

# Higher Education in British and French Mandated Cameroon: Implementation and Impact on Human Resource Development, 1922-1961

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## Abstract

In this paper, I discuss the development of higher education in the former League of Nations Mandate Territories (1922-1946) and the United Nations Trust Territories (1946-1961) in Africa, with a particular focus on British and French Cameroon. In contrast to some British and French colonies where higher education institutions were established in preparation for self-government and independence, I question why higher education institutions did not exist in any of the six mandate territories in Africa until independence. I examine the extent to which the approach taken by Britain and France to meet the territories' need for higher education matched the territories' need for a skilled workforce. I argue that both the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) and the Trusteeship Council (TC) saw the establishment of higher education institutions in the administered territories as an urgent need for the development of the mandates, but implementation was thwarted by the administrative authorities who rejected the proposals and instead recommended a scholarship system that yielded limited returns to education in the territories. In both British Cameroon and French Cameroon, this policy resulted in poorly developed human capital and weak political and economic leadership. The paper draws on critical analysis of primary historical documents as methodology and decoloniality as theoretical foundation. I consider the LoN and the UN as complicit with Britain and France (the administrators) in the underdevelopment of higher education in the two mandates because they often endorsed their views on issues or failed as oversight bodies in ensuring that decisions on higher education in the case were rationally implemented – what Ndlovu-Gatsheni has called “a common agenda of Euro-North American hegemony of exploitation and subjugation.”

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## Introduction

“...we are done with annexations of helpless peoples meant by some powers to be used merely for exploitation.... The Mandate system offers them a better system of administration.... It would more effectively secure them liberty, material welfare and opportunity for development. “(Woodrow Wilson at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, cited in Anghie 2002: 525)

Higher education generally refers to the form and level of formal learning offered by universities, colleges and institutes leading to a degree, diploma or certificate; the main entry requirement is a secondary or high school diploma (IGI-Global 2022; Sabzalieva 2019; Tierney and Lanford 2016; Montgomery and Canaan 2004). The importance of higher education is reflected in a large body of research that has found a significant relationship between higher education, human resource production and the development of nations (Teichler 2015; Meyers 2011; Zhongchan/ Yongqiu 2007; Hillygus 2005; Mbua 2003; Nie/ Junn/ Stekh-Barry 1996; Thompson, 1981). In most cases, the studies conclude that the output of a system is determined by the educational quality of its human resources, not only in terms of subject areas, but especially in terms of educational attainment (Boyadjieva/ Trichkova 2019: 1047; Shrivastava/ Shrivastava 2014: 809). These findings justify why societies have always invested in higher education institutions (Teferra 2016). According to the European Commission (2018), universities have played a leading role in sustaining economic growth and political stability in most countries that have achieved this goal. To achieve this, academic and professional qualifications in different categories of public service have been closely monitored to avoid mediocrity, incompetence and poor returns.

The history of higher education in the former British and French colonies of Africa has been extensively documented, with a cross-section of authors concluding that the development of higher education was delayed and in most cases the provision was either a factor of protests by the colonised population, or fear of it, or a desire to fulfil the colonisers' wartime promises (Paligot 2021; Balthazar 2020; Boyer/ Clerc/ Zancarini-Fournel 2013; Bathelemy 2010; Cisse 2010; Toure 2009; Nwaona 1993; Borsali 1983; Mclean 1978 Eisemon/ Salmi 1993; Lulat 2005, 2003; Yesufu, 1973). However, no similar interest has been expressed in relation to mandated areas. Although there have been studies of the mandated system (Pederson 2013; Anghie 2002; Wright 1930), the development of education, and in particular the development of higher education policy in the administered territories, has not been examined in detail. This does not undermine the fact that

the provision of higher education was a commitment made by the mandate holders when they accepted the mandates in 1922 and renewed them in 1946. Cassanelli and Abdikadir (2008) have shed light on Somalia, showing how Italy as mandatory power provided the territory with specialised higher education institutions from 1950 onwards, leading to the establishment of the *Università Nazionale Somala* in 1954.

