

Research article

SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES IN AFRICA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR: 1939 – 1945

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ABSTRACT

Secondary school education is critical to the development of manpower and human resource development in all its entirety at higher education level where people specialize in different disciplines. Africa had few secondary schools before 1939 and between 1939 and 1945 (the Second World War years), there was a great set back, economic depression, social deprivation and so on that negatively affected the establishment of secondary schools. However, during the war years (Second World War) there were changes in colonial policies that positively influenced the development of secondary schools. There were demands by nationalists, pressure groups and communities for secondary schools in the 1940s. From 1945 many secondary schools were established but there were challenges of quality education, quality assurance, adequacy of teachers, access to schools, text books, content of curriculum, science and vocational education which endured over many decades. Significantly, secondary school leavers formed the bulk of the base of middle and lower cadre manpower and persons who joined the highly educated elites to struggle for independence in Africa. Secondary data and few primary data were used for this discourse.

Key terms: Secondary School, Educational Challenges and Second World War.

INTRODUCTION

Secondary school education takes place after primary school education. In Africa, it took place in grammar, trade, vocational, modern and technical schools at the end of which the students either proceeded to universities or other forms of higher education institutions or developed along other lines as entrepreneurs. It is a path to the opportunities and benefits of economic and social development as well as for the preparation of future leaders.

Secondary school education enables the individual to identify his or her skill and therefore develop a future career based on his or her talents and skills. It is at this stage that many people acquire knowledge and skills for the life of work and so it serves as a bridge for school to the world of work. Consequently, no modern society can afford to neglect the development of secondary school education.

Having been drawn into the modern world through colonization and introduction of Western style of education, Africa also had to go through the whole spectrum of their educational system in spite of the fact that the colonial government was not liberal with the provision of education in the various colonies. The discourse examined the various challenges experienced in the provision of secondary school education in Africa from 1939 to 1945, the Second World War (WW2) years. Were there any positive effects in the development of secondary school education in this period irrespective of the negative aspects of war? Were there events that further had impact in this educational spectrum in the immediate post – WW2 years?

Findings shed light on the subject of discussion as they also contributed to literature on the history of education in Africa.

Developments on Secondary School Education in the Pre-Second World War years in Africa

Secondary school education was introduced by Christian missionary groups in different parts of Africa before the Colonial Government developed educational policies and established their own secondary schools. Secondary schools were established as early as 1859 in Lagos Colony by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Other Christian missions and Colonial Government subsequently did same in various parts of Nigeria such as Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar in 1895; Katsina College, 1922; Abeokuta Grammar School in 1908; Ibadan Grammar school in 1913; Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha in 1925 and so on.

The first Grammar school in Sierra Leone for boys was established in 1845 and the one for girls was in 1849. In Uganda only Makerere College offered full secondary school education. Kenya had only two junior secondary schools, both were provided by Christian Missionary Societies (Mazonde, n.d.). Achimota College established in 1927 in the Gold coast provided secondary school education. In French Equatorial Africa, and Portuguese Angola, Mozambique and Guinea according to Adu-Boahen (1990) there was practically no access to secondary school education. This assertion, Adu-Boahen explained was substantiated by the argument that the Europeans feared that educating Africans would destroy colonialism as a system of relations.

Challenges in the Development of Secondary School Education in Africa: 1939 – 1945

There was economic slump that also caused depression from the late 1930s and early 1940s in Africa. This situation had terrible effects on educational development generally. For example, the goal and aims of education in this period were not clear. There were no policies and plans to guide the educational process, as such the Christian Missions, Communities and Individuals who provided education were not co-ordinated. There was no uniformity in educational practice as such there were variants in the urban and rural areas and among the various colonies with

different colonial masters. This was a major challenge, because the various philosophies of the colonial governments influenced the development of secondary school education in Africa.

For the French and the Portuguese, it was the assimilation policy that favoured only the educated to become French citizens among other criteria. This policy impinged on the development of secondary school education in Africa. The British adopted the indirect rule policy of administration yet they strictly influenced the education curriculum and did not adapt it to the needs of the people. Consequently, what did education do for the African? How did it shape Africans and the future of Africa in the global arena?

