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Black Men, English Suits and a Corner Office: Education and the Making of a West-Cameron Civil Service 1954-1972

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Abstract

Within the perspective of postcolonial state building in Africa, the study hinges on the colonial education, manpower and development nexus to examine the state of preparedness of the Trust Territory of the British Southern Cameroons with regards to an indigenous political and economic leadership as the British and Nigerian colonial authorities were leaving the territory. It discusses the quantity and quality of manpower produced by the British colonial education system that was on hand to take over the mantle of leadership as the territory gained independence. The study asserts that, the forming West Cameroon state was ill-disposed to its own endeavours due to lacks in a sufficiently qualified personnel and could thus not implement its own policies; the roots being a poorly developed colonial educational system. This had significant effects on the socio-economic development of the federal state of West Cameroon. The paper has relied on archival data and some critical secondary literature to present the argument.

Keywords: Britain, colonial education, Camerrons, political and economic leadership, manpower

Hombres Negros, Trajes Ingleses y una Oficina en la Esquina: Educación y Cración de un Servicio Civil en el Oeste de Camerún, 1954-1972

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Resumen

Dentro de la perspectiva de la construcción estatal postcolonial en África, el estudio gira en torno al vínculo entre la educación colonial, la mano de obra y el desarrollo con el objetivo de examinar el grado de preparación del Trust Territory of the British Southern Cameroons en relación a un liderazgo político y económico indígena mientras que las autoridades coloniales británicas y nigerianas abandonaban el territorio. Se analiza la cantidad y la calidad de la mano de obra producida por el sistema de educación colonial británico que asumió el mando del liderazgo en la medida que el territorio obtuvo la independencia. El estudio afirma que el estado de Camerún Occidental no estaba predispuesto a realizar sus propios esfuerzos debido a la falta de personal suficientemente calificado y, por lo tanto, no podía implementar sus propias políticas. Las raíces del problema, un sistema educativo colonial poco desarrollado. Esto tuvo efectos significativos en el desarrollo socioeconómico del estado federal del oeste de Camerún. El artículo se ha fundamentado en datos de archivo y en algunas publicaciones secundarias críticas.

Palabras clave: Gran Bretaña, educación colonial, Camerún, liderazgo político y económico, mano de obra.

Britain took over the administration of the territory she named Southern Cameroons in 1916 following a French and British partition of the former German Kamerun. She administered the territory as part of her colony of Nigeria until it gained independence in 1961 through a federation with the former French administered Cameroon (independent since 1 January, 1960 as *Republique du Cameroun*). Historical evidence shows that as of 1961, the territory was the least developed of all former British West African dependencies (Aka 2002; Ndongko, 1981). The evidence also reveals that in the years of the federation with former French Cameroons (1961-1972), the former British administered section of Cameroon didn't fare well in terms of local administration and socio-economic development (Ndongko, 1981). There have also been crucial complaints of the marginalization of the former British sector of the country since the days of the federation which have even led to the emergence of secessionist tendencies in that part of the country (Kum, 2017; Mbaku, 2004; Ndue, 2002; Ngoh, 1999; Koning and Nyamnjoh, 1997). While several postulations have been made regarding the sources of the region's underdevelopment and other woes (Ndi, 2013; Ngomba, 2004; Ngoh, 2011, 1999; Mbile, 1999) colonial education provision has hardly been considered as one of the factors.

In this paper, I argue that the quality and quantity of British colonial educational provision for the Southern Cameroons were key determinants of the quality of the political and economic leadership that took the territory through the independence negotiations (1959-1961) and administered what became the State of West Cameroon in the years of the federation with *La Republique du Cameroun*. I hold that "the establishment of secondary and higher education institutions was fundamental in the production of men and women who had the standard of public service and the capacity for leadership which the progress to self-government demanded" (Adams 1953, p.716). This was particularly the case between 1959 and the end of the federation in 1972 when the administration, development and wellbeing of this part of Cameroon depended exclusively on the indigenes of the former Southern Cameroons whose leadership potentials were also a factor of British colonial education provision.

As early as 1925 the Mandate Commission of the League of Nations had insisted that Britain should supply soundly educated Cameroonians within all professional fields (File Ba/1925/5, p.45 NAB). In 1946, the Trusteeship Council reiterated the urgency for Britain to “afford qualified Cameroonians the opportunity of receiving higher general and advanced professional education to the full extent compatible with the interests of the Southern Cameroons population” (Trusteeship Council 1947, p.699). Britain, on her part acknowledged the importance of setting up “institutions in her colonies, some of which should reach university rank and include in their curriculum branches of professional or vocational training” (Colonial Office 1925, p.5). In the post-World War II years her educational policy for the Cameroons categorically stated the need to streamline education in order to develop an indigenous/African political and economic leadership to whom the mantle of power was to be handed. This was made clear in Article X of the Trusteeship Agreement (Tazifor 2003, p.166). These policy directives were reflected both the Eastern Nigerian 1953 policy of education and the Southern Cameroons educational plan of 1955 (Eastern Region of Nigeria 1953, p.6; Southern Cameroons 1955, p.15). The aim was “to ensure a smooth socio-economic take-off” of former colonies (Ghedo, 1973, p.71; Kindleberger and Herrick 1977, pp.1, 5).

