

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

Education in Africa

A Comparative Survey

Edited by

A. Babs Fafunwa and J. U. Aisiku



Education in Africa

First published in 1982, *Education in Africa* offers a comprehensive treatment of the development of education in Africa. Until now only scattered documents on educational growth in individual countries have been available; works devoted to Africa as a whole have tended towards the general and have, by and large, been written by outside observers. This book is a collection of illuminating syntheses of major trends in educational development in Africa, by renowned African educationists, and is the first attempt to supply the need for a comprehensive book on African education written from an African viewpoint. All but one of the chapters were written specially for the book by leading African educators each of whom has had a distinguished career and wide experience in education in his or her own country; they represent eleven nations in all. The volume is designed for African students, teachers and administrators and will also be welcomed by educational planners and by scholars working in the fields of comparative education and the history of education. It will be of special interest to departments, institutions and faculties of education in all the universities and colleges of education in Africa, and to educators and students worldwide who are concerned with comparative African education.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Education in Africa

A Comparative Survey

Edited by A. Babs Fafunwa and J. U.
Aisiku



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

First published in 1982
by George Allen & Unwin

This edition first published in 2022 by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN
and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd, 1982

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

Disclaimer

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and welcomes correspondence from those they have been unable to contact.

A Library of Congress record exists under ISBN: 0043701132

ISBN: 978-1-032-32661-0 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-31611-4 (ebk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-32666-5 (pbk)

Book DOI 10.4324/9781003316114

Education in Africa: A Comparative Survey

Edited by

A. BABS FAFUNWA

J. U. AISIKU

London

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN

Boston Sydney

©George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd, 1982
This book is copyright under the Berne Convention. No reproduction
without permission. All rights reserved.

**George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd,
40 Museum Street, London WC1A 1LU, UK**

George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd,
Park Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 4TE, UK

Allen & Unwin Inc.,
9 Winchester Terrace, Winchester, Mass 01890, USA

George Allen & Unwin Australia Pty Ltd,
8 Napier Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060, Australia

First published in 1982

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Education in Africa.
1. Education—Africa
I. Fafunwa, A. Babs II. Aisiku, J. U.
370'.967 LA1501
ISBN 0-04-370113-2

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Education in Africa.
Includes index.
1. Education—South Africa. 2. Comparative education.
I. Fafunwa, A. Babs, 1923– II. Aisiku, J. U.
LA1501.E364 370'.968 81-19129
ISBN 0-04-370113-2 (pbk.) AACR2

Set in 10 on 11 point Times by Gilbert Composing Services
and printed in Great Britain
by Biddles Ltd, Guildford, Surrey

Contents

1	African Education in Perspective <i>by A. Babs Fafunwa</i>	page	9
2	Education in Cameroon <i>by Solomon Shu</i>		28
3	Education in Egypt <i>by Abdelaziz Soliman</i>		49
4	Education in Ethiopia <i>by Germa Amare</i>		62
5	Education in Ghana <i>by A. Asiedu-Akrofi</i>		98
6	Education in Kenya <i>by Filomina Indire</i>		115
7	Education in Lesotho <i>by J. Mohapeloa</i>		140
8	Education in Liberia <i>by Mary Brown Sherman</i>		162
9	Education in Mali <i>by Ahmadou Toure</i>		188
10	Education in Nigeria <i>by Onyerisara Ukeje and J. U. Aisiku</i>		205
11	Education in Tanzania <i>by Julius Nyerere</i>		235
12	Education in Africa: Progress and Prospect <i>by A. Babs Fafunwa and J. U. Aisiku</i>		254
	Index		262



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Chapter 1

African Education in Perspective

A. BABS FAFUNWA

‘What is African education?’ asked a sceptic. ‘Is it the second-rate education imported from France, Britain, or Spain – the imperial powers that dominated the political and commercial life of the African continent for well over three hundred years?’ Whatever may be the sceptic’s view, educational historians know too well that even when a system is transferred in its purest form from one cultural environment to another there is bound to be a change due to certain cultural, social and/or economic imperatives. In any case no study of the history of education in Africa is complete or meaningful without adequate knowledge of the traditional or indigenous educational system prevalent in Africa prior to the introduction of Islam and Christianity.

As we have stated elsewhere, every society, whether simple or complex, has its own system for training and educating its youth, and education for the good life has been one of the most persistent concerns of men throughout history. However, the goal of education and the method of approach may differ from place to place, nation to nation, and people to people. The Greek idea of an educated man was one who was mentally and physically well balanced. The Romans, on the other hand, placed emphasis on oratorical and military training. In Old Africa the warrior, the hunter, the nobleman, the man who combined good character with a specific skill was adjudged to be a well-educated and well-integrated citizen of his community.