Secondary school education development was not widely provided in all parts of Africa and this issue of adequate access was a huge challenge. In Bechuanaland (Botswana) for example, there was no secondary school before the Second World War (WW2). Only those who could afford it acquired secondary school education from South Africa or Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Colonial government was indifferent and considered that it was cheaper for the students from Bechuanaland to study in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia than for them to build secondary schools in Bechuanaland. However, the tide changed in the 1940s when pressure mounted in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) for more access to secondary school education and the decision was to keep out those from Bechuanaland. Again, South Africa was determined to introduce Bantu Education Policy that was to restrict the admission of students from protectorates such as Bechuanaland. Thus, St. Joseph's College, was established in 1944 by a Christian mission. The next in 1948 was Moeng College (modeled on the English grammar school type) built by community initiative. At independence in 1966 there were only nine secondary schools in Bechuanaland. Christian missions built three; four were built by a private individual, Patrick Van Rensburg, the Swaneng Hill School in Serowe. The ninth one, Gaborone Secondary School in the capital was built as a government school and opened in 1965 (Tabulawa, 2013). Given such limited access to secondary schools it was not surprising that in 1964, two years before independence in 1966, only thirty nine (39) students sat for their matriculation examinations.

The situation in Bathurst was gloomy too. Western Boy's High School was established in 1879 to cater for the sons of African entrepreneurs. Then in the 1880s, Church Missionary Society Grammar School was established. By 1931 according to Sarr (2013), Gambia had six primary schools and four secondary schools in Bathurst. Two were for boys and two for girls. Secondary school education was so scarce that more than $3^{1/4}$ of those who completed primary school were not absorbed in these secondary schools. It was partly for this reason that thousands of children of school going age were left out.

Parents, most of whom were impoverished as a result of the economic down-turn of the 1940s were reluctant to send their children to secondary schools which also required higher school fees in this period. Similarly, many students withdrew from Edo College, established in 1937 due to an increase (hundred percent) in school fees in 1941. Infact, this was a great hindrance because it was the only secondary school in Benin city, Nigeria at that time which provided access to many Edo students for secondary school education. Hitherto, those who could afford it (few persons) attended secondary schools in Lagos and other parts of the country. It was only in 1947, post WW2 that another secondary school, Western Boys High School was established in Benin City (Usuanlele, n.d.).

In Angola, secondary school existed only in the towns and was available to few Africans before 1960. Mozambique like Angola (these were Portuguese colonies) did not have many Africans in secondary schools. Partly responsible for this situation was that primary school education was fraught with enormous hurdles and age restrictions that made it almost impossible for Africans to succeed. It was very difficult to have access to secondary school education particularly during the Salazar era of Antonio de Oliveira Salazer, the Portuguese dictator who ruled Portugal from 1932 to 1968 (Education Encyclopedia, n.d.).

Consequently, only “assimilated” Africans attended secondary schools. The situation was so critical that by 1954 there were 71 primary schools, 12 elementary professional schools, 2 government technical schools, 1 government high school and no government teacher training institutions in the public school system (Education Encyclopedia, n.d.). The non implementation of the ideal nature of the assimilation theory, a colonial policy that is based on egalitarianism was partly responsible for this. Portuguese assimilation was effected if the African was a Christian, had good character and was fluent in Portuguese. Being assimilated granted the person opportunity for post primary and higher education. In a situation where there was limited access and Salazar was bent on repressing opposition in Portugal’s African Colonies by not liberalizing education by government and Christian missions, it was obvious that Africans access to secondary school education was greatly limited.

Zomba Catholic Secondary School in Malawi was established in the 1940s. In Kenya there was in 1932 an African Government School at Kakamega for secondary education now known as Kakamega High School. There was also Alliance High School. These were junior secondary schools both established by CMS. In Uganda, only Makerere College offered facilities for full secondary school education. There was also Budo school for secondary education too and Munali in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). In the 1930s and 1940s secondary schools expanded in northern Sudan but there were no educational facilities in the south of Sudan before 1903.

There were more secondary schools in Nigeria than in other colonies. Before 1939 there were over 50 secondary schools in Nigeria and they were established through the efforts of Christian missions, colonial government, local communities and private individuals yet there was limited access in its spread in relation to the size of the country.

