

THE PERILS OF SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR BRITISH SOUTHERN CAMEROONIANS IN COLONIAL NIGERIA 1922-1962: READING MEANING IN THE TESTIMONIES OF OUR GRANDFATHERS

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ABSTRACT

The territory of British Southern Cameroons became an integral part of the British colony of Nigeria as soon as the partition of German Cameroons was effected in 1916 and concretized by the Mandate Agreement of 1922. In this regard, the British colonial authorities were expected to provide for the education of Southern Cameroonians just like their Nigerian counterparts, but they opted for the provision of such services in Nigeria. This paper, in putting together the experiences of some British Southern Cameroonians in their quest for secondary education in colonial Nigeria concludes that the terrible experiences were all part of the British attitude of neglect for the territory which had lasting effects on manpower development. This was an intentional contradiction of the colourful and assuring proclamations they made to the League of Nations in 1922. Being a historical analysis, I have used mainly documentary and archival evidences.

Key Words: Secondary Education, British colonialism, Perils, testimonies, Neglect, Exploitation

INTRODUCTION

When the British arrived the Southern Cameroons, they met a very underdeveloped educational sector. Apart from the bad state of primary schools needing urgent attention, there was no secondary school in the territory. Britain therefore hoped to provide an elaborate educational system that would make available opportunities for training in all sectors of life. In signing the Mandate Agreement in 1922 and the Trusteeship Agreement in 1946, Britain had committed itself to 'be responsible for the peace, order and good governance...promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the territory... extend a general system of elementary education designed to eliminate illiteracy and to facilitate vocational and cultural advancement of the population of the Cameroons.'¹ Similarly she also pledged to encourage secondary, higher and professional education with a view of guaranteeing

¹ The Trusteeship Agreement for British Cameroons in T., Tazifor, *Cameroon History in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Buea: Educational Book Centre, 2003, p.165.

self-determination for the territory's inhabitants.² The determination to implement this policy could be seen in their 1925 Memorandum of Education in British Tropical African Dependencies which clearly stated that;

The organizational structure of the school system should embody; the elementary education for boys and girls, secondary or intermediate education, technical and vocational institutions; some of which *should* later reach university level.³

In view of this, the 1926 Nigerian Education Ordinance structured education in Nigeria into three stages; Infant; Elementary (Standards I-VI), Secondary and Higher education. The policy was revised in 1931 (the Hussey Plan) to read thus:

...the entire system of education is based on three stages; a) elementary, b) Middle c) Higher.... Middle schools of six years duration give an education corresponding to that given in English secondary schools⁴

By the 1931 Revision and its application in the Cameroons, Middle I and II were actually the senior elementary schools (Standards V and VI)⁵ while Middles III-VI were the four years of secondary education. By this system it was understood that after fourteen years of education, a candidate would be ripe for university studies. In fact as was the case elsewhere, everything being equal, after pupils left primary schools, they were to naturally choose from teacher training institutions, secondary schools or technical schools in which they were expected to spend five years and write the Matriculation exam (*matric*) or West African Schools Certificate Examination. After that, those who were ambitious spent another two years of high school where they would take the Senior Cambridge Overseas Schools Certificate Examination to qualify them for entry into the British university system; at which level a candidate could read for a diploma course or degree programme in their field of interest.

BRITAIN'S SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY FOR THE SOUTHERN CAMEROONS

When the British took over the Cameroons in 1916, there was no secondary school in the territory. however, following the educational structure laid down in the 1925 Memorandum, the Permanent Mandates Commission (P.M.C) of the League of Nations (L.O.N) and other observers of the educational scene in the Cameroons were made to believe that, the moment pupils got into standard VI (or Middle II) in Southern Cameroons, or the moment sufficient numbers of primary school graduates were available in the territory, the administering authorities would begin

²Ibid

³Colonial Office, *Memorandum of Education in British Tropical Dependencies*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1925, p.3

⁴Cameroons, Notes on Annual Reports to the League of Nations, 1935, p.75

⁵Files at the National Archives Buea-Cameroon dealing with class enrolments for some years especially in the 1930s for instance show tables of standard I-IV and then Middle I-II to represent senior Primary schools

thinking of establishing secondary school facilities and by the time these got to the sixth year, there would be facilities for university education in the Cameroons.