As for the situation in the British and French Mandated Territories, little research has been published. On the eve of independence, there was a shortage of Cameroonians with post-secondary education at a time when such local personnel were badly needed, as the higher ranks of most employment institutions, including the civil service, were dominated by foreigners. According to the civil service classifications of the time, management positions required persons with university degrees (Kuoumegni 1983; Southern Cameroons 1958a; Federation of Nigeria, 1956). This shortcoming was not without consequences for the socio-political and economic development of the areas (Ndille 2020; 2019; Aka 2002). Against this background, the assessment of higher education policy and its implementation by Cameroonian<sup>1</sup> administrators in this article is justified by the following key questions: What higher education policies did the British and French pursue in their territories in Cameroon, and what was the implementation that led to these outcomes? In addition, what was the role of the Cameroonian state and the United Nations as oversight bodies in setting policy and monitoring implementation, and to what end? The need to provide answers to these questions is the main interest of this paper.

The paper draws theoretically on decoloniality, an epistemic perspective based on the concepts of power, knowledge and being that established a racially hierarchised, Euro-American centred global power structure (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013; Grosfoguel 2007; Escobar 2007; Quijano 2000). Two reasons justify the use of the term decoloniality. First, it shows how the underdevelopment of the global South has its origins in Eurocentric modernity, through colonial policies that guaranteed exploitation and subjugation. Second, decoloniality also implicates the LoN and the UN as agents of coloniality by questioning and critiquing the extent to which they perceived their role as institutions to which administrative authorities were accountable for policy implementation in mandated/trust territories.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Cameroon" is also used when referring to both the British and French administrative territories. When referring to only one of the two territories, either "French Cameroon" or "British Cameroon" is used. Discussions of British Cameroon are limited to the southern part (also referred to as British Southern Cameroons or simply Southern Cameroons).

The method chosen was a critical readings of both published research and of documents housed in archival institutions (Kridel 2021), where the archive is understood as both a physical and an online structure (Bowen 2009) containing private and public records. In this way, I looked at public documents from the National Archives of Buea and Yaounde-Cameroon, where a considerable number of documents relating to the British and French administration of Cameroon still exist in print. I also drew on official texts, resolutions and recommendations of the UN Secretary-General and the United Nations on higher education in Mandate/Trustee Territories obtained from various online archives of the United Nations. This archival data was cross-checked with the available secondary literature (Bowen 2009).

### **Contextualising British Cameroon and French Cameroon and the Mandate System**

The German Empire annexed *Kamerun* in July 1884 and administered it until 1916, when Britain and France ousted it in the First World War. After the failure of attempts to establish a condominium (Elango 1987), Britain and France divided *Kamerun* in February 1916 and each power began to administer its territories separately. Initially, the division was provisional, as the outcome of the war in Europe was to be awaited. However, both states retained permanent control over their territories through the League of Nation's international system of coercion in 1922.

For various reasons, Britain had been given only a narrow strip of the western border of *Kamerun*, covering 34,000 square miles. It divided this territory into British North Cameroon and British South Cameroon and annexed it to the Northern and Southern Provinces of its colony Nigeria respectively for administrative convenience; this was done with the blessing of Article 22 of the LoN Covenant (Aka 2002). Until 1961, both parts of British Cameroon were administered as integral parts of Nigeria. In 1961, they were offered two alternatives for independence by the UN: Integration into Nigeria (independent on 1 October 1960) or reunification with *La Republique du Cameroun* (former French Cameroon, independent on 1 January 1960). The British Northern Cameroons voted for independence through integration into Nigeria, while the Southern Cameroons voted for reunification with the *Republic of Cameroon*. This marked the end of British mandate and trusteeship over the Cameroons. The French had consistently administered the 143,000 square mile territory as a colony within their French Equatorial African Empire and led it until independence on 1 January 1960.

