

INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE EDUCATION: CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH



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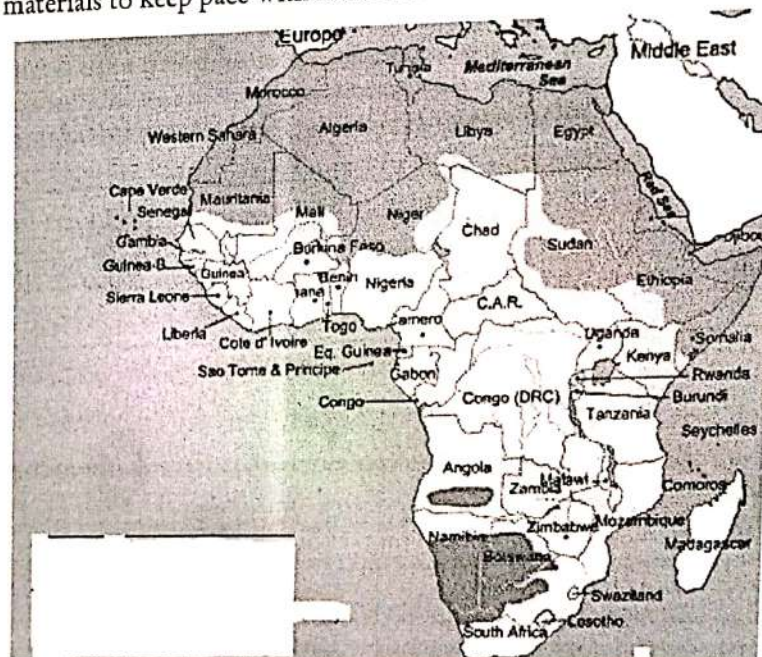
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Introduction

The continent of Africa was one race discovered and believed by Europeans to be lacking civilization in all forms, politically, socially, economically, religiously and in other considerations (Abdulrahman, 2016). Europeans had earlier conducted series of expeditions to Africa and discovered the viability of the African soil to aid further development of Europe in Agriculture, but more importantly, as a rich continent in raw materials to keep pace with their industrial revolution.



Africa was also seen as a potential market for their products. Clearly, an economic downturn in the early 1870s brought some Europeans to look toward the nonindustrial world. They viewed these countries as both markets for their products and as suppliers of natural resources to fuel the industries.

Scrambling and Partitioning of Africa

From the foregoing therefore, Europeans considered that exploiting the weaknesses and some glaring deficiencies of Africans would directly translate to advantages for their own region. These are the reasons that informed the scrambling and partitioning of Africa and on the eve of the scramble,

Wright (2009) says that Western Europe was a century into the Industrial Revolution and clearly the most powerful and technologically advanced portion of the globe. Firearms, transportation, and communications technologies were developing at an astonishing pace, and national pride was growing in each European country. Furthermore, advances in medicine enabled Europeans to spend longer periods in the tropics free of illness; as against the initial regular deaths of the whites from mosquito bites, which even made Africa to be regarded as 'Whiteman's grave'. Industrial production was reaching such high levels that Europeans worried about over-production and finding consumers for all the goods that European industries were turning out.

Unfortunately, conflicting interests even set in among these European countries and the strongest European countries became jittery over what becomes their fate in the balance of power if their rivals acquired colonies in Africa. This according to Omolewa (2009) and Wright in Abdulrahman (2016) made a number of European mightiest to recognise the fact that their national pride was at stake; therefore between 1885 and 1900, European powers were at times, racing each other to stake claims in Africa. So was Christianity, the famous Scottish missionary/explorer David Livingstone had whet the public appetite for a Christian "civilizing" mission in Africa, full of non-Christians and torn by slave trading. Livingstone's death in the wilds of Africa in 1873 called attention again to the cause.

All of this afore-stated were the factors that resulted in the Scramble for Africa which began with slow territorial acquisition through the early 1880s, followed by a competitive rush to claim African lands after the Berlin West Africa Conference (1884-1885). The final stage of the Scramble was characterized by slower occupation of territories and overcoming of African resistance through the first decade of the 20th century.

