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Political ramification on educational policy in colonial kenya

Ngeno Kipkemoi Robert, Dr Samson O. Barasa, Prof. John Chang'ach

Moi University, Department of Educational Foundations

School of Education P.O. Box 3900, Eldoret (code 30100) Kenya

Changach65@gmail.com

Abstract

Colonial educational policies were marked by conflicting interests of different actors who were involved in the provision and consumption of education. Initially, education matters were left to individual colonies and voluntary agencies, but from 1925, Whitehall began to take a keen interest in the development of education in the colonies. Several educational policies were enacted, including Fraser report, the East African Protectorate Education Commission in Kenya, Phelps-stoke commission, Memorandum on education policy in British Tropical Africa, Beecher committee of 1949 and Binns committee report of 1952. These policies sought to inculcate western morals, technical skills, and the need for rural advancement. Africans did not contend with recommendations of these commissions; therefore, several institutions emerged that sought to improve educational conditions for Africans, such as political associations, Local Native councils, and Independent school associations. Data for this study was collected qualitatively; this involved both primary and secondary sources of data. The results of the study indicate that politics has a direct influence on educational policy. The study will be significant to educational stakeholders, educational policy developers, and planners, educational historians and will be used as a basis for teaching politics and education in colonial Kenya and for future research in the history of education.

1.0 Introduction

British educational policies were riddled with controversies marked by conflicting interests. Prior to First World War (Whitehead, 2005) indicates that the colonial empire was less concerned with education in the colonies because education was considered a matter for local initiative and voluntary agencies. Due to emergence of the League of Nations' concept of trusteeship, colonial office established the Advisory Committee on Native Education in June 1923 which was later renamed Advisory Committee on Education in Colonies. (Schilling, 1980) indicates that this Advisory Committee on Native education was made up of the following membership; missionary societies representatives, educational experts, imperial affairs personnel and permanent staff of the colonial office. The Commission succeeded in two ways; first, it issued Memorandum on policy questions which some of them were adopted as official government policy. Secondly, it advised the secretary of states on specific matters referred to colonial office by individual colonies.

Urch (1971) document that pertaining provision of education to Africans, two schools of thought emerged; those who believed in rapid westernization of Africans. This school demanded that African values be changed and called for social change. The other school of thought believed in maintenance of African traditions that were essential for well-being of the Africans According to (Bogonko, 1984) missionaries emphasised technical education for Africans as a development tool. Their aim was to inculcate habits of industry among their converts as a way of discouraging idleness. The missionaries also believed that through technical education, they would be able to be self-sufficient. It was a means of raising enough food, cash, bricks for building and furniture in their mission stations.

2.0 Colonial Education Policies and Influence of Education in Kenya

According to Jensz (2018), missionary participation in African education began as early as 1910 when they held the Edinburg conference in Scotland attended by 1200 delegates. One of the topic of discussion, was education of Africans in European colonies. Some missionaries who were internationally influential such as J. Oldham and Rev. Jesse Jones, became influential in calling for specific practices in curriculum implementation such

adaptation of Africans to rural environment. This was reflected in policy document of education ordinance of 1925. Several educational policies that came up later up to the time of independence replicated this idea. Kallaway (2009) documents that policies regarding governance, access and curriculum were central in mission education. Cooperation between missionaries and state in provision of education, were strengthened by the increased demand of education linked to nationalist demands and the shrinking resources that were available to the missionaries therefore the need to get financial assistance from the state.

According to Urch (1971), pioneer educational recommendations in colonial Kenya were made by the Fraser Report of 1909. It was chaired by Professor Nelson Fraser a former Principal of Training College in Bombay University. He arrived in Kenya in January 1909 and released his report in October 1909. The report influenced development of education in the following ways; it directed government to take full control of education in the colony, it proposed the appointment of Director of Education and recommended financial aid of missionaries in order to support their educational work.