It must be recalled that by 1922, when Britain signed the Mandate Agreement, she had administered the Southern Cameroons directly for eight years since the 1916 partition. Rather than set up a separate administration of the territory, she opted to administer it as an integral part of her colony of Nigeria. Here, opportunities for secondary education had been available since 1859 when the Anglican Christian Missionary Society (CMS) established the CMS Grammar School in Lagos. The Colonial Government had also started Kings College Lagos in 1909 and later in 1929 added Umuahia, Ibadan and Zaria as Government Colleges for the east, west and northern populations respectively; this amidst over 40 privately own secondary grammar, technical and commercial schools.⁶

Generally speaking, therefore, the system of education in Nigeria had enjoyed a continuous history of development for not less than eighty years before 1922. By then most of the British territories had already produced a number of university graduates. In addition, some of the primary and secondary schools had been established, financed and managed by Africans themselves.⁷ On the other hand as of 1922, education in Southern Cameroons had been relatively short, unstable and had seen an insignificant degree of expansion since the British takeover of 1916. In fact, the development of education had passed through two periods of different orientations (Missionary-1844-1884; German-1884-1914) and eight years of interregnum occasioned by the First World War. Moreover, each period of orientation left nothing of permanent value. Unlike Nigeria, indigenous participation had also not been encouraged by the Germans with the result that there was no school operated either by individuals or by local communities.

Britain therefore inherited the Southern Cameroons with almost a vacuum in the development of education. Putting the colony of Nigeria and the Mandated territory of Southern Cameroons side-by-side, one would see that the development needs of Nigeria were therefore, very different from the development needs of Southern Cameroons; signalling a sense of urgency to prioritize development of the Southern Cameroons through its own indigenous legislation and administration.⁸ But as seen below, this was not the case.

As early as 1923, a two year post-primary school representing a kind of Middles classes III and IV was started at the Victoria Government Elementary School. It was actually called the Secondary Department and received boys who had completed the eight year-primary school

⁶J.F. Gbenu, State of Nigerian Secondary Education and the Need for Quality Sustenance. *Greener Journal of Educational Research*, 2 (1), 2012. p.7

⁷R.N., Ndille, Britain, in the Educational Development of British Southern Cameroons: A critical Historiographical analysis. Draft Doctorate Dissertation, UNISA, 2014, p.168

⁸Emmanuel A. Aka, *The British Southern Cameroon 1922-1961: A study in Colonialism and Underdevelopment*. Platteville MD. Nkemnji Global Tech, 2002, p.115

cycle. The secondary department, many expected, would lay the foundations for secondary education in the Cameroons. Unfortunately, the colonial authorities had different plans with this school. With the high need for indigenous primary school teachers, the authorities rather converted it into an elementary teacher centre and went ahead to move it Buea in 1925. They declared that it was 'the first step towards providing a staff of well trained teachers who are natives of the mandated territory.'⁹The Secondary Department became the Normal School and was moved to Buea in 1925.

By converting the Secondary Department to a teacher training centre, the British dashed the first opportunity that the people of Southern Cameroons had of acquiring secondary education in their own territory. How then did the British colonial authorities provide secondary education needs for the Southern Cameroons? This question was raised as early as 1924 when the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations asked the French and British Administrations to describe the measures they were taking 'to offer Cameroonians opportunities for secondary education.'¹⁰

While the French presented a series of plans to establish Medical, Veterinary, agricultural, classical and Technical schools in their zone,¹¹ the British answered in a manner which, sadly but certainly became the official British policy for secondary education provision for the territory until their departure from Cameroon. They reported to the PMC that;

At present, there are no facilities for secondary education in the Cameroons under British Mandate. There are no schools beyond Middle II (being standard 6, the 8th and last year of primary education in the territory). Pupils now who wish to continue their education beyond Middle II may do so at any of the colleges in Nigeria.¹²

From then, any aspirant for secondary education in the British Southern Cameroons, had to cross over into Nigeria where the facilities were already available. Year in year out aspiring Southern Cameroonians knocked on the doors of secondary schools in Nigeria; a few as government, mission and later Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) scholarship holders and the majority as self-sponsored students.