The British and French administration of Cameroon was in fulfilment of the mandate they had agreed with the League of Nations in 1922 (Pedersen 2013; Anghie 2002; Wright 1930). The mandate system provided for the creation of social, political and economic conditions deemed necessary to lead a people to the construction and administration of a functioning nation-state, distinct from what colonisation had offered. In particular, this project provided internationally supervised protection and administration for the peoples of the Middle East, Africa and the Pacific who had previously been under the control of Germany or the Ottoman Empire (Anghie 2002).

According to Pedersen (2015), while both Britain and France had further imperial ambitions in these territories, this was very much at odds with Woodrow Wilson's ideal of the "the interest of the populations concerned", which formed the backbone of the mandate system. At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the victors of the war therefore agreed on a compromise solution whereby these territories would be supervised by the LoN but administered under a government mandate given to a government capable of providing the necessary guardianship. The mandate system was thus introduced at the cost of the annexation of these territories by the victorious powers. As Wilson had argued, such a course of action would have contradicted the principles of freedom and democracy for which the war had supposedly been fought (Anghie 2002: 523).

The mandate system divided the territories concerned into categories A, B and C according to their level of development. The A mandates were those in Europe and the Middle East that had reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations could be provisionally recognised, subject to the provision of administrative advice and assistance. The C mandates were South West Africa and the Pacific territories, where it was understood that their administration was not to be supervised by the League, so that no annual reports were to be made to the PMC. The B mandates were other German territories in Africa that were not yet able to stand on their own feet and for which the League took over administration until they were ready for independence (Pederson 2015; Anghie, 2002).

The Cameroons fell into category B and both Britain and France had to enter into separate agreements with the League of Nations that governed their mandate. These agreements have come to be known as the Mandate Agreements of 1922 and, with the establishment of the UN, the Trusteeship Agreements of 1946. With regard to education, it is interesting to note that the mandataries agreed to be "to be responsible for the material and moral well-being and social progress

of the inhabitants” and, in addition to primary education aimed at eliminating illiteracy, to provide facilities for secondary and tertiary education and vocational training in a manner that would ensure the right of self-determination under Article 76 of the UN Charter. The extent to which these goals were achieved was the subject of annual reports discussed in the Permanent Mandate Commission (PMC) of the League of Nations during the interwar period and in the United Nations Trusteeship Council (TC) after 1946. From 1948 onwards, the United Nations also established visiting missions in the Trusteeship Territories to verify the implementation of the Trusteeship Agreement on the ground.

### **Higher Education Affairs in British Cameroon and French Cameroon during the Mandate (1922-1939)**

In the discussions of the PMC, the administrative authorities had to outline how they intended to ensure higher education in their areas (LoN 1924: 3). This was the case at the 1924 meeting. When the question was raised, the French representative replied that “for a long time no one would have dared talk of higher education (*l’enseignement superieur*) in their sphere of Cameroon,” but that the pressure of the PMC was now making them consider the project (France 1924: 27). The British authorities, on the other hand, simply stated that there were no opportunities for secondary (and therefore higher) education in their territory, but that British Southern Cameroonians who wished to pursue secondary education could do so in Nigeria and that a scholarship system had been set up to ensure that this goal was achieved (Cameroon 1925: 35). The administrative authorities were advised to start building secondary school facilities so that students would have the opportunity for tertiary education by the time they completed sixth grade. By 1939, there were no opportunities for tertiary education in either French Cameroon or British Cameroon. On the British side, there was only one public institution for post-primary education, a college for primary school teachers at Kake near Kumba. The government allowed the Roman Catholic Mission to open a secondary school at Sasse near Buea in 1939. In the French area, education did not go beyond higher primary as of 1939 (Mac-Ojong 2008: 149).

