

Contribution of Local Native Councils to the Development of Colonial Education: Case of the Kipsigis of Kenya, 1934-1957

**Dr. Thomas Kipkorir Ronoh & Mary Chepchieng*

Department of Psychology, Counseling and Educational Foundations, Egerton University.

**Corresponding Author: ronoh.thomas@yahoo.com*

Abstract

The paper critically discussed the contribution of the Local Native Councils to the development of colonial education among the Kipsigis of Kenya. Arguably, it extensively utilized structural functionalism and dialectical materialism theories as organizing frameworks as well as guided the conceptualization of data analysis and interpretation. As aptly articulated in this paper, the government continued to expand educational infrastructure and made the system more appropriate to the needs of the majority of the African population. Despite all these efforts, the colonial educational policies continued to favour the European and Asian communities in so far as financing, curriculum and administrative governance of education was concern thus prompting the Africans to start their own independent schools movement.

Keywords: *Local native councils, colonial education, kipsigis.*

1. Methodology

The research employed an ethno-historical approach in its design. The selection of the informants was done using snowball and purposive sampling techniques to identify key cultural consultants (Dalen, 1979; Babbie, 1996; Cohen, 1994 and Gall 2003).where individual interviews were carried out during the year 1996-1998 with approximately 45 elderly men and women. The interviews systematically covered the general development of education in Kipsigis during the period under study as was guided by the objectives and research questions taking into cognizance the general historical framework. Interviews were taped, transcribed and analysed qualitatively through content analysis and triangulation approaches.

2. Introduction

The government continued to expand primary and secondary educational institutions to meet the growing demands from the Africans. Despite all these efforts, the colonial educational policies largely favored the European and Asian communities at the expense of the Africans. Emphasis on technical and vocational education was the preference of the colonial government, which required to train skilled personnel to assist in socio-economic development of the country as opposed to being engaged in white collar jobs as leaders in colonial administration. Dialectically, this prompted the Africans to start their own independent school's movement.

3. Development of Education during the Inter War Period: 1934-1945

The development of education in Kipsigis during the inter-war period was a rather slow and protracted process mainly because of lack of physical facilities, financial support, supervision and emerging conflict between the colonial government and the Africans. With the formation of the District-Education Board in 1934, the problem concerning sub-elementary education offered to the Kipsigis was virtually resolved. The District Education Board Ordinance of the year, District Education Boards for North also established South and Central Kavirondo. Such boards had been established for Fort Hall (Muranga), South Nyeri, Kiambu and Machakos (KNA, 1934:10). These Boards were responsible for approving the establishment of new elementary schools and the provision of funds; allocate grants and scholarships in the respective districts.

The creation of the District Education Boards was also an attempt by the colonial government to regulate Local Native Council funds to ensure its prudent use to cover all sectors of education. The District Commissioner, being Chairman, was in a position to control the flow of Local Native Council funds (Mambo, 1981; Anderson, 1970; Bogonko, 1991). The Kipsigis viewed the establishment of the District Education Board as a direct channel through which they were to participate in the improvement of their education. The Board was generally instrumental in controlling and financing elementary education and, quite often, it was not necessary for the Director of Education to question their suggestions and decisions (Chumo, 1997; Mambo, 1981& Otiende et.al).

E.G. Morris, the then Director of Education arguably observed that one great handicap to progress in elementary education, apart from the presumed general apathy of the community, was the almost complete absence of vernacular literature (KNA, Education Department, 1936:46). This was later addressed by the colonial government with the introduction of language policy into curriculum reforms, yet this question stills stands the test of time even at the present times..

. In 1938, six boys passed the primary school certificate from GAS, Kabianga, yet none of them was admitted to proceed for secondary education (KNA, Education Department, 1938). This was very disappointing to the Kipsigis in general who began to think that the colonial government was out to limit their educational advancement so as not to acquire academic type of education similar to the one that was offered to the Europeans and Asian Communities (Muricho & Changach, 2011). However, the government policy was to maintain a racial separate development in education that limited Africans from access to higher education. In essence, the goal of education was to produce a semi-educated labour to develop the colony's economy hence chiefs and headmen were to help in administration.

