

Colonialism and the Development of Higher Education: Policy Impact on Post-Colonial African Universities

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Abstract

This article traces the history of the development of higher education in British colonial Africa. It argues that British colonial education policies not only created dependent higher education institutions in the final days of colonial rule in the British territories (Rodney, 2010; Altbach, 2003), but the policies also failed to make these institutions relevant to their societies and peoples. Furthermore, no attempts were made to establish any meaningful and effective working relations between higher education and industry for national development and economic growth. To a large extent, therefore, African higher education institutions have continued to remain alien centers of higher learning almost removed from the realities and the needs of post-colonial African societies and their peoples. The article suggests the need for the re-orientation of the nature and goals of the curricula of African universities, if they hope to make any significant impact on their societies and the world at large.

Introduction

European colonization of the African continent beginning in the late 19th century, also introduced a new way of life into the African society. The African milieu was transformed by Western influences, creating the need to fit African peoples into these new conditions (Nwauwa, 1997). The introduction of Western education as a whole, therefore, became a necessity in the colonies of the European powers, as it was needed for communication with their colonized Africans. It also provided the means of recruiting Africans into the roles of interpreters and mediators, which helped to adapt African societies and their institutions into the colonial mold. The introduction of Western education in colonial Africa thus was not aimed at developing the African and his/her environment but to serve and adapt Africans to the colonial interests of the European powers.

African adaptation to the colonial goals was required in three main areas. First, adaptation was needed in the colonial administration and services, including tax collection, law courts, public works, agriculture, and health. Second, it also occurred in the mining, finance, commercial enterprises including farming establishments, production of raw materials, produce collection, distributive trade, and importation and exportation. Finally, adaptation was required in the missionary activities of evangelization and the provision of Western education itself (Ajayi, Goma & Johnson, 1996).

This article traces the history of the development of higher education in British colonial Africa. It argues that British colonial education policies not only created dependent higher education institutions in the final days of colonial rule in the British territories (Rodney, 2010; Altbach, 2003), but the policies also failed to make these institutions relevant to their societies and peoples. Furthermore, no attempts were made to establish any meaningful and effective working relations between higher education and industry for national development and economic growth. To a large extent, therefore, African higher education institutions have continued to remain alien forms of centers of higher learning and almost removed from the realities and the needs of post-colonial African societies and their peoples.

The article focuses on the higher education policies within the British colonial territories, simply because the British colonial political strategy which utilized the Indirect Rule system of governance, not only allowed it (Britain) to make more significant policies on education for its colonies than the other European colonial powers, but it also allowed a few western-educated Africans to participate in the newly-established political system to serve as clerks, messengers, teachers and interpreters. Conversely, under the Direct Rule system adopted by France, Belgium and Portugal, Africans were excluded from any form of participation at all levels of the colonies involved thus western education was not considered necessary for the colonized Africans in these territories..

The term *higher education*, as used in this chapter, refers primarily to university and college-level education.

British Colonial Education Policies Before 1920

British colonial policy on education in Africa began in 1882 (Ajayi, Goma & Johnson, 1996), that is, two years before the Berlin Conference which partitioned the African continent into smaller territories to be occupied by the European powers. In 1882 the British colonial government established government subvention to missionary schools in West Africa. However, there was no formal educational policy for the colonies in Africa until the 1920s. For example, the first investigations into education in the British colonies of the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Sierra Leone and Gambia was conducted through the agency of Dr. Richard R. Madden, sent to West Africa as the royal commissioner, broadly charged with a survey of the political economic, and cultural institutions in these settlements (Barnes, 2002). Madden's report, published in 1841, preposterously indicated on the basis of the flimsiest evidence that while the African exhibited learning capability in his childhood comparable to that of the European, by the time he/she reached adulthood, this capability had atrophied, significantly to the point where the African was now intellectually inferior (Lulat, 2003). He blamed this development on Africa's tropical climate as was then perceived by the pseudoscientific thinking of his day. Consequently, he recommended that Africans should be schooled in non-intellectual pursuits, specifically vocational training. This, therefore, became the somewhat educational policy for British colonial territories until the 1920s.