Access to secondary school education was acute in the French colonies. Education system in French West Africa from 1924 to 1947 consisted of six years primary education (regional urban) intermediate-higher education in upper schools and in professional schools (generally one for each colony), and at the top the federal schools (two normal schools, a school of medicine and pharmacy, a veterinary school, a school for marine mechanics, and a technical school). Two schools for secondary school education that were established in Senegal (the Faidherbe State Secondary School of St Louis and Van Vollenhoven State Secondary School, at Dakar), were attended by Europeans and the privileged assimilated Africans (Meyer, 2014).

Bolibaugh (1972), explained that FaidherbeState Secondary School offered only lower secondary school education, in both academic and commercial education. Every student commenced with a one year general education course the person continued with one of three specialized programmes. For Africans, the commercial and the administrative programmes were available for them which prepared them for civil service positions. The academic lower secondary studies were available to French students who were prepared for the upper grades of metropolitan secondary schools. However, to qualify for the academic programme, the student must pass a special examination organized by a committee of teachers headed by the Chief of Education for West Africa. This practice was discriminatory because Africans (majority of them) were excluded from the academic programme which leveraged higher education degrees.

The situation in Ivory Coast (Cote d’ Ivoire) was similar as its first secondary school that was established in 1928 did not provide full secondary school education between 1928 and the end of WW2 (Meyer, 2014). EcolePonty (William Ponty) in Senegal which was attended by those who completed higher primary school (lower secondary school) according to Yeonhwa (2009) was for a few outstanding ones or a select few, such as sons of chiefs of ethnic groups and the French. Some, also went to France for secondary and post-secondary school education.

In Algeria where the French settled, there was poor access to secondary school education for Africans. Only 20 percent of the secondary school pupils as late as 1954 were Africans. Others were Europeans. Jews (other minority groups other than Europeans) in North Africa, especially in Tunisia had more access to secondary school education than Africans. (Rodney, 1973). In Senegal as late as 1946, there were only 174 Africans out of 723 pupils in their

high school. It is obvious from these examples that there was a deliberate act by the French to deny Africans' access to secondary school education in spite of their assimilation policy.

France assimilation policy was based on egalitarianism, a belief in the equality of human beings especially in social, political and economic rights and privileges. However, France did not reflect this philosophy in their activities, policies and intentions on secondary school educational development, albeit the development of the entire spectrum of education in Africa as the discourse has shown so far. The ultimate goal of eliminating African culture and creating French-Africans, peers with French citizens in the metropole who were to be culturally undifferentiated was not achieved through discriminatory and poor access to secondary school education. Secondary school education was restricted because the French aimed at creating a small class of 'civilized' (evolues) members of intermediate personnel and thereby ensured that the colonial state had enough 'auxiliaries d' administration' to function. Meyer (2014) explained it more succinctly when he cited the Governor General's remark in this regard that "colonial duty and political necessity imposed a double task on their education work: on the one hand it is a matter of training an indigenous staff destined to become our assistants throughout the domains, and to assure the ascension of a carefully chosen elite and on the other hand it is a matter of educating the masses to bring them nearer to us and to change their way of life (Bulletin de L' Enseignement en AOF, no 74, 1931 cited in Meyer, 2014).

The French also perceived secondary and higher level of education as potential threat to their colonial authority because such exposure could engender resistance, discontent and a realization of their illegitimate rule. Consequently, it is not shocking that there were only about nine hundred students in higher primary schools (lower secondary schools) in 1945.

Schooling beyond primary education in Belgium Congo and Rwanda-Burundi was impossible due to the paternalistic policy of Belgian government and the Catholic Church. For them, Africans were to be gradually civilized. Secondary school education was too advanced for them. Another argument was that no highly educated African would be able to serve the masses of their own people as Belgians were more interested in the welfare of the African masses (Rodney, 1973). Consequently, it was only in 1948 that Africans in this area could access secondary school education. How can a government which claimed to be interested in the welfare of the masses not provide secondary school education which was intermediate education, not higher level education? Colonial governments generally made colonies to contribute to the development of education. Belgium, though a small country was industrialized and should have made the development of secondary school education imperative. Congo on the other hand was among the richest colonies in Africa and generated sufficient revenue that expectedly would have also contributed to the development of secondary school education. Irrespective of Belgian government's arguments it was simply extremely exploitative, oppressive and devoid of interest in the welfare of the masses. Rodney (1973) explained Belgium's policy as highly capitalist. Worst still were Spain and Italy, small and underdeveloped by European Capitalist standard. They did not develop secondary school education (no secondary schools) in their colonies.