The section that follows is a collection of the accounts of excruciations of the Southern Cameroonians in their efforts to acquire secondary education. These accounts are presented as a demonstration of the British neglect and underdevelopment of a sector of life of a people

⁹ Cameroons, Annual Reports for the League of Nations, 1925, p.35

¹⁰ France, Rapport Annuel sur Cameroon, 1924, p.27

¹¹Ibid

¹²File Ba/1926/3 Annual Report to the League of Nations for 1926,p.146. This position continued till 1939 and beyond. It is also stated in the 1937 Report with specific mention of Umuahia College in Eastern Nigeria being the secondary school in Nigeria recommended for Southern Cameroons college aspirants. File BA/1937/5 Cameroons Province Notes for the League of Nations Report, 1937, p.100

entrusted to them and to which they made clear commitments to their provision. This is done with the view of pushing forth the argument of the British neglect, insensitivity and self-conceitedness in a mission that greatly publicised the selflessness of purpose in their acceptance of the Mandate over the Cameroons.

SOUTHERN CAMEROONIANS ON THE WAY TO CALVARY: PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF EXPERIENCES OF GOING TO COLLEGE IN NIGERIA

The administration of Southern Cameroons as an integral part of Nigeria and the decision to provide secondary education for Southern Cameroons in Nigeria rather than opening such schools in the territory negatively affected the acquisition of such an education in the Cameroons. Although there were many who yearned for secondary education, very few ended up acquiring it. This was due to two major reasons. First the British colonial authorities didn't match their words with action by ensuring that a huge number of primary school leavers who showed interest in secondary education actually got admitted and registered in Nigerian colleges. This would have meant in part providing an increased number of scholarships places for Southern Cameroon.

Secondly, the absence of a reasonable level of transport infrastructure between the territory and Nigeria made access to and from Nigeria a herculean task for students and other commuters. Neri Namaso Mbile one of those with the earliest accounts of experiences of secondary education in Nigeria observed that 'it is not easy to imagine the ordeals through which Cameroons students went in their effort to acquire college education in the British colonial days.'¹³ He holds that;

The arrangement of administering the territory as an integral part of Nigeria created an excuse for Britain as administering Authority to use Umuahia Government College in Eastern Nigeria as a point where general education was meted out to those with the best aptitude for it. This meant sharing one college between the six provinces of Cameroons, Calabar, Ogoja, Owerri, Onitsha and Rivers. The arrangement involved a silent quota in the files of some three students per province annually with the giant provinces of Owerri, Onitsha and Calabar often taking up the extras in a class of thirty per year.¹⁴

Mbile concludes that, with at most three students per year from the Southern Cameroons sponsored by the government, the inadequacy in the British efforts on the score of education in the Mandated Territory was visible.¹⁵ Mbile also informs that the annual entrance examination

¹³Mbile, N.N., *The Cameroon Political story; Memories of an Authentic Eye Witness*, Limbe; Presprint, 1999, p.10

¹⁴Ibid

¹⁵Ibid

into Umuahia College was a keen contest to select the best three boys per province. In the Cameroons province in 1938 the year Mbile wrote and was selected along with Samuel Endeley and Emmanuel Oguntayo (all from Buea Government School), 68 Southern Cameroonian candidates took the entrance examination.¹⁶ This number was quite sufficient to start a two stream secondary school or at least, a preparatory class but the administering authority insisted that it was continuing to make facilities for secondary education in Nigeria accessible to Southern Cameroonians without discrimination.¹⁷

From the number of applicants and those who actually attended the schools, it was clear that the system of quotas and scholarships through which Southern Cameroonians could enter such institutions did not permit the territory meet its secondary education needs through Nigeria as a very limited number of candidates got admitted or won the scholarships. Joseph Ngalame passed the entrance examination into Umuahia College in 1937 but could not attend because he was not awarded the scholarship. He explains that

The system of providing secondary education for Southern Cameroonians through a system of scholarships contributed to the underdevelopment of education. In terms of the number of Southern Cameroons candidates who passed the First School Leaving Certificate and were ready to go to secondary school, a very insignificant number was awarded scholarships to study in Nigeria. In 1937, I was one of the seven boys who passed the entrance examination to Umuahia but I didn't receive a scholarship which was supposed to be awarded by the Kumba Native Authority. That year only one scholarship was awarded. I was devastating seeing my dreams forestalled.¹⁸