In Old African society the purpose of education was clear: functionalism was the main guiding principle. African society regarded education as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. Education was generally for an immediate induction into society and a preparation for adulthood. In particular, African education emphasised social responsibility, job orientation, political participation and spiritual and moral values. Children learnt by doing, that is to say, children and adolescents were engaged in participatory education through ceremonies, rituals, imitation, recitation and demonstration. They were involved in practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting, and so on. Recreational subjects included wrestling, dancing,

drumming, acrobatic display and racing, while intellectual training included the study of local history, legends, the environment (local geography, plants and animals), poetry, reasoning, riddles, proverbs, story-telling and story-relays. Education in Old Africa was an integrated experience. It combined physical training with character-building, and manual activity with intellectual training. At the end of each stage, demarcated either by age-level or years of exposure, the child was given a practical test relevant to his experience and level of development and in terms of the job to be done. This was a continuous assessment which eventually culminated in a 'passing out' ceremony, or initiation into adulthood.

For the select or the elect, secret cults served as institutions of higher or further education. It was at this level that the secret of power (real or imaginary), profound African philosophy, science and religion were mastered. Irrespective of the level of education and training given during the pre-colonial days in Africa, it was functional because the curriculum was relevant to the needs of the society. Unemployment, if it existed at all, was minimal and very few young men roamed the villages and towns with nothing to do.

Education in Old Africa was not rigidly compartmentalised as is the case in the contemporary system. Today educators are beginning to talk about universities without walls, schools without classes, and subjects without grades. This is as it should be, particularly in Africa where only a handful constitutes the elite and where, if a stage is missed, all other chances may be forfeited. It is even worse if one has never seen the inside of a formal school. Certainly, one important guiding principle is that education, in the widest sense of the word, should be a continuous process, flexible enough to accommodate any mature person at any stage.

The aim, the content and the methods of traditional education are intricately interwoven; they are not divided into separate compartments as is the case with the Westernised system of education. The characteristics of traditional education in Africa are aptly summarised by Abdou Moumouni in his book *Education in Africa*:

- (1) The great importance attached to it, and its collective and social nature.
- (2) Its intimate tie with social life, both in a material and a spiritual sense.
- (3) Its multivalent character, both in terms of its goals and the means employed.
- (4) Its gradual and progressive achievements, in conformity with the successive stages of physical, emotional and mental development of the child.¹

Because indigenous education failed to conform to the ways of the Westernised system, some less well-informed writers have considered it primitive, even savage and barbaric, but such contentions should be seen as the product of ignorance and due to a total misunderstanding of the inherent value of informal education. After all, education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives; that is to say, it is a process for transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge either to ensure social control or to guarantee rational direction of the society or both. All educational systems, whether traditional or Western-oriented, seek to achieve these goals irrespective of the curriculum, methods and organisation designed for the purpose.

When evaluating any educational system one must determine the extent to which it is meeting the needs of a particular society at any given time. Traditional African education must, therefore, be judged not by any extraneous consideration or some foreign yardstick but by its performance within a given social context. Many European observers tend to ignore this important factor.²

In this chapter, therefore, we shall discuss the three major landmarks in the history of African education prior to the era of political independence.

- (1) indigenous or traditional African education before the advent of Islam and Christianity;
- (2) the advent of Islam and Islamic education in Africa;
- (3) the coming of the Christian Missionaries, and the colonial era.

We shall also compare and contrast how each major area operated in a number of African countries including those not represented in this volume.

I SEVEN CARDINAL GOALS OF TRADITIONAL AFRICAN EDUCATION

The objectives of traditional African education are many and varied but the ultimate goal is to produce an individual who is honest, respectful, skilled, co-operative, and who conforms to the social order of the day. Although the educational objectives cannot be neatly distinguished, seven aspects can be identified:

- (1) To develop the child's latent physical skills.
- (2) To develop character.

- (3) To inculcate respect for elders and those in positions of authority.
- (4) To develop intellectual skills.
- (5) To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour.
- (6) To develop a sense of belonging and to encourage active participation in family and community affairs.
- (7) To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

Learning starts early for children in Africa as elsewhere, and more often than not begins at the mother's breast. Fed regularly, weaned when the time is ripe, the African child spends the first five years of its life in a close relationship with its mother. During this early stage the child is reared by the mother, not by the family as a whole.

In a polygamous African family there may be several 'mothers'; they all play a part in caring for the youngest generation but ultimate responsibility for each child lies with its natural mother, who carries it on her back wherever she goes, puts it to bed, looks after it when it is ill and teaches it to speak. Full of curiosity, the baby watches her every gesture, and learns to interpret her smiles, her frowns and her tears.

Little by little, this lively curiosity reaches out beyond the mother's world. Somewhere between the ages of 4 and 6 the grandparents – and sometimes uncles and aunts – begin to take part in the children's education, sending them on little errands, teaching them to be obedient and to respect their elders (this is a very important matter in African society), and to observe certain rules of behaviour. The grandparents also teach them the history of their family or of their people.

African education is 'global'. In other words, each social institution has a role in providing the moral and practical teaching that will enable young boys and girls to take their rightful place in the community.

The traditional educational system is based on age-groups, or on affinities within these groups, whose limits are defined differently by different peoples.

Age is very important to Africans. It confers economic and social privileges, particularly as far as the distribution of prey, rewards and wealth are concerned.

