

British and French Educational Policies in Africa: Church Missionary and Enculturation Perspective

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Abstract

Both British and French African colonies have experienced some sort of civilization through their educational agenda which was done through missionary and trade activities. While the church missionary activities from the land of the colonial masters were commended on the one hand, they were criticized for upholding slave trade and racial discrimination on the other hand. Therefore, using the historical research method, the paper aimed at elucidating the British and French educational policy in Africa through church missionary and enculturation processes. The paper showed that the colonial masters irrespective of the medium used in carrying out their educational policies, were domineering and discriminating to African cultural heritage either by way of assimilation or indirect rule. While the policy of assimilation by French subjugated the language and culture of their African colonies, that of British used their African colonies to perpetuate their agenda through indirect rule and never British citizenship to them. The paper was concluded on the presupposition that the educational policies of the duo through church missionary and acculturation activities was applauded in the positive civilization brought to their African colonies, they should be criticized for the policies that are affecting those colonies negatively.

1. Introduction

Prior to the First World War, educational policy in British Africa was little developed. Most initiative toward schooling was pursued by voluntary and Christian missionary agencies, who received minor financial support from local government revenues. Colonial policies of the 1920-30s reflect an intensification of investment in the African colonies by the provision of mass education, in response to an increasing native demand as well as to international pressure for responsible administration in accord with the League of Nations principle of trusteeship. In 1923, the Colonial Office created the Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical Africa, later renamed the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, too verse for a developing system, which hoped to improve upon acknowledged missteps in education policy in India. Rather than implementing the literary English curriculum which had produced a class of misfit and non-compliant intellectuals in India, government officials sought to develop a practical curriculum to commensurate with the local environment and employment opportunities and instructed in vernacular languages to focus education on rural uplift. Defined as the “adaptation” approach, this progressive strategy was debated by British and African subjects alike, and witnessed a wide variety of success and uneven application across diverse colonial contexts (D’Adamo, 2011). A juxtaposition of African and colonies showed that educational policies should be made under serious consideration of the people’s milieu.

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Moreover, in the area of Africans' way of life, the British condemned everything about them. They tried to convert as many Africans to Christianity as possible, gave them English names and did not allow the teaching of African history and culture in their schools. On the other hand, the French regarded the Africans as "equals" so did not do this specific kind of damage but one doubts if they pushed for the teaching of African history and culture in their teaching. Therefore, the method that will be explored for this paper is the historical research method and the aim of this paper is to elucidating the British and French educational policy in Africa through church missionary and enculturation processes. The paper argued that the colonial masters irrespective of the medium used in carrying out their educational policies, were domineering and discriminating to African cultural heritage either by way of assimilation or indirect rule.

2. Foreign Missions and Enculturation: French and British Colonies in Perspective

The missionary activities of the church in French colonial territories were quite commendable but also deserve a critical observation. The foreign missions sponsored all the expenses involved in their colonial endeavours. Chidozie and Eniayekan (2013) x-rayed the French policy of assimilation in their foreign missions and submitted that the attempt to globalize the French language in contemporary world politics, in view of competing value systems from other key languages of the international society of which the contextualizing of the philosophical trajectory of globalization which sees globalization as the homogenization of ideas, images and institutions with a view to creating a 'global culture' of norms and values acceptable among certain regional blocks, draws its intellectual support from the French policy of assimilation which informed their colonial method during the era of balkanization of Africa, Asia, and the rest of the Third World and as such, the policy of assimilation adopted by the French as a fundamental colonial policy created a tension between fragmentation and integration, which still resonates in contemporary literature on neo-colonialism, albeit its developmental paradigm.

Woodberry (2004) has also observed in a research that cross-national empirical research consistently suggests that, on average, former British colonies are both more democratic and have more stable democratic transitions. He argued that former British colonies are distinct not because Great Britain was a democracy – so were France and Belgium during the late 19th and early 20th century. Nor were the British more altruistic. However, British colonial elites were more divided and thus more constrained and in particular, religious groups were more independent from state control in British colonies than in historically-Catholic colonies (i.e., colonies of France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Italy). Initially the British restricted missions in their colonies, but Evangelical Protestants forced the British to allow religious liberty in 1813. Woodberry observed further, that Protestants were not able to win religious liberty in most other European colonizers during the entire period of colonization. Protestant missionaries were central to expanding formal education in the colonies because they wanted people to read the Bible in their own language. Governments wanted a small educated elite that they could control but some other religious groups invested in mass vernacular education primarily when competing with Protestants and missionaries also constrained colonial abuses when they were independent from state control (i.e., chose their own leaders and raised their own funds). If colonial exploitation was extreme, it angered indigenous people against the West and made mission work difficult. Thus missionaries had incentive to fight abuses. Other colonial elites had no incentive to expose their abuses, and indigenous people had little power in the colonizing state. This left missionaries in a unique bridging position. Moreover, according to Woodberry, Non-state missionaries also fostered institutions outside state control, institutions that nationalist leaders later used to challenge British colonization and birth political parties and that statistical analysis confirms the centrality of missions in expanding education and fostering democracy. Controlling for Protestant missions removes the association between democracy and British colonization, other "Protestant" colonization, percent European, percent Muslim, being an island nation, and being a landlocked nation. Other controls (such as current GDP, and current education enrollments) do not remove the strong positive association between Protestant missions and democracy.