Thus, over a period of twenty-four years (1922-1946), the PMC did not succeed in getting the administrative authorities to establish higher education institutions in both parts of Cameroon. This could be attributed to the structural weaknesses that characterised its foundation and functioning. The League of Nations did not have a fixed programme for the development of education in the areas under its jurisdiction, but rather adopted and supported strategies such as the 1922

adaptation of the Phelps-Stokes Commission. The PMC's education adviser, Mrs Bugge Wicksell, recommended that a college in Africa such as Achimota in Ghana, similar to the Tuskegee and Hampton Colleges in the United States, could be used to devise a higher education programme (LoN 1924 Appendix 12: 183). This recommendation was not followed through. On the ground in British Cameroon, a four-year unqualified primary education in agriculture, handicrafts and sanitation was introduced. As the British representative explained, this education was supposedly for “backward people” (LoN 1924, Appendix 12:183) and the rural economy to which the pupils returned after school. Higher education was seen as an unnecessary burden (Hussey 1931).

One of the reasons for the failure to implement the PMC decisions was that the PMC was seriously hampered by its founding laws, which did not provide for on-site assessments of policy implementation. The PMC preferred not to visit the areas because of “fear of obstructing the administration in carrying out its duties” (LoN 1945: 44). In the absence of assessment visits to the territories, the Commission based its work on the annual reports submitted by each government. These reports were not examined until six to ten months after they were submitted (Hall 1948: 186), and in most cases the reports were inaccurate and misleading (Aka 2002: 50). For example, in the British-administered area there were only four government schools with a very small number of pupils. The administrative authorities had to combine statistics on educational structures and student numbers of government schools with those of Native Authority schools (schools established and run by local communities) when submitting reports to the PMC. This amalgamation often gave the impression that the administrative authorities had done more to access and expand education in the area than was actually the case (Ndille 2014). Although residents could petition the League of Nations, at the Paris Peace Conference Britain and France objected to the procedure by which petitions could be submitted without going through the administrative authority (Aka 2002: 50).

Another stumbling block for the PMC was the fact that most of its members had previously worked in their country's administration. Myres describes the Commission as “a body of colonial experts” (1930: 224), as it was dominated numerically and ideologically by former employees of the Colonial and Foreign Ministries. Although the PMC was blessed with a number of fascinating personalities such as William Rappard, DFW Van Rees and Frederick Lugard – some of whom later played key roles in the formation of its successor, the Trusteeship Council, such as Ralphe Bunche (Pederson, 2015; Goldstein, 2017) – most members of the Commission often placed their position as representatives of their states above truth-telling. In 1924, the French representative even reminded

members that “they should always remember when taking a decision that they were, so to speak, operating upon a living body which was extremely alive and which reacted very readily” (Myres 1930: 224). This meant that most members of the PMC were in favour of their government's policy and that the Commission generally sought broad approval, thus endorsing the educational policies already pursued by most member countries to the detriment of the League of Nations's political commitments.

Moreover, the Commission had neither the legal nor the practical instruments to punish any of the powers whose administration of the mandated territory fell short of expectations. Indeed, at its first meeting, the Commission had passed a resolution which Myres (1930: 224) describes as “non-interest or the unwillingness expressed by the administering authorities” that it “could not usurp the authority of the local administration, who decided the type of government best suited for its territories.” (France 1922). Therein lie, in large part, the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations and why it was virtually impossible for the PMC to make progress in higher education or demand additional investment during the interwar period.

### **Higher Education Concerns and the Call for a Trust University in the Post-World War II Era**

The end of the Second World War was associated with much optimism for all non-self-governing territories around the world. This optimism was reflected in the changes in colonial educational ideologies. For Britain, there was a need to think about universities for its overseas possessions that would ensure a transition in colonial educational policy from the training of “patient, skillful, reliable farmers, artisans, clerks and minor grade employees” of the inter-war years to producing “highly qualified professional men and women, capable of assuming responsibility in management and administrative positions of a free country” (in Brown 1964: 26). This determination found its counterpart in the establishment of the Elliot Commission on Higher Education in 1944, which immediately undertook a tour of West Africa and British Cameroon to assess the need for higher education (Britain 1945). An immediate impact of their report was the establishment of higher education institutions in the Gold Coast as well as in Nigeria and Uganda (Borsali 1983).