African children love to explore their immediate surroundings, to observe and imitate the actions of adults and to discover new horizons. In this they are no different from other children, whether in Europe, Asia, or elsewhere. What distinguishes them is their way of doing things, and above all the spontaneity with which, in societies that have retained their links with the past, they jump about, climb trees, dance, or move to a rhythm, simply because their brothers and sisters or their elders are doing so. No sooner, in fact, do they discover their limbs, than they discover how to use them.

African children perhaps differ from their European counterparts in that they have completely untrammelled access to the stimulating world of music and dance. The movements of the African dance, in their infinite variety, offer the best possible physical exercise for growing bodies. No teacher or dancing-master is needed: the children join in naturally, following the steps of adults or other children. Dancing and music are also a means of transmitting the culture of a people and of performing together as a group.

In a study of the Yoruba of West Africa, M. A. Fadipe³ has described certain practical aspects of the education of young children.

As soon as her daughter is of age, it is the mother's duty to teach her the rules of hygienic and well-mannered behaviour observed by the group. One of the most important of these rules concerns the use of the right and the left hand.

Before the whites brought their culture to Africa, the use of forks and spoons was unknown. The right hand was traditionally used for lifting food to the mouth and – mainly for this reason – was forbidden to touch unclean objects . . .

A child caught eating before early-morning ablutions – which involved at least washing the face and mouth – would be scolded and punished by an adult member of the group . . .

The 'indirect' education received by the child in the community is almost as important as that received at school.

In certain parts of Africa character training took many forms. Parents encouraged healthy rivalry between children of the same age – sometimes as early as the age of five – by organizing wrestling matches and by setting the children competitive tasks. Fair play was also encouraged; winners and losers alike were congratulated when they played well. The main thing was not winning and losing, but playing the game. With the introduction of Islam, the Koranic schools brought additional elements of character training. Children were sent to the Mallam for three or four hours every afternoon to learn the Koran by heart, together with the principles of Islamic ethics.

Traditional education, as far as character-building was concerned, was certainly severe. But this was because of the importance which African society attaches to this aspect of education. The habit of physical exercise, apprenticeship in a trade, a religious upbringing, a respectful attitude towards one's elders and active participation in community life are indispensable conditions for any African wishing to be considered a person of consequence. The lack of more formal education can be forgiven, but a person who does not fulfil these conditions inflicts the worst possible humiliation on both his immediate family and his more distant kinsfolk.

Respect for one's elders, which is an important part of character training, includes respect for all who represent authority: village chiefs, religious leaders, soothsayers, uncles, relatives and neighbours. Styles of greeting play an essential role in the expression of respect. Salutation is a complicated affair in Africa, with different modes of addressing relatives, elders, equals, chiefs, and so on, and special greetings for morning, afternoon and evening.

There are different formulas for games, dancing, or drumming, for sitting or standing, for tilling the soil or fishing, for weaving, swimming, walking, or recovering from an illness. Anniversaries, funerals, or weddings, yam-growing ceremonies, the rituals of ancestor-worship, the Egungun festivals and other special occasions – all call for special types of greeting.

If 'intelligence' means the capacity to assimilate experience, and if 'intellectualisation' denotes abstract reasoning – as in the formation of concepts or judgements – then it can be said that traditional African education encourages intellectual development. Observation, imitation and participation are three pillars of the educational process.

African children and adolescents learn the geography and history of their community. They know their local hills and valleys like the backs of their hands; they know where the land is fertile and where it is barren. They know when to expect rain and when to expect drought. They know the right times to hunt and fish. In every family the old people are teachers of local history. The songs of praise which often commemorate great events enrich the oral tradition, creating an experience which it is difficult to forget.

Botany and zoology are the subjects of both theoretical and practical lessons, in which special attention is paid to local plants and animals. Where animals are both a source of danger and a means of livelihood their behaviour is another important subject of study.

Proverbs and riddles are exceptional wit-sharpeners, and are used to teach the child to reason and to take decisions.

Africans also have fun with their mathematics in games of skill, such as the 'Ayo' game where players must outwit their opponents in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Some educators have come to believe that certain aspects of traditional African education should be integrated into the modern system, and have begun to work along these lines. This is a field which should be given priority in all developing countries.

One of the aims of education, whether modern or traditional, is to perpetuate a given culture. Traditional Africa sets great store by this aspect of human development.

As they grow up, children of traditional societies absorb and assimilate their peoples' cultural heritage, without formal teaching. They observe, imitate and mimic the actions of their elders and their

siblings. They attend baptisms, religious ceremonies, weddings and funerals, the coronations of kings or chiefs, and the annual yam festival. They watch the acrobatic displays of guilds and associations, often joining in with members of their own age-group or with their families.

As we have already pointed out, responsibility for the upbringing of young Africans is traditionally shared by the entire social group. Good manners, conventions, customs, moral rules and social laws are inculcated by close relatives, by more distant members of the extended family, or by neighbours. The hallmarks of a successful traditional education in Africa are honesty, perseverance and sincerity.

Traditional Professions and Trades

Whether in the northern, eastern, western or southern African community, the aim of African education is basically the same – to produce a man or woman of *character* with the useful skill appropriate to his or her status in life.

