K a c h e r e B o o k s No. 53

Contradictions in Post-War Education Policy Formulation and Application in Colonial Malawi 1945-1961

A Historical Study of the Dynamics of Colonial Survival

Isaac Chikwekwere Lamba

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A HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE DYNAMICS OF COLONIAL SURVIVAL

by

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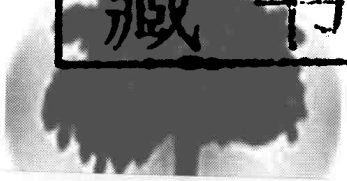

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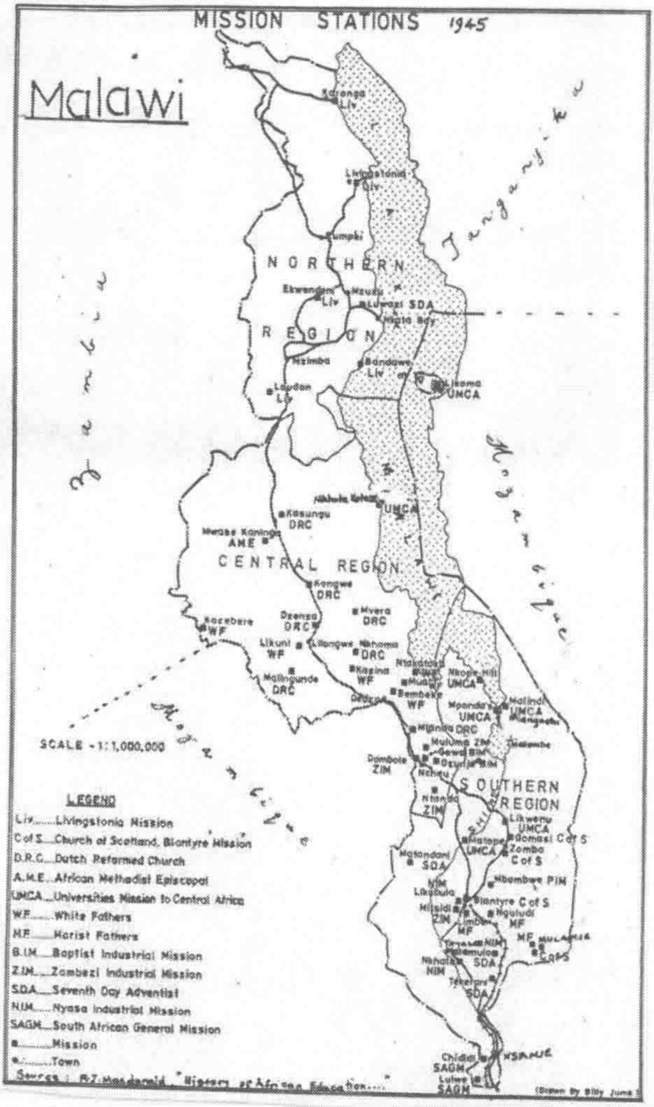
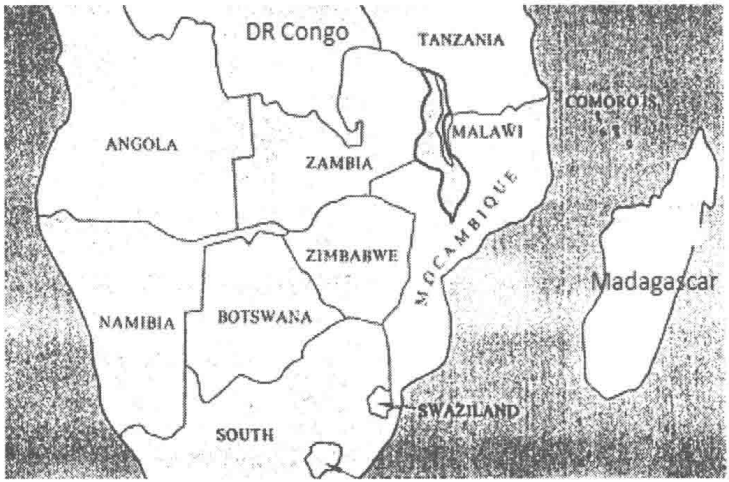