In French Africa, particularly in Senegal, the colonial authorities had founded a number of research centres and institutes in the interwar period, including the *Ecole Africain de Medecine* (1918), an African medical school that served Europeans, Metis, but also a small African educated elite that had nominally acquired



French citizenship. In 1936, they also founded the *Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire (IFAN)*, an institute for the study of African cultures and history (Wilder 2005: 70). All these institutions were initially colonial instruments, but evolved with independence into instruments that met African needs. At the Brazzaville Conference in 1944, General de Gaulle acknowledged the support from colonial France in Africa that had helped him defeat the Vichy government and spoke of the need to reform education to ensure training at all levels (Gasanobo 2012). Although it took more than ten years for implementation to become visible in higher education, these promises and the increasing demands of Africans for social, economic and administrative change in post-World War II French Africa led to a series of reforms, including the merger and expansion of some of the formerly mentioned colonial educational centres into the *Institut des Hautes Etudes de Dakar*, the Dakar Higher Education Institute in February 1957. This institute was officially inaugurated as the University of Dacian in 1959 (Toure 2009).

The establishment of University Colleges and *Institut des Hautes Etudes* in the British and French colonies of Africa respectively was not only a recognition of the value of higher education for the colonised population, but also an indication of a gradual shift in perspective towards the provision of higher education for the colonial population through structures on the African continent. Although most of these institutions continued to be extensions of universities in metropolitan cities, their location on the African continent meant that many more Africans would receive higher education than the possibility of receiving a scholarship to study at European institutions every year. But while these developments were underway in the British and French colonies, the situation in the British and French mandated territories in Cameroon also needed to be addressed. As with the PMC, Britain and France signed the Trusteeship Agreement in 1946 and promised to “afford qualified [Cameroonians] the opportunity of receiving higher general or advanced professional education to the full extent compatible with the interests of the population (UN 1946, Article 10).”

However, the optimism soon evaporated into a cloud of despair in Cameroon. In 1947, the TC asked the administrative authorities to describe the measures they had taken to fulfil their responsibility for the higher education of the Cameroonian population. The education policy outlined by the French did not include plans to set up the recommended schools or to establish higher education institutions. The 1947 French Cameroon Annual Report acknowledged that there were no institutions of higher learning in the territory. The need for higher education was met through a scholarship system that allowed qualified candi-

dates to study in France or at the medical school in Dakar (France 1947). According to this report, educational plans for the territory were limited to the expansion, construction and equipping of primary and secondary schools, technical facilities and teacher training colleges (France 1947).

For their part, the British informed the TC that they were continuing the policy of providing all post-primary education in Nigeria on the basis of the "...the fewness of the boys in standard VI fit to enter secondary school." This was not based on the absence of candidates but upon the authority's subjective views that "... a considerable proportion of the boys entering secondary schools in Cameroon, including the many selected by their standard VI examinations were not really fit for secondary education" (United Kingdom 1947:150).

The TC and UNESCO were concerned with the development of indigenous human resources to ultimately fulfil the mandate of self-determination (TC 1946: 3). However, the British authorities argued that "if the measure is the number of jobs open in government departments, trading firms and plantations in the Cameroons, again, our impression is that primary education is sufficient." They also argued that the number of Cameroonians attending Nigerian secondary schools would produce enough educated "natives" to take up clerical jobs in the local civil service (United Kingdom 1947: 150). At that time, most senior positions were held by foreigners and the TC feared that some services would collapse if they left the country. It therefore called on the administrative authorities to urgently create higher educational institutions (TC 1946: 3).