Efforts were made by government officials from the Department of Agriculture to arrange agricultural projects in the neighbouring intermediate schools, seeking to secure the interests of the pupils of those schools in such projects. Besides, plans were also made for those who had left or were about to leave intermediate school to undertake agricultural training. This was an

industrial model led “on the Negro Industrial Schools of America founded by General Hampton and Booker Washington so as to educate the boys mainly through the hands, providing a sound general education and technical training in one trade for each pupil (East African Protectorate, 1919; 185: Rodney, 1994 & Bogonko, 1991).

This discourse found itself in dialectical materialism conception as articulated by Chesnokov (1969), Marx (1975), Giddens (1995) and amplified by Rodney (1994) where it explained that the ruling class dominated the means and mode of production that had clear inclination to also dominating the superstructure of the society as well. In this perspective as it happened in the colonization of Indian Society, the colonial government controlled the type of education that provided to the Africans within the overall framework of bringing new socio-political and economic order in Kipsigis and Kenya in general through provision of elementary type of education. As rightly attested by Rodney (1994) and being a generally accepted discourse in this paper, colonization sought to bring a new system of education to the Kipsigis society, which was inconsistent with the socio-economic needs and interest of this group. Admissibly, Dewey (1911) observed that the best form of education should take into account the interest, needs and abilities of the learners.

The Kipsigis District Education Board in its meeting in 1947 passed one of the most important resolutions concerning the rules and recommendations on the development of primary schools (KNA, DC/KER/4/4, 1942). Emphasis was laid regarding the establishment of aided schools - which were the majority to be found in Buret, followed by Sot and Belgut while Chepalungu, had none. The new grants-in-aid rules stated that the cost of primary schools should be the responsibility of the Local Native Councils, and that there should be European supervision of all primary schools (Ronoh, 2000). Furtherance, the Local Native Councils were responsible for all the expenses of the African staff and boarding together with half the cost of recurrent equipment and maintenance. On the other hand, the Government was to be responsible for the cost of European staff and half the cost of recurrent equipment and maintenance (KNA, DC/KER/3/7; 1925-1942).

4. Post Second World War and Development of Education in Kipsigis, 1946-1957

The Kipsigis community struggle to establish its own teacher training institution (KNA, PC/NZA/3/5/82; 1946) during the Post- World War period and this was prompted by the fact that Kipsigis boys were being turned away from joining secondary schools in other districts. The boys were compelled to seek entry into colleges in other Kalenjin districts - notably Tambach and Kapsabet -, which offered teacher training. From 1946, the Butere teacher training college, which had been taking Kipsigis students for training was not prepared to take first year candidates anymore (KNA/DC/KER/2/1; 1944-1946). During this time, the Kipsigis had shown eagerness for education through the LNC twice voting sh. 5/- special education cess and by putting forward the Kabianga scheme. The vote was specifically towards the erection of lower primary teacher training buildings.

The government, on its part, hoped through the school to train the low-grade personnel it needed for staffing the bottom echelons of the colonial bureaucracy. It also intended to create such conditions - political, economic, social and moral - as would enable the metropole to exploit as fully as possible what was regarded as the hitherto insufficiently tapped resources in Kipsigis (KNA, DC/KER/4/4; 1946).

After the Second World War, the colonial government collaborated with all the missions in Kipsigis in continuing to provide only low-level education to the community. This led to Kipsigis pressure on the colonial authority to provide more and better education. The issue soon became the focus of the political associations that emerged in the late 1940s, including the Kipsigis Central Association whose activities extended from Kipsigis to Nandi and Elgeyo - albeit to a small extent (KNA, DC/KER/3/8; 1932-1943).