The import of Madden's educational report and philosophy was that Africans should be trained as laborers to serve Europeans. The policy of teaching vocational education to Africans was based on the 19th century European view which held that Africans were uneducable, because of their inferiority in nature. The 19th century British Empire, and Europe as a whole, had become lively centers for research for publications on race issues. It was at this time when Dr. Robert Knox, a Scottish Anatomist, and Arthur de Gobineau, a French Sociologist, had advanced the theory of the inferiority of the African, which theory several European scientists attempted to prove correct or confirm - in part, to justify European colonization of Africa and its peoples. In 1863 the search for confirmations of African inferiority led to the formation of the Anthropological Society of London, with Richard Burton, the dishonorably discharged British soldier, as its vice president. The goal of this Society was to collect data to confirm the African inferiority theory. This theory, therefore, was a deliberate European design to justify its colonizing activities in Africa, following its abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade in the latter part of the 18th century.

Consequently, British colonial government involvement in education in the colonies was very minimal before the 1920s, with the larger participation involving missionaries. As stated earlier, government involvement at this time was limited to providing subventions to the missionary schools. It must be understood that the government subventions to the missionary efforts at educating Africans was not to support their evangelization efforts: it was an attempt to utilize the psychological effects of religion in creating obedient and submissive minds required in Africans to help facilitate the political and economic goals of the colonization process. That is, Africans filled with religion and the fear of heaven and hell will not rebel against colonization, with its accompanying exploitation practices.

Another reason explaining the limited government involvement in colonial education at this time was due to the stiff resistance from colonial officials in the colonies, who did not wish to lose their jobs to competing educated African rivals (Teferra, 2003). This concern proved the 19th century theory of African inferiority wrong, for it showed to Europeans that Africans were capable of receiving and excelling in Western education, and this ability allowed these educated Africans to apply and compete for jobs with the Europeans in the colonies thus undermining the job security of the European colonial officials. It also indicated that colonialism was used to provide needed employment for Europeans helping to reduce unemployment rates in Europe. Finally, Britain refused to formulate any formal educational policy in its African colonies at this time because of its concerns with the cost involved in expenditures (Nwauwa, 1996).

It is to be kept in mind that this concern was of great importance based on the fact that the main goal of colonialism was to accumulate profit but not to improve African lives and societies hence any large scale involvement in colonial education was bound to deplete any accrued profits. Educational provision, therefore, was mainly the undertaking of the various missionaries, which included the Wesleyan Methodists, Anglicans, the Presbyterians and the Roman Catholics.

British Colonial Education Policies in the 1920s

The British colonial government became more active in the provision of colonial education in its African territories beginning in the early 1920s. This sudden policy change, however, was due to the pressure exerted on it by the increasing role of the missionaries in educational provision, the publication of the Phelps-Stokes Commission's Reports, the increasing African demand for Western education, and the British recognition of the eventual African independence from colonial rule (Brown, 1964).

The Phelps-Stokes Fund, a \$1 million donation established by an American donor of the same name, was for the purpose of advancing the education of African Americans and Africans. In the early 1920s it appointed a Commission to conduct investigations into African education and published its Report in 1922. The focus of the Report was the need for adaptation of education to African conditions through vocational and technical training.

The Phelps-Stokes Report not only caused educational policy changes in the British colonies but it also led to the creation of the British government's Advisory Committee on Education in Tropical Africa in 1923. This Committee later initiated the government's active role in African colonial education but at the same time, it sought the expressed interests of the colonial government at the expense of Africans thus its conclusions had to reflect the interests of the colonial government.

The Advisory Committee suggested that the government extend the benefits of basic literacy to as many Africans as resources permitted, as well as provide training for the development of a cadre of low-level government officials, including messengers, clerks, interpreters, and housekeepers. More importantly, the government was required to provide vocational education opportunities to the pupils and permit the development of some level of further education, especially in areas as agricultural, veterinary, and paramedical training (Altbach & Kelly, 1984). These recommendations became the first formally adopted policy on education by the British, largely based on the Phelps-Stokes ideology of adapting Western education to African circumstances, stressing on vocational skills at the expense of academic education. However, it was not made clear whether education was being offered to function as a change-agent to Africans and their societies, or as a colonial tool purposely geared towards assisting with achieving colonial goals. The Committee's conclusions only sought to perpetuate the traditional lifestyles of the people while their services and usefulness to the colonial cause were emphasized. On the question of higher education, the Committee concluded:

As resources permit, the door of advancement, through higher education, in Africa must be increasingly opened for those who by character, ability and temperament show themselves fitted to profit by such education
(Ajayi, Goma & Johnson, 1996: 44).