MISSION STATIONS 1945
Malawi
NORTHERN REGION
CENTRAL REGION
SOUTHERN REGION
Tanganyika
Zambia
Mozambique
SCALE - 1:1,000,000
LEGEND
Liv......Livingstonia Mission
C of S....Church of Scotland, Blantyre Mission
D.R.C....Dutch Reformed Church
A.M.E...African Methodist Episcopal
UMCA...Universities Mission to Central Africa
W.F.......White Fathers
M.F.......Marist Fathers
B.I.M.....Baptist Industrial Mission
Z.I.M.....Zambezi Industrial Mission
S.D.A.....Seventh Day Adventist
N.I.M.....Nyasa Industrial Mission
SAGM....South African General Mission
■.........Mission
●.........Town


DR Congo
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COMOROS
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SWAZILAND
SOUTH

Abstract

The post-World War II colonial reconstruction programmes for economic recovery and general political and social development in Malawi (then known as Nyasaland) necessitated increased education. But the sincerity of metropolitan development plans for the colonies could only be adequately appraised through the degree of demonstrated commitment in the implementation of the announced plans.

This study seeks to examine chronologically the development and application of colonial education policies during the period 1945 to 1961 in Malawi. The parties involved included the British Colonial Office, the Nyasaland Protectorate Government and the Christian missionaries on the one hand, and the European settlers, Asian, Coloured and African communities on the other as the target groups of the policies.

Devising educational policies of equitable benefit to all the racial and social groupings in Malawi posed enormous problems to the colonial administration. This study, examining the dynamics and course of policy, contends that, given the prevailing economic and political conditions, non-European education, especially that of Africans, experienced retardation in favour of European education. Sometimes apparent government ineptitude, combined with calculated needs for the Europeans, produced under-development for African education in Malawi and the country's economy. In the end, African education operated against the odds of missionary and government apathy.

This book discusses the impact on education, generally, of the Nyasaland Post-War Development Programme, the Colonial Office Commissions of 1947, 1951 and 1961, and the local Committees set up to inquire into the retardation of African education in its various categories, including female and Muslim, in response to both local and international pressure. Although considered a priority, African education developed slowly, contrary to the declared goal of Post-War colonial policy of self- determination with its potential demands for trained local manpower. The argument demonstrates the tenacity of the Federal Government of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in playing down African education as a political strategy from 1953 to 1961 at the same time as it accorded a better deal to Asian and Coloured education.

This study which has not included vocational, technical, mass and adult education, represents the first integrated treatment of both African and non-African education in Malawi, especially in the post-World War period.

Introductory Preface

This study seeks to examine the history of post-war education, a journey through the dynamics of colonial survival along the lines of N.D. Atkins' work, *Educating Rhodesians: A History of Educational Policy in Rhodesia* (Longman, London 1972). So far, an indepth examination for Malawi on this topic focusing on the post-war period is yet to be undertaken. Leslie Austin Lionel James' thesis, "Education in the Rhodesia's and Nyasaland 1890 – 1963" (PhD, New York University, 1965) is a fragmentary study which naturally features Malawi only in a regional context. Roderick J. Macdonald's "History of African Education in Nyasaland 1875 – 1945" (PhD, Edinburgh University 1969) is perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of the topic but stops where my project starts. Besides, unlike his work which is restricted to African education, my treatment aims at a broader spectrum that includes minority groups such as Asians, Muslims, women, etc. in some detail.

The study covers the last sixteen years of colonial rule in Malawi, a revolutionary period in the historiography of colonial Africa south of the Sahara. The objective is to examine critically post-war educational policy formulation and implementation, delineating the underlying motives in colonial policies permeated by a quest for survival at a time of a challenged and disturbed colonial order. The war years represent a turning point in long established colonial traditions and relationships as characterised by the development of unorthodox thinking among colonial subjects whose war experiences away from home broadened their horizon of understanding the myths underlying white supremacy in the political, social and other issues. Education formed one of the most explosive areas for articulation by Africans in their dissatisfaction with the colonial order. In Malawi the forces and dynamics exerting pressure on one another included the Colonial Office—cum—the territorial government, the missionaries, the white settlers, Asian and Coloured communities with their own educational demands, and, finally, the African colonial subjects who clamoured for socio-political change with education as an important agent for transformation.

