

## Review

# From Birth Till Death: A Narrative Analysis of the Evolution of Curriculum Issues in Cameroon Education System Before Independence and Reunification

Yaro Loveline

### Abstract

Department of Curriculum Studies and  
Teaching, Faculty of Education,  
University of Buea

\*Corresponding Author's E-mail:  
lukongemms\_20@yahoo.com

Cameroon educational development has continued to be a subject of numerous national and international debates since the introduction of formal education in the country in 1844 till date. The question that is usually asked and has received varying response is what type of education for Cameroonian Schools. While educational experts have provided responses to this question from several perspectives very few studies have addressed the issue for a responsive curriculum making from the lens of curriculum change and planning at the different levels of schools on which considerable efforts have been made in providing quality education since the introduction of formal education. One way of doing this is to go back to the historical evolution of curriculum issues in Cameroon as a starting point in charting a part way for a responsive curriculum that appropriately addresses the current need of the individual and society. The study argues that the evolution of education in pre-colonial and colonial Cameroon was characterized by the curriculum concepts of continuity, change and resistance to change. Using the narrative approach, the study attempts to articulate the arguments in discussing the historical evolution of the educational development with respect to pre-colonial curriculum issues, colonial curriculum issues, education under the German protectorate, education in French occupied Cameroon, and education in the British occupied Cameroons.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Relevance, Continuity, Change, Resistance to Change, Colonial Indigenous, Education System, Cameroon

## INTRODUCTION

Cameroon's education system has experienced a fast-evolving course of development since the introduction of formal education or schooling in 1844 by the London Baptist Missionary Society. From this humble beginning, the school system in Cameroon has steadily grown into a complicated network managed by churches, the state and private individuals (Tambo, 2003). Educational development in Cameroon is closely linked with its political development. This is evident in the different educational policies that were introduced by the different successive governments of the country. The paper presents the historical development of curriculum efforts in Cameroon in relation to issues of curriculum reform with particular reference on continuity. It begins with education

during the pre-colonial era and ends with education before independence and reunification.

### Pre-colonial Curriculum Issues

Before the advent of formal or western education in Cameroon, some form of informal and non-formal education already existed. Shu (1985) termed this as Cameroonian indigenous education since it was based on the traditional practices of the people of Cameroon. MacOjong (2008) points out that the term informal was suitable to describe the system of education that was practiced before colonization and the introduction of the

western type of education imposed by colonial masters. Cameroon indigenous education is part of African indigenous education. Moumouni (1964) argues that, despite the ethnic diversity of the population of Africa and the differences in the level of economic, political and social development attained before colonization, one finds in the educational domain, a certain number of common traits which clearly demonstrate the cultural unity of African people. He maintained that indigenous education was a practical system of education whereby communities of people participated in order to satisfy their biological needs as individuals on the one hand and their social needs as a group on the other.

Indigenous education produced its own craftspeople, artists, doctors, poets, farmers, carvers, religious priests, political thinkers, soldiers, businesspeople, musicians and people of all walks of life. This system relatively developed the potentials of its people as well as provided them with a source of livelihood that contributed to the growth of the society. According to Moumouni (1968) traditional education in Africa was characterized by:

- The great importance which is attached to it, and its collective social nature
- Its intimate tie with social life, both in a material and spiritual sense.
- Its multivalent character, both in terms of its goals and the means employed.
- Its gradual and progressive achievement, in conformity with the successive stages of physical, emotional and mental development of the child. Appropriate citation(s) required here!

Pre-colonial education responded to the economic, social and political conditions of pre-colonial African societies. Moumouni (1968) further points out that traditional African education embraced character-building, as well as the development of physical aptitudes, the acquisition of those moral qualities felt to be an integral part of manhood, and the acquisition of the knowledge and techniques needed by all men to participate actively in social life in its various forms. In demonstrating the relevance of indigenous education to the African people, Moumouni (1968) posited the following arguments: Firstly, that this education was effective because of its very close relationship with life. He argued that it was through social acts of production and social relationships of family life and group activities that the education of the child or adolescent took place, so that he or she was instructed and educated simultaneously to the extent that he/she learned everywhere and at all the time.