The rationale behind this conclusion, showing no firm decision to offer higher education in the colonies, indicated that the colonial officials and the government were in no hurry to offer higher education in their African colonies. They had assumed that Europeans, assisted by traditional rulers, would, for the foreseeable future, determine policy in the colonies (Nwauwa, 1996). In other words, since indirect rule had no place for highly educated Africans within the colonial administration, the demand for higher education or universities naturally faced stiff opposition from British colonial officials. It was generally believed that Africans required in the colonial administration would function as clerks, messengers, interpreters, craftsmen, tradesmen, agricultural and veterinary assistants, and technicians. It was these cadres that the schools needed to produce. These assumptions and conclusions indicated that intentions of the British colonial officials regarding African education were not aimed at benefiting African development. Colonialism only needed the cheap labor supply and a few literate Africans who could help with assisting the Europeans to conduct business in Africa: it did not need highly educated scholars capable of challenging the goals and objectives of Europeans in Africa at the time. Provision of higher education thus became a policy left out of the discussion of the Committee until the 1940s when they were forced to resurrect and initiate it due to increased African demands for self-rule.

In terms of educational provision in the colonies, the Advisory Committee's recommendations produced several results. First, the Committee inspired the series of ordinances in each colony setting up Departments of Education and Inspectorates, and regulating the conditions for operating different levels of education and attracting government subsidies. Indeed almost all the former British colonies in Africa continue to have these education departments that oversee all their national education programs. Most importantly, education began to receive special attention within the British colonial system for the first time. Second, the regulations offered by the Committee also succeeded in raising the standards of the schools, especially the secondary schools and teacher training colleges. The raising of standards also indicated that the colonial officials had come to realize that they could no longer continue to deny their African subjects the type of education required for the pursuit of higher education in the future, because of African independence at some point in time. Finally, the Committee's suggestions encouraged the opening of secular government schools in Muslim areas and other places inadequately served by church missions. These included the Sudan and Nigeria, thus for the first time, Islamic Quranic schools faced the Christian challenge regarding education in such communities. This challenge would later be interpreted by Muslims as a serious threat to Islam in the form of a Christian ploy to takeover the former. This realization thus developed the spirit of nationalism and fostered the struggle for independence in the 1950s and 1960s in these countries.

The major obstacle to the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, however, was that the new educational policy was ineffective in settler colonies including Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and South Africa. As an example, the colonial government in Northern Rhodesia established its first Junior Secondary School at Munali in Lusaka in 1939 – at the beginning of WWII. This indicated the serious predicament of most of the colonies at independence in terms of highly educated personnel required to lead their countries. As noted by Teferra (2003), Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo – DRC) reached Independence in 1960 “without a single national engineer, doctor or lawyer” (Teferra, 2003:128). On this issue Kenneth Kaunda, the first president of Zambia observed:

As far as education is concerned, Britain's colonial record in Zambia is most criminal. This country has been left by her as the most uneducated and most unprepared of Britain's dependencies in Africa. This record is even treasonable to mankind when it is recalled that in the seventy years of British occupation, Zambia has never lacked money However, financial exploitation was preferred to human development (in Addresses, 1996, p.5 cited in Ajayi, Goma & Johnson, 1996:45).

The demand for higher education by the few educated Africans, however, had continued unabated since the 1860s, even before the Berlin Conference and as evidenced in the requests of Horton and Blyden.

By the 1920s African demands for higher education had then been ignored for over half a century. Between 1860 and 1911 the demands by Africanus Horton of Sierra Leone, Edward Blyden of Liberia, and Casely Hayford of the Gold Coast (Ghana) for a West African University had been persistently frustrated by both British colonial officials and the missionaries. The colonial government opposed the idea of an African University not only because of the problem of funding but also, to secure the positions of British officials against African competition in the colonies. According to Nwauwa (1996), the educational advancement attained by the Creoles of Sierra Leone had placed them in direct rivalry with the British officials, traders and missionaries alike. The missionary agencies, on the other hand, resisted the notion of an African University on the grounds that the proponents called for secular institution under government control. This demand thus was perceived to undermine the religion-oriented curriculum of the missions geared at the conversion of Africans to Christianity. Before the 1940s, therefore, the impetus for a university issued almost exclusively from Africans. For example, Horton saw it as absurd that the colonial government of Sierra Leone should spend £400 on education while it committed £14,000 per year on police (Nwauwa, 1996:10). This indicated that the government was more interested in subjugating Africans through strict law and order observance than educating the people due to the fact that achieving the express colonial goals of profit and natural resources formed the fundamental aim of the colonial government.