Traditional African education is not limited to general education alone. It is also vocationally oriented:

- (1) Agricultural education – farming, fishing, animal care and animal rearing.
- (2) Trades and crafts – weaving, sculpting, drumming, smithing, soap-making, carpentry, singing, wine-tapping, pottery-making, dyeing, hair-plaiting.
- (3) Professions – priesthood, medicine, justice (police, messengers, judges), hunting, military, chieftaincy, kingship.

There are special schools in certain African countries for specific types of education; some of these institutions are known as secret societies. Some of the best known are PORO and SANDE in Liberia, Dipo Ceremony in Ghana, Fertility House in Calabar, Nigeria, and numerous initiation (graduation) ceremonies all over Africa.

Irrespective of the level of training, the method of teaching is through the time-tested apprenticeship system. The period of apprenticeship depends on the complexity of the trade or profession to be learnt. The training of a drummer or singer takes less time than that of a priest or an indigenous doctor or medicine-man.

Kanga Kalembu-Vita of Zaire describes indigenous African education in this way:

The aim of traditional education is the preparation of the youths, their insertion and complete integration into the life of the community. This major objective implies the definition of the specific goals, among which are in particular:

- ensuring education in the matrimonial, social, religious and technical domains (picking of fruits, pharmacopoeia . . .);

- ensuring training in thinking, practical wisdom, aesthetics, etc . . . ,
- ensuring the education of will power through asceticism, self-denial, mortification, physical endurance, self-control, etc . . .

In the African conception, education strives to make the individual pass from his status of an absolute individual to that of an integrated member of the society, to make him lose the illusion of happiness in the state of isolation so that he may accede to true happiness by being open to others, not for personal benefit but in order to create with everybody a new reality transcending individuals, namely the *community*.

In other words, education aims at making man an integral entity, indivisible in himself, a distinct entity but not separated from others, an entity in unity not only with other men but also with the whole of nature, that is the ground, water, fire, light, etc. . . . It is, finally, a question of making man pass from the situation of the individual to the social situation aimed at and finally to that of cosmic participation.

This African education centred on communal life is an education acquired for life and through life. Pululu gives its principal characteristics which he considers as a programme of the New Education: 'Sense of observation, spontaneous activities, exploitation of nature, educative games, co-education of both sexes through games and initiation rituals, learning of the art of oratory, dance, fables, and songs, these are all admirably and very naturally organized in such a way as to make complete and mentally-balanced men who are well adapted to their environment'.⁴

II THE ISLAMIC INFLUENCE ON AFRICAN EDUCATION

The influence of the Islamic religion on African education is considerable. Most students of history are familiar with the Arab North Africa, for instance, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Libya and Tunisia. In this area of Africa Islam and Islamic education had established firm roots long before the Western intervention, and Islamic schools and universities flourished centuries before the arrival of Christian evangelism and colonialism. From there Islam spread to West Africa.

Thus in northern and western Africa and also in a number of eastern and central African countries Islam antedated Christianity and colonialism. Today, of about forty-five countries in Africa, over thirty-five have considerable Islamic influence; that is all of the North and West African countries, over half of the East African countries and some of those in Central Africa. Indeed, Islam has played a major role in the shaping of culture and education in most countries of Africa.

Islamic Education

Wherever Islam has spread rudimentary knowledge of the Qur'an, the Hadith (traditions of the Prophet) and the Shari'a (canon law of Islam) are still taught to its followers.

One Islamic tradition states: the best man among you is one who learns the Qur'an and then cares to teach it.' Islamic learning began on this prophetic advice,⁵ with the result that teaching religion to others was considered a duty for which a person should expect no reward. This noble principle, which was successfully applied at the early stage of the development of Islamic education, reduced the status of a teacher (*mallam*) to that of a beggar: he came to occupy socially a rather low status. He had to wander from place to place looking for charitable Muslims to patronise him and give him food and shelter. Whenever his efforts were not sufficient to procure the bare necessities of life, he had to send his pupils from door to door asking for charity. They were considered to be *muhajirun* (emigrants) who had left their homes in search of knowledge. Even today a pupil in the traditional way of education is called Al-Muhajir, meaning an emigrant. But the higher grade of teachers, the *'ulama*, who were deeply learned in the science of the Qur'an and the Hadith, Islamic theology and etymology, were highly respected right from the time that Islam was first established.

The Qur'anic School System

The system described below is typical of the one most frequently encountered in Black Africa.⁷

A Qur'anic school is usually found in or outside the mosque itself. Indeed, the oldest Muslim university, Al-Azhar in Cairo, was established in a mosque. Today thousands of these schools are located in mosques, private houses, or specially built premises.