Educational Attainment in the Southern Cameroons (1916-1961)

Two key issues determined British colonial education policy and the production of a Southern Cameroons educated elite between 1916 and 1961. First was the state of willingness of Britain as administering authority to relinquish her hold on the Cameroons in the interwar years (1919-1939). Here, literature has suggested that by 1939, Britain harboured little or no plans (MacOjong, 2008; Ngoh, 1987). Second, and closely linked to the first, was the adoption of the approach of filling government positions with educated people from her other West African territories (Nfi, 2014; Mukete, 2013). These two issues downplayed the urgency of an elaborate educational system and the production of an educated elite beyond secondary level on whom the mantle of leadership was to rest after independence.

Under Britain, primary education policy in the Cameroons was characterised by the philosophy of “adapting education to the needs of the local communities” (Colonial Office 1925, pp.3, 5, 7). The philosophy

classified the Southern Cameroons as an entirely rural territory and provided for a four years junior primary school system (File Ba/1926/3 NAB, p.147; Hussey, 1931). As late as 1954, the school system in the Cameroons continued to be defined by the 1947 *Memorandum on Educational Policy in Nigeria, Sessional Paper No.20 of 1947* which amongst other things continued to provide “a four-year junior primary school course for all children who want it, and a further four-year Senior Primary school course for those who can benefit from it” (Cameroons 1954, p.105). The four-year junior rural school was uncertificated and emphasized agriculture and handicraft “leaving a majority of Southern Cameroonian children to go the way of their ancestors” (File Sb/a/1958/4 NAB, p.1) as it provided them only with basic skills to sustain them in the rural community.

By making junior and senior primary education access a matter of want and desire on the one hand, and ability and possibility on the other respectively, Britain created a pyramidal structure of education in the Cameroons in which, very few pupils reached the eighth year of primary education to either enter secondary school or get certificated for employment purposes. In 1954 primary school enrolment in the Southern Cameroons stood at 37,307 pupils. Of this number only 1753 (04.7%) was in Standard VI; the eighth and final year of primary school. That year there were 319 primary schools in the territory with only eight offering the senior primary classes where pupils could take the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) and progress to secondary school (Cameroons 1954, p.113). The level of educational wastage was evaluated at 42.3%; the highest in British West Africa (Aka 2002, p.148).

Regarding secondary education, the 1939 Annual Report indicated that “there were no facilities for secondary education in the Cameroons Province.... Pupils who wished to continue their education beyond Standard VI had to do so at Umuahia College or at one of the Mission Colleges in Nigeria” (File Ba/a/1939/6 NAB, p.100). Despite many horrendous experiences that Southern Cameroon students faced to acquire secondary education in Nigeria (Ndille, 2018, pp 32-47) government policy for secondary education in the Cameroons remained, “to give an opportunity for the able child to proceed from a primary school to a secondary school, and thence to a training institution or other institution for post-secondary studies in Nigeria” (File Sb/a/1956/4 NAB, p.39; File Sb/a/1958/2 NAB, p.87). This was to be achieved in one of two ways; first, through a system of

government scholarships and second, parents financing those who desired it but could not win government scholarships. While many parents found it difficult to shoulder such responsibilities for secondary education for their children in far-away Nigeria, the colonial government in terms of the number of scholarships, awarded a maximum of three each year (Mbile, 1999, pp 8-17). This could be termed a negligible contribution.

By 1961, four secondary schools had been established in the territory by missionary bodies; Saint Joseph's College, Sasse-Buea in 1939; the Basel Mission College-Bali in 1949 the Queen of the Rosary College Okoyong in 1955 and the Sacred Heart College-Mankon in 1961, offering general secondary education. But these efforts were also insignificant in the production of an educated elite for the territory. This is because the colonial administration insisted that the schools must shoulder school funding responsibilities and be strict on admission age requirements (File Sb/a/1956/6 NAB). The schools were only allowed to recruit 36 students per stream each year (File Sb/a/1958/2 NAB) with the consequence that, as of 1954, the Trusteeship Council expressed dissatisfaction at the level of secondary education provision in the Cameroons (Trusteeship Council Doc. T/1147 Addendum 1, 1954; Trusteeship Council 1955, p.897). While Britain recognized that there were "always a considerable number of applicants for admission to secondary schools" she argued that the problem lay in obtaining "the right type, young enough...and many of the applicants were below the standard academically" (Cameroons 1954, p.115). This assessment was based on entrance examinations and age requirements which many complained hindered access but which the colonial authorities continued to adhere to despite the call to improve this sector (File Ba/1949/4 NAB).

In 1961, the year of independence, the four mission secondary schools in the territory put together had a total enrolment of only 882 students. This enrolment represented a dismal 0.75% of all primary schools in the territory which stood at 116,859 pupils (Burns 1965, p72; West Cameroon 1962, pp.16, 19). The facilities at the four Mission schools remained thus under-utilized as many prospective Southern Cameroons children continued to be rejected through stringent admission regulations. Even when members of the Southern Cameroons Provincial Education Committee argued that it was "impracticable to insist upon ideal admission age of twelve or thirteen" and very difficult entrance examinations, the government insisted that "a balance

had to be maintained between the territory's urgent need for educated people and the equally vital necessity to maintain standards" (File No. Sb/a/1958/2, NAB).