However, since the educated African elite, especially in West Africa, saw themselves as socially above their illiterate brethren – both the chiefs and the masses – they felt slighted under indirect rule, which assigned them no roles under the colonial administration. Furthermore, they were quite displeased with the pay differentials that existed between them and their European counterparts that held the same academic qualifications and experience.

Consequently, they became antagonistic to their African rulers and the British colonial officials, and as a class began to constitute a formidable destabilizing force against the colonial establishment. However, the fact that the educated elite saw themselves as socially above their fellow citizens, including their traditional leaders also illustrated the type and nature of education provided by the European colonialists to Africans. This attitude which was found in all the European colonies across the continent showed the alienating nature of the education offered in the schools: the worship of European culture and the acceptance of the myth of European superiority over African inferiority. The Western educated African began to disown his/her socio-cultural background perceiving it as inferior compared to the European way of life and taste. The question that begs for an answer, therefore, is whether or not the educated African elite would have ever opposed the colonial establishment as an unwanted foreign domination, had they been offered positions of power and better salaries by the colonial government. It showed that even from the start, the African elite, like the colonial rulers, sought their own self-interest at the expense of the African masses - a desire which has come to characterize contemporary African politics and leadership in post-colonial Africa.

The lack of opportunities for public roles within the colonial establishment thus raised the suspicions of the educated African elite against the philosophy of the adaptation of education to African circumstances, if the local administrators even did not recognize the certificates and diplomas awarded by the local colonial educational institutions, as equivalent to European degrees for purposes of seeking employment (Agbodeka, 1998). Thus adaptation, which formed the core of the Advisory Committee's suggestions for African education, became the subject of debate by the late 1920s and the early 1930s.

The Advisory Committee's Response To African Higher Education Demands

In response to the increased demands of Africans for higher education, the Advisory Committee which had previously rejected such demands became obligated and selected a number of central government institutions and tried to develop them into higher education of some kind. Among those selected were the Gordon Memorial College in Khartoum, the Makerere College in Kampala, Uganda, the Prince of Wales College (Achimota) in the Gold Coast, and in 1929 the Yaba High School was established in Ibadan, Nigeria to offer 2-year courses in Arts or Science, followed by professional courses of 3-year teacher training, 2-years engineering, or agriculture or surveying, and 5-year medical and veterinary courses. At Makerere students were trained in carpentry, mechanics and later paramedical, veterinary, surveying, agricultural and teacher training and clerical courses were added. Established in 1924 as a model comprehensive school, Achimota offered classes in Kindergarten through Secondary, as well as first year University College affiliation to the University of London. It emphasized the study of local languages and cultural heritage but later focused on secondary adding courses leading up to the London University Matriculation and Intermediate in the 1930s (Effah, 2003; Agbodeka, 1998).

Despite the fact that the new Colleges attracted the cream of the available students at the time, a systematic mechanism was duly put in place to frustrate the academic endeavors of many of the students through massive failure at the examinations conducted by the college officials (Ajayi, Goma & Johnson, 1996; Agbodeka, 1998). It was a strategy designed not only to limit the number of college-educated Africans but also as a mechanism to undermine the very higher education established by the colonial government for its African subjects. Success in examinations was tied more to vacancies and character evaluation than to performance. First, the control over vacancies meant that the colonial officials strictly dictated the pace and numbers of students admitted into the Colleges, which indicated an attempt to limit the potential number of educated Africans who were most likely to question colonial rule, as well as compete with Europeans for high paying jobs within the colonial establishment. Second, the use of character evaluation as an indicator or measurement of success in examinations clearly showed the kind and type of graduates preferred by the colonial administration: the docile and obedient educated African ready to agree and assist the colonial administration in exploiting Africans. It was also an opportunity to use such obedient Africans as loyal *comprador* elites capable of assisting in furthering the colonial ambitions of the British, following independence. To ensure that those deemed unacceptable for college education did not skirt around the restrictions, colonial officials discouraged registration for overseas examinations, while courses essential for such examinations were often eliminated from the curriculum. This policy ensured that the College Diploma earned by Africans remained strictly of local significance.