Following the 1947 Annual Reports, UNESCO informed the TC and the General Assembly that the development of education in the Trust Territories was disappointing and that the provision of higher education should be considered urgent in view of the development needs of the Territories. It highlighted the key role that higher education should play in the effective economic, social and political development of the territories and the attainment of their self-government. UNESCO noted that the number of schools in the six African Trust Territories (including Cameroon) was not keeping pace with the increase in the number of children seeking education. It also deplored the lack of higher educational institutions in the six Trust Territories and called for the expansion of secondary and higher education in the territories themselves (UNESCO 1948: 6-7).

In both British Cameroon and French Cameroon, secondary education had been completely neglected in the interwar period, and the British and French administrative authorities justified their unwillingness to open higher education institutions by citing a poorly developed secondary education sector. Notwithstanding

this, the majority of TC members agreed that primary, secondary and higher education institutions could be established simultaneously, citing several examples from the United States of America, Europe and South America (UN, 1949: 761). This meant that the development of higher education was not dependent on secondary school graduates. The United Nations established the Committee on Higher Education and mandated it to conduct extensive discussions on the possibilities of establishing higher education institutions in the Trust Territories. The general opinion was that a central university – the UN University for the African Trust Territories – with equal access for all qualified students was the best way to promote higher education in the region (UN 1949: 761). Thus, on 18 November 1948, a resolution was passed which stated that

“[While] noting the higher education facilities provided in certain non-self-governing African territories by some administering authorities [particularly Belgium in Ruanda-Urundi], the TC is charged with the responsibility of studying, in consultation with the administering authorities and UNESCO, the financial and technical implications of a further expansion of these facilities, including the possibility of establishing by 1952, and maintaining, a university to meet the higher education needs of the inhabitants of Trust Territories in Africa.” (UN 1949: 762)

A consensual solution to this matter would have involved the establishment of a university for the Trust Territories under UN funding and supervision in at least one of the territories, Cameroon being the most likely because of its centralised nature (Aka 2002: 154), but the response of the UK and France to this proposal was disappointing, to say the least. The UK representative argued that a central university would not meet the needs of these territories because of language difficulties and distances between them. Restricting a university to the Trust Territories implied that the neighbouring non-self-governing territories, which were not Trust Territories, had different needs. He finally suggested that the existing system of colonial regional universities should be adapted to the needs of the nearby trust territories (UN 1949: 29). For British Cameroon, the nearest regional institution, University College Ibadan in Nigeria, was less than a year old and there were only three colonial scholarship places for students from British Cameroon (United Kingdom 1949: 160). For an entire territory where an urgent need for graduates had been identified, this was certainly a wholly inadequate number.

After acknowledging the enthusiasm of the population for secondary and higher education, the representative of France wondered whether the expansion of

secondary and higher education was desirable in the context of generally slow development and that “it is not desirous to create more highly educated persons than the territory can absorb” (UN 1949: 21). In his opinion, “the system of scholarships was more adaptable and preferable to a central university since many Africans wished to pursue higher studies abroad” (UN 1949: 760). This was an illogical argument, considering how much more highly qualified indigenous personnel an African university would produce compared to a system with foreign scholarships. The French representative concluded that “as far as the territories under French control were concerned, the establishment of a university was inappropriate, in view of the fact that the French government had fully taken care of higher education needs of the inhabitants” (Gwei 1975: 244).

However, there were members from other countries who disagreed with the British and French positions on the question of a central university. The USSR considered that the reports on the French territories of Cameroon and Togo “did not produce any evidence that the system of scholarships was meeting the higher education needs of the territories.” Rather, it revealed that “too little attention was paid to the educational problems of these territories” (UN 1949: 844).