According to (Misigo, 2013), the East African Protectorate Education Commission of 1919 was established because missionaries had failed to adhere to the standards that had been set for teacher of 1916. It proposed that secular schools should include in their curriculum religious and moral instruction. It also recommended literary education and technical training in areas such as; medical, administrative, commercial, industrial and agricultural work. Urch (1971) note that the commission recommended use of vernacular in preliminary stages of education and later use of English in upper classes. Concerning European and Asiatic education, (Mambo, 1983) note that this commission proposed for an equality of educational needs between Indian and European races although the Europeans continued to gain upper hand in terms of allocation of funds for education.

Urch (1971) asserts that Phelps-Stoke Commission of 1924 was chaired by Dr Thomas Jesse Jones Welsh-born American sociologist at Columbia University. It recommended adaptation of education to the needs of the local community. It also pointed out lack of cooperation between government, mission and settler representatives. It recommended that government should play a key role in establishment and maintenance of teacher training centres. Booth (2003) and Githungu, et.al (2014) points out that Phelps-stoke report dedicated an entire chapter to female education and concluded that the social evils of African society was a result of ignorance of women. Cooking, clothing and housekeeping were the aspects of domestic care in African homesteads which were dependent on women therefore, if they were ignorant on how to perform them civilisation would be hindered. Curriculum for girls was geared towards development of western ideals centred on health, hygiene and care of children. Prevost (2017) document that African female education in the period between the first and the second world wars, was a product of joint venture between the state, missionaries and philanthropic initiatives. This education superseded the intended adaptation that was intended by the Phelps-Stoke and introduced another level of adaptation known as gendered adaptation whose key objectives were; preservation of integrity and moral uprightness. It was also perceived as an important tool in limiting the dangers of modernisation in rural areas.

According to (Misigo, 2013), the Phelps-Stoke Commission was instrumental in resolving the existing conflict between major interest groups in provision of education in Kenya. It advocated for establishment of schools in the heart of rural areas. According to Githungu et.al, (2014), the commission also stressed on practical education of African communities. Tum (1996) asserts that it was expected that the rural schools would be limitedly influenced by the missionaries and European settlers. However this was not the case in Kenyan context because the missionaries strategically placed themselves in local institutions such as LNCs that enacted and implemented educational policies at the grassroots.

Memorandum on Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa was formulated as an attempt unite missionaries and colonial office in provision of African education. According to (Booth, 2003), it was a product of activities and influence of the Advisory Committee on Native Education. The Memorandum proposed that education for the Natives was to render an individual more efficient in his or her condition of life. Concerning preparation of one for life, Whitehead (2018) using the case of Queen Elizabeth school in Northern Nigeria examined preparation of girls for life as wives, workers and mothers. The school sought to give girls complete education and did not prioritise domestic education over professional life.

Akala et.al (2018) and Tum (1996) note that Beecher committee of 1949 was chaired by L.J Beecher and it deviated from the recommendations of the earlier education commissions by noting the negative effects of the industrial and agricultural aspects of curriculum therefore, it proposed for a more positive approach in industrial and agricultural orientation of African curriculum. According to Tum (1996), the commission recommended effective control and expansion of education at all levels. Githungu et.al, (2014) further posits that the commission also sought to maintain Christian principles and European moral standards due to declining African moral standards. There was also Binns Committee report of 1952 chaired by Binns. Tum (1996) note that the commission recommended that agriculture be made the core subject in the curriculum. It also recommended further reduction of examinations in the education system. Githungu et.al, (2014) stated that the education offered ignored African culture and invested on schooling efforts in moral education.

Generally, British educational policies dealt with diverse issues including; use of vernacular in African education, nature and content of school curriculum, female education, mass education, local education committees, educational administration among others. It was evident from William Ormsby accounts who was the under-secretary for state in 1929 that there was inadequate coordination of ideas in education between colonies. According to (Whitehead, 2003) the need to have excellent interchange of ideas between colonies led to establishment of oversea education journal. The aim of this journal was to enhance exchange of knowledge in educational spheres between colonies, to inform the leading education officials on education developments elsewhere and to keep colonial officials in periphery in touch with those in Whitehall.

2.1 Political Associations and Education in Kenya

According to Maxon (1986), political associations were mainly formed as an attempt by the elites to gain access to local resources, political, social and economic opportunities. Its members believed that, this could only be attainable through greater influence in grassroots institutions such as Local Native Councils and District Education Boards. Its members comprised of successful farmers, traders, employees of Christian missions and colonial government.