However, beginning in the 1930s the colonial government acting on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee began to allow the University Colleges to affiliate with British universities particularly Cambridge University and the University of London.

Initially, the Committee had been concerned about the fact that such affiliation would undermine the policy of educational adaptation to African circumstances, as contained in the Phelps-Stokes Report of 1922. This ideology subsequently helped to design the local African Diplomas earned by the African graduates. The new affiliations included the affiliation of Achimota to the University of London, Fourah Bay to Durham University, and Fort Hare and UNISA to Pius XII College. But it soon became obvious that the growing affiliations also meant greater scrutiny of the quality and credibility of degrees offered by the University Colleges. That is, the Cambridge and London External Examinations became a double-edged sword: the examinations undermined adaptation since the external universities offered degrees and diplomas equal to British university degrees. They also did much to raise the standard of secondary education in the colonies, by offering a uniform standard and external measurement, which provided objective criteria for evaluating performance in the secondary schools. According to Lulat (2003), the French would later introduce this style of affiliation and degree granting requirements with its international baccalaureate.

As discussed above, once again, the failure rate was very high especially at the Matriculation level as an effort to limit the expansion of higher education in Africa. Psychologically, this high rate of failure also indirectly established the dominance of European education and degrees over African education and qualifications into the post-colonial era. Philip Altbach (2003), correctly points out that one of the colonial legacies of African universities has been the relegation of such institutions to the periphery of the international university system. That is, although affiliation was progressive in terms of higher education development in Africa, it also indirectly set the universities of the metropole over African universities from the start, and even today, Africans - and their governments - prefer degrees earned from European and other Western universities to the local degrees offered by African universities. Most Africans consider degrees earned from overseas universities, particularly from their former colonial rulers as higher and of better “quality” than the same ones offered by their country’s universities – a display of lingering colonial influence. This means that most Anglophone Africans would rate higher degrees earned from British Universities than those earned from their local universities in Africa, while the same goes for Francophone Africans who also, to a large extent, rate French University degrees higher than their own. To this end, most British and other European universities do not recognize degrees from African universities thus make those graduates take further “intensive” Diploma courses before entering into their originally intended programs or degrees. But the high failure rate in the University Colleges, however, failed to deter most Africans from pursuing further attempts through correspondence courses, such as the Rapid Results Tutorial System of London, as well as individual African businessmen/women able to sponsor their children to study in European and American universities.

The British policy of affiliation of African University Colleges to British universities, combined with the opportunities for overseas studies by those Africans able to afford, though welcome, still left serious devastating effects on African higher education. First, affiliation obviously laid the foundation for the alienation of both African education and the educated African from the local African socio-economic and cultural realities. This was due to the fact that African education was completely based on foreign or European dictates and values, which were quite alien to the contextual problems and application of the African society. Higher education, in particular, was geared towards satisfying foreign requirements rather than meeting local demands and needs, since it was all focused on passing foreign examinations conducted by British Universities and based on their needs and expectations. Second, affiliation also established the psychological training and belief within and of the African to accept that educational quality lay with the universities of the metropole, thus laying foundations for the periphery and dependent status of African higher education. Third, the knowledge and skills acquired by the educated African elite were never considered for local usage and application: African graduates returned to their communities not as social change-agents, but as academics who were ready to just ‘write and talk’ (Brown, 1964) without tackling the problems faced by the people and their communities. They simply became ‘office’ people who shunned performing practical and “dirty” work as was required of them – especially as engineers or agricultural scientists. However, affiliation and the progress made in the development of higher education began to change colonial policies on African education as a whole.

British Colonial Higher Education Policy Changes – 1930s and 1940s

In 1932 the Advisory Committee appointed James Currie to head a sub-committee tasked to review anew the issue of higher education in British colonies in Africa. This Currie subcommittee later published its Report in which it warned that:

... the African thirst for higher education remains unabated, if this is not satisfied at home it can only lead to an increasing efflux of undergraduate African students towards universities of Europe and America (Ajayi, Goma & Johnson, 1996: 49).