The opposition of the USSR led to some division among the members of the Trusteeship Committee on the issue of higher education in the Trusteeship areas, especially between those members who acted as administrators and those who did not. This disagreement led to a meeting of higher education experts from Belgium, France and the UK – the countries directly involved in the matter. They met in Paris to reaffirm solidarity in their position or, as the official documents state, “to consider the UN proposal for the establishment of a university in 1952 for African Trust Territories (UN 1949: 844).” On 17 May 1949, they submitted a joint memorandum to the UN Secretary-General in which they described the proposal as impracticable “because of a shortage of potential teaching staff and pupils”, as well as “difficulties of language and of Finance” (UN 1949: 844). The memorandum indicated that Belgium planned to establish a university in Rwanda-Urundi. However, both Britain and France took the view that qualified students in their respective territories could receive higher education at universities in major cities or at colleges in neighbouring territories. The available funds, Britain and France said, would be used to expand educational facilities at the primary and secondary levels (UN 1949: 844).

At the 48th session of the TC, the representatives of Australia, Mexico, the Philippines and the United States, who had been appointed members of the Committee on Higher Education (UN 1948: 844) and who were generally opposed to the British and French approach, responded to the British-French-

Belgian Joint Memorandum by calling for further discussions on the decision to open a central university for the African Trust Territories. The Higher Education Committee met for the first time on 1 June 1949. It studied the papers prepared by the Secretariat on higher education in the African Trust Territories, reviewed the reports of UNESCO experts and representatives of the administrative authorities, and considered higher education institutions in the African Trust Territories and the technical problems involved. It concluded that there was an urgent need for higher education facilities in the Trust Territories as “no institutions for higher education existed within the six African Trust Territories” besides certain university preparatory courses offered in Ruanda-Urundi (UN 1948: 844).

The Committee on Higher Education rejected the excuse that the full development of primary and secondary education facilities was a necessary precondition for the establishment of higher educational institutions. According to the Committee, the establishment of higher educational institutions would itself drive the development of education at the primary and secondary levels. It called for the simultaneous development of primary, secondary and higher education in the African Trust Territories. The committee also dismissed the alleged problem of student numbers as a reason for denying the Trust Territories the opportunity to have at least one higher education institution. In fact, the growing number of students in the Trust Territories was a strong argument for the establishment of higher education institutions (TC 1949: 21).

Unfortunately, just as with the PMC, the members of the Committee ultimately supported the views of their governments (Myres 1930). The Committee on Higher Education sided with Britain, France and Belgium on the issue of establishing a single university for the six African Trust Territories. It concluded that the idea of a central UN university for the African Trust Territories was impractical because the Trust Territories did not have a unified education system, their inhabitants did not share a common language, and the distances between the Trust Territories were so great that it would be extremely difficult to find a suitable location. In addition, it was a challenge to bring together personnel from different educational systems and a single higher education institution could not meet the specific technical and cultural needs of each area (UN 1949: 844). The report of the Committee on Higher Education was submitted to the TC at its fifth session (15 June to 22 July 1949) and, after two days of discussion, was unanimously adopted as resolution 110(v). It stated that

“The government of France should consider the establishment of institutions of higher education for the Trust Territories under its administration

if possible by 1952, and expresses the hope that the government of France will pay particular attention to the higher education needs of the trust territory of Cameroon under French Administration ...; The Government of the United Kingdom should consider without prejudice ... with a view to facilitating the expansion of higher education in Togoland and Cameroons under British administration, all possible steps to increase the number of scholarships for students from the two territories." (TC 1949: 20-21)

The resolution affirmed that in planning higher education, special attention must be paid to the technical and cultural needs of the Trust Territories in order to promote human knowledge and to enable people to become responsible citizens and self-governing (TC 1949: 21).