Scramble for Africa is a phrase used to describe the sometimes frenzied claiming of African territory by half a dozen European countries that resulted in nearly all of Africa becoming part of Europe's colonial empires. The Scramble began slowly in the 1870s, reached its peak in the late 1880s and 1890s, and tapered off over the first decade of the 20th century. Opposition and resistance by most African countries from being taken over and ruled by foreigners resulted in military attack, using modern weapons to crush opposition and install authority over the African inhabitants.

By 1912, all of Africa was in European hands except Liberia and Ethiopia. The period of colonial rule that followed brought social, political, and economic change across the continent. The African colonies would only slowly gain their independence, most doing so between 1955 and 1965. Some did not achieve self-rule or majority rule until the 1980s or 1990s. However before independence, the colonial experience of the Africans was characterised with the good, the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, even on education.

Colonial education in Africa was for long determined by the major colonisers, that is, the European imperialists:

- French speaking countries of Africa, known as the Francophone.
- English speaking countries of Africa, known as the Anglophone.
- Portuguese speaking countries of Africa, known as the Lusophone.
- Minor colonisers of the African countries were the Belgian, Italians and Spaniards. Germany, after World War I lost all her territories to the major colonisers.

French Colonial Education Policies in Africa

France, according to Okorosaye-Orubite (2009) became the biggest colonizer in Africa, such that by 1920, France had her dominion over countries in North, West, Equatorial, Central Africa and the Island of Madagascar. All French colonized territories are the francophone and include:

- In North Africa, French colonial territories included Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.
- The French West African consisted of the current Republics of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo.
- French Equatorial Africa had the present day Republics of Cameroon, Chad and Gabon.
- In the Central Africa, Congo (Brazzaville) was the only French territory.
- France also colonized the Island of Madagascar.

French pioneered the practice of the principle of 'Assimilation' as a colonial policy in Africa. After the World War II, the assimilation principle was modified to a new principle – 'Association'. What was assimilation and on what considerations was it based? The arrogance of French was so glaring in their colonial administrative policy, believing that it was their duty to impose their culture on the people considered to be inferior to them. As further reported:

it was a civilizing mission based on the belief that people of all colours could be assimilated into the French culture, for what was good for France was good for others. The French believed that it was their mission to transform Africans and Asians into Frenchmen, speaking, living, behaving and thinking like Frenchmen. Even their territories were to be regarded as provinces of France, administratively, economically and politically. This was the beginning of the idea of the assimilation policy... (Fajana & Anjorin, 1977:42).

As maintained earlier that the continent of Africa was believed by Europeans to be very far away from civilization when it was first discovered. The initial intention therefore was to spread 'civilization' along with trade and Christianity to 'primitive' peoples outside Europe; Mortimer (1969:32) submits that it was only in French territories that this idea of 'civilization' was "associated with that of citizenship. Only France expected to 'assimilate' its colonial subjects to the point where, not only culturally but legally and politically, they would actually be Frenchmen". In terms of education, assimilation means developing non-Europeans away from their values, culture and ideals, and to introduce them to an educational system that is akin to the one in France, a situation described by Fafunwa in Adejumo & Iwobi (1990:86) as 'frenchifying' the African". This is an element of assimilation policy of the French colonial authority.

Assimilation was modified to 'Association' because of internal contradictions that manifested themselves during the implementation of the policy. The Africans naturally had very strong attachment to their own ideals, values and traditions. Consequently, the process of 'frenchifying' them was persistently resisted and therefore the assimilation according to Okorosaye-Orubite (2009) was not successful. Mortimer (1969:39) confirms that in theory, assimilation meant that any colonial 'subject' could attain full French citizenship status, provided he/she must have attained a high level of French education. As variously reported in many sources that in practice, even those Africans who had acquired the required level of education were reluctant of taking up the French citizenship which was not in tandem with the African customary laws.

Educationally, the levels of western education acquired and economic prosperity enjoyed by an African are made the requirements to become a 'citizen' and these were exclusively determined

by the French colonial administrators. Therefore, even those Africans who applied for citizenship were at the mercy of the officials. In effect, Okorosaye-Orubite (2009) in his conclusion says:

there appeared to be a 'hidden agenda' formulated by the colonial authority to maintain the number of Africans with citizenship rights at a very low level so that a large African adult population (yeomen) would be left behind to do forced labour on the European owned plantations under the indigénat act.