Documentary evidence affirms that in 1937 only Miss Sally Kofele, a native of the Cameroons, and the only girl candidate who was successful in the First School Leaving Examination a year before, in 1936, was awarded a scholarship to enable her to continue her education at the Kudeti Girls' School Ibadan in Western Nigeria.¹⁹ In the year, 1939 there were 134 candidates in standard VI in the government schools in the Cameroons expecting to enter a secondary school in Nigeria the following year (1940).²⁰ Apart from the limited number of scholarships and the admission by quota other issues such as the ordeals of the journey to Eastern Nigeria discouraged many Southern Cameroon parents from sending their children there and forced many potential candidates to seek inferior jobs in the territory which jeopardized the chances of young Southern Cameroonians becoming potential economic and political leaders in the territory. Mbile writes that;

¹⁶Ibid. p.11

¹⁷Cameroons, Annual Report for the League of Nations, 1938, p.137

¹⁸ Interviewed in 2011 in Baseng, aged 83 and Cited in R. Ndille, 2014. p.212

¹⁹ File Ba/1937/5, NAB, Cameroons Province Notes for the League of Nations Report, 1937, p.100

²⁰Kb/a/1939. Cameroons Province Estimates 1939-40, NAB also see United Kingdom, 1939, p.151

Transport between Cameroon and Nigeria was virtually Limited to irregular boats... involving months of waiting.... Sometimes, Henry AnjeUsim (attending the West Africa People's Institute Calabar) and I used hand pulled canoes as we journeyed up and down from Calabar (in Nigeria) to Ndian (in Cameroon); a journey which lasted three days.²¹

As late as 1957, a white paper presented to the Nigerian Federal Council of Ministers on the Southern Cameroons Finances by the Minister without Portfolio V.E Mukete decried the state of the roads in the Cameroons.²² He lamented that;

It is not a happy situation at all to observe that there is no all seasoned road in the territory.... The gravity of the situation is appreciated when it is realized that traffic is practically at a standstill on both the federal and regional roads for eight months in the year.²³

This situation not only perturbed movement between Cameroon and Nigeria, making access to secondary institutions practically impossible but completely paralyzed socio-economic activities in the territory. Emmanuel AlongoamoAka has observed that, a glance at the map of the Southern Cameroons illustrating the development of Cocoa planting in Cameroons shows clearly that where roads have been made, planting has taken place.... To him;

The relatively backwardness of the British Cameroons of our days was mainly due to lack of roads. The existing roads, were extremely destructive to all forms of transport which had to use them. In fact apart from making administration difficult, it isolated the majority of the people from the centres of modernization and from the main channels of trade. I would not talk of the ordeals I went through to get to my school in Lagos but it suffices to mention that to raise money to go to school in Nigeria, we had to transport our agriculture produce on head load for long distances, crossing fast-flowing rivers in the course of which, some of the produce was lost as it was normal to see a river sweep away a man and his produce. All this because the British did not consider most parts of Southern Cameroons worth their investment.²⁴

According to Aka it is appropriate to point out that the very limited means of communication and social infrastructure in the Southern Cameroons were adequately serving the economic interest of the metropole. That is why most of the developments were concentrated at the coastal district. Further investments to develop more economic and social infrastructure, especially in the

²¹ N.N. Mbile, 1999, p.11

²²Mukete, V.E., *My Odyssey: The Story of Cameroon Reunification*, Yaounde: EAGLE PUBLISHING, 2013. p.349

²³Southern Cameroons, Memorandum by the Federal Minister Without Portfolio to the Federal Council of Ministers on Southern Cameroons Finances, 1957, p.2 NAB

²⁴E.A. Aka, 2002, p162

hinterland merely to carter for what was hackneyed as ‘native welfare’, could therefore, not be contemplated.²⁵ He strongly believes that

Britain’s administration of the Southern Cameroons as elsewhere, was strictly guided by economic interests. There is a distinct possibility that if gold, diamond or any other profitable natural resource had been discovered in the hinterland of the territory in Wum and Nkambe, for example, Britain would have developed some of the best means of communication to link the areas to the seaport in the coastal district, and then, claim the credit for meeting its international responsibility over backward people.²⁶

Southern Cameroonians who lived in the Kumba and Victoria divisions which were southern could only travel by sea through Victoria or through the creeks at Ekondo-Titi. Victor Mukete who used the Victoria sea route on his way to Nigeria and the EkondoTiti route on his way back describes it this way;