As early as the third year of life Muslim children are expected to start the first stage of Qur'anic education. At this stage the pupils learn the shorter chapter of the Qur'an by rote. The only pleasure they can derive from the system at this stage lies in the choral recitations, which often follow a sing-song pattern. The pupils seem to enjoy reciting these verses to themselves in their homes and at play. The method of instruction is as follows, the teacher recites to his pupils the verse to be learnt and they repeat it after him. He does this several times until he is satisfied that they have mastered the correct pronunciation. Then the pupil (or group) is left on his own to continue repeating the verse until he has thoroughly memorised it. The verse is then linked with the previously memorised verses and in this way the pupil gradually learns by heart whole chapters of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an is divided into sixty parts (or *esús*), each of which contains a number of chapters (although very long chapters or parts thereof form certain *esús*). A pupil at what we may call the 'primary' level of the

system is expected to memorise one or two of these sixty *esús*, often beginning with the short chapters. These chapters are usually those he would most require for his daily prayers.

From here the pupil moves on to the next stage at which he learns the alphabet of the Arabic language. The Arabic alphabet is composed of twenty-six letters, all of which are consonants. Some teachers divide these letters into three, often in the ratio 5:5:3, and teach the pupil to recognise the letters by writing some of them on his slate and making him repeat the sounds several times over. This stage lasts between six and thirty-six weeks, depending on the rate at which the pupil learns to recognise the individual letters. When the teacher is satisfied that the pupil has attained the standard required for reading Arabic characters, he introduces him to the formation of syllables with 'vowels'. There are only four vowels which are simply four different notations (or signs) written above or below a consonant to indicate what vowel sound should go with it. When he is able to do this competently, the pupil then employs his newly acquired skills in the reading of the first two parts of the Qur'an all over again.

This stage is affected by the linguistic background of the teacher since variation in the pupil's pattern of articulation could be due to the teacher's accent. It lasts for six to eighteen months, depending, again, on the capabilities of the individual pupil. The spelling pattern, once correctly grasped, enables the pupil to read at sight any texts written in the Arabic language. This is usually the final stage in the acquisition of reading skills.

The teaching of writing starts at different times in different schools. Some pupils start learning how to write Arabic characters as early as the first stage of the system. Others do not start until much later, for example, when they are learning the alphabet. This is generally a very slow, painstaking and rather tedious process during which the teacher writes out the model of the verse on the writing board and the pupil copies it out below several times.

Many people think that Qur'anic education ends here, but this is only the end of what may be regarded as the primary level of the system. Although the pupil has committed the first two *esús* to memory and is now able to read and write in Arabic, he still generally does not know the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an, except for a few translations which he picks up unconsciously either at sermons or during other ceremonies. This is the level every Muslim must pass through if he is to be able to pray and perform other religious duties since the prayers, birth, death, marriage and other religious ceremonies are usually performed in Arabic.

What we may regard as the 'secondary' level of the system has a much broader and deeper curriculum. The pupil begins by learning the meaning of the verses he has committed to memory. The teacher does his

best to explain the Arabic texts. But this is usually far too difficult for young minds and, in many cases, for the teacher as well. Besides knowing the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an the pupil is also introduced to other writings, such as the Hadith. The translation method is largely used and repetition is still fully exploited.

In the traditional system this level merges imperceptibly into the higher level (which in current usage may be termed the 'post-secondary' level). It is at this stage that the pupil begins to learn grammar. The method used capitalises greatly on the mechanical rote-learning of grammatical rules. This, as the linguists often point out, is not the most effective way to teach a language meant for communication.

The course of study at this level includes grammatical inflections, syntax, logic, arithmetic, algebra, rhetoric and versification, jurisprudence, scholastic theology, commentaries on the Qur'an, treatises on exegesis and the principles and rules of interpretation of the laws of Islam, and the traditions of the Prophet and commentaries thereon. These are regarded as different branches of learning and it is not often that a teacher attains perfection in all of them. A scholar who is good at jurisprudence may be relatively weak at arithmetic. That is why, at this stage, the student of the Qur'anic system is often instructed by more than one mallam.

It is also at this stage that the student decides in which area he wishes to specialise. This marks the beginning of the university level. Having chosen his specialist subject, he proceeds to a university (usually one of the celebrated universities at Fez, Sankore, Timbuktu, or Al-Azhar) or continues at home learning from local specialists. By this time the student has acquired some proficiency in the Arabic language and is able to read, understand and interpret many of the works of earlier scholars in his field. At the end of his studies he receives a 'licence' empowering him to practise as a teacher, an *imam*, or an *alkali*, depending on his area of specialisation.

In Qur'anic schools, unlike formal schools, there are no rigidly codified rules, but there are a few conventionalised ways of behaviour which guide the pupils – and the teachers. The teacher regards himself as the custodian of his pupils, his duty being primarily to train them to be good citizens. The school week starts on Saturday and ends on Wednesday. There is no bell to summon the pupils to school; nor is there a fixed dress.

Fees are paid in cash and kind. There is no fixed amount, as this varies from teacher to teacher. The teacher collects the 'fees' from his pupils. These do not usually amount to more than a few pennies. The teacher may also receive gifts, such as grain, meat, cooked foodstuffs, a piece of cloth, or a prayer mat (almost invariably a goat's skin), particularly during one of the Muslim festivals.

Helping with onerous chores is considered part of a pupil's duties to

his teacher. During the month of Ramadhan the older pupils accompany their teacher to his preaching ground – usually a busy and conspicuous part of the street. There it is their duty to get the place lit and the chairs arranged and to treat the audience to melodious songs and poems in praise of the Prophet.