Apart from the low output in the few Mission secondary schools, the unwillingness of the colonial government to set up government secondary schools in the territory as they had done in Nigeria further exacerbated manpower development. In 1954 there were 82 secondary schools in the Eastern Region of Nigeria within which Southern Cameroons had been administered. Of this number 23 were government owned (Nduka 1964, p.147) but none of these were in the Cameroons. While the administering authority insisted that it was "continuing to make facilities for secondary education in Nigeria accessible to Southern Cameroonians without discrimination" (Cameroons 1955, p.81) it was evident that the system of quotas and scholarships through which a maximum of three Southern Cameroonians could enter such institutions each year did not permit the territory meet its secondary education needs through Nigeria. By limiting the expansion of secondary education, Britain therefore limited the development of educated manpower beyond elementary levels.

Regarding higher education, its development in the British African dependencies "was necessitated by the need to produce men and women who would have the standard of public service and the capacity for leadership which the progress of self-government demanded" (Adams 1953, p.716). This meant that, Britain, as administering authority, owed the people of Southern Cameroons a sustainable system of higher education. As mentioned above, as early as 1923, the Mandate Commission had requested her to make available an elaborate plan in this direction. This was re-iterated by the Trusteeship Council. The absence of a secondary education institution in the Mandate period, greatly limited any possibility for a reasonable number of Southern Cameroonians to acquire post-secondary education at that time.

After the Second World War however, with the creation of the United Nations Trusteeship Council (UN-TC) special emphasis was placed on the development of Higher education in most Trust Territories. Britain's arrangement for university studies was for candidates from the British administered Cameroons to enter the University College Ibadan-Nigeria through a system of scholarships (Cameroons 1947, p.150). Again, like secondary education, the system of providing higher education to Southern

Cameroonians in Nigeria proved unsatisfactory in meeting higher education needs for the territory. In 1949, there were 800 applications for government university scholarships in Nigeria and only 115 were awarded of which only 03 (0.02%) of the awards were attributed to the Trust Territory of Northern and Southern Cameroons put together (Cameroons 1949, p.80). As of 1947, only four students from the Cameroons were reported to be studying in universities in the United Kingdom and elsewhere (Cameroons 1947, p.150).

In 1948 UNESCO ordered a study of the “possibility of establishing and maintaining a university to meet the higher education needs of the inhabitants of Trust Territories in Africa by the year 1952” (Trusteeship Council Doc. T/334 1949, pp.1-3). Unfortunately, Britain and France who administered most of the trust territories argued against the scheme; their reason being that “... only a minority of secondary school children in these territories are of the temperament suited for a university education” (Trusteeship Council 1949 Doc. T/369, p.2) This would have provided greater access to higher education for the territory considering the fact that the Southern Cameroons, with its central location vis-à-vis the other five trust territories, stood a greater chance of hosting the university (Trusteeship Council 1949 Doc. T/369, p.2).

The consequence of the poor higher education policy for the Cameroons was that in 1959, only 116 Southern Cameroonians had been registered in higher education institutions in Nigeria and abroad since 1954 (File Sb/a/1958/1 NAB). In 1961, the year Southern Cameroons gained independence, there were not more than twenty university graduates in the territory (Phillipson, 1959; West Cameroon, 1962, p.16). That year, there were only 21 Southern Cameroonians holding executive posts (File Sb/a/1959/11 NAB) and the number of students pursuing higher education outside the territory was 65 compared to 6800 Nigerians, 280 Gambians, 3,793 Ghanaians and 833 Sierra Leoneans (British Council, 1961). This was not unconnected to Britain’s colonial education policy in the Cameroons. There were 65 Southern Cameroonians in British universities in 1961 with only ten taking degree courses. There were 17 others in Nigeria pursuing various degree and professional courses (Federation of Nigeria, 1960,p.1, 16). These figures revealed that there would be a huge man power inadequacy at top levels of administration which was bound to negatively affect the rate of ‘Cameroonization’ of the public service at independence (Trusteeship Council Doc T/1426, 1959).

Independence, Challenges and Strategies for the Cameroonization of the Administration

I have mentioned above that Britain's policy of administering the Cameroons as an appendage of Nigeria (File Ba/1923/1, NAB) led to two policy recommendations which despite their being disadvantageous to the Cameroons were upheld by Britain throughout the mandate and trusteeship. First, apart from the Missions' efforts, Britain maintained her policy of providing post-primary public education for Southern Cameroonians in Nigerian institutions. Second, she upheld the policy of recruiting Nigerians to work in the Cameroons. While the first policy limited the production of an indigenous educated manpower beyond the primary school level, the second removed the urgency of an indigenous educated manpower which would have signalled the need for an elaborate post-primary education system in the Cameroons.