At 13, I had to travel on the open windswept deck of a German Cargo boat, the WAHEHE, from Victoria (the Cameroons) to Port Harcourt (Nigeria), and thence by other means, to Umuahia, without the slightest clue on how I would spend my holidays. During the Christmas vacations, I had to brave the route from IkotIpkene to Ikang (South East Nigeria) and through the Waters to Bamuso (Cameroon) on the Bakassi Peninsula, thence to Mbonge, and to Kumba on foot. This was in 1933. Sometimes it took me half of some of the holidays only travelling.²⁷

Regarding travelling on the Ikang Stretch which Mukete used, NerijsNamaso Mbile has bitter memories. He describes a horrifying experience which they went through on one of their return journeys to school in Nigeria using that route;

We were hurrying back to Calabar for school when the only transport means available was a hand-pulled canoe with four men. Three of the men were the pullers while the fourth man was being transferred to the Calabar General Hospital as his ailment could not be successfully treated at the Ndian Hospital (on the Cameroon side). It was raining hard as we paddled down the Ndian River on our way to Calabar via Ikang. One disturbing feature was the ailing man, who kept grunting in pain as the canoe moved while the rain hammered away.... Sleep which respects no one nor time began to cast its spell on our wet and weary selves. When we awoke, one of the men told us ‘my good friends, dat man don

²⁵Ibid

²⁶ibid

²⁷V.E Mukete, p.349

die.’ Between us and the leading oarsman, on the floor of the faithful canoe that was ferrying us, lay the dead body of the ailing passenger We were too cold and frightened to venture any word and in the rest of our lives this sad event was hardly ever mentioned. This story may be an index of the ordeals...but it is not the ultimate example. TamajongNdumu, for instance, used to trek from Bamenda-Nkwe to Calabar, on his way back to Umuahia College²⁸

The story of Tamajong reflects the other side of the journey to Nigeria for those in the more inland Mamfe and Bamenda Divisions. They travelled by land from Bamenda through Mamfe, Ekok thence to Ikom in Nigeria to their various destinations. V.E. Mukete confirmed that throughout his days as a student in Nigeria and later as a Federal Minister of the Southern Cameroons in Lagos, many students regularly trekked to and from the Bamenda Division during their school days in Nigeria. In fact, because of the poor road network, going by motor transport was a luxury to the people of Southern Cameroons. Mukete laments that

It was most unfortunate. Expecting children of 13 years to trek from Bamenda to Calabar in search of secondary education was not a minor deterrent. Today (2014) it is difficult to believe that boys of 13 actually trekked from Bamenda to Calabar in search of secondary education in a journey that took *between* three and *eight*²⁹ difficult days.³⁰

Simon AwasumSoh, who lived in Bamenda and had to embrace that journey the moment he graduated from his primary school in Mankon in the 1940s recounts that;

We trekked through footpaths, undulating hills and valleys, crossing dangerous streams and rivers. Not many students could even afford to wear shoes. A majority of us wore what was called Dschang shoes. Shoes made from used motor tyres. They were durable. Those of us from Bamenda trekked 7 days and those from Kumbo nine days and those from Nkambe 11 days. Generally ... only those with tenacity and hardworking survived. We suffered.... Even discipline was severe and draconian. In our class we were about 76 and we graduated about 16. It was a hell of a time for many of us. We saw the seven colours of the rainbow of suffering.

Soh laments that going to school in British Southern Cameroons, especially secondary school was;

²⁸ N.N. Mbile, 1999, pp.13,15,17

²⁹ Mukete talks of three days while Nfi talks of eight days. Nfi's number seems more reasonable judging from the state of the road and the distance between Bamenda Division in Cameroon and Calabar in Nigeria. However as Mukete explains, for those who went by boat from the Kumba and Victoria Divisions, it was practical to spend about three or four days to get to Calabar from Cameroon.

³⁰ V.E. Mukete, 2013, p.349

A painful and traumatizing experience... In those days We were not allowed to use mattresses on our wooden beds nor pillows, we had only mats and folded our arms as pillows for five long years. While I was still in primary school, we often watched those who went to secondary in Nigeria trek home; sore footed carrying their trunks on their backs using shoulder pads. I was scared of going to secondary school and little did I imagine that not long from then, I would make that journey.