Both the French and British missionaries were used to carry out some process of enculturation. They taught the African people to read the bible in English (British) and the French also taught the bible in Latin and French. Although, some part of the British colonies like Nigeria, the people were allowed to learn and use their local language, the influence of English language was much on the people especially those who are interested in western education. The duo foreign missionaries also taught their colonies on how to put on English and French clothing. This has influenced their colonies even till neocolonialism.

3. Conceptual Frame Work

Zamudio (2010) did a similar work in Chiapas, Mexico. Zamudio presented an ethnography of Catholic missionaries in the Misión de Guadalupe in Comitán, Chiapas, Mexico and the paper focused on the efforts of those missionaries to put into practice the “Theology of Enculturation” in their work in Tojolabal communities. In the processes of transformation that the missionaries undergo the enculturation of praxis and the theology of enculturation are usually assumed to be one and the same thing but they expressed a difference between a process of accommodation and a should be pattern which constituted a difference between how things are actually done in practice, and a normative how things should be done. The theology of enculturation is as presented by Zamudio linked to an institutionally based process (the pastoral work of the missionaries), whilst the praxis of enculturation is best understood as the process of transformation that the missionaries themselves undergo as they attempt to apply the theology of enculturation in their pastoral endeavours and as such, the work of the missionaries or pastoral agents was inspired by notions inherited from the theology of liberation. Yet it is not just about the action of evangelization, but also aims to foster an intercultural and interreligious dialogue between Church and Tojolabals. Today missionaries attempt to recover ‘lost cultural aspects’ of the Tojolabals, in the hope of supporting them in rebuilding their religious identities and “indigenizing” the Church. Zamudio’s ethnography study revealed that, in the pursuit of these utopian goals, the missionaries display essentialism, and are also shaped by their individual beliefs or habitus and, in certain sense, individual interests.

Nmah (2010) also did a work on the ethical-genesis of Christianity in the emergence of Nigerian nationalism and pointed out the role of Christianity in arousing national consciousness from positive and negative perspectives and called for a church that promote human freedom and justice in contemporary African society and that Africa and Nigeria in particular is struggling to realize how human rights that were distorted by the advent of the West were resuscitated by the Africans through their protest against the colonial power and domination.

4. Britain and France Approaches to Education in their African Colonies

➤ British

i. The British were interested in containing the costs of their colonies and enlisted the help of mission societies to provide education on their behalf cheaply. Missions had considerable freedom in how they ran schools, recruited teachers, taught religion, and adjusted teaching contents to local conditions. Overall, the educational system was decentralised. Furthermore, the first grades of primary schools instruction was in the local vernacular, with English as a subject (Garner and Schafer 2006).

ii. The British had a primarily commercial approach to colonization; acquisitions were often driven by private companies – the flag followed the trade.

iii. Promotion of the concept of white man superiority over the black Africa. Mart (2011) elaborated with other scholars that European colonialism was established in the belief that superior races have the privilege and the duty to civilize the less fortunate, inferior races (Serequeberhan,2010). A notable British geographer, James MacQueen, arrogantly proclaims, “If we really wish to do good in Africa, we must teach her savage sons that white men are their superiors” (Falola, 2007). The "ideological pacification" of the colonized occurs when this insidious and humiliating idea is decisively implanted in African psyches and is accepted by Africans as their destiny (Serequeberhan, 2010). As Frantz Fanon puts it: "In the colonial

context, the colonizer does not stop his work of breaking in the colonized until the latter admits loudly and clearly the supremacy of white values" (Serequeberhan, 2010). The English novel is the "terra firma" where the self-consolidating project of the West is launched, and Robinson Crusoe is an inaugural text in the English novel tradition. It is also an early eighteenth-century testament to the superiority of rational civilization over nature and savagery, a text that foregrounds the developing British Empire's self-representation through encounters with its colonial others (Kehinde, 2006):

The true symbol of the British conquest is Robinson Crusoe, who cast away on a desert island, in his pocket a knife and a pipe, becomes an architect, a carpenter, a knife grinder, an astronomer, a baker, a shipwright, a potter, a saddler, a farmer, a tailor, an umbrella maker and a clergyman. He is the true prototype of the British colonist, as Friday (the trusty savage who arrives on an unlucky day) is the symbol of the subject races (Susan Gallagher, 1991).