On ceremonial occasions – such as the Eid-el-Fitr, Eid-el-Kabir, Maulud Nabiyyi (the Prophet's birthday) and the Lailatul Qadr ('The Night of Greatness', a night in the month of Ramadhan) – the pupils present 'plays' based on the life of the Prophet. These are very similar to the Roman liturgical plays and the medieval miracle plays that succeeded them.

Qur'anic School Teachers

The qualifications of Qur'anic schoolteachers differ from person to person and from place to place. Sometimes they are highly learned *ulama*, well versed in Islamic studies, but this is rare. Then there are those whose only qualification is that they can recite the Qur'an and write Arabic characters. Such people usually start up a class with their own children, and neighbours are encouraged to send their children along.

Some Qur'anic school proprietors do not insist on a set fee to be paid by the pupil. But recently some Arabic schools have introduced various fees for admission, award of certificates and monthly or annual tuition fees.

Most of the Qur'anic schools are run according to the discretion of their individual proprietors, who are invariably Qur'anic schoolteachers themselves. As a result, instruction differs from school to school, and there is no uniform curriculum, nor are there prescribed qualifications for teachers. In most schools former pupils are appointed as teachers at extremely low wages. Considerable reform is being carried out in many of these schools today.

It should be noted, however, that Muslim institutions of higher learning and universities are organised and administered along modern lines like other universities in the world, for example, the universities of Algiers, Libya, Cairo and Rabat.

III THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The vast exploration of Africa in the early nineteenth century and the evangelistic and trading activities that followed led to the 'scramble for Africa' in the 1880s, and the eventual establishment of colonial rule over large portions of the continent. Among the principal 'winners' in the scramble were Britain and France. Thus, all the countries covered in this work, except Liberia and Ethiopia, were at different periods in their

history under the colonial rule of these two countries – Britain and France.

Although Liberia was never a colony, nevertheless, its history as a nation is usually traced to the activities of the ‘American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States of America’. Similarly Ethiopia, though never colonised, also had some experience of foreign incursion through the Italian occupation of 1935–41. Cameroon represents a country with a dual colonial experience, while Egypt stands as an exemplar of a country which had a diluted experience of multiple foreign interventions, having been occupied at different points by the French, the Osmani Empire and then the British.

Thus, either by way of occupation, direct colonial rule, or through massive migration (as was the case of Liberia), all the countries covered in this work shared a common history of foreign intervention. The impact of such influences on the educational development in Africa is the subject of this part of the chapter.

The first general remark on the history of education in colonial Africa is that foreign missions (Christian or Islamic) with interests in Africa pioneered and dominated the educational sector for many years. This pioneering work in education should be judged in the context of the missions’ early recognition of the supreme importance of education in the successful prosecution of their evangelistic assignments. Therefore, education for the propagation of the gospel – to win African souls for Christ – was made a central objective of mission education in colonial Africa. In the later years of colonisation, when the colonial governments began to show interest in education, the general goal of education did not seem to have changed. What seemed to have changed was the shift in emphasis – a shift from a purely religious education to a diluted semi-secular education which emphasised the role of the school in the continued furtherance of colonial interests in Africa. All the countries covered in this work shared this common characteristic in the development of their educational systems.

A third general observation common to Africa’s colonial system of education is that there were conscious and obvious attempts, first by the foreign missions and later by the colonial governments, to educate the African away from his culture. This feature was more pronounced in the French colonies where education meant ‘frenchifying’ the African. This is not to play down Britain’s guilt in this attempt. For example, indigenous schools, usually referred to as the bush schools, were reinstated into ‘catechetical’ schools (as in Kenya, for instance) and the first village elementary schools. The highly sophisticated PORO school system in Liberia and Sierra Leone was almost completely eradicated in the colonial period.

A fourth common characteristic of the colonial system of education in Africa was the lack of co-ordination, particularly in the early years of

colonisation when the missions, to the near exclusion of the governments, dominated the provision of education to the people. Indeed, each mission or voluntary agency concentrated on its respective area of operation without much regard for developments outside it.

Thus far, we have noted the missionary dominance of educational objectives which, in turn, limited the curriculum of the mission schools to the essentials of the Christian or Muslim life. In addition to religion, reading, writing and arithmetic were made the pillars of every school curriculum. The narrowness of the school curriculum remained relatively unchanged even after the increased government involvement in education. Religious education still dominated the curriculum while the entire school system grew increasingly bookish and examination-oriented. This development was common to both the British and French colonies where schools were used basically for preparing the African for the semi-skilled job market. In fact, the volume and quantity of education the colonial administrators were willing to give to the Africans were the barest minimum necessary for such auxiliary positions as clerks, interpreters, preachers, pupil-teachers, and so on.

Over this issue of the volume and quantity of education Britain, France and others showed remarkable differences. Britain, under the policy of 'imperial trusteeship' which, according to Allison Smith, meant a 'limited liability and a reluctance to undertake large-scale projects because of the risks involved',⁶ pursued an educational policy which guaranteed a steady flow of African manpower. Britain, unlike France, recognised that the colonised countries might eventually revert to self-rule. Consequently, facilities were expanded in British colonies to provide secondary and higher education much earlier than in the French.