Administratively, the Kipsigis was separated from the other Kalenjin groups with whom they spoke one language. They were the only Kalenjin group placed in Nyanza Province, while their counterparts were all in the then Rift Valley Province. Often, they felt isolated from the other communities of Nyanza, hence finding it appropriate if they could have their own schools in Kipsigis (KNA, DC/KER/3/8, 1932-1949). For these reasons, the Kipsigis sometimes bypassed the District Education Board and tried to establish schools without its approval. As is well known for Kenya as a whole, such independent schools came to strongly challenge the colonial set-up. It is understandable that in the midst of redressing stratification of colonial education that favoured Europeans and Asians, the Africans set up their own independent schools that incorporated African cultural values into Christianity and that was of utility to the immediate environment (<http://softkenya.com/education/history> of education in Kenya, 2012).

The Kipsigis manifested the phenomenon of independency in 1947 when they founded the first independent school in Boito near Litein. The movement was spearheaded by Solomon arap Mateget, who was also instrumental in the formation of the Kipsigis Central Association a year after. The Kipsigis wanted to have a school that would be independent of both government and mission control (Sifuna, 1990; Eshiwani, 1993; Seron, 1997; KNA, DC/KER/3/8. 1932-1949). Research shows that, initially, it was the lack of sufficient schools, leading to political impatience - rather than discontent with the existing schools - that had given impetus to the founding of independent schools in Kipsigis (KNA, DC/KER/3/8, 1932-1940).

Later, however, the Kipsigis began to question the type of education that was offered to them. They wanted to be given an academic education to help them progress economically, socially and politically, and they saw attempts to restrict their education to technical and vocational training as aimed at keeping them in an inferior position (KNA, Report on Native Affairs Department, 1947:28). They also began to demand educational and religious training that was related to their own culture, and the same educational opportunities as other races. From all these feelings developed the movement towards independent schools and churches in Kipsigis. Thereafter, a handful of schools opened both in the reserve and on the tea estates - and the

colonial administration became extremely worried about, or opposed to, this independent movement.

In October 1947, the Kipsigis reportedly held meetings throughout Belgut in which they contributed sh. 12/- each - the money being contributions to the Githunguri Teachers' Training College in Kiambu in the Central Province (KNA, DC/KER/4/3, 1947:1). In addition, it was observed that postcards were being sold at sh. 3/- each in the Sondu market in order to raise funds for political purposes - perhaps indicating an even more generalised political consciousness. It was further reported that a fee of shs. 13/- was paid, of which some was sent to the Githunguri Teachers' Training College, and that the Kikuyu who lived in the neighbouring Kisii district attended the meetings. The links with Githunguri went further than financial contributions, however; some Kipsigis boys went to be educated at Githunguri, one of them being the son of Jonah arap Chuma.

The political implications of these connections were feared by the colonial administration. As the District Commissioner wrote, "one wonders whether they will receive training as teachers or political saboteurs (KNA/DC/KER/4/3, 1947; Korir, 1978). It is imperative to note that although independent schools mushroomed in the country as early as 1910, they reached a climax in 1939 with the establishment of Githunguri Teachers Training College, who was most well known Principal was Peter Mbiyu Koinange of Kiambu who later became a Minister of State in the First Kenya Cabinet in 1963.

The colonial administration soon took practical steps to destroy Arap Mateget's organisation(s). On March 22, 1948, the members were ordered to appear before the District Commissioner and most of them, excluding Arap Mateget, showed up. The particulars of each man was recorded, and they were given clearly to understand that any further political or religious agitation would be severely punished - and that the activities of each would be closely watched. In addition, their photographs were taken outside the office for purposes of identification (KNA/DC/KER/1/21, 1948). While in Central Kenya, Githunguri Teachers College was closed in 1952 ostensibly for being seen as the hot bed for Mau Mau insurgency during the Declaration of the State of Emergency.

Research has shown that the need for schools providing secular education led to the founding of an independent school movement in Kipsigis. Consequently, and in agreement with E. Berman (1975) that the Africans in Kenya had well defined ideas concerning the role of the colonial government and the missionaries and the kind of education they imparted in their schools. They readily articulated those ideas and applied pressure, forcing them to yield to their educational demands. However, whenever these desires were not fulfilled, the Africans often seized the opportunity and organized their own schools.