According to Moumouni, A. (1968), Instead of learning in circumstances determined in advance as to place and time, outside the productive and social world, he was truly in the "school of life" in the most concrete and real sense. Secondly, he contends that the pedagogy of traditional education reveals a profound knowledge of the physiology of the child and adolescent. This is so because the different age groups correspond generally to the different stages of mental and behavioural development of the child. Pedagogical methods employed in each of these stages show evidence of adapting to the physical and psychological potential of the child, which

necessarily requires knowledge and understanding of the fundamental characteristics of personality at each different stage of the child's evolution.

The Cameroon indigenous education was basically provided by the family and the social institutions usually organized by the rulers of the land. Though this type of education was informal, MacOjong (2008) identified some of its underlying principles. These include; communalism, preparationism, holism and utilitarianism. Communalism was an approach that suggested the way parents sought to raise their children within the community where each individual saw his well-being as tied to the welfare of the group clan, or tribe. Preparationism was a method used in preparing children to assume adult roles and functions in the family, the tribe or the clan. The roles which were cultural, social, economic and political prepared children to eventually become for instance responsible husbands, wives, village councillors. Holism was a philosophy that considered the learning of all activities of the society by an individual without specializing on any. For example, besides being a farmer, individuals were expected to know how to build, hunt and play other roles. This approach made children to grow as "jacks of all trades but master of none". Utilitarianism or functionalism philosophy advocated that what was learnt in indigenous education was immediately applied in the society. A child who learned how to cook, cooked, a child who learned to farm, farmed or a child who learned how to build participated actively in building.

According to MacOjong (2008), one set back of Cameroon traditional education is that it was totally void of any developmental efforts and attempts towards modernization. This view is backed by the modernization theory which states that, "for a society to develop socially and economically, an appropriate proportion of the population must hold modern attitudes, values and beliefs" (McClelland, 1961; Inkeles, 1979). Thus, formal education is perhaps the most important agent for transforming a traditional society into a modern one. In other words, schooling has a modernizing effect on the ways people think and consequently the ways they behave. Despite the above contention, Moumouni (1964) concludes that traditional African education is a rich source of information worthy of creative reflection, especially "now, when all of black Africa is faced with the crucial problem of creating an education system which answers to the aspirations and needs of our people and at the same time is worthy of the great future..." (p. 33).

The foundation of formal education in Cameroon was laid by the London Baptist Missionary Society in 1844 when Joseph Merrick opened the first school in Bimbia with an enrolment of sixty pupils. Later in 1845, Alfred Saker opened a second primary school at Bethel, Douala (Shu, 1982). According to Tambo (2003), the focus of educational activities during this period, was on the primary level. Secondary education was not yet contemplated because the goal of education by the Baptist Missionary Society was for the evangelization of the native people. The curriculum therefore emphasized English, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and the study of the Bible. Since the pupils were mainly native inhabi-

tants, native languages were also used in teaching.

Most remarkably during this period was the introduction of indigenous or native languages in the curriculum of the school. Joseph Merrick's very first task was to learn the Izubu, the language of the Bimbia people which he later used as the language of instruction in the school. He produced a Vocabulary book and a scripture book in Izubu for the school. In the same vein, Alfred Saker set up a boarding school and a training centre at Bethel. He mastered the Douala language and by 1872, he had translated the entire Holy Bible into Douala. He also produced a dictionary in the Douala language and also wrote the Douala grammar book for the school which he used in teaching people to read and write in Douala (Ihims, 2003).

Though educational activities were pioneered by the London Baptist Missionary Society in Cameroon, Cameroon was not considered one of British West African possessions. Consequently, she could not benefit from the Education ordinance of 1882 which expanded educational facilities to British colonies through grants. This ordinance formally provided the basic policies that regulated educational activities especially those concerned with the uniformity and quality of education in all British West African possessions. Fonkeng (2006) concluded therefore that, 'there were no reliable records showing the syllabus followed, the length of the primary school course, the nature of the final examination taken and the certificate awarded to successful pupils to verify the "Britishness" of the education system that existed during this period' ( p. 52 ). In fact, there was no formal education policy for schools during this period. Furthermore, schools were concentrated only around the two coastal towns of Victoria and Douala, implying that this exercise was only enjoyed by some few privileged Cameroonians. Despite the above setbacks, the work carried out by the missionary societies in Cameroon was considered a take-off point of modernization in Cameroon. Between 1844 and 1880, the missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society created a total of 18 schools in Cameroon. MacOjong (2008) argues that although western education supplanted Cameroon indigenous education through language domination, the later still continued to exist side by side with the Western education system.