Britain's recognition of its colonies' possible return to self-rule, a possibility unrecognised by France, accounted largely for the differences in both countries' colonial policies including their colonial education policies. For example, while Britain embarked on a policy of partnership soon after the Second World War in 1945, France intensified its policy of assimilation and association intended to ensure continued and perpetual consolidation of French colonial influence and authority in Africa. In fact, the French saw their colonies as overseas units of European France. Therefore, rather than develop an educational system which upheld African values, culture and ideals, determined efforts were made to make colonial education a close replica of the educational system in France. And as far back as 1924 all mission schools in the French colonies were required to conform to a state model – that of the schools of metropolitan France.

In terms of quality, structure, curriculum, examinations and certificates, the French colonial schools were almost exactly like their counterparts in France. The curricula were decided by officials in the

Ministry of Colonies in Paris. The African schoolchild had to recite French poems, sing French hymns and learn French literature, and was taught French geography and the history of France. He had to contend with French teachers, particularly at the secondary schools (lycées) and, of course, grapple with a foreign language as the medium of instruction. By the time the child qualified for the Baccalauréat he was, in the words of Mumford and Orde-Brown, 'French in all but the colour of his skin'.⁸ According to an on-the-spot assessment of the quality of French colonial schools, with the Bamako schools at Mali as reference, Mumford and Orde-Brown wrote:

the general impression gained from a visit to the Bamako School was that the institutions were equal in standing and equipment to the best that Europe can produce. Using the term in its biological sense, these schools are the 'growing points' of French civilization in Africa.⁹

In general, French colonial education was essentially a means of producing a nucleus of native aristocracy who would eventually propagate French ideals and uphold French ways of life.

Britain, on its part, showed some concern for the adaptation of education to the African situation. In fact, the policy statement issued by the British government in 1925 as a result of the Phelps-Stokes Commission on African Education noted: 'Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life . . .'.¹⁰ Consequently Britain suggested vocational education in place of the prevalent concentration on academic education. But this preference was not sufficiently backed up in practice since there was no corresponding growth in industry, agriculture and commerce to guarantee recipients of vocational education a place in the job market. Hence, for example, the insistence on the primacy of industrial and manual education in Sierra Leone as far back as 1926 failed to change the people's preference for classics and literary academic work.

While Britain made efforts, though somewhat superficial and insincere, at adapting colonial education to African situations, France's colonial duty in the field of education was, according to Governor Roume, to produce native trained staff who must be auxiliaries in every field and assume the status of a carefully chosen elite. The other task of education, Governor Roume added, was to bring the masses through schools nearer to France and to transform the 'native' system of living. Thus, in place of British partnership and adaptation, the French stood for association and assimilation; and the French colonial school system consequently remained wholly French in character, structure, content and methodology.

Another feature of British colonial education was the principle of racial segregation perpetuated in Kenya and Tanzania. There was also the 'indirect rule system' in northern Nigeria with its consequence of an imbalance of educational development between the northern and southern areas of that country.

In Kenya and Tanzania different schools were established for the different racial groups: Europeans, Asians, Arabs and Africans. In Nigeria the Qur'anic schools were allowed to flourish in the Muslim north while Christian education flourished in the Christian south. One of the effects of this segregational feature of British colonial education was the lack of uniformity in standards and in facilities amongst the African schools. This became in the later years of colonisation the target of attack by a few educated Africans in those countries. Another effect of this development was the growth of community involvement in education in British colonies.

Apparently in recognition of the need to promote local participation in education, Britain decentralised the control of education and the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, instituted in 1923, gradually shed its controlling powers, first to territorial departments of education and later to regional and local bodies.

Closely associated with this decentralised control of education was the introduction of a new system of administration and supervision of educational development in the whole of British tropical Africa. This new system also became necessary for the implementation of a new financing system introduced in response to the demand of missionary and other voluntary bodies for government financial assistance. The financial assistance system known as grants-in-aid, which was meant to supplement the efforts of the missions and other voluntary agencies, soon developed to permit government's supervision and inspection of non-government schools to determine qualification for recipients and to ensure some uniformity in standards. Schools which did not qualify for government grants were privately run, drawing their finances exclusively from contributions of the missionary bodies, private individuals, local authority and community organisations. In some countries non-government schools began to earn such grants-in-aid as early as 1870, and by 1925 grants-in-aid rules were already laid down in countries such as Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria.

The introduction of the system of grants-in-aid, and the resultant classification of schools into aided and unaided schools in British colonies, intensified the Africans' demand for more government involvement in the provision of more and better education for the people. In Tanzania political parties were used to press the agitation for more schools; the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), as it was then called, opened primary schools and turned them over to parents' associations. The role of such political parties, local

communities and unions in the development of education during the colonial era is an important landmark in the history of education in British Africa, whereas in French Africa during the same period such laudable development was comparatively non-existent. The French policy of association and assimilation seemed to have drowned the few nationalist voices in French Africa in this direction. For example, rather than expand higher education facilities in the French colonies, the French Colonial Office in Paris preferred to give scholarships to Africans for higher studies in Paris. Mali had no higher institution of university status but, in the 1959–60 school year, for example, there were 158 Malians receiving higher education on government scholarships.¹⁰

The school systems varied between the British and French colonies partly because the French were obliged to follow the metropolitan pattern. Nevertheless, in spite of differences of nomenclature and organisation, the conventional division into primary, secondary and higher levels can be discerned in the respective chapters of this book.