Colonial African education seemed unmistakeably tied to political strategies instead of African socio-economic development and its planners appeared naturally interested in devising a type that would entrench continued docility of the indigenous Africans. In Malawi missionaries posed as the custodians of African interests, but always failed to really

satisfy African educational aspirations which they had aroused, and invariably blamed their shortcomings on alleged government indifference. In general, differences of opinion and conflict existed between missionary and official government approaches to educational policy but in the final analysis such differences never altered the ultimate desire of each party in its own way to patronize and control the Africans, sometimes in a most subtle manner in the name of 'progress'. In both mission and government circles education for African leadership did not seem to be the greatest need for Africans; in 1961 Malawi possessed not more than a dozen African university graduates out of a population of 3 million after 80 years of colonial western education.

The establishment in 1953 of the Central African Federation or the Federation of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland was welcomed by the protectorate government as a potential source of budgetary relief on the swelling costs of education. Hitherto government funds also catered for non-African education which claimed a good share of the budget that should have otherwise gone to African education although even between 1953 and 1961 no spectacular socio-economic progress for Malawi became conspicuously noticeable. Apart from non-African education the federal government assumed responsibility for higher education for Africans, an area where its performance proved pathetically dismal.

Non-African education, an important element of this study, was initially rejected by missionaries and became the "unwanted baby" of the Nyasaland Government as the demand grew for Asian and European educational facilities. From the earliest days of the protectorate the Asian factor was considered by the system as crucial to the country's commercial development while Europeans would play a necessary role not only to Malawi's economic progress but also to the running of political life and government. When the Asian and European demands for their children's education could no longer be ignored, missions emphasized their commitment to African education and the mounting non-African pressure forced government to extend its responsibility to non-African education which eventually came to include education for the Coloured community. This partly explains the protectorate government's enthusiasm for the Federation with its albeit empty, financial promises. The Federation, with a lifespan of only a decade, proved a negative structure especially as far as African education went since European education got the lion's share of federal funds that were made available. In line with the policy of domination, African education in fact experienced retardation, contrary to what Roy Welensky, the Federal Prime Minister, called, "progress" in

summing up the federal achievements at the formal break-up of the Federation in December, 1963.

This historical discussion examines chronologically the origins and dynamics of Colonial Office and local educational policy and practice; it traces and demonstrates through an analysis of these policies, the paradoxes and contradictions in the expressed educational strategies in Malawi. This study exposes the crises in policy formulation and implementation which effectively retarded education for leadership, development and progress. Often the policies aimed at the maintenance of the status quo of missions and government with Africans as subjects for manipulation. Any so-called education for progress was actually calculated and designed to serve foreign interests rather than African development. This explains why Malawi came to represent an imperial slum, as it has occasionally been called.

Data for this project was collected through archival and oral research both in Malawi and in the United Kingdom; government and mission repositories were visited. This book will be of great use to many people interested in the history of western education in Malawi. College students and researchers will particularly benefit from this detailed study of education in this southern African country, the former British Protectorate of Nyasaland.

Acknowledgements

This work was made possible through the financial assistance of the Academic Staff Scholarship of the British Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. I am grateful to the Plan for funding this doctoral research into the historical study of post-World War II western education in colonial Malawi, the focus of the thesis, and for the maintenance during my stay in Britain.

My sincere thanks also go to various personalities who individually and collectively made available various forms of assistance. Foremost is Emeritus Professor George A. Shepperson, then William Robertson Professor of American and Commonwealth History, Edinburgh University, whose extensive knowledge of Malawi's history and dedicated advice on this work provided great stimulation. His scholarly, constructive and encouraging criticisms and suggestions have led to the present form of this book whose preface he should have been the most deserving person to write in honour of his professional role and friendship.