The duration of a journey between Nigeria and Cameroon could hardly be estimated. John Ikpeme, a Grade II teacher posted to Mamfe Government School in 1938 disclosed that;

The situation was not only difficult for Cameroonian students coming to Nigeria for studies. It was the same for us Nigerians who were posted to work in the territory and those doing business. Because of the bad roads, once one was posted to the Cameroons, it was hard for one to get transferred out of there because most people who had higher qualifications who were needed to head services in the Cameroons hardly even applied to work there since better opportunities were available in Nigerian towns. On my first trip to Cameroons, I remember very well that I underestimated the distance to Mamfe. I left Calabar on a Saturday morning on a lorry to Ikom but only got to Mamfe the next Thursday night having finished the six day journey on foot.³¹

The distance that Mr. John Ikpeme covered to Mamfe was just one-third the distance that students from Bamenda division Like TamanjongNdumu covered to reach the first town in Nigeria; Ikom. It is covered today to and fro in half a day. But in the British colonial days it was a frightening thought, each time one imagined that holidays were coming or ending; a time that one had to engage the roads again to or from Nigeria.³² TazoachaAsonganyidescribes his experience with the roads. He recounts that he was sent home for fees on one occasion.

The Principal, asked the students who had not yet completed the year's school fees to go home and not return without the money. I had absolutely no money on me so I decided to put my case to the principal but he was unyielding and insisted that I go for the money. I left weeping. After a month, and five days in the village, I was back in school but my problems were far from over. On my way to the office to pay the fees, I came face to face with the time table of the end of year

³¹Interview with John Ikpeme, aged about 90, Calabar, Nigeria, September 10, 2011, Mr.Ikpeme, retired as grade II teacher of Mamfe Government school in 1963 where he had served since 1938.

³²R.N. Ntoko, personal Archive, Nyasoso

examination. Rather than study, the sleeplessness of the previous days (trekking from the village to school) took hold of me and I dosed off most of the time.³³

In the same light, Mbile recounts that in 1939, the Umuahiacollege which served most of the candidates from Southern Cameroons was closed due to the first world war. It became a detention centre for German war prisoners from the Cameroons. Most of the pupils were found alternative admission in other schools and he was lucky to be found admission at Hope Waddell Calabar. He explains that

I met HP Sone and AT Enaw and Peter Nsoesie also from the Cameroons there. On our first day at the college, we had a very rude reception after over seven days of travelling from the Cameroons. We had considered ourselves to be exceptionally lucky to have lost only a week to arrive Calabar. And though we had an excellent excuse for the few days of lateness to a school we were reporting for the first time, Mr. Smith the Scottish headmaster of Hope Wadell didn't see it so. As the rules insisted, we were late to report on the opening day and so we were sentenced to six hours of grass cutting. As we were marched away by the senior prefect to clear a huge overgrown compound of the headmaster, in the Calabar September sun, we saw a serious challenge testing us to our limits. With borrowed machetes we had begun at 8am and at 4pm our task master came to dismiss us from our punishment that we still contend was undeserved.³⁴

The difficulties of providing secondary education for the Cameroons through institutions in Nigeria were continuously being brought to the knowledge of the Administering Authority with the hope that it would go ahead to establish secondary education facilities in the territory. For instance, in the Cameroons, as a whole, all senior primary schools put together produced a total of 54 pupils in Middle II (standard six) in 1931, 66 in 1932, 45 in 1933 and 40 in 1934.³⁵ In 1935, a total of 48 pupils were in Standard VI in all the three government schools offering the luxury of senior elementary education.³⁶ In that year 123 candidates sat for the entrance examination into the Teacher Training Centre Kake; there were seven boys from the Cameroons in Umuahia College in Nigeria; three entering class one that year.³⁷ But the annual report indicated that there were only 12 students on government scholarships in Nigeria; three in the first year.³⁸ Comparatively in terms of access less than one percent of the first school leaving certificate

³³TazoachaAsonganyi, T. Asonganyi, 'St. Joseph's College Sasse: Cradle of Holistic Education for 75 years,' in *Sasse Chronicles 1939-2014: A Special Diamond Anniversary Publication of St Joseph's College Sasse and Sasse Old Boys Association*, 2014, p.26.

³⁴NN Mbile, 1999

³⁵Cameroons, 1931, p.61 and Cameroons 1935, p.50

³⁶ Cameroons, 1935, pp.50-52

³⁷ Ibid. p80

³⁸Ibid, p.79

holders in Southern Cameroons were attending secondary schools. The impact on manpower development can be imagined.