While higher education in the British colonies was largely the development of academic intellectualism, some measure of professionalisation and vocational education was introduced by the French. Mali, as an example of the French system, had separate specialised institutions to cater for the different professions and vocational trades. In contrast, Britain established single institutions to offer specialisation in a number of professions and trades. In Nigeria, for example, trade centres were opened at the secondary level while at the higher education level the Yaba Higher College offered specialisation in medicine, agriculture, engineering, surveying and teacher training.

In all the countries covered in this work all educational institutions, including primary schools, were fee-paying under the colonial system. Furthermore, primary education expanded disproportionately to secondary education while higher education was pathetically inadequate. Although primary education was expanded, illiteracy was very pronounced in the colonial era. Primary schools were few and scattered; pupils had to walk long distances to schools. It was to avoid the necessity of schoolchildren having to walk long distances and because of the missionaries' belief in the negative influence of the pupils' homes on their Christianising efforts that some schools were made into boarding schools. The boarding system, predominant at the secondary school level, limited its growth, thereby intensifying the bottleneck at this level of education. That was the system inherited by British colonies upon the attainment of independence, and when independent African countries embarked upon free and, in some countries, such as Tanzania, Kenya and Nigeria, compulsory primary education, they had to grapple with this bottleneck situation at the secondary education level. Kenya and Tanzania have since abandoned the boarding system.

We now come to the years immediately preceding independence. As noted earlier, British Africa led the French in the agitation for increased quantity and improved quality of education. As early as 1929 the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association was formed in Kenya and that movement was very active and vocal between 1929 and 1936, expressing strong dissatisfaction with the quantity and quality of education provided by the missions. In that same country Tom Mboya launched the famous Airlift of 1959 in which the young Kenyans of African descent were flown to the United States of America and later to other parts of the world, especially London, for education. There was also the pioneering contribution of the TANU party in Tanzania and President Julius Nyerere's personal leadership in the advancement of an educational system founded on African values and ideals.

The United Gold Coast Convention and later Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) also championed the call for more and better education for the people of Ghana. And in Nigeria ethnic groups formed unions like the Ibo Union and the Egbe Omo Oduduwa to add support and voice to the agitation of the newly emergent nationalist movements. In these countries community-sponsored schools – primary and secondary – were established; and in addition the various unions offered scholarships to deserving sons and daughters of their members for overseas education. The Harambee school in Kenya exemplifies Africa's voluntary and community endeavour in the context of African-directed Western education.

That was the picture in the closing years of colonial education in Africa. Young educated Africans, political parties, ethnic groups, and so on, began to ask for more education and for a redefinition of the goals and purposes of education. There was general discontent expressed against the colonial education, especially in British Africa. This is not to claim that all was calm in French Africa. Guinea, though not represented in this book, championed the call for self-government and the demand for an educational system that reflected African conditions. Mali, soon after independence in 1960, embarked on a thorough educational reform meant to give it a truly Malian system of education.

On the whole, whatever the differences and similarities between the British and French colonial systems of education, the essential and common concern of the colonial schools was the provision of a modicum of education necessary for the African to fit into colonial expectations. It was in the post-independence period that the respective governments began to transform education to promote national awareness, economic productivity and political consciousness. How each country carried out this business of transformation of education along national ideals will be seen in the contributions on individual countries.

NOTES: CHAPTER 1

- 1 Abdou Moumouni, *Education in Africa*, trans. N. Phyllis (London: Deutsch, 1968) p. 15.
- 2 A. B. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), p. 17.
- 3 N. A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970), pp. 111–13.
- 4 Kanga Kèlemba-Vita and others, 'Black civilization and education', paper presented at Second World Black Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos, 1977, p. 3.
- 5 A. R. I. Doi, *Introduction to the Hadith* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1970), pp. 90–5.
- 6 A. Smith 'Trusteeship and partnership in British Africa', *The Year Book of World Affairs, 1953* (London: Stephens, 1953), p. 170.
- 7 S. A. Jimoh, 'A critical appraisal of Islamic education in Nigeria', mimeographed M. Ed. term paper, Faculty of Education: University of Ye, 1971, pp. 10–15.
- 8 W. Bryant Mumford and G. St J. Orde-Brown, *Africans Learn to be French: A Review of Educational Activities in the Seven Federated Colonies of French West Africa based on a tour of French West Africa and Algiers undertaken in 1935*. (London: Evans, 1936), p. 47.
- 9 *ibid*, p. 44.
- 10 Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies, *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa* (London: HMSO, 1925), p. 4. (See also note 2 of Chapter 5.)
- 11 H. Kitchen, *The Educated African* (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 498.