Currie's Report not only represented the actual first signs of British assent to higher education in Africa: it hinted at the underlying danger of Britain losing both the loyalty as well as political and economic alliances with future educated African elite likely to assume leadership roles in the post-colonial era. More so, it indicated the gradual emergence of the US as a formidable political rival at the international level that could no longer be ignored.

Equally troubling from the Currie Report was the concern of the British about the growing young radical nationalists who had embraced Garveyism and Pan-Africanism while studying in America, including Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast and Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria. While Garveyism preached against the illegal European occupation of Africa and its accompanying exploitation of the continent and its peoples, Pan-Africanism attempted to raise the consciousness of all continental and Diasporan Africans around the globe to unite in opposing racism, colonialism and black exploitation by European powers (Leney, 2003). These sudden developments hinted to the colonialists of their numbered days in Africa, thus there was the urgent need to build a cadre of loyal associates through higher education offerings.

The immediacy of the situation compelled the Advisory Committee to begin to question the wisdom of Britain in subscribing to the adaptation of education to the African environment policy of the US as contained in the Phelps-Stokes Report of 1922. Until the beginning of the 1930s, British colonial officials had failed to address the question of education in their African colonies. The new realization, however, prompted the move towards accepting the necessity for an African educated elite.

However, unlike the French, Britain preferred to train its African elite in Africa - not in Britain. This strategy perhaps was designed to help Britain avoid any funding costs involved. That is, if Africans wanted higher education then they should pay for it themselves. Furthermore, if the universities were located in Africa, it provided the British the opportunity to dictate their course, nature and scope and credibility. This implied that African universities would completely come to rely on British academic institutions not only for all their operational requirements, but more so, for their approval and acceptance into the world university system, since the quality of academic standards required would be determined by British Universities. Once again, this confirms Philip Altbach's Center - Periphery theory mentioned above, concerning Western and African universities. In other words, the policy to train its African elite inside Africa meant the colonization of African higher education. This also created jobs and opportunities for British academics and graduates in African institutions, since the new African universities lacked the required trained personnel, critical resources and professional expertise needed for implementing their curriculum and administration. Building African universities inside Africa also gave the British the opportunity to influence the kind of academic and political training given to African students, since they were not in England to discover any discrepancies in the freedom of thinking and challenging authority in attempts at fostering critical thinking skills, and also the courses offered and administration styles that existed between the two institutions.

The most obvious implication of the British colonial policy was the fact that the decision to offer higher education to Africans inside Africa meant that these institutions had to be built inside Africa. But this decision, however, also meant that the nature of the university had to be modeled around the dictates and similarities of British universities, thus laying the foundation for the alienation of African universities from their local societies. The students were geared towards imbibing more European knowledge and values than those of their African cultural background. This kind of hiatus in academic and citizenship training from the early stages of the university system in Africa helped to develop and create later political leaders who cared less about the problems of their societies and people than their own selfish goals. It also created a gap between the use of the university as a source of social and economic development in Africa thus university graduates were not trained to become problem-solvers but just graduates with paper diplomas.

In the creation of these African universities, Currie's Report had recommended that University Colleges should be made out of Gordon Memorial College in Khartoum as well as Makerere in Kampala, training students to the level of University Pass degrees. It emphasized the study of education focusing on producing teachers to meet the needs of the Sudan and East Africa. In West Africa, it recommended that Achimota in the Gold Coast and Yaba in Nigeria should be turned into University Colleges, as well as Fourah Bay College which was to specialize in theology and education.

To strengthen the case of the University Colleges as recommended by the Report, the Advisory Committee, in 1937 appointed the De La Warr Commission on higher education in Africa, which visited Uganda and proposed - again - that Makerere become a University College soon and later to be affiliated to London University, granting external degrees.

British Colonial Higher Education Policies in the 1940s

At the beginning of the 1940s the Colonial Office in London became rather active and ready to promote efforts towards the establishment of universities in Africa. Thus, all of a sudden higher education which had been repeatedly ignored by colonial policy since the days of Horton, Blyden and Hayford, was now high priority on the colonial government's agenda. This time the initiative rather came from London - not from Africans.