Two curriculum issues emerged in Cameroon during the period of the missionaries. Central among them was the issue of language policy. Since missionary education was basically for the spread of Christianity, the issue of language became a relevant concern. Joseph Merrick and his team had to learn the Izubu language if the spread of Christianity had to be effective in Bimbia, and it is for the same reason that Alfred Saker and his team too learned the Douala language. Together with these two languages, English which was the language spoken by the missionaries became the language of instruction. Another issue that emerged, though for a remote reason, was the use of the classical literacy curriculum of the 3Rs. This was only relevant during this period because it was one of the means through which the indigenous people could learn how to read the bible. This study therefore argues that curriculum issues considered to be the planned and unplanned activity under the auspices of the school was significant during the pre-colonial period.

## Colonial Curriculum Issues in Cameroon

Between 1884 and 1961, Cameroon was administered by different colonial masters who aimed at controlling the life of the native Cameroonian politically, economically, socially and culturally. As far as education was concerned, the European colonial administrators developed philosophies for the development of education in Cameroon. Each colonial administration developed a philosophy that was based on their individual interests. MacOjong (2008) holds that, apart from promoting their culture and civilization, the goals of colonial masters in Cameroon were mainly for economic gains. They therefore introduced formal education as a tool to produce rudimentary manpower required for economic exploitation.

Pre-colonial and colonial curriculum policy issues and trends in Cameroon constitute the main concerns or components of educational development. Moreover, the development of these issues is closely connected to the political evolution of Cameroon. Considering that history is the succession of events, the development of formal education in Cameroon during the colonial era will be divided in to three different historical periods. These include; the period of the German Education from 1884 to 1914, Cameroon education during the war from 1914 to 1922, the twin period of the French education in the French sphere of Cameroon from 1922 to 1960 and the English education in the British sphere of Cameroon from 1922 to 1961.

### Education under the German Protectorate 1884-1914

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1884, Cameroon became a German protectorate. On July 14<sup>th</sup> of the same year, the German flag was hoisted and Dr. Max Buchner was appointed the Imperial representative. Ihims (2003) argues that the departure of the British Baptist Mission from Cameroon after the German annexation of the territory did not mean the end of western education in the territory. The Basel Mission took over from the Baptist Mission in 1886 with the determination to continue with education. They were later joined in the effort of planting Christian education in Cameroon by other interested missionary bodies. During the early years of German colonization of Cameroon, the colonial administration was not really interested in opening schools.

According to Tambo, L. (2000), the German educational policy in Cameroon was designed to meet Germany's colonial objective in the territory. Until 1884, when Germany formally took over the administration of Cameroon, mission groups, including the Roman Catholic, British Baptist and Basel Missions, had already established schools in the colony. The cardinal objective of these denominations in the territory was to spread Christianity, and they focused on the establishment of primary or elementary schools, because those institutions attracted a large percentage of the population. After the Germans took over the control of the territory, many of the schools were turned into acculturation centres where schools were expected to revise their policies to suit the

German colonial ideologies of the superiority of the German culture. This required the use of German as the language of instruction in school and the teaching of German history and geography. Ihims (2003) states that the emphasis placed on the teaching of German language in schools was a means of developing in the natives a taste of and a liking for the German culture and a love for the German Fatherland. Thus, the German authorities made it abundantly clear that the German language was and will always be the first language in its territories in Africa. Any other language could only be taught if enough time was available and only when it was authorized. This therefore implied a change in the use of indigenous languages as one of the languages of instruction in school during the period of the British missionary society, to the use of German as the only language of instruction in school during the period when Cameroon was under the German protectorate.

Though the curriculum of schools during the German colonial administration consisted of general education subjects, great emphasis was also placed on vocational and technical education. However, no educational policy was officially drawn up. Missionary societies operated their schools independently with no government interference. The first real attempt towards the development of education made by the German administration took off in 1892, when three German educationists (Betz, Christaller and Kobele) were authorized to draw up a syllabus for government-owned schools in Cameroon and Togo. The syllabus covered a five-year course and emphasized the teaching of the German language (Tambo, 2003).