Several other people offered sincere moral and material support both in Britain and in Malawi. The hospitality extended to me in their homes resulted in a useful combination of hard work and relaxation. Apart from several former missionaries now in retirement in Scotland, to mind come others such as Professor Margaret Read who after a good interview and valuable reminiscences and hospitality in her home at Paradise Walk Street in London at her age of 94, passed away peacefully a few months later. In addition to all these, the co-operation and assistance of the staffs of Edinburgh University Library, the National Library of Scotland, Rhodes House Library at Oxford University, the Public Record Office in London and other repositories in the London area, facilitated my archival research in Britain.

In Malawi, the late Mr. Steve Mwiyeriwa, the then Government Archivist and subsequently University Librarian at the University of Malawi, and Mr. Mtapiko, his deputy, always ensured smooth work for me in the National Archives of Malawi. In the University Library at Chancellor College, the College Librarian rendered enormous assistance at the right time. My history students too at Chancellor College deserve special mention for assisting as field research assistants. The University of Malawi is thanked for granting me timely study leave, and Professor Bridge Pachai, now retired and settled in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, for suggesting the topic.

My greatest debt of gratitude goes to my wife, Christine, whose patience and understanding in the course of this work always provided the necessary encouragement. This book is dedicated to my wife and family, especially to my illiterate and yet wise mother, Mai Everes Chikadza Mbewe; in her own way mother stimulated and provided the most effective inspiration in my academic pursuits. Her job was properly and effectively done.

Chapter Divisions

1. The Traditional basis of education in Malawi

This chapter largely makes use of secondary sources to give an ethnographical background of traditional education of the Malawians as well as the story of missionary and non-missionary occupation of the country and establishment of western educational institutions.

2. Primary education for Africans

This chapter examines the general concept and policies of colonial education that failed to promote development. For a long time missionaries regarded education principally as a service agent for the propagation of Christianity rather than as an important investment tool for economic and political development. Malawians on their part perceived education not only in economic terms but also as a means for control of their political destiny. Government for a long time concurred with the missionary belief in horizontal educational expansion restricted to primary levels. But the wartime African's military demands for better and more advanced education could no longer be ignored, given the Africans' military contribution in the defence of the Empire, although this implied jeopardizing, eventually, the colonial ideal of supremacy. Africans demanded the rectification of an educational system basically meant to serve Europeans interests.

3. Secondary education for Africans

The absence for a long time of secondary schools for Africans led to frustration of the able and ambitious Malawians. This situation partly contributed to the migration of such Malawians to get an education elsewhere. On completion of their primary education such people often chose the opportunities available in the neighbouring host countries. Examining the situation more closely, this diaspora seemed to present an implicit smart solution to potential problems of undesirable elitist manpower in Malawi that would be created by advanced education. But wartime African pressure aimed at definite change of this situation. Africans stressed the need for government recognition of their loyal military contribution in the war, recognition partly through better educational facilities up to secondary and higher levels. Malawians developed a new self awareness during the war and brought back home new experiences and ideas in mat-

ters of political, social and educational development of colonial peoples. As if redressing some guilt, missionaries began to support Malawian demands for secondary education and government responded by agreeing to finance the first secondary school, Blantyre Secondary School, in 1941. But in reality the secondary system fed by poor mission primary schools proved no more than a sinecure, statistically. This study examines the causes of the existing retardation. Both missions and government shared responsibility. It was like giving with one hand and snatching away the gift with the other hand.

4. Higher education for Africans

Given the prevailing background, any discussion of higher or post secondary education at the time sounds ironical. When the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland first opened its doors in 1957 to bolster the concept of practical partnership the Central African Federation, Malawi had no single African candidate to offer. In 1961 not more than 6 Malawians were attending that University. It is true that some Malawians went to Makerere in Uganda and some universities in South Africa but these were only a handful, and most of such Malawians came from the diaspora camp. The major handicap was that missionary and government conviction in African secondary education was half-hearted, partly because of fear of developing a potentially dangerous elitist education likely to challenge and dislodge the colonial structure and partly because of sheer absence of competent planning and administration.