Several reasons accounted for the sudden shift in government attitude toward higher education in Africa and for Africans. First, the British government had become aware and convinced that it was far more dangerous for Africans to continue to acquire higher education training from overseas, especially in America than to provide them with university facilities locally. As discussed above, the shifting of loyalties of the African elite who studied in America became a major concern at this time to the British who then decided to end any such further occurrences arising in their colonies. Second, even in Britain the wisdom of indirect rule which had helped to not only keep the peace in the colonies and also reduce administrative cost suddenly began to be questioned. It was realized at this time the inadequate contributions of the local chiefs to the new system of parliamentary government and economy that required Western educational qualifications and literacy. The colonial government, therefore, realized the need for allowing educated Africans into the mainstream of governance (Barnes, 2002).

Third, and perhaps the most important reason, was the Declaration of the famous Atlantic Charter by the Allied Powers of WWII in 1944, which reaffirmed the right of all peoples to self-determination, following the end of the War in 1945. The Charter, though later construed to apply to European countries, since Africans still had to fight for their independence, inspired Africans, especially the educated Africans now turned nationalists, to press harder for universities as part of African nationalism and self-rule. African demand for higher education centered on the training of Africans capable of taking over the administrative and technical jobs hitherto reserved for Europeans. This need showed the first signs of African dependency and professional and economic vulnerability that would lead to neocolonialism in post-colonial Africa. African independence, therefore, would not mean true independence as conveyed by the word. The sudden interest from the Colonial Office in London helped to increase African demand for university education. In 1940, the government enacted its Development and Welfare Act, which made available funds for development projects in the colonies. Consequently, the government began to assert its control over policy and implementation in the colonies. In 1943 it appointed the Asquith Commission headed by Justice Cyril Asquith, to look into the establishment of University Colleges to be affiliated to British Universities in the colonies (Leney, 2003).

However, the end of WWII in 1945 had also driven home to the government of the imminent possibility of independence in the colonies, especially following India's independence in 1947. It was realized that it was only a matter of time before Africans also became free hence Britain needed allies on whom to depend to continue their exploitative relationship with their African territories. The educated elite thus became important to the British since they were the most likely candidates - not the chiefs - to assume power following independence.

The Asquith Commission reported its findings following its investigations in East, West, and Central Africa. Its recommendations included *inter alia*:

- The colonial office focus on the need to ensure high quality education in the colonies to produce an elite of good quality leaders.
- University Colleges should aim to become centers of learning, promote research, be residential, and emphasize Liberal Arts and Science above professional and Vocational studies.
- It laid the basis for the Scheme for Special Relations between the University of London and the Colonial University Colleges, under the supervision of the International University Council for Higher Education in the colonies (IUC). (Leney, 2003; Ajayi, Goma & Johnson, 1996: 55).

The IUC was made responsible for allocating funds under the Colonial Welfare and Development Act, and also to process advertisements for the University Colleges and recruit staff for them, mostly from British Universities. Agbodeka (1998) comments on this:

So the stage was set, among other things, for a massive colonial educational infrastructural construction era, which coincided at least partly with the period of post-war job scarcity in the UK..... We cannot but conclude that the British government opened an overseas job market around the Empire and no doubt did kill two birds with one stone (p.6).

The Special Relations Scheme suggested by the Asquith Commission also provided for the possibility of adaptation of the curriculum content of the degree programs but in practice, the emphasis was on transplantation – not adaptation. This strategy thus not only undermined the entire higher education system in the colonies by not relating it to local development, but it also alienated both the graduates and the knowledge gained from the African society and its needs. This situation further deepened the dependency syndrome in Africa, with African universities becoming peripheral institutions even today, within the international university system.

In 1946 the Colonial Office agreed that any colony able to find the initial capital cost could establish its own University College. Consequently, the Gold Coast was allowed to build the University College at Legon, Accra, with one million pounds sterling from the Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB) funds. It opened its doors on October 11, 1948 with ninety-two students as a residential institution. It would later add the Kumasi College of Technology which also would become the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology as the second University of the country. However, this strategy of the colonial government was an indirect attempt to shift the bulk of the cost of building the University Colleges onto the colonies. This exercise not only helped to deplete any meager funds left by the colonial administration going into independence, but it also made African Universities completely dependent upon the central government for any future funding needs. More so, since the curriculum was a direct transplantation of British academic requirements in Africa, it was clear that the University Colleges established very little or no relations whatsoever, with local African industries and businesses to promote social and economic growth inside Africa. This negative trend has since continued into the post-colonial era.