By 1944, of a total of 163 public service staff in the Southern Cameroons, 130 were Nigerians and only 33 were Southern Cameroonians (Cameroon Youth League, 1944, p.5). In 1946, all the four head teachers of the government primary schools in Southern Cameroons were Nigerians (File Sb/e/1950/1 NAB). By 1959 there were 1471 posts in the Southern Cameroons public service with 121 in the Senior Administrative category and 63 in the executive Category all of which required a post-primary certificate as entry requirement (File Oc/1961/1 NAB). Of this number, only 36 Southern Cameroonians were in the two categories put together. 52 posts were vacant and 70 were occupied by Europeans and Nigerians (File Oa/1960/2, p.9 NAB). These figures highlighted the critical need for indigenous public service personnel educated beyond the primary school and made people to fear that if the Southern Cameroons seceded from Nigeria, and if, as a result, British and Nigerian manpower were to leave the territory, some state departments would collapse (Phillipson, 1959, p.10).

Southern Cameroons got independence in 1961 by reunifying with the former French Cameroons on a federated state basis amidst Britain's expectations of integration into Nigeria. It then became the state of West Cameroon but adopted the Nigerian Civil Service Code made up of four levels each spanning considerable grades depending on experience and training. These levels included the senior, intermediate, junior services and

daily paid workers. Except in the case of daily paid workers whose only qualification was physical fitness, a degree from a recognized university was accepted for entry into the senior service; a diploma into the intermediate service while a secondary school certificate gave access into the junior service (File Oc/1961/1 NAB). Primary school leavers were also qualified for employment as clerks but at a lower grade and salary. A civil servant could rise in grade and category with several years of demonstrated competence but in principle, qualifications remained paramount (File Ob/f/1953/2 NAB).

Independence led to two developments which put the government at the end of its tether. First, new administrative units were created which required a huge number of highly educated indigenes as service heads and senior civil servants (Federal Republic of Cameroon, 1961a). Second, there was a mass departure of British and Nigerian expatriates. These developments not only exposed the futility of a poorly developed British colonial educational system in the Southern Cameroons; with a majority of indigenes holding primary school and elementary teacher training certificates and very few holding secondary education and university qualifications, but showed how desperate the government was in the face of such a critical shortage of people with the right kind of education and experience. As a strategy, the state government began filling senior administrative positions only by promoting first class clerks, some with a limited secondary education but a majority with primary school certificates (File Od/a/1961/1 NAB). As this measure was far from being palliative, the government went on to compromise quality further by waiving the civil service code of appointments entirely. From then, recruitments and appointments followed no laid down criteria.

It became common to find primary school teachers with not more than 12 to 13 years of formal education being appointed to executive positions. West Cameroonians who passed the London General Certificate of Education in two subjects at the advanced level were employed as Assistant Executive Officers. By the civil service code, such persons were best suited for clerical positions (File Oc/1961/1 NAB; Cameroon Champion 5 December 1961, pp.1, 3). Similarly, high school students or anyone who passed the same examination either in three subjects in one sitting or in four subjects in two sittings, was appointed into the senior grade of the civil service. One could find a few permanent secretaries in the ministries who

were responsible for providing technical advice to the government with undergraduate diplomas but the majority were at best primary and secondary school leavers a situation which was described as alarming (Cameroon Champion, 5 December 1961, p.1).

On the whole, the need to get people fill civil service positions was abused in West Cameroon due to the absence of qualified indigenes. One of the most striking examples was that of the Attorney General who was not more than 30 years old and had less than five years of practical experience. Following the Civil Service Code, he would have been no more than a pupil lawyer at the time he became the Attorney General of the Southern Cameroons (Aka, 2002, p.202). Some holders of Elementary Teacher Grade II Certificates were recruited as District Officers (D.O) and Assistant District Officers (A.D.O) (Cameroon Champion, 5 December 1961, p.5). While the phenomenon drew bitter criticisms from some members of the public (Aka 2002, p.149) it was evident that an underdeveloped colonial education system had given people the leverage to man government departments for which they had very little knowledge, training or experience. The effects were to be felt in the political decision making processes and the economic performance of the state.

The ‘Cameroonized’ Leadership and the Economic Performance of West Cameroon

Although the 1961 constitutional provisions left the general guidance of the economy and development planning exclusively with federal jurisdiction, the states, under certain provisions, were permitted to work in these fields (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, 1961b, Part II Articles 5.7 and 7.1). The West Cameroon government therefore targeted industrialization especially agro-industry as its policy priority (Ngomba 2004, p.100). To achieve this goal, it created the West Cameroon Development Agency (WCDA) in 1962. It was to succeed the Southern Cameroons Development Agency (SCDA) which had been established in 1956. The WCDA made relentless efforts in fostering the economic development of West Cameroon by initiating, acquiring and becoming a partner in several development projects. Table 2 below presents the major WCDA investments.