European educators and inspectors (most expatriate staff) were compelled to join the military service as a result of the WW2. Indeed, education departments in all the colonies suffered financial hardship, acute material shortages and grievous losses in teaching and essential administrative staff. (Whitehead, 1992). Mazonde (n.d.) reported that the French West African an annual supply of 35 secondary school teachers was considered sufficient for a territory that is about the size of Western Europe, consisting of eight countries namely: Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta(Burkina Faso), Benin and Niger. Inadequate teachers especially qualified ones was a major problem in this period. However, this situation in French West Africa was due to deliberate deprivation or poor access to secondary school education.

Generally in all secondary schools in Africa there was inadequate teachers at the appropriate levels of training and because resources were limited better qualified teachers could not be attracted and this affected learners performance

and quality of knowledge. In the Gambia for example, expatriate teachers were retrenched as European staff strength was also reduced due to financial problems. Sierra Leone's experience was more vivid and reflective of the general trend in this period. The secondary schools were poorly staffed with regard to qualifications. As at 1947 there were 80 teachers in the assisted secondary schools but only 13 were qualified academically for work in higher classes, 37 teachers were qualified for work in the lower classes, while the remaining 30 should not be teaching above the primary level (sessional paper, 1948). The shortage of trained staff in the Colony secondary schools in Freetown was acute, that of the protectorates was critical. It was not easy to find expatriate staff to be recruited, new qualified teachers were not forthcoming and those who indicated interest to be trained was small. Consequently, the development of secondary schools in the Protectorate was retarded. They could not be expanded or upgraded to provide full secondary school education.

The form and content of Education in Africa has from the introduction of Western Education reflected the educational system of the colonizing country. At the secondary school level it was inevitable because students who had to study for degree courses overseas or within Africa had to meet the requirements of such institutions which were based on their syllabi. Thus, the final examination in British colonies, the Oxford and Cambridge School Certificate examinations influenced the secondary school curriculum. The medium of instruction was in the language of the colonial power, namely, English, French, Portuguese respectively. Their various curricula stressed the teaching of liberal arts and little (sometimes not available) technical, vocational, or professional institution. Latin, Greek, History, French, English, Portuguese (depending on the colonial power), General Science (not physics, chemistry, Biology and mathematics), Nature Study, Algebra, Euclid, Geometry, Bible Studies, Geography and Logic, were taught.

The European bias of colonial education and the remoteness of the curriculum made secondary school education insignificant in the context of national needs and for the future development of Africa. Consequently, European language and culture were imported into Africa through education. Teaching placed much emphasis on the authority of the teacher who dominated and virtually directed all activities in the teaching and learning process. Students' individual differences and abilities were not considered. The predominantly humanities-oriented subjects taught in secondary schools retarded the heterogeneity of students talents and abilities and did not encourage the practice of categorizing students into separate academic and vocational streams at their relatively young age. Teaching was expository and authoritative and so learning was receptive and submissive acceptance of knowledge. Students were therefore passive listeners, not participants in the process. The expatriate teachers did not have the knowledge about the African environment as such it was difficult to make learning material (content) concrete and easily understandable by the students. For example, how would the African relate geography of Britain, English literature, history of British Empire, and so on to his/her environment? Of what relevance was such content to him/her?

It is clear from the discussion that the African was alienated from his/her environment through colonial education. There was much concentration on success in the examination but not in the application of knowledge acquired. Classroom supplies and equipment were acutely inadequate (Damane and Molutsi, 2013). Infrastructure in most of the schools were inadequate and did not expand at the rate of increase of students due to rural-urban migration in the mid 1940s.

Changes in the education system were initiated during the WW2 years as a result of the establishment of 1940 and 1945 Colonial Development Welfare Act (CDWA) funds. British colonies were also encouraged to make provision for educational spending in their development plans. Falola (2004) noted that the French in 1946 created the Fonds d' Investissement pour Le Developpement Economique et Social (FIDES) for expenditure on welfare and economic programmes from which Africans benefited. However the French territories were to benefit from FIDES by being part of a larger French Community based on the assimilation policy. Thus, in both British and French territories colonial government was to expand elementary and secondary schools as well as establish a few higher institutions.