The impact of the independent was ideally to demonstrate African's dissatisfaction with the colonial education and the need for reforms in the school curriculum to make it relevant and consistent to their situation and the Ominde Education Commission in Kenya later addressed this. The schools acted as the impetus where Africans organize themselves to provide secular

education to their children independence of government and missionary control. It also became a reawakening call for the colonial administration to continuously change educational policies to keep pace with the demand for expansion of education.

The development of African education - including that of the Kipsigis - took a major turn with the appointment of the Beecher Education Commission of 1949. The commission's Report was at the time described by many, as the 'educational bible in Kenya' with regard to education for Africans (KNA, Report of African Education in Kenya, 1949; Mutua, 1975 and KNA, Education Department, 1949; Chelule, 1997). The Beecher recommendations were based on the principle of high selectivity. Half of the students were supposed to drop out of elementary school after only four years at the age of eleven. Such wastage and highly competitive examinations made it difficult for the would-be-scholars to continue beyond the elementary level. The Kipsigis were opposed to this type of planning which allowed only five percent of the school - age children to go on to upper primary schools. The inability of the D.E.B. to open more primary schools did not cause serious complaints among the community until the emergence of political parties {Ronoh, 2000}, which steadfast advocated for establishment of independent schools in Kipsigis as well as elsewhere in Kenya.

5. Conclusion

The Kipsigis D.E.B. greatly assisted the development of both primary and intermediate education and, later, secondary education. The board played a greater role in the expansion of the schools - especially in terms of funding, supply of trained teachers and supervision. Fundamentally, the Board ensured that schools under its management obtained adequate facilities and monitored the payment of school fees to ensure uniformity in all aided schools.

The Kipsigis felt that the education provided in primary and middle schools was insufficiently academic. Since, most of the time was spent by the students in the farm as well as in the workshop instead of in the classroom. The pupils were taken through with an inferior type of education that did not fit them only for the farm or workshop. The Kipsigis indeed regarded the school as an instrument of change, but only on terms broadly acceptable to their traditions while the government tailored the educational curriculum to serve their own ends.

6. References

- Anderson, J. (1970). *The Struggle for the school*. London: Green and Co.
- Babbie E. (1996). *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, California. Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Berman B. (1975). *African Reactions to Missionary Education*. New York. Oxford University Press.
- Bogonko, S.N. (1991). *A History of Modern Education in Kenya. 1895-1991*. Nairobi: Evans Brothers Ltd.

- .Castle, E.B. (1998). *Principles of Education for Teachers in Africa*, Nairobi: Oxford University press.
- Chelule, B. (1997) Oral Interview, Cheboyo, 2.3.97.
- Cohen, L. & Manion, E. (1994). *Research Methods in Education*. London: England: Routledge.
- Chesnovok, D.I. (1952). *On Colonialism*. Moscow: People's Publishing House.
- Chumo, C. (1997) Oral interview at Cheboyo on 2nd March 1997
- Dalen V.B. (1979) *Understanding Educational Research: An Introduction*. New York: MacGraw Hill Inc.
- East African Protectorate (1919). Evidence of the Education Commission. The Swift Press.
- Eshiwani, G.S. (1993). *The Development of Education in Kenya since Independence*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers
- Gall, M.D. & Borg, R. (2003). *Educational Research: An introduction*. New York; Pearson Education, Inc.
- Giddens, A. (1995). *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. London: Routledge.
- Hunter, G. (1963) *Education for a Developing Region*. London; Allen & Unwin.
- Fish, B.C. & Fish G.W. (1990). *The Place of Songs*. Nairobi: World Gospel Mission/Africa Inland Church.
- Jones, T.J. (1925) *Education in East Africa*. London: Edinburgh House.
- Karuga, Otiende & Wamahiu, (1998). *Education and Development in Kenya: Historical Perspectives*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Korir, M. (1978) "The Kipsigis, Land and the Protest Phenomenon in Colonial Kenya," Seminar in African History Research Paper, Northwestern University, pp.33-41.
- KNA, PC/NZA/3/6/80: Confidential Report: Kericho - General on the Kipsigis Education and Teacher Training-proposed T.T.C at Kapkatet, 1944-1946,
- KNA, DC/KER/2/1: Handing Over Report, Kericho, 1944.
- KNA, PC/NZA/3/6/81: Provincial Commissioner Department of Education, 1944-1946 on the proposed T.T.C centre - Kapkatet on 4^u, February 1946.
- KNA, PC/NZA/3/5/82: Confidential Report on Post-Primary Education and Teacher Training for Kipsigis on 23rd May 1946.
- KNA, PC/NZA/3/6/81: Correspondence between Senior Education Officer T.O Benga to Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza concerning Kipsigis L.N.C. Meeting held on 3rd February 1946, p.2., Minute 21/46/
- KNA, DC/KER/4/4: Monthly Intelligence Report, February 1946.
- KNA, DC/KER/3/8: Political Record Book, 1932-1949