The Asquith Report, however, resulted in a number of higher education institutions being established through the agency of a combination of British government finance, through the colonial Development and Welfare Fund, and British University expertise in the form of the IUC for Higher Education. The graduates of the University Colleges received their degrees from the University of London, on the basis of their affiliation to the University. The IUC also had the responsibility of setting the examination standards for the University Colleges. The latter, therefore, concentrated more on passing the required examinations than combining academic knowledge and skills to produce graduates capable of applying the knowledge gained in the society. Thus African universities began to focus more on the teaching and learning of theory than the application of the same. Indeed, the University Colleges became examinations-orientated than anything else.

The Asquith Colleges included the University College of Ghana, the University College of Sierra Leone, the University Colleges of Ibadan, Khartoum, Makerere, Nairobi (after upgrading the Royal Technical College at Nairobi), the segregated College of Salisbury (later the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland), and the University College of Dar es Salaam (Effah, 2003).

These institutional establishments, all of them occurring in the late 1940s into the 1960s began the African university education system within the British colonies. Thus on the eve of independence some form of higher education at the university level was in place in most of the British colonies in Africa. Its rigor and quality was comparable to that of the metropole (Rodney, 2010; Brock-Utne, 2000).

Conclusion

The discussion presented above, confirms that in all the British colonies of Africa higher education came rather late. These institutions were built in the latter half of the 20th century hence they have since not had adequate time at their disposal to build their own academic traditions (Altbach, 2003). The late arrival of higher education has also resulted in the creation of manpower and economic dependency in post-colonial Africa, whereby expertise in most areas of scientific and technological needs is imported from Western countries, because the universities that were supposed to help develop such manpower needs were not given priority on the agendas of the European colonialists. The colonial roots of higher education in Africa, therefore, have rendered such institutions dependent upon Western academic dictates and practices in regards to curricula and administrative structures, in their struggle to meet the Western academic standards required of them. Despite the fact that post-Independence African universities are now autonomous and thus capable of issuing their own university degrees, still almost all of them continue to adhere to the academic systems and structures left by the colonialists.

Consequently, some European universities, including those of Great Britain, such as the University of London, continue to perceive the universities of their former colonies of Africa as second-class universities since the latter institutions were created by them. Thus graduates from African universities are made to undergo special one-year “post-graduate diploma” degree training, before being allowed to pursue their originally intended degree programs, with the excuse that the one-year post-graduate diploma degree is required “to assess the ability of these graduates to pursue higher degree programs in the United Kingdom.”

The history of higher education in colonial Africa, as discussed above, indicates that the goal for establishing such institutions was not aimed at the development of Africans and their societies, unlike those of Europe, instead it was designed to establish the African elite who were the likely candidates to assume the public and government positions vacated by the colonialists after independence. These institutions, therefore, were not established as autonomous academic sites, to foster independent thought and critical thinking skills in students, but to be used to continue to serve the economic and political interests of Europeans, through the elites, in the post-colonial era. The universities were built not only on the colonial principles and ideologies of European interests, but they were also patterned on European models of higher education. This strategy made adaptation of such institutions to the African society rather difficult thus alienating the African university graduate from his/her society and people, since the curriculum reflected foreign knowledge and values. The universities, therefore, continue to remain white elephants - to a large extent – and ivory towers in the African society due to their inability to assist in the improvement of the quality of life and standard of living of their people and the development of their societies through advancements in scientific and technological innovations.

The mission and role of African universities in the development of African societies, therefore, have not been realized due to the lingering colonial influences which compel them to focus more on examinations and the teaching and learning of more theory than practical application of the knowledge acquired, to allow the graduates to become problem-solvers of their various societies. The only hope left for the universities, is for them to reorient their curricula and administrative systems to focus more on the new global academic and national and international development needs. They must focus more on the teaching and production of practical and problem-solving graduates capable of influencing social change, in attempts at improving the life conditions of their populations in the light of current and future national and international social and economic concerns.

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