Table 2
WCDA Investment Projects 1959-1972

	Project	Value (FCFA)
1	Cameroon Fisheries Limited	11. 070.000
2	Cameroon Bank	69.200.000
3	Cameroon Air Transport	6.920.000
4	Cameroon Commercial Corporation	37.500.000
5	United Cameroon Trading Company	27.680.000
6	Buea Mountain Hotel	20.760.000
7	Cameroon Rethreading Industry	8.250.000
8	Tiko Iron Works	40.000.000
9	Kamerun Timber LTD	10.380.000
10	Coastal Timber(Cameroon) LTD	3.460.000
11	Cameroon Forest Products LTD	3.460.000

Source: *Dervish, 1968, p.178*

Despite the strenuous efforts to revamp the economy through the above mentioned projects, the attainment of WCDA objectives left a lot to be desired. Most of the projects ran into difficulties within the first few years of their inception. The Cameroon Fisheries Project failed from inception while the Cameroon Timber Company in which the WCDA had 15000 ordinary shares went into liquidation in 1962. By April 1964, barely two years after it went operational, the Tiko Iron Works which produced steel pots had collapsed. Further efforts in 1965 such as the Motor Tyre Rethreading Industry; the Cameroon Commercial Corporation Ltd and Cameroon Building Society aimed at revamping the economy were all grounded by 1968. By the late 1960s, the Cameroon Air Transport Ltd, the United Cameroon Transport Agency and the Cameroon Bank Ltd were all in serious difficulties (*Dervish, 1968, pp. 17-19*). By 1970, none of the remaining projects was making a profit and the majority had in fact failed. In the words of Ngomba, (2004, p.96) “the economic woes of West Cameroon termed underdevelopment were aggravated by the short comings of the WCDA.”

Some sources chide the West Cameroon government for appointing top rank managers on the basis of party affiliations and compensation. They argue that, ‘it did not seem to matter if any project failed or succeeded so long as a board member retained the confidence of the ruling party (*Cameroon Express 9 July, 1968, pp.3, 7*). While such sources hold firm to the ‘greed and nepotism’ theory of the West Cameroon government officials,

a major dynamic in the economic woes of the West Cameroon government which has not received significant attention is the appointment of people into the top ranks of administration without due regard for educational qualifications and training. For example, the WCDA chairman, W.P. Lebaga was one of the founding fathers of the KNDP but had not succeeded to enter parliament on any of the occasions; 1954, 1957 and 1959. The party hierarchy may have decided to reward his political faithfulness with such an appointment. His poor performance as board chairperson however may have been more a factor of his education and training than his innate motivations to be corrupt to the point of crippling the Agency. His highest qualification was a Grade II teacher certificate and experience as a supervising head teacher (Dervish, 1968, p.13). The Commission of Inquiry set up to investigate the poor performance of the WCDA acknowledged the fact that professionalism had been neglected in leadership choice due to the unavailability of people with the right kind of education. The Commission noted that:

Incompetence...absence of a reasonable level of academic training,...the extremely low calibre of many persons appointed to the WCDA Board...some of whom could not write their names... and could not participate intelligently in Board deliberations...’ was the most important reason for the collapse of WCDA (Dervish, 1968, p.19).

Table 3
Academic Qualifications of the WCDA Administrative Personnel as of 1968

Position	Academic Qualification
1 Secretary/Accountant	• West African School Certificate (GCE O/L)
2 Executive officer	• Standard VI First School Leaving Certificate
3 Confidential Secretary	• Standard IV education
4 Assistant executive officer	• Standard IV education • Teachers Grade III Certificate
5 Manager Santa Coffee	• Cambridge Overseas Schools Certificate.

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6 Mechanical Superintendent	• GCE Ordinary level Certificate
	• Further Training in the UK (1968)
7 Saw Mill Manager	• Standard IV
	• Government Technical College Ombe

Source: Dervish, 1968. Report of the Commission of Inquiry. P. 178.

Table 3 above shows an example of the mismatch between educational qualifications and professionalism which the Dervish Commission reports above. It also shows that with the collapse of WCDA projects manned by people with basic education, developmentally oriented projects had to possess strong administrative, regulatory, technical and extractive capacities for strategic policy formulation, implementation, evaluation and correction in a timely manner with minimum sloppage (Gyimah-Boadi 2004, p.4). For this to be achieved, the educational system must have been elaborately established to churn out administrators, managers, economists, strategists and other top level public servants (Aladegbola and Jaiyeola 2016, p.147). In West Cameroon the colonial educational system rendered this a luxury, sacrificing the development of the state. Apart from Mr. Lebaga's enormous influence within the party he had little or no other training in management to become the chairman of the country's development agency.

The same could be said of other top managers in the state. For many years the Cameroon Bank was managed by inexperienced and incompetent staff. As of 1968, the Managing Director, like the Attorney General of West Cameroon, was not more than 30 years old and had less than 5 years' experience. By civil service regulations, he was not qualified as a Branch Manager, a position which, in West Cameroon, was held by secondary school leavers, many of whom ended up in prison largely for lack of experience and qualification (Aka 2002, p.148). At the Cameroon Bank, there was no standard lending policy. Loans and overdrafts were granted to mostly senior government officials with recklessness leading to 1,154,654,360 Francs CFA in outstanding debts as of 30 June 1965; barely a few years into the Bank's existence (West Cameroon, 1966, pp 53, 203). The West Cameroon government in another financial miscalculation withdrew its deposit of 700.000.000 Francs CFA in June 1965 in violation of its 1963 agreement with the Bank (Cameroon Times March 1, 1966, p.4). According to the Cameroon Times the money was used to sustain the failing projects of

the West Cameroon Development Agency. Such financial miscalculations could have been avoided if a well trained and experienced banker/accountant was recruited at the head of the Bank on a competitive basis.