Generally, the clear requirements of the assimilation were to have the Africans become Frenchmen politically, behave socially in conformity with French lifestyles of marrying one wife (monogamy), replicating the French inheritance laws in the African territories. The dogmatic idea of 'Frenchifying' the Africans under the assimilation principle had a collision with the well established African cultural and social orientation and eventually led to series of resistance from the Africans.

A combination of the impotence of assimilation policy by the French colonial administration which led to her dissatisfaction and coupled with the chagrin of the Africans produced unsatisfactory posture on the implementation of the assimilation policy, prompting the 'demand for social, economic and political ascendancy by the African nationalists; coupled with a bid to quell the Africans revolt and the demands by the United States of America and the United Soviet Socialist Republics, U.S.S.R during the World War II, that at the end of the war, European countries should initiate the process of decolonization, all of these according to Okorosaye-Orubite (2009) forced the Charles de Gaul administration to modify 'assimilation' to 'association' in the 1944 Brazzaville Conference

Association literally means a group of people or organizations joined together for a purpose. In other words, it may mean linking or joining of people or things. However, in the case of French colonial policy, it has been rendered from the perspectives of politics, economy and culture. Thus; politically, Fajana & Anjorin (1977:45) explain 'association' to mean a situation where traditional authorities would exercise power, while the colonial officials would remain aloof, interfering only if it was necessary to check any abuse of power. Similarly, association is economically interpreted to waste mean collaboration between Frenchmen and Africans... Culturally, it is explained to mean when there was interest in and even appreciation of African cultures, but these never replaced the firm belief in the superiority of the French language and culture.

The unwavering believe in the supremacy of the French culture over and above African culture, even the modification of assimilation to association is what Okorosaye-Orubite (2017) concludes that did not drastically change French approach to education in the colonies. This situation in which local variations were ignored adversely affected the development of education in French colonies. Fafunwa in Adejumbi & Ivowi (1990:87) again observes that "the curricular were decided by officials in the Ministry of Colonies in Paris... In general, French colonial education was essentially a means of promoting a nucleus of native aristocracy who could eventually propagate French ideals and uphold French ways of life".

In his overall assessment, Abdulrahman (2016) maintains that it can be concluded that French colonial education policies in Africa were such that the quantity and quality of education provided for the native African were very low, while the content was alien to the colonized peoples. The rate of educational development vertically and laterally was very, very slow or at best gradual. Instrumental to the awareness and understanding of the importance

of self rule, as well as educational development in Francophone Africa was the impact of the Second World War.

Comparatively, education fared so well in the British colonies than it was in the French.