5. Education for African girls and women

The neglect of this area of colonial education reflected the woman's status in the eyes of western educators. At a time when the social place of her western contemporary had been reasonably elevated, the African girl was considered and accepted as inferior to men. This view applied to the colonial conception of the girl's potential contribution which never went beyond the confines of the domestic obligations of family or domestic world. The Africans' own attitudes to their girls did not seem important to the policy makers. Missionaries were convinced about the need to educate future Christian wives for male teachers and evangelists rather than as future leaders to compete and contribute side by side with men in the development of the country. This fact was reflected clearly in the curriculum for women which emphasized on religion, hygiene and domestic sciences. The concept of female secondary education likely to create in-

dependence of mind seemed something to be avoided. It is therefore not surprising that as late as 1948 only two Malawian girls attended junior secondary school, and the first girl to complete a full secondary course did so only in the late 1950's, unlike the situation in East Africa. In 1957, out of 528 Malawians in junior secondary school only 64 were girls.

During the period under review facilities for girls' education were extremely limited. No major improvements followed the visit to Malawi of the Margaret Read/Freda Gwillian Commission from the Colonial Office in 1947 appointed exclusively to examine and make recommendations of the required improvements in girls' education. The subsequent Nuffield Foundation Commission and Report (1952/53) made its own positive suggestions about female education but, like the 1947 Report, never introduced any radical departure from the conservative and mundane features of the traditional colonial curriculum dominated by domestic science. The weaknesses continued and once more featured in the Phillips Report on African Education, 1961. This study will contend that the lack of any strong conviction either in the Colonial Office or among educators in Malawi for any progressive female education for leadership stemmed from a mixture of traditional conservatism and absence of innovativeness among the educators.

6. The plight of secular education for African Muslims

Malawi, with a substantial Muslim population (c.9% in 1966) particularly among the Yao, has always been confronted with the challenge of providing western education for this minority group. The major problem facing secular western education for Muslims, especially with the inherent mission influence, was the conflict of religious ideals. Missionaries controlled schools and their apparent insistence on proselytising the pupils, though contrary to the government policy of religious freedom in education, created reluctance among Muslim parents to send their children to mission schools. Their own initiatives in the form of few madrassas (Muslim schools) suffered from a chronic and crippling staff/teacher shortage. For a long time both missions and government paid little or no attention to secular education for this section of the population. Although in the 1950's government inspection itineraries included Muslim schools this was a half-hearted effort which only proved discouraging to Muslim education. This study suggests government deliberate lack of a more imaginative approach to the education of Muslim children which should have involved reorganization of the whole educational system to cater for Muslim educational requirements. The discussion demonstrates the ne-

glect of this education as part of the whole policy of subtle official encouragement of illiteracy to uphold white supremacy in the post-war Empire. Any preference by the government went to Christian mission education.

7. Education for the Asian and Coloured Communities

This minority education defied colonial policy makers. Missionaries decided to bear no responsibility for these sectors of the community if their education entailed separate facilities. Asians became a purely government concern as most of them had entered Malawi as British citizens to run the commercial sector. As such, Asians demanded practical government recognition of their citizenship and their undoubted contribution to the economy, by seeking schools for their children. But given a choice, white public opinion seemed to favour coloured educational opportunity as these children were considered as deserving of civilized European life, although in practice the position was different as the largest proportion of the Coloured people led a typically African life. In the end government miscalculation brought together the education of the two inordinate groups, the Asians and Coloureds, on economic grounds, a situation which only led to enormous problems of integration. Right from the start government reluctance to finance this type of education was clear, and it was a source of great relief in 1953 when the Federal Government took over responsibility. This study is the first to examine the politics of this education focusing on Malawi. Floyd and Lillian Dotson's cited in this discourse, was a survey study of these minorities throughout the Central African region. For comparison, it is argued that on the whole, despite the enormity of African tax revenue, African education failed to elicit the same government support as Asian education. In the end government scholarships for secondary and higher education tenable outside Malawi were made available to these minority groups.

8. Education for Europeans as a master race

Europeans represented a small group in Malawi but were treated by the colonial system as the most important. Although government initially gave the impression of reluctance to run European education, it ultimately succumbed by supporting individual European educators initiatives in Blantyre and Zomba. This led to a firmer commitment which would have continued even after 1953 when the Federal Government took over European education.