Education and the Performance of the West Cameroon Leadership: A political Dimension

The federal system of government was abolished in Cameroon 1972 following a 20th of May referendum. One of the justifications was the poor performance of the West Cameroon state government evidenced in part by its financial insolvency. Generally, while the West Cameroon delegation had gone to the constitutional talks of 1961 with the hope of establishing a loose federation or confederation which would have given the state a significant degree of powers, the delegation of La Republique du Cameroon could only concede to a federation which still ended up giving a lot of powers to the federal institutions and the president of the republic. From the close of the conference therefore, it was the feeling amongst West Cameroonians that their delegation had failed to obtain for the state a significant degree of concessions and events began to prove that as far as the union was concerned, they were on a disadvantage (Ngoh, 2011, 1999; Aka 2002; Mbile 1999).

While some sources have talked of the British and French conspiracy to stifle the West Cameroon leadership (Ndi, 2013, p.71) the absence of Secondary and higher education which comes with relevant political education cannot be minimised. In fact, Because of the scarcity of opportunities for secondary and higher education, the top leadership of West Cameroon was drawn from the elementary teacher training corps with a curriculum similar to that of primary schools. This compared to general secondary and higher education had very limited notions of political education and its benefits and hardly met the needs of a sound political leadership. This lack accounted for several false starts in the independence and reunification negotiations and in the general comportment of the West Cameroons political leadership thereafter.

Empirical research has shown that advanced education affords aspiring politicians the competence of grasping complex socio-political, economic and cultural concepts which place the beneficiary at an advantage to those who do not acquire such an education. Meyers (2011) as well as Hillygus

(2005) have found out that higher educational attainment especially of a social science nature inspires the cultivation of interest in politics by developing cognitive skills and knowledge relevant to politics such as negotiation, mediation, and leadership. It also inculcates in the beneficiaries, relevant civic skills that facilitate rational engagement for the common good and promotes social advancement into politically oriented networks that encourage participation and enhance benefits derived from political social capital in individuals' networks.

The studies on education and political engagement largely converge on the fact that “advanced education is the strongest predictor of high positive outputs in political participation even when other socio-economic factors are considered” (Hillygus, 2005, p.25). Apart from giving learners knowledge, and bringing them closer to high political networks, higher education, especially with the teaching of social sciences like history, political science, public administration and philosophy opens up windows to the understanding of the past and present contexts of world affairs. It equips students with the necessary theories, practical case studies as well as heroes and heroines whose lives and documented experiences could be very instructive to future leaders and place them at a higher pedestal of operation and performance than those who have not attained such levels. From a psychological point of view, higher levels of education also afford the beneficiary a personal image void of inferiority complexes in the face of political adversaries (Hillygus, 2005, p.26). Brief, those who pass through such a system become better prepared for political office than those who have little or no knowledge of it.

This, in no way downplays personal leadership attributes and charisma but justifies the fact that, in relation to the leadership in the Southern Cameroons and its challenging options of independence (either integrating with Nigeria or reunifying with former French Cameroons) the level of political maturity, political manoeuvring and negotiation capacity would have yielded more fruits for the people if the leadership had been better prepared by a complete colonial educational system which included access to higher education for a majority of those who qualified for it. Consequently, as Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry (1996) have argued, their ability in understanding the abstract subject of politics, researching and evaluating issues at stake rationally and handling the bureaucratic requirements effectively was limited due to their level of educational

attainment. Apart from that, because the critical issues affecting levels of political participation such as social and political networks as well as relevant political information which are easily acquired amongst well-educated and connected individuals (Galton, 2001) were limited or not exploited, the performance of the West Cameroon leadership was hampered.

One of the most popular areas of contention in the history of Cameroon is the negotiations for British Southern Cameroons independence which culminated in the Foumban Constitutional Conference of 17-21 July 1961 with the former French administered Cameroons (La Republique du Cameroun). Achangkeng argues that these talks qualify as false negotiations as the delegation from La Republic du Cameroon strove to gain more by stalling the negotiations and avoiding agreement or without an intention of reaching one (2014, p.129). Should this be accepted, it could only be seen as a political strategy which was not noticed by the Southern Cameroons leadership. Apart from that, he adds that, the lesson of political negotiation which teaches that there is need to spend much time and effort in the pre-negotiation period before a decision is made had not also been learnt by the Southern Cameroons leadership (Achangkeng, 2014, p.129).

Because the Southern Cameroons delegation was ignorant of the importance of pre-negotiation, very minimal pre-Foumban conference groundwork was carried out. All calls by the British administering authority for the government 'to make constitutional proposals of La Republique du Cameroon known to the electorate prior to the plebiscite just like the integrationists had done with Nigeria were not heeded (Ngoh, 2011, p.31). The few meetings between the Southern Cameroons leadership and La Republique du Cameroon bore no fruit other than a few declarations which gave the impression that actual constitutional ground works would be undertaken after the plebiscite. They registered a false start by allowing themselves to be cajoled into voting for the political future of the territory (11 February 1961 plebiscite) before deciding on the form and structure of the envisaged union (17 July Foumban Conference); a kind of putting the cart before the horse.