Later in 1907, the first education conference convened by Governor Theodor Seitz was held in Douala to discuss and formulate the official guidelines for education in Cameroon. The main objective was to formulate an official German educational policy for Cameroon and to draw up a standard curriculum for all schools in the territory, with emphasis on the teaching of the German language. The conference was attended by government officials and representatives of the missionary bodies. Decisions arrived at included the following:

- German was to be the only European language to be used in schools in Cameroon.
- The use of Douala language was to be limited to the Douala district.
- An examination board was to be created to ensure that a high standard of instruction in German was achieved.
- The primary school course was to last five years.
- School attendance was compulsory and school discipline was to be strict. (MacOjong, 2008).
- The curriculum prescribed for all schools in the territory, whether Government or Mission included: reading and writing in German language, arithmetic, Geography of Cameroon and the world, history of Germany after 1870, and general science.
- The conference also established collaboration and consultation between government and voluntary agencies in matters relating to education.

The resolutions of the 1907 education conference were published in 1910.

This became the first Education Law and the very first legal

administrative document dealing with education in German Cameroon. It made German governor the highest authority in all educational matters. By this, the German colonial administration assumed total control and regulation of education in both government and mission schools.

By 1914, when Germany was suddenly ousted from Cameroon due to the outbreak of the First World War, the following achievements had been made by the German colonial administration during their thirty years of administering Cameroon.

- The German – Basel Mission took over formal education from English speaking Baptist Missionary society.
- Education which was formally in the sole hands of the missionaries was put under the care of the government.
- The first ever Education Law in Cameroon was enacted under the German Educational Administration in Cameroon.
- Schools which were limited only to the coastal areas began to spread further inland.
- English language that was introduced by the English Baptist Missionary Society was replaced by the German language as the medium of instruction.
- Government assumed supreme authority in the control of education and they designed syllabuses that were also used by mission schools.
- During their period of administration, vocational, technical and teacher education was introduced.
- Grant- in-aid was given to mission schools that taught in the German language, followed the government prescribed curriculum and strictly adhered to the government educational policy.

In spite of the fast development of schools in the German era in Cameroon, there existed the problems of relevance of the curriculum. Teaching and learning in school were predominantly based on the teaching of German language and history. The curriculum of “elementary schools followed too closely, the curriculum of schools in Europe whereby the African realities were not considered. As a result, the schools tried to make Europeans out of the natives instead of educating them to become useful citizens in their own country (Fonkeng, 2006. P. 212).

As discussed above, education in Cameroon during the early years as well as the period of colonization was mainly used as a tool for the spread of Christianity. Language being an important tool for communication became very instrumental in providing the kind of knowledge needed for the purpose. The issues of continuity and change in education were already evident during this period. There was continuity in the sense that education which was used as a means to spread Christianity during the missionary period continued to be used for the same reason and more during the German mandate. However, change was seen in the language of instruction used as well as the kind of curriculum offered during the different periods of colonial administration.

When the British Missionaries arrived Cameroon, more emphasis was laid on the use of the indigenous language as a means of instruction. However, there was a revolutionary change in the language policy. Rather than the use of both the

indigenous and the foreign languages used as languages of instruction during the missionary period, the Germans insisted on the use of German as the sole language of instruction during the period of the German mandate. The study argues that the radical change in language did not meet any significant resistance from the indigenous population because the natives believed that the use of foreign language will open them to the world as well as 'provide a ladder to an altogether different world of increased financial and enhanced social status' (Ndille, 2015. p. 5).

### **Cameroon Education during the First World War (1914-1922)**

Tambo (2003) describes the periods of 1914-1922 as the gloomy years in Cameroon educational development. Education being a peace time activity was severely hindered by the activities of the First World War and peace settlement. In the course of the hostilities and the fall of Douala, Victoria and Buea, all German missionaries were arrested and later evacuated from Cameroon. Thus, deprived of its leadership, all schooling activities in Cameroon came to a standstill. Because the Germans were defeated by the combined force of French and British troops, the Paris Peace Settlement confirmed the resolution of the Oliphant Picot meeting of 1916 in London that divided Cameroon between Britain and France. Consequently, there were problems in switching from German to English in the British-occupied area and from German to French in the French-occupied area.