The French Parliament also made the Ministry of Overseas France (formerly the Ministry of Colonies) to prepare a ten year plan for the modernization and equipment of the colonies. Twenty five percent of the funds of the 1946 FIDES was for social development projects while ten percent of the 25 was allocated to education. Neither of these percentages were actually effected. But a 1949 four year plan replaced the 10 year plan of 1946. It was from 1949 that many secondary schools were constructed. Colonial territories bore all the cost for operating the secondary schools, offering scholarship for study in France among others (Bolibaugh, 1972).

Significantly, as the educated elites struggled for recognition, relevance and self-determination, the transformation of secondary school education and demand for a wider spread of the schools became issues of concern. Greater access to secondary education it was felt, would reduce social inequalities. Again, to strengthen their struggle for power, the educated elite realized that it was important to mobilize the masses against the colonial masters. Education was therefore an agency for effective communication with, and mobilization of the masses. Consequently, there was a strong demand for mass education. While Benavot (2006) reported that many European governments launched large-scale educational reforms to establish and expand more inclusive (no longer elitist) secondary schools, the degree of this positive change would be appreciated only in comparison and relationship to the level of spread before the WW2. However, he also noted that the pace and outcomes of these changes varied from country to country, as the transformation of secondary education became an important target of reformists' struggles especially in the mid 1940s and by the American educated elites. Mazonde (n.d.) wrote that in countries like Ghana and Kenya the big leap in secondary school development occurred in the late 1930s. In Ghana they trebled between 1935 and 1945 despite the WW2. In northern Sudan there was an expansion in secondary schools in the 1940s. In Nigeria many schools such as Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls School (ACMGS) 1943, Okrika Grammar School (OGS) among others were established too.

Another trigger that developed secondary school education in this period was the need for an educated class of primary school teachers, village monitors (in French Africa), clerks; agricultural demonstrators, laboratory assistants and dispensers (in Southern Rhodesia) minor officials and so on, according to Hungwe (n.d.). Abdullahi(n.d.) stated that to push pen behind an office desk became the dream of an "educated" Nigerian on completion of secondary school and anything else became derogatory and below "human" dignity. In the Gambia as Sarr (2013) noted, there was a high level rural-urban migration because of menial job opportunities in Bathurst. Firms all over the continent paid higher than others and employed secondary school leavers. However by the late 1940s there was a general realization that secondary school education was a good thing in itself. This awareness further stimulated its development especially in the post-independence period.

Conclusion

Challenges are rife in all aspects of human endeavour and so should be expected. The development of any spectrum of secondary school education is likely to be fraught with enormous challenges. This is expected because the providers were alien to the people, culture and environment where they engaged in this academic exercise. Thus, the spread of secondary schools in all the colonies whether British, French, Portuguese or Belgian was uneven. Limited access was often deliberate in order to prevent many Africans from this level of education. France, Portugal, Belgium openly practiced this policy. The British did same especially in Southern Africa – Northern and Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively), Bechuanaland (Botswana); Malawi, Kenya, and so on in other parts of East Africa. Inherent in this strategy was the fear that many educated Africans would challenge the existence of colonial rule and this eventually occurred because the educated elites mobilized them during the late 1940s in the struggle for independence.

The WW2 contributed to the closure or relocation of a number of schools which further limited access and reversed some achievements of previous years, from mid 19th century. The level of education funding dwindled and this

retarded teacher recruitment, infrastructural development, curriculum development and so on. As initiatives to transform and diversify secondary education systems gained momentum (from elitist to a more inclusive type), especially with the provision of CDWA in 1945 and FIDES in 1946 by Britain and France respectively, and the new attitude of the colonial powers that espoused improved welfare for the colonial people, new expectations were generated and that secondary schools would be positively affected quantitatively and qualitatively.

Agitation for inclusion in political administration and eventual takeover of government (end of colonial rule) by nationalists positively affected the spread of secondary school education and its transformation in the post-WW2 years and at independence. However, European culture had been established through their language as a means of education and their curriculum. Certificate at the end of secondary school education in the French territories was the Baccalaureate and was marked in France. In the British colonies it was either the Oxford or Cambridge certificate. Spain did not provide secondary schools in this period and those of Portugal and Belgium were so severely limited that Africans did not get to the peak of secondary school education except for a tiny few who had it at the metropole.

The Second World War therefore had both negative and positive effects on secondary school education in the continent. While there were adverse effects in the early years, 1939 to 1943, the catalyst nature of the war period stimulated more value and demand for secondary school education that positively affected its spread.

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