Apart from the above, an understanding of basic political ideologies such as leadership for the common-good, human needs and structural theories would have prevented the Southern Cameroons delegation from engaging discussions without involving all sheds of opinion (Aka, 2002; Mbile, 1999). The Southern Cameroons Leadership failed to understand the degree of

moral commitment that a leader makes to his people as well as the seriousness and consequences of failing to meet that commitment. They also did not understand the difficulties which the drawing of a constitution entailed. They did not understand that the constitution was not a partisan affair, but a national issue and that it had, therefore, to represent all shades of political opinion if it was to serve the interests of the people as a whole. This was particularly so for a constitution which was to unite two territories of different colonial and cultural backgrounds (Aka 2002, p.254); lessons which an advanced civic education should have taught the people.

By initiating negotiations with Amadou Ahidjo, the leader of *La Republique du Cameroun*, for the constitution without seeking any technical advice and without, until late, having to consult the opposition which had an equal number of seats in the West Cameroon state house of assembly and some of the most experienced and enlightened political leaders in the territory, the Southern Cameroons Premier became too presumptuous and arrogated to himself a responsibility far beyond his capacity. Even when the Chief Secretary to the Governor General of Nigeria and the Council of Ministers, Sir Foley Alfred Newns warned that based on its composition, the Southern Cameroons government was incapable of grappling with the tremendous problems which faced it as a result of their limited education, and proposed that it should be accompanied to the constitutional talks by British experts the Premier declared that ‘the drawing of this constitution is a matter for Cameroonians themselves, and it was no longer necessary to refer the matter to outsiders’ (Milne, 1999, p.435). On the contrary, even a much more politically experienced delegation from *La Republique du Cameroon* (Mukete 2013, pp.501-521; Ngoh, 1987, p.139; Delancey, Mbuh and Delancey, 2010) did not deprive itself of the continuous presence of French technical advisers.

In fact, the attitude that the Southern Cameroons leadership displayed in the events surrounding the drafting of the federal constitution could best be described as a display of immaturity. They failed to be equipped with the necessary understanding and appreciation of the stakes of the matter because of a glaring lack of political education acquired as one acquires advanced education (Meyers, 2011; Hillygus, 2005; Galton, 2001; Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry, 1995). Also, by Platonic suppositions, the highest educational attainment is one of the most important criteria for political office and in drawing up the Nigerian Civil Service Code, it was understood that an

individual will contribute more effectively to the development of his society if he is allowed to perform the role commensurate to the educational level he had acquired. Applied in the state of West Cameroon, the code required that a degree from a recognized university was necessary for direct entry into the senior service and a university diploma from a post-secondary institution was necessary for entry into the intermediate level of administration. While this was strictly observed in Nigeria both in the holding of political and administrative office, it was not observed in the Cameroons due to the unavailability of highly educated indigenes.

In the majority, the local educated elite in the Southern Cameroons was drawn from the elementary teacher training centres which had for long served as the major avenue for post-primary education provided by the administering authorities. Of the twenty-six members of the House of Assembly in West Cameroons in 1961, there was only one with some university education. There was one reverend pastor with some twelve to fourteen years of education, mainly in theology. The rest of the members were primary or secondary school graduates and dropouts (Mukete, 2013, pp.501-525). The same characteristics were exhibited by the Council of Ministers, made up of 96% elementary school teachers; only two of whom had obtained the Grade I certificate. John Ngu Foncha, the KNDP leader and Prime Minister, was a Grade II Teacher. In all, no member of his cabinet had had more than 14 years of formal education (Aka, 2002).

In essence, as of 1961, the circle of the social class which formed the political leadership in the Southern Cameroons was very narrow; a limitation which was not caused by the inability and absence of potentials in the individual leaders to pursue higher education but by the unavailability of opportunities for further studies. It was a contradiction that while universities served as avenues for political education and nurseries for political leaders in the other British West African Dependencies, in the British Southern Cameroons it was the elementary teacher training colleges which remained the incubators of political leadership and the teaching profession as a whole (in the majority was elementary), the reservoir of the most enlightened political personnel. It is true that in Nigeria, and Ghana, teachers constituted the largest single group among members of parliament (Kalu, 1960, p.135) but it was not the elementary school teachers that played the front roles as it was the case in British Southern Cameroons.

In 1958, the United Nations Trusteeship Council (UN-TC) had forecasted that “the past inadequacy of educational facilities, would bear negatively on the rate of Cameroonization of the political leadership and in terms of development, would place the Southern Cameroons more than half a century behind Nigeria and other British West African territories (Trusteeship Council Doc. T/1426, 1958, p.11). On the eve of the 1959 elections in the Southern Cameroons, it had been forecasted that “it might be a tragedy for the territory if the KNDP won the elections, since (at that time), it was difficult to see people in the party with a reasonable level of education capable of taking up leadership positions” (Ardener, 1961, p.878). The KNDP actually won the elections. By 1972, the point had been driven home; political, administrative and managerial blunders, economic difficulties in the state of West Cameroon, the dissolution of the Federal system and the marginalization of the Southern/West Cameroon dubbed “a-little-knowing junior partner” (Ndi, 2016, p.176) by the majority former French Cameroons led government.