In the Provincial School Committee (PSC) meeting at Buea on 24th December 1938, a greater part of the agenda was the whole question of a government secondary school for the Cameroons. Local officers and mission representatives on the committee were ardent in pressing for secondary school facilities to be set up in the province. Unfortunately, the Assistant Director of Education in Nigeria W.N. Tolfree, who surprisingly had served as Superintendent of Education for the Cameroons Province in 1934-5 did not see things in the same way. He argued (and erroneously too) that;

One of the reasons for delaying in the provision of secondary school classes in the Cameroons is the fewness of the boys in standard VI... fit to enter secondary school. A considerable proportion of the boys entering there including the many selected by their standard VI examinations were not really fit for secondary education. If the measure is the number of jobs open in government departments, trading firms and plantations in the Cameroons, again, my impression is that primary education is sufficient.³⁹

Both the European and Native members of the PSC knew that the premise on which the Assistant Director based his argument were faulty. Each year, Government Schools in Cameroon which operated Standard VI classes could jointly produce a sufficient number of pupils capable of establishing a two stream secondary school. For example, as mentioned above, 68 Southern Cameroons candidates took the entrance examination into colleges in Nigeria in 1937.⁴⁰ Educational statistics show that from 1931 and for a considerable period, primary schools in the Southern Cameroons were graduating an estimated number of between 45-55 pupils each year.⁴¹ Tolfree's argument on 'the fewness of the boys in Standard VI fit to enter secondary school was not tenable. One may not be wrong to argue that, as a European colonial administrator, his attitude towards the establishment of a government secondary school was influenced by the European attitude of limiting the education of Africans to substandard levels in order to avoid competition with Europeans. In fact, in Mukete's words, Tolfree feared that the acquisition of higher level certificates by Southern Cameroonians would bring nationalistic sentiments and ultimately signal the end of their (European) stay in the territory.⁴²

The Acting Director of Education in Lagos D. Bienerman was of Tolfree's position but he expressed his reservations of establishing a secondary school in the Cameroons province on

³⁹cited in R. Ndille, Education and Development: British Impact on Southern Cameroons. MA Thesis, Centre for African Studies, Dalarna University. 2007, p58

⁴⁰ Cameroons, 1938, p.137

⁴¹ Cameroons, 1937, p.61

⁴² V.E. Mukete, 2013, p.349

financial grounds.⁴³ The call for the British authorities to establish secondary educational facilities in Cameroon had been endorsed by the Nigerian Southern Province Education Board earlier in the year (1938) with the understanding that ‘financial difficulties and the supply of suitable teachers can hardly ever be surmounted and so should not be an obstacle to a good initiative in educational development such as, setting up of a government secondary school in the Cameroons.’⁴⁴ However, the Acting Director on whom the final decision or recommendation rested concluded on a negative note that ‘lack of finances was a decisive factor to the establishment of the proposed Middle School in Buea (Cameroon).’⁴⁵ The determination not to open a government school in the territory persisted until 1961 when the British left the territory. Opportunities such as the Morris Plan of November 1942 and the Davidson Plan of 1943 on the educational improvement of Nigeria made no mention of education in the Cameroons.⁴⁶

As the Second World War ended in Europe, developments on the international scene also gave hopes to the inhabitants of colonial territories. With the creation of the United Nations Organization (UNO) ideas of self-determination were given final effect by Article 75 of its Charter which insisted that the objectives of trusteeship must be ‘to promote the political and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories and their progressive development towards self-government or independence.’⁴⁷ With this, Britain went on to sign the Trusteeship Agreement on December 13, 1946, in which she pledged to;

Provide such facilities as may prove desirable and practical in the interests of the inhabitants for qualified students to receive secondary and higher education including professional training.⁴⁸

Despite this pledge, there was no change in Britain’s attitude towards the educational development of Southern Cameroons. The Roman Catholic Mission had started a secondary school in 1939 (the St. Joseph’s College, Sasse near Buea) and in 1949 the Basel Mission started another in Bali in the Bamenda Province (the Basel Mission College BMC-Bali) but the colonial government was unwilling to set up a secondary school as it had done in Nigeria. To Britain, Southern Cameroons, was just a backward outpost of Nigeria. In fact, correspondences at Rhodes House, Oxford revealed that erring district officers were sent there on punitive measures.⁴⁹ In 1949, the UN Visiting Mission observed that ‘in the Cameroons under British Administration