This policy implies that the British culture is superior to the African culture, hence they disregarded the culture of their African colonies. This disregard was also present in the British Educational policy. The African British colony are yet to recover from this policy because after independence, African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, etc cannot study sciences and the humanities in the African language. This is why education seemed difficult for some people today. While countries like, Russia, India, China, some Arab speaking nations, etc are excelling in science through the use of their languages, Nigeria is still struggling with English language to study science.

➤ **French**

i. French ideology aimed at assimilation; to turn Africans into Frenchmen, education was considered key. Schools could not operate without government permission, they had to employ government-certified teachers and follow a government curriculum, and French was the only language of instruction. The 1905 Law on the Separation between the State and the Churches limited the activities of mission schools, and the state became the main and expensive provider of education (Garner and Schafer 2006).

ii. The French case was the opposite: the state decided to build an empire reaching from Algeria to Senegal and the Congo through military conquest (Cogneau and Moradi, 2014).

iii. French colonial policy incorporated concepts of assimilation and association. Based on an assumption of the superiority of French culture over all others, in practice the assimilation policy meant extension of the French language, institutions, laws, and customs in the colonies. The policy of association also affirmed the superiority of the French in the colonies, but it entailed different institutions and systems of laws for the colonizer and the colonized. Under this policy, the Africans in Côte d'Ivoire were allowed to preserve their own customs insofar as they were compatible with French interests (Cogneau and Moradi, 2014).

Cogneau, and Moradi (2014) explain further that when newly independent countries took control of schools, they kept essential features of the educational systems. According to this conventional story, the mixed and flexible British system was more apt at increasing enrolment, and literacy. A cursory look at aggregate figures supports this story. When African countries gained independence, former British colonies had higher school enrolment rates on average than former French colonies (Benavot and Riddle 1988, Brown 2000). A significant educational gap has persisted since then. In 2000, former British colonies enrolled 70% of their school-age population in primary schools, 15% more than former French colonies (Garnier and Schafer 2006). Additionally, former British colonies prompted a larger number of school children to complete schooling, with fewer repeated years (Mingat and Suchaut 2000).

5. British and French Colonial Educational Policy in Colonial Africa: A Comparison and Contrast

The British and the French had very different colonial policies with the latter being more equal, if you can say such a thing about a country taking over another nation. The British practiced association which

promised the blacks independence eventually, and the French practiced assimilation which treated the blacks as equals (French Blacks) (White, 1996; Cogneau, 2003).

In means of colonial enforced education, the British were exclusive and the French were inclusive. The British only allowed African chiefs' children to obtain an education in their colonies. The French allowed all Africans in their colonies to obtain an education. These niceties are of course not expected to be taken with the best intentions. Each country ruled their colonies in a way that would ensure a peaceful living without danger of uprisings (Charles, 2011).

In ways of government, the British let the African chiefs in their colonies continue to rule with Brits placed as figureheads of government. This was of course another way to try to appease the Africans who had been colonized. The French set up new governments and placed both Africans and Frenchmen in power since they claimed they were equal. I am sure that the positions Africans were placed in contained less power than the French positions, but on the surface this looks like an equal gesture (Charles, 2011).

Ostensibly, French colonial administration is usually characterised as more 'direct rule' compared to the British; traditional authorities were largely ignored. French ideas about colonial policy (as in many things) were divided—assimilation. French colonial policy incorporated concepts of assimilation and association. Based on an assumption of the superiority of French culture over all others, in practice the assimilation policy meant extension of the French language, institutions, laws, and customs in the colonies. The policy of association also affirmed the superiority of the French in the colonies, but it entailed different institutions and systems of laws for the colonizer and the colonized. Under this policy, the Africans in Côte d'Ivoire were allowed to preserve their own customs insofar as they were compatible with French interests. An indigenous elite trained in French administrative practice formed an intermediary group between the French and the Africans. Assimilation was practiced in Côte d'Ivoire to the extent that after 1930, a small number of Westernized Ivoirians were granted the right to apply for French citizenship. Most Ivoirians, however, were classified as French subjects and were governed under the principle of association. As subjects of France, they had no political rights. They were drafted for work in mines, on plantations, as porters, and on public projects as part of their tax responsibility. They were expected to serve in the military and were subject to the *indigénat*, a separate system of law (Charles, 2011).