### **Education in the French Occupied Cameroon**

After the First World War, and the defeat of Germany by the French and British troops, Cameroon became a mandated territory given to Britain and France. When they took over in 1916, they set about restoring educational activities which had come to a standstill as a result of the First World War. The immediate objective of the French administration was the spread of the French language which was considered as the basis of effective administration. A government order was signed in 1920 specifying that only school teaching exclusively in French and following the prescribed government syllabus would be recognized and permitted to receive financial support from the Government. Later in 1921, another order was signed organizing private and public schools. These schools were arranged in the following order:

- Preparatory schools (écoles préparatoires)
- Village schools (écoles de villages)
- Regional schools (écoles régionales)
- Urban schools (écoles urbaines) often for expatriate children.
- Higher Primary schools (écoles primaires supérieur)
- Vocational schools (écoles professionnelles)
- Technical Education Establishment (Formation Technique)

By 1930, more orders were signed to guarantee the steady expansion of schools. They also defined the collaboration between the government and other voluntary agencies. Thus, by the end of the mandate period in 1946, there were 137 public primary schools, 1,188 private primary schools, 3 private higher primary schools, 5 public schools, 5 public secondary schools and 2 private secondary schools.

In 1946, after the Second World War, the status of Cameroon under both British and French administration changed from a mandated territory to that of a trust territory. According to MacOjong (2008), the change of status also ushered in a change of educational objectives in French Cameroon. Instead of educating the people for civilization as was the case during the mandate period, objectives in the trusteeship period were aimed at training the natives of Cameroon for self-rule. The change in objectives to education for self-rule contributed to the growth and expansion of the school system. Thus, the trusteeship period was characterized by change with regards to growth and expansion of the school system.

The French created a collaborative climate with the existing missionary agencies particularly in the spread of the French language. Moreover, in spite of the awareness of the French government of its responsibility towards education, it could hardly define its policies on education. Therefore, there were no visible educational policies in French Cameroon during this period.

### **Education in the British Occupied Cameroons**

British Colonial Education in Cameroon was adopted from policies developed earlier for British dependencies and particularly for Nigeria where British Southern Cameroon was attached for administration. This colonial education policy was adaptationist which was developed and implemented indirectly through missionary societies and native authorities through indirect rule. Adaptation guided British colonial education throughout the colonial era in Southern Cameroons. This was a philosophy that originated from the American Cultural influence of Imperialism. Under the British rule, education was seen as training temporary civil servants for colonial exploitation. British administration was decentralized and education was seen as a way of training temporary civil servants for colonial exploitation. British administration was decentralized and education was dictated by British policy in Nigeria. Missionaries played a significant role in British educational policies in British Cameroon. The educational curriculum was structured in a way that reflected the British educational system as education was free at primary levels with the standard six certificates marking the end of Primary school enrolment Moumouni, A. (1968).

Education matters were left in the hands of the missionaries and the Native Authorities. The administration through the Native authorities and local administration saw education as a way to train temporary Civil servants for colonial exploitation (Courade, 2002). They controlled the planning and

implementation of the curriculum, training of teacher, provision of instructional materials and supervision of examination. While Native Authorities, schools aimed at serving the family ethnic group, tribe, the clan and the community as a whole, Children were taught about their race, and much of the teaching was done through story telling with the use of traditional resources. In this regard, chiefs were tasked with the responsibilities of creating and maintaining schools (Courade and Courade, 1977). By 1930, Native administration schools were opened in Bimbia, Batoke, Babundu, Bajo, Nguti, Bali, Bikom with a total enrolment of 843 pupils. The missionaries saw as an instrument for religious conquest in the Country. They trained catechists, teachers and clerks.

Prior to the British administration of Cameroon from 1922 to 1959, the periods between 1914 - 1922 were gloomy years in educational development in Cameroon. Tambo argued that, education being a peace time activity was severely hindered by the first world and peace settlement. Thus, deprived of its leadership, all schooling activities in Cameroon came to a standstill. During these years all missionary activities were suspended all German missionaries were arrested and later evacuated from Cameroon.

During these years all missionary activities were suspended. Therefore up till 1922, only government schools were operating in British Cameroon. Though still affected by the war, the missionary societies made efforts to resume education in Cameroon. According to MacOjong, the St. Joseph's missionary society of Mill Hill, were the first. They took over from the German Catholic Pallotiner in 1922. Catholics schools were opened in Buea, Ossing, Bekom and Kumbo. Though these schools existed, some were not properly organised, had inadequate instructional materials nor qualified staff. Most of these schools were considered hedge schools because attendance was usually irregular, especially during the planting and harvesting season.