These associations were not evenly spread across the country because economic, social and political conditions were not uniform. Maxon, (1986), further indicates that such political associations among the Luo, Agikuyu and Abaluhya ethnic communities were active during interwar years whereas among the Abagusii, it rose to prominence after the Second World War. The same is also true among the Kipsigis as noted by Rono and Chepcheng (2016) that activities of the Kipsigis Central Association emerged after the Second World War. It urged the colonial government to provide more and better education to the Kipsigis.

In central Kenya, political associations were in existence as early as 1920s. Kikuyu Association is a good example of an association that was active at that time. Its membership was made up of colonial chiefs and young mission educated members such as Harry Thuku who were seen to be more radical. According to (Njagi, 2011), the younger men perceived chiefs as colonial administration associates therefore, they had little regard for them. On the other hand, the chiefs did not favourably view the educated youth. Clayton and Savage, (1974) argue that this later on, led to a split and formation of another association called Young Kikuyu Association by the younger members which was modelled after Young Buganda Association

According to Njagi (2011) despite the conflict of interests by its members, Kikuyu Association was able to agitate for improvement of native welfare particularly education. One of its resolutions related to education passed in a meeting held on 24th June 1921, urged the government to spend the revenues derived from the natives to the benefit of the natives' education. In western Kenya, the first political association to be formed was Young Kavirondo Association (YKA) on 23rd December 1921. According to Lonsdale (1968), the association under chairmanship of Jonathan Okwiri agitated for the missionary educated elites to be actively involved in local affairs. It also demanded for the construction of a government school and general improvement of educational facilities in Nyanza.

Activities of these associations in development of education were afflicted with a number of challenges. Firstly, they were perceived with a lot of suspicion by the colonial government therefore, any unruly occurrence in their area of operation was associated with them. Its members although they were accommodated in local institutions

such as Local Native Councils and District Education Boards, they were closely monitored by colonial administrators such as the District Commissioners.

Secondly, wrangles and antagonism led to split of larger association into smaller associations that made little influence socially and politically. It has been indicated by Aseka (1989) that Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association split in 1924 leading to emergence of North Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association which had conflicts with the mother association over land and schools in the border locations of Luo and Luhya communities. Thirdly, pressure from colonial administration forced most political associations to adhere to government policies and declarations so as to minimise hostility from the colonial government. They ended up adopting collaborationist approach in order to gain greater influence in the local affairs for example; Kisii Union and Young Kavirondo Associations

2.2 Emergence and Contribution of Independent School Association to Education in Colonial Kenya

Development of education in Kenya would be incomplete without examining the role of independent schools and independent movements. As early as 1920s, Africans had begun agitating for establishment of educational facilities that offered skills beyond technical training. They believed that intellectual advancement was key in preparing them for placement in existing economic setup. Pinto (1963) and Tum (1996) concur that Church council on October 1929, passed a resolution which prohibited African parents from seeking admission for their children to schools if they failed to give an undertaking that they opposed female circumcision. This resolution was supported by colonial government officials. This led to formation of independent schools associations such as Kikuyu Independent Schools Associations and Kikuyu Karinga Education Associations.

Njagi (2011) asserts that there is evidence that independent schools existed before 1929. Persistent failure by the colonial government to address African concerns in terms of education, led to emergence of initiatives to construct their own schools. The urge of setting independent schools were driven by the need for freedom to practice their own customs and select their own curriculum without external interference. Missionaries were determined to retain control of education in their hands selecting only those aspects of education which they saw fit to teach Africans. Tum (1996) and Abreau (1982) indicates that the colonial government did not provide adequate educational facilities to Africans therefore, independents schools were established in order to fill that void. Most of the schools were put up and managed in the spirit of self-help.

Kamuyu (1981), note that the first independent school in central Kenya was established in 1913 at Giathiiko Kiambu. It was established as an attempt to challenge the missionaries and colonial government educational policies that denied Africans 'proper' education which they yearned for. This is the reason why in their schools, Africans implemented syllabus that contradict the existing government policies for example language policy. Whereas the government clearly outlined that English be taught from standard IV, independent schools emphasized teaching of English at the earliest possible stage.