⁴³ File Sb/a/1938/13, NAB, Correspondence of the Director of Education Nigeria to the Superintendent of Education Cameroons Province 1937-8, p.36

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.37

⁴⁵ Cameroons 1938, p.77; also see File Sb/a/1938/13, p.36

⁴⁶ A.J. Atayo, *Cameroon Educational System*, Buea: Loving World Publishing House, 2000, p.25

⁴⁷ V.G. Fanso, 1989. *Cameroon history for secondary schools and colleges Volume 2*. Limbe: Macmillan, 1989, p.104

⁴⁸ T. Tazifor, *Cameroon History in the 19th and 20th centuries*. Buea: Educational Books Centre, 2003, p.165 also in Fanso 1989, pp.103-104 also quoted in H.O.H. Vernon-Jackson, *Schools and school systems in the Cameroons 1916-1961* (Ed.D Thesis, Columbia University, 1968, p.412

⁴⁹ B.F. Booth, 1973, p.189

education is still backward' and urged the Britain 'to press forward more vigorously in its efforts to improve secondary education.'⁵⁰ Britain declared that

In as much as the Administering Authority attaches particular importance to the improvement and expansion of educational facilities in the Trust Territory, expansion of facilities to include a government secondary school could only be done within the limits of available teaching staff and financial resources which as of now are not adequate.⁵¹

Even the approval for the Missions to open their secondary schools in the territory were obtained only after being convinced that;

The Missions would save the government money and provide a quality education through competent graduates.... Their work would save us a considerable amount of money in building accommodations and getting a good staff for a government school which we are not disposed to in the present circumstance.⁵²

Even with the creation of these mission schools, access to education was still very low as the two schools put together admitted only 66 students a year and collected school fees which made the schools accessible only to the wealthy.⁵³ The consequence was that as some continued to die in their quest for secondary education in Nigeria, many others continued in the circle to life that went from the village to the elementary school and back to village life. In this case the development of a vigorous manpower for the territory was jeopardized.⁵⁴ In 1955, Catholics opened a girls' secondary school in Okoyong near Mamfe called Queen of the Rosary College.⁵⁵ In 1961, they opened another 'all boys' secondary school in Bamenda called Secret Heart College, Mankon. By 1961 therefore, there were altogether four secondary schools in the Southern Cameroons; Sasse (1939), Bali (1949), Okoyong (1955) and Mankon (1961), all with a total enrolment of 882 students⁵⁶ with none established by the government. On the contrary, in 1954 there were 82 secondary schools in the Eastern Region of Nigeria. Of this number 23 were government owned but none of these were in the Cameroons.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ United Kingdom, *Report by His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the year 1949*. London: HMSO, 1949, p.161

⁵¹ Ibid. p.163

⁵² File Sb/a/1938/13, NAB, Correspondence of the Director of Education Nigeria to the Superintendent of Education Cameroons Province 1937-8, p.36

⁵³ Ndille, 2014

⁵⁴ United Kingdom, 1950, p.76

⁵⁵ United Kingdom 1955, p.160

⁵⁶ R.N., Ndille, 2014

⁵⁷ O., Nduka, 1964, p.127

The nostalgia with which V.E. Mukete looks back at his school days is summarized in the words which became the title of chapter ten of his book 'I admire Britain with reservation'⁵⁸ being her failure to discharge the responsibility of the objectives of the Trusteeship System in the Southern Cameroons. N.N. Mbile sees this as a determination by Britain to prevent the development of a Southern Cameroonian elite class. He reveals that 'many Europeans living in African territories hated educated Africans for being cocky.'⁵⁹ This animosity and the suffering that Cameroonian children incurred to acquire secondary education in Nigeria made most parents to prefer that their children remained uneducated.⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

The paper aimed at demonstrating that, the British decision of administering the Cameroons as part of her colony of Nigeria accounted for the underdevelopment of the territory. In her development agenda for Nigeria, Southern Cameroons was often treated as an appendage which did not deserve its own but would always rely on what was available in Nigeria. Consequently its own development needs were not a priority to the British administering authority. In this circumstance, road infrastructure, healthcare, educational provision, trade and general community development were neglected. This without doubt had to earn the territory the status of the least developed territory of all British West African administered territories.

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⁵⁸ V.E. Mukete, 2013, p.349

⁵⁹ N.N. Mbile, 1999, pp.6-7.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.7

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