Dupraz (2013) observed with other scholars that in the period 1870-1940, primary enrolment rates were significantly higher in the British colonies of Africa than in the French ones (Benavot and Riddle, 1988). This education differential could still be observed in 1960 and has persisted up to quite recently (Brown, 2000; Cogneau, 2003; Garnier and Schafer, 2006). Grier (1999) argues that the differences in growth performance between former French and former British colonies in Africa can be explained by the impact of colonization on education. The literature underlined three main differences between French and British colonial education policies. First, difference in agency: while the British entrusted religious missions, financed through a system of grants-in-aid, with education, the French established a public, free and non religious network of schools (Gifford and Weiskel, 1971); the French system was more centralized, the British one more demand-driven (Garnier and Schafer, 2006). Second, difference in the language of instruction: while French colonial administrators were very adamant that instruction was under-taken in French only, local languages were more often used (at least in the first grades) in British Africa; as a result, French colonial schools employed more European teachers than British ones. Third, difference in the purpose of instruction: while British missionaries, whose goal was conversion, tried to reach the largest number of people, the goal of French colonial education was to train a small administrative elite. Scholars argue that, because of these differences, the British system was more able to respond to local demand, and did so at a lower cost.

6. British-French Colonialism in Africa: The Role of the Church Missionary

The colonial masters used the church not as a New Testament Church but as civic organization. The Church was used and abused by the colonial masters in so many ways. Although, they also used the church

as a means of good news (Gospel) to the people of Africa in destroying some barbaric practices, they also used the church to perpetuate their colonial agenda.

The Church as Agent of Colonialism

The British as well as the French colonial masters used the church to colonize their colonies by sending missionaries from foreign land to teach the people of Africa. Although, they also came to carry out trade in Africa, the Church was never eye out. They mixed all together to achieve their agenda of colonization. Missionaries signed treaties which were later used by colonialists to take over colonies e.g. Tucker, a British Missionary interpreted the 1900 Buganda Agreement to the regents of Kabaka Daudi Chwa II. This led to loss of political, economic and social powers to the British protectorate government. Sir Harry Johnstone signed on behalf of the British government (ELATE, 2014).

The Church as Agent of Slavery

The white-man used the Church as agent of slavery by involving it in slave trade in Africa. They interpreted, the Bible with the connotation of slavery especially from the point of *doulos* in the New Testament in which one strong example is Onesimus (the slave) and Philemon (the master) (Philemon 1:1-25). Another example is the admonition that slave should obey their masters. These passages and its likes in other parts of the Bible were deconstructed to build the mind-set of slavery which they use the church to achieve. One important characteristic of these missionaries according to Zamudio (2010) is that they attest and, in certain sense, get involved in all problems, oppression, and injustice the indigenous individuals undergo. This oppression could have necessitated the move for liberation.

The Church as Agent of Acculturation

Comparing colonial education discourse in the French and Portuguese African enterprises, Madeira (2009) also touched on acculturation in the context of the duo educational policies. Similarly, the British and French colonial masters, introduced their cultures to Africa as Superior to that of Africa. They eventually gave us the Civilization of Culture. They made us understand that their culture is biblical. They did not just enslave Africa through trade and civilization they also enslaved our psychic and it is still working on African's today. For example, the wedding conducted in Church today, is in accordance with the Western Culture not according to the one in John 2:1-11. They made Africa feel that Western Culture is superior to that of Africa hence our mode of dressing, eating, dancing etc are expected to be influenced by the culture of the colonial masters. Whether we accept it or not, it is playing out today in Africa's society. Today English and French languages are dominating in British and French colonies.

The Church as Agent of Civilization and Education

The Missionaries that were sent to Africa were well trained professionals who came to carry out the practice of their profession in the process of colonization. Some of them were teachers, traders, clergies, doctors, nurses, engineers, administrators, etc. They brought schools and hospitals as part of their missionary works. They educated Africa on many things such as reading and writing, science and technology, hand craft, Bible knowledge and dressing. The colonial masters should be appreciated for this but at least they would have helped us to redefined Africa for Africa. Of course, why should a Yoruba man, Hausa man, Urhobo man, Zulu man etc, learn chemistry, physics, medicine etc with English or French language? What happened to the local language of the people? This is why it looks as if science is difficult in Africa. We must not forget that Africans are not totally ignorance of science and technology because before the advent of western education, Africans have learnt how to do local surgery in orthopedics, midwifery science, agricultural science and hand craft technology like weaving of basket, roofing raffia, etc. This is not to say that western education is not better. Western education would have helped us to develop on African science and technology. They were at the fore front of condemning African technology. For example, African traditional medical science and technology is gradually going oblivion because the church relegated it to the background and promoted the western orthodox medicine as superior (Ottuh and Ottuh, 2012). This not with standing, western education has indeed brought some positive civilization to Africa. Both the British and French African colonies are testimonies of this phenomenon.

7. Conclusion

Both the British and French educational policies in colonial Africa were aimed at civilization of the colonies in their own styles. While the British used English language, the French used the French language to educate their colonies.

Moreover, the policy of assimilation by the French was more favourable to their colonies than the indirect rule policy of the British in West Africa. For example, Nigerian cannot be seen as part of like Cameroon is seen as part of France due to the various approaches used by the duo.

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