2.3 Local Native Councils and Education in Kenya

Wamagatta (2008) note that Local Native Councils were created in 1925 with an aim of enabling Africans to control their own affairs and formulate legislations in their respective geographical areas. According to Mambo (1983) LNCs were aimed at closer monitoring of the whole country by the colonial administration. They were instrumental in development of education in colonial Kenya. Mambo, (1981) note that a District Commissioner was a chairman of LNC and wielded considerable powers. Other members of the council were; chiefs, headmen and nominated 'safe' African representatives. This is reinforced by (Wamagatta, 2008) who notes that District Commissioners strictly controlled LNCs businesses and that majority of members were chiefs who made sure that government resolutions sailed through.

According to (Schilling, 224), LNCs generated funds in various ways such as; local taxes, fines, fees and income from rents. Mambo (1981) points out that LNCs' main contribution was development of infrastructure in health, agriculture, public works or road building, water supply, famine relief and education. Njagi (2011) notes that LNCs continuously called for better schools, provision of secondary and higher education to Africans and review of curriculum particularly provision of non-religious instruction in schools

It should be noted that although there were other pressing areas of concern, most LNCs became preoccupied with increasing educational opportunities. In matters education, (Mambo, 1983:181) indicates that LNCs adopted independent stand. Colonial government established District Education Boards in order to regulate the amount of funds LNCs could spend on education. DEBs were also chaired by District Commissioners and other members comprised of missionary representatives, colonial government officials and African representatives. Despite their representation, educated Africans were dissatisfied with DEB membership (Mambo, 1981:62).

A number of LNCs such as Kiambu, Murang'a Nyeri, North Nyanza, Central Nyanza and South Nyanza made attempts to build their own central high schools by each raising ten thousand pounds (Bogonko, 1992:7). Fort Hall, Kiambu and Nyeri Local Native Councils were anxious to get the schools started (Mambo, 1983:182). This ambition was not immediately realised. As noted by (Wamagatta, 2008:349), the Director of Education failed to sanction building of Githunguri High school by citing lack of staff who were to be in charge of the school. Instead, he recommended that the funds collected for that purpose were to be used for improvement of existing mission buildings in the District. Although North Nyanza and South Nyanza quickly raised funds, the colonial government thwarted their efforts of building high schools.

A few months after establishment of Machakos LNC, there was general improvement of school infrastructure in the area. The LNC was able to put up a number of permanent village schools. Generally, LNCs contribution to development of education cannot be overemphasized. They pressed the colonial government to hasten reforms in education.

Areas that were beyond the jurisdiction of 1924 LNC ordinance such as Mombasa and Lamu seemed to have been disadvantaged because they missed large sums of money that could have been earmarked for education. This was also replicated in areas which had no mission schools because government could not provide any grants-in-aid (Mambo, 1983:182-183). This was also true for those Districts that were seen to be less progressive and which established LNCs later. They lagged behind their counterparts in educational development which became apparent during independence. This has culminated into enactment of policies such as quota system in education in post-independent Kenya as an attempt to limit disparities in education that exist between different regions.

3.0 Ramifications of politics in Colonial educational policies in Kenyan Context

Colonial educational policies in Kenya were riddled with controversies and conflict of interest by different actors. Policy enactment and implementation in education is not a straightforward activity. It entails negotiation of hidden interests in order to arrive at consensus. Levinson (2009) argues that the best way to understand policy is to see it as a kind of social practice specifically, a practice of power. In most cases, it tends to reproduce existing structures of domination and inequality. It also tends to extend the interests of those who disproportionately wield power. The most influential actors in educational policy formulation and enactment in colonial Kenyan context were the Missionaries and the colonial government representatives. Africans were relegated to the periphery although at times their interests were articulated by the some missionaries for example Archdeacon Owen. According to (Okia, 2012), Archdeacon Owen viciously fought against African forced labour abuses. Some of the complaints that he raised were taken up by colonial office, anti-slavery and Aborigines protection society press. Other personalities who had closer link with missionaries who shaped positively development of African education in London were J.H Oldham, Norman Leys, Handley Hooper, and Randall Davidson. Christopher (2013) note that it was the support of this influential members of the church that policy in Britain was influenced.