By 1925, there was still no education policy for schooling in Cameroon especially as the different schools were carrying out independent activities in terms of opening and closing of schools, supervision and inspection and use of curriculum. Only the government schools had certified teachers. The missionary teachers were mainly missionaries and their wives assisted by unqualified teachers who taught using the native languages (MacOjong, 2008). The bad state of affairs in curriculum matters motivated the education committee of mission to present a memorandum on education to the secretary of state for colonies in 1923. In the same vein, the American Baptist Foreign missionary society also requested the Phelps – Stokes fund to sponsor research on African education.

Based on their request, the PhelpsStokes fund convened financed two commissions in 1920/21 and 1922/23 which evaluated the colonial education system in Africa. The first Commission led by Thomas Jesse Jones in West Africa visited Cameroon from 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> December 1920. The commission set out to investigate and provide information on the educational work already being carried out in the areas to be studied; the educational needs of Africans in terms of religious,

social, hygienic and economic conditions and to report on the extent to which these needs were being met ( Gwanfogbe, 2006; MacOjong, 2008). Bude (1983) argued that the results of the investigations were discouraging due to indication of unsatisfactory development caused by the acceptance and application of the obsolete educational methods from Europe and the United States. Among other issues, the report specifically stated that there was neglect of school organisation and inspection, neglect of a balanced education policy ensuring an education policy ensuring an education for both masses and elite. Inadequate cooperation between the different colonial institutions and their representatives, as well as the lack of relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the community.

The commission recommended the design of an educational concept adapted to the needs of people, completely oriented towards family and community life. They proposed a curriculum which should emphasis the development of character, health, agriculture and industrial skills, improvement of family life and the encouragement of healthy recreation. Bude (1983) further argued that the proposed adapted education for black Africa was believed would diminish the selfish individual competitiveness based on an unrelated bookish system, and instead develop the community as a whole by improving the general standard of living of the population through a community-oriented school system. It can be argued that proposed curriculum was an articulation of the concept of curriculum change and continuity as it emphasized a return to the indigenous education before the advent of Western Education whose philosophy was to train individual for their workforce. The publication of the report from the Phelps – Stokes Commission in 1922 spurred the British Government to effect changes in its colonial policy on education such that in 1925, the Education Policy in British Tropical Africa was published. Among other things, the policy emphasised on the need to engage qualified teachers with the curriculum relating more than ever to the local culture. It emphasized the use of vernacular as a medium of instruction in both mission and government schools as well as the production of textbooks by the government.

As far as implementing the education policy of 1925 was concerned, an education code was prepared for Southern Nigeria and Cameroon in 1926. This was done based on the peculiarities of these regions. This present study posits that the code was both a structural and Programmed adjustment of the educational systems in the British Cameroon. These forms of adjustments that the study has adapted from Gwanfogbe (2006) and MacOjong (2008) were identified in terms of the following.

As far as structural adjustment was concerned,

- A federal education board was established in Lagos with Cameroon represented only at the provincial committee level.
- Schools were structured into infant or village schools supervised by the Native Authorities and the Mission; Primary schools covering elementary and primary schools located in administrative headquarters were supervised by Government; and secondary schools that covered the middle schools and

normal classes located in Provisional head quarters were also supervised by the government only.

- Conditions were laid out for opening schools, organisation, control and administration of the education system,
- Conditions of upward mobility in the teaching profession and provision of government subventions
- Duration of Primary school course was set at Nine years.
- Government was to inspect and supervise teaching and provide resources in terms of training of teachers and provision of instructional materials except for mission schools,
- Duties were well spelt out for headmasters and teachers
- A staffing formula was devised with proportionate number ratio of teachers to school enrolment with appropriate qualifications were posted to schools
- Both in internal and external supervision of each mission school was to be carried out respectively by visiting teachers, managers and supervisors of mission schools on the one hand and by government inspectors from the department of education on the other.

For programmed adjustment;

- The language policy defined the use of local languages for teaching while mission schools would continue the use of Douala and Bali languages in their schools.
- All native authority village and government schools had a common syllabus comprising of reading, writing, arithmetic, nature study, moral instruction, singing and colloquial English
- English was made compulsory for all post infant education
- only the prescribed syllabus was to be followed
- The class size and spacing were specified in order to avoid overcrowding in classrooms
- Specified school records were to be kept
- Daily hours of attendance were fixed at three hours thirty minutes (31/2h) for infant classes and four hours thirty minutes (41/2h) for elementary classes.