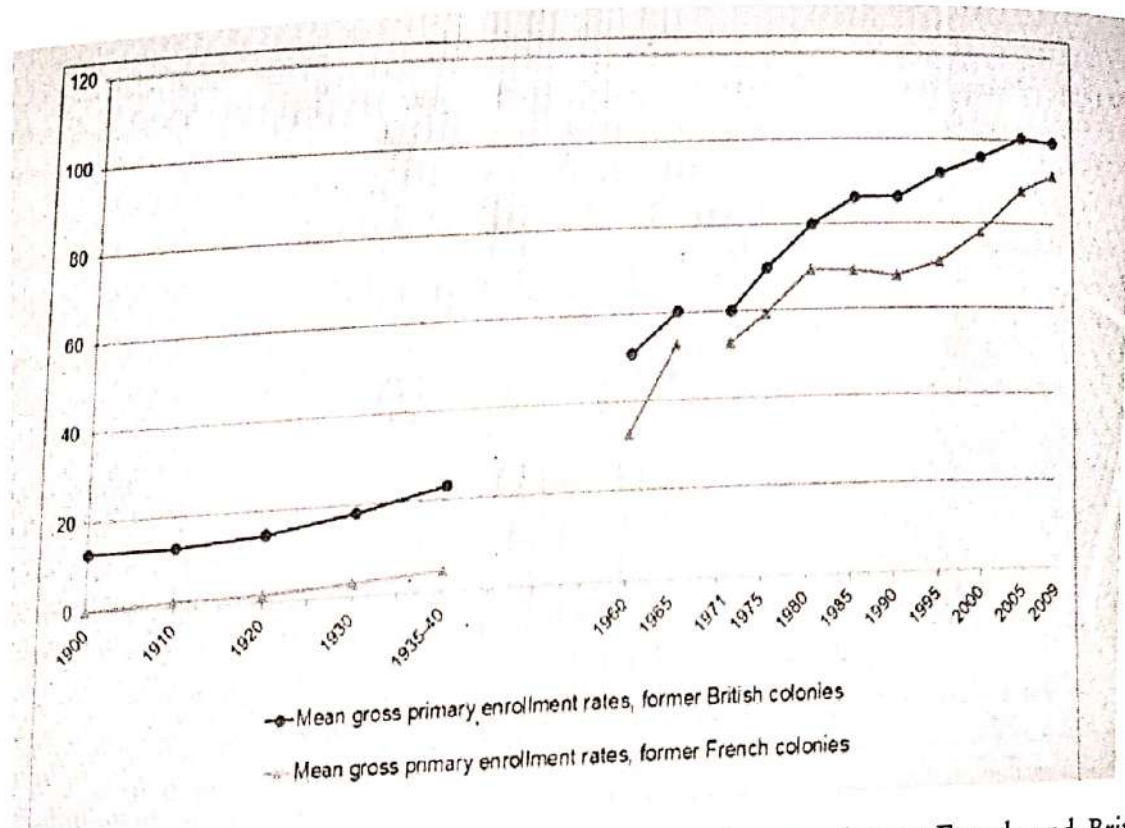


Fig. 1: Difference in gross primary schools' enrolment rates between former French and British colonies

Figure 1: The difference in gross primary school enrollment rates between former French and former British colonies is a fact to behold. From the various sources, the statistics show the Gross enrollment rates before World War II (Benavot & Riddle, 1988). The figures presented for 1960 and 1965 are from the World Bank (1993); while those figures from 1971 to 2009 are from the World Bank (2013). Note that a few countries miss figures for some years; linear extrapolation was used to fill in the blanks. Before World War II, the sample used to compute means varies from year to year (German colonies that became French or British after the First World War are not used to compute pre-World War I means). From 1960 on, the sample is composed of the following countries. Former British colonies: Botswana, Ghana, Gambia, Lesotho, Mauritius (missing from 1999 on), Malawi (missing in 1960), Namibia (missing between 1960 and 1985), Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe (missing from 1998 on). Former French colonies: Benin, Burkina Faso (missing in 1960 and 1965), Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Congo, Comores, Djibouti (missing in 1960 and 1965), Gabon (missing in 1960), Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Chad, Togo.

Assessment

In the assessment of how well the colonizers did in their African territories, French still fell short of the British achievement, but better when compared with the Portuguese. While French colonial

administrators were adamant that instruction be undertaken only in French, 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 schools. While British missionaries, whose goal was conversion, tried to reach as many children as possible, the goal of French colonial education was to train small administrative elites. Gallego & Woodberry (2010) have stressed the importance of competition between missions in explaining the better education outcomes in British colonial Africa. Enrollment rates were higher in British colonies throughout the colonial period, a gap that could still be observed at the beginning of the 21st century (figure 2). However, establishing a causal effect of colonization on educational outcomes from a simple difference in means is an exercise in self-deception. The samples are simply not comparable: there were more settler colonies in British Africa (Kenya, Zambia, 2 Zimbabwe, not to mention South Africa).

Conclusion

Finally, the French highly centralized system of governance led to a highly centralized education system in which policies were formulated in Paris and sent out to the oversea provinces as 'commands' or 'instructions' for uniform implementation. For instance, while Britain gave some form of freehand to the Governors – General to administer the colonies in tune with to circumstances, the French operated uniform policies in all its African territories. Fajana & Anjorin (1977:44) confirm that "the French administration of territories was characterized by uniform centralized rule from France".

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