- KNA, PC/NZA/3/1/363: Confidential Report: Institutions and Associations, Nandi Association, 1944- 1948,
- KNA, DC/KAPT /1/14/15: District Education Board Minuted of other Districts; Tambach, Baringo, Kapsabet, West Pokot, Maralal, Elgeyo-Marakwet; Confidential Reprot, 1946-1949.
- KNA, DC/KER/3/4: Monthly Intelligence Report for March 1947.
- KNA, Report on Native Affairs, 1939 - 1948, Government Printer, Nairobi, 1947
- KNA, DC/KER/3/8: *Political Record Book*, 1932-1949.
- KNA, Report on Native Affairs Department, 1939-1948, Nairobi: Government Printers,
- KNA, DC/KER/4/3: Monthly Intelligence Report for October, 1947, p.7.
- KNA, Monthly Intelligence Report for March 1948, Nairobi: Government Printers.
- Manners, R.A. (1967) "The Kipsigis of Kenya: Culture Change in a 'Model' East African Tribe", *Three African Tribes in Transition* Vol. 1. (Ed). J.H. Steward, Urbana: Illinois.
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1974). *The German Ideology*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Mosonik, D.M (Oral interview) Kapchumbe, 2.3.97
- Muricho, W.P. & Changach, J.K. (2013) Education Reforms in Kenyan for Innovation. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(9) 123-145.
- Musaazi, J.S. (1985). *An Introduction to Theory and Practice of Educational Administration*, Nairobi: Macmillan Ltd.
- Namaswa, G. (1989). *Education Administration and Planning in Kenya*. Nairobi: Nairobi University Press.
- Nkinyangi, J.A. (1980) "Socioeconomic Determinants of repetition and Early School Withdrawal at the Primary Level and their Implications for Education Planning in Kenya" *PhD*. Dissertation, Stanford University.
- Otiende, J.E. et al (1972). *Education and Development in Kenya: An Historical Perspective*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- .Rodney, W. (1994) *.How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi: East African Educational
- Ronoh, T.K. (2000). "A History of Colonial Education among the Kipsigis of Kenya, C. 1895-1963: Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Egerton University.
- Sang, K. (1997): Oral interview at Chebunyo on 2nd March 1997
- Seron, P. (1997), Oral interview, Kapsasian on 6.2.97
- Sifuna, D.N. and Otiende, J.E. (2009). *An Introductory History of Education*, Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.

- Sifuna, D.N. (1976). *Vocational Education in Schools*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.
- Sifuna, D.N. (1990). *The Development of Education in Africa: The Kenyan Experience*. Nairobi: Initiatives Ltd.
- Sheffield, J.R. (1972). *Education in Kenya: An Historical Study*. New York: Teachers College Press
- Sheffield, J.R. (1971). *Education in the Republic of Kenya*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sheffield, J.R. (1964). *Policies and Progress in African Education in Kenya, 1949-1963*. Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University. New York: Teachers College.
- Talabei, K. (2015) John Dewey: Philosopher and Educational Reformer. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 1(1) 1-13.
- Tignor, R. (1976). *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Akamba, Kikuyu and Maasai from 1900-1939*. New York: Princeton
- Tum, M. (1991). *Trends in Vocational and Technical Education in Kenya*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 54,471-490.