These reforms of 1925 marked a significant turning point in the development of education in British Cameroon. In 1939, the first secondary school was opened by the Catholic mission in Sasse and it offered a six-year secondary school program leading to the Cambridge University Examinations. Before then, the first teacher training college had been opened in Kake in 1932.

### **The Argument**

Educational development in Cameroon during the colonial period was characterised by continuity and change on the one hand and resistance to change on the other hand. These directions in curriculum endeavours were captured by the study with regards to language of instruction, purpose of education the structure of the syllabus and curriculum relevance. Each of these constitute discussions in the paragraphs that follows:

### **Language of instruction**

Continuity was evident in the use of instruction during the

different era whereby schools were allowed to use the vernacular in teaching. In 1884 when Joseph Merrick opened the first school in Bimbia and learned the native language Isubu which he used as language of instruction in teaching the natives. Subsequently the Duala language was also used as language of instruction in schools in the coastal area to the extent that Alfred Saker wrote books and dictionaries in the Duala language. Though other colonial languages were introduced as language of instruction during the different periods of colonial administration, native languages continued to be used in teaching and learning. Conversely, as the different colonial powers administered the territory during the different periods, some changes in the use of language of instruction became evident as they introduced their colonial languages to be used in teaching and learning in schools. For example, during the German era, the German language was made the only European language to be used as a medium of instruction in schools and while the native languages were accepted in schools, only schools that taught in German were given subventions in terms of grant in aids. French was used in the French administered territory, while English became the official language of instructions in the British administered territories.

### **Purpose of Education**

The reason why colonial education was considered important was because it was seen as one of the best ways to ensure effective occupation of their territories. While the different colonial administration used it to train the workforce, the mission used it as means of spreading the Gospel. The German Colonial administration was determined to enforce the colonial order and promote their culture. These were the driving forces for educational endeavours throughout the colonial era. However, there was resistance from the natives especially to the British policy of adaptation which they saw as an attempt to keep the Africans improvised and primitive.

### **Syllabus**

The implementation of syllabus or the curriculum of schools during the colonial period was characterized by continuity and change in terms of the subjects taught in schools. Throughout the colonial period, the teaching of the 3Rs continued to be dominant in the syllabuses of schools. However, changes were seen in the imposition of subjects considered important to the different colonial masters that administered the territory during the different periods. History of the German empire, German grammar reading and writing in German were compulsory subjects in schools during the German era. In the French administered territory, recognized schools were defined as those which taught exclusively using the French language and using the official syllabus which included arithmetic, reading and writing the metric system history, geography with emphasis on France and French Equatorial Africa. While the

colonial curriculum did not take into consideration the needs of the people, the adaptation policy which to extent was not successful due to resistance from the natives was geared towards providing relevant education that would address the needs and concern of the native Cameroonian.

### Relevance

The issue of relevance of education during the period of colonial administration specifically during British administration was greatly criticized by the Cameroonian elites who felt that the particularity of the adaptationist policies invariably aimed at maintaining Africans in their perceived primitiveness. Though relevant to their needs at the time, they felt that any limitation of the curricular reduced the hope for the scientific and technological training which were the motivating factors for Africans' desire to acquire Western Education (Gwanfogbe, 2002). Any attempt during that period to insist on adaptation was regarded by Africans as a deliberate attempt to delay their development. Consequently, the reform met a lot of resistance from Cameroonians. They further resisted because they were never consulted nor their opinions sought in matters of determining what form of education was relevant for them

### CONCLUSION

Curriculum reforms are usually about the concept of continuity and change. Many curriculum reforms are based on how the curriculum has traditionally been organized. Thus, Government and schools renew their curricula because their existing ones are not what they should be, or simply because there is a belief that changing the curriculum will also bring expected improvements into classrooms. However, the study has pointed out to the fact that curriculum change during the period before independence and reunification in Cameroon was based on the interest of the colonial powers that administered the territory during the territory and not relevant to the needs of the people. This met with resistance from the native who were the consumers of the curriculum and consequently to unsuccessful implementation to the curriculum changes. For educational efforts to succeed in future, it is recommended that school curriculum and pedagogy be refined and updated to suit the needs of young people in this global and digital era. Future

more, a good understanding of change and a clear conception of the curriculum are necessary conditions for improved educational practice.

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