameroons, some important lessons for educational policy reform have been learnt. First, is the fact that any differentiation in the education system in whichever society, without provision for equality among all population groups would imply the perpetuation of inferiority on one. Second, and as Bude (1983) cautions, a utilitarian education philosophy such as adaptation without an attempt to promote political responsibility and individual self-determination leads ultimately to increased dependence and exploitation and an essentially progressive pedagogic concept becomes an instrument of restrictive education policy if the emancipation criterion is disregarded.

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