Apart from the weaknesses displayed in the Pre-1961 constitutional negotiations, other consequences of trusting the destiny of the territory into the hand of leaders with a limited education were that knowledge of the socio-economic potentials of the territory were unknown to them. First, the contribution of the Southern Cameroons to the economic development of Nigeria and African history and civilization in general remained little known to the leadership as it was not part of the curriculum of primary and teacher training institutions. Second, only a negligible number of the leadership had some faint knowledge about the Mandate and Trusteeship systems of colonial administration, especially about the differences between British and French systems of colonial rule, and the similarities if any in the two systems, and above all, the rights of colonial subjects and the responsibilities of administering powers (Aka, 2002) all of which would have informed their policies and decisions.

Consequently, the political future of the territory was being shaped more on emotional and sentimental grounds guided by the slogans such as “how nice it will be to meet our brothers” than on any rational appreciation of economic, geographic or historical facts. According to Aka (2002, p.257) the Southern Cameroons political leaders were carried too far by the euphoria of reunification that they signed a blank cheque, merely trusting that the future development of policies would be guided by mutual compromise. He terms

their failure to master the issues objectively a matter of “throwing the future into a lake without knowing whether the lake was inhabited by fish or crocodiles.”

Besides the above, other exhibitions of the effects of a limited political education on the part of the Southern Cameroons leadership at the Fouban constitutional talks could be seen in their failure to come up with a discussion on a specified formula of revenue allocation between the Federal and State governments to enable them execute their constitutional functions effectively; this being the most important requirement for federalism (Johnson 1970, p.219). Amadou Ahidjo; president of the Federal Republic and the leader of the delegation of La Republique du Cameroun probably aware of this quickly placed all viable sectors from which the West Cameroon government would have derived revenue like the ports under the federal government. This permanently put the West Cameroon state government at a deficit and at the mercy of federal subventions; a strong argument for West Cameroon financial insolvency which Ahidjo used to dismantle the federal system in 1972. Without financial autonomy, the state of West Cameroon therefore became only “an imagined space of freedom and identity” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, p.14).

It has also been revealed that the Fouban constitutional talks were characterised not only by merry making and side attractions but by tension, mudslinging and the absence of consultation on the part of the Southern Cameroons delegation to the point where further negotiations like the August 1961 Yaoundé Tripartite Conference did not include the opposition in West Cameroon (Mbile 1999, pp165-195). Ngoh also shows how the ‘Southern Cameroon Premier imagined the unimaginable in his constitutional proposals for a federal Cameroon’ by insisting that “the Southern Cameroons Governor would be a head of state, and the President of the Federal government would be a head of state, the Governor of the Republic of Cameroon would be a head of state” (Ngoh 2011, p.30). These pronouncements were also exhibitions of a limited grasp of the basic forms of government and their power attributions.

One can therefore say with certainty that amongst the combination of factors that account for the fate of the former Southern Cameroons after 1961, the education factor cannot be left out. Until 1961, higher education was non-existent in the territory and its attainment was limited to a few government scholarships for studies in Nigeria and Britain. With the

consequence that very few university graduates were available to lead the territory through its most challenging days. There were also four under-utilized Mission secondary schools. Like higher education, Britain didn't open a government secondary school in the territory in her over 45 years of administration of the Cameroons. Consequently, it is the colonial education system and the administering authorities that are being faulted for the limited political education amongst the Southern Cameroons leadership which account for their dismal performance in the political as well as the economic sphere and the underdevelopment of the territory.

Conclusion

It is not enough to argue that the founding fathers of Southern Cameroons nationalism did not restructure inherited colonial structures to make them profitable for the people. The difficult question is, how did the colonial system prepare them for the huge challenges they were expected to shoulder at independence? In this paper, I have argued that a significant level of education which affords aspiring leaders the competence of grasping complex socio-political, economic and cultural concepts is necessary for the effectiveness and efficiency of any government. With it they acquire foresight, knowledge, diplomatic, administrative and managerial skills which enable them to set policy agendas and pursue them rationally.

In discussing the problem of limited education in the Southern Cameroons in 1955, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) had hammered on the fact that “no other type of investment will produce a greater return than an investment in higher education” (IBRD, 1955, p.372). This reiterated more than downplayed the role that human resources with the necessary level of education can constitute as the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations (Harbison, 1973). Consequently a government that is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people to the maximum standards available in comparative terms and utilize them effectively in the national economy and politics, has not done any justice to the people. Any observable developmental deficit in the state of West Cameroon such as demonstrated in this paper, cannot therefore be separated from the leadership's inability to play its role -a major factor being its limited educational attainment resulting from the colonial educational inadequacies.

While the study has used the years 1959 and 1972 to establish the impact of the colonial education and manpower nexus in the Cameroons, it is important to state that the phenomenon was not limited exclusively to the KNDP government which was in power for a majority of these years. Even Endeley's government (1954-59); the first indigenous government of the Southern Cameroons, was not healthier in its composition and would not have done better. Asked why higher education so cherished by the people was at the same time so limited, one cannot help but conclude that a weak colonial education structure guaranteed continuous internal control of the territory. It was clear that through a weak educational system, the African nationalists who masterminded the wind of change in the late 1950s would fail to create stable postcolonial nation states and thus remain dependent on the metropole. Going by the Decolonial hypothesis, poor and skewed social bases of imagination as well as a weak and fragile African nationalism giving birth to underdevelopment and dependence had long been the hidden agenda for a limited education.

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