According to Schilling (1980), the settlers unlike the missionaries lacked capability to leverage in Britain but in the colony, they were powerful. They were well represented in the legislative and executive councils therefore, they were able to influence budget for African education and shape legislation regulating African education

Education reports that were enacted during the colonial period in Kenya from Fraser of 1909 to Binns report of 1952 mainly emphasized provision of technical education to Africans. This was an attempt by the colonialists to maintain power and limit Africans from making educational strides. However, there was a positive turn in African education from 1940s due to wind of change globally and also as a result of efforts by officers who served in the Advisory Committee on Native Education in Colonies such as Frank Ward. Whitehead (2003) observe that

during Ward's reign as the editor for *Journal of Oversea Education*, he covered different aspects of African education in the *Journal* including; Philosophy of education in colonial setting, relevance of school curriculum, activities of local education committees, educational administration, examination reform, mass education, new colonial universities among others.

Political associations were instrumental in agitating for provision of better education for Africans in Kenya. Educational politics were prevalent in these associations. The members were driven by the urge to gain access to political, economic, social and economic opportunities in their localities. Most of these members were successful farmers, traders and graduates of missionary schools. Competing interests of its members limited its achievements. There was lack of trust between the chiefs and young members who were more radical and often perceived the chiefs as associates of the colonial administration. They demanded for expenditure of collected revenue from the natives on development of natives' education.

Local Native councils contributed to general development of education of Africans in Kenya. Politics of education were prevalent in LNCs because they were composed of different actors such as; chiefs, headmen, missionaries and colonial government officials. Their efforts to development of native education include; agitation for better schools and review of curriculum particularly provision of non-religious instruction. Some LNCs through their District Commissioners for example Central Nyanza, were able to agitate for funds from the government for education of dependants of soldiers who died in the First World War. The eligible children were registered in order to benefit from the scheme whether they had or had not reached the school age. They were to receive free primary education and their names added to the register of beneficiaries. In intermediate schools such children were to be given remission of fees (KNA: PC/NZA/3/6/13). Barasa (2018:258) notes that politics influences the sponsorship and financing of education in terms of structure, content, method and process which is exactly what this study has affirmed.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has openly pointed out the important role played by politics in determining the development and implementation of educational policies. It is apparent that British were liberal in enactment and implementation of educational policies in its colonies. Educational officials in each colony were given freehand to exercise their initiative in effecting the educational suggestions made the Whitehall through institution such as Advisory Committee on Native Education. This was mainly guided by the fact that education was considered a matter for local initiative.

Colonial educational policies in Africa were highly influenced by missionary activities. The state and missionary factor were inseparable in provision of education to African communities. Missionary influence on educational policy began as early as 1910 when Edinburgh conference was held in Scotland where matters of African education specifically on curriculum implementation was discussed. Other educational policies on access, governance and teacher education were central in mission education.

Political Associations and independent movements were the main channels in which Africans expressed their dissatisfactions with the nature of education that was offered to them. Political Associations were mainly vehicles by which the African elites made attempt to gain access to political economic and social opportunities in the grassroots. Members of these associations strategically positioned themselves in some grassroots institutions such as Local Native Councils and District Education Boards where they believed they could be able to engage and influence educational policy enactment and implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for further interrogation of curriculum offered to Africans during the colonial period in Kenya in terms gender in order to establish whether there was explicit intention to gear adaptation of specific gender for subordination. In this perspective, the intended purpose of Jeanes School Kabete, Home craft schools and spinning and weaving centres that were established in the Local Native Councils need further interrogation.

The study will be significant to educational stakeholders, educational policy developers and planners, educational historians and will be used as a basis for teaching politics and education in colonial Kenya and for future research in history of education. This study strongly recommends a similar study to be done on initial

educational policies after independence. The study was limited to the fact that it focused colonial period. A similar study ought to be done to cover colonial and post-colonial era.

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