### **British and French Implementation of Resolution 110(v) of 19 July 1949 on Higher Education in the Trust Territories**

This section describes how the British and French administrative authorities implemented Resolution 110(v). Resolution 110 called on the French government to establish higher education institutions in its trust territories by 1952 (TC 1950: 2). However, France had little interest in opening higher education institutions in either French Cameroon or Togo, which had a relatively small population. This attitude was made clear (again) in their 1950 annual report, in which they argued that "it was inadvisable to contemplate founding a university in Cameroon at the time... [This issue] was not to be considered until such a time that secondary education had been fully developed in the territory" (France 1950: 244). The French authorities considered that sending Cameroonian students on scholarships to French universities was the best way to provide higher education in the circumstances. The scholarships totalled (in 1946) thirty million CFA francs, an enormous burden on the country's already tight budget (Gwei 1975: 246). Although the financial outlay was considered disproportionate given the total number of qualified students, this remained the state's preferred method of providing higher education.

In 1949, the UN had sent a visiting mission to Cameroon. The results prompted UN agencies to continue to put pressure on France to establish a higher education institution in Cameroon to comply with Resolution 110(v). At its 6th session in 1950th, the General Assembly assessed the progress of education in Cameroon in the light of the reports of the 1949 visiting mission, the petitions from Cameroon, the TC recommendations and Resolution 110 (v). It issued a statement affirming that the education of highly qualified indigenous personnel in the

territory was an essential step on the road to autonomy and independence, and called on France to offer more scholarships and establish higher educational institutions in its territory as soon as possible (TC 1950:722). Despite this request, the French authorities maintained their position that it was pointless to consider establishing a university in Cameroon because of the lack of financial resources, equipment and a sufficient number of qualified students (France 1951: 252).

The French colonial authorities in Cameroon restructured the country's education system in 1951, but did not consider higher education (France 1951: 252). When the deadline set in Resolution 110(v) expired in 1952, the French colonial authorities stated that "it is indispensable to train highly qualified cadre and the administrative, technical and intellectual elite who should participate actively in the rapid evolution of the territory." However,

"Presently the number of baccalaureate holders justifying the creation of a university is still extremely insufficient, taking into account the expenses necessary for maintaining the following: Library, laboratories and teachers' salaries. For a fairly long time to come, it will therefore be wiser to keep to the system of scholarships, given to young men desirous of pursuing higher studies." (France 1952: 261)

These considerations were repeated in the 1953 Annual Report with the erroneous addition that "besides the fact that the political elite of Cameroon did not favour higher education within the territory... young Cameroonians would benefit more from university training in France" (France 1953: 250). This was hardly convincing, considering the numerous petitions by some vocal Cameroonians like Reuben Um Nyobe about the slow pace of socio-economic and political development in the country (File APA11229/D NAY). In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly in 1952 as President of the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC), Um Nyobe had described the lack of access to secondary and tertiary education for Cameroonians as a sign of racial discrimination and a measure to prevent the self-government of Cameroon by France (Meyomesse 2010). Indeed, demonstrations resulting from such complaints by locals had led to clashes between French colonial troops and locals in Douala in 1945, in which ten people, including the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, were killed (Nghoh 1987: 136). As Richard Joseph argues, disappointment with the level of social progress in French-administered Cameroon through blatant neglect of post-secondary institutions led to the radicalisation of young Cameroonians against the French administrative authorities (Joseph 1977).

The annual reports of 1954 (France, 1954) show that the situation of higher education in French Cameroon did not change despite the petitions and the UN's request to the administrative authorities to address the problem. In 1955, the TC sent the third visiting mission to Cameroon. The French authorities responded to questions about higher education with plans to establish the *Lycée de Yaoundé*, a preparatory class for entry into the *Grandes Ecoles* in France (TC 1955: 91). Some councillors bitterly criticised the French administrative authority for its apparent unwillingness to create a higher education institution for a population of over three million. They saw the lack of such an institution as an obstacle to the training of indigenous personnel and the Africanisation of the state apparatus. While appreciating the efforts made through scholarships, they pointed out that no country could definitively depend only on foreign scholarships. Others brushed aside the question of financial difficulties and held that it was of paramount importance for an area with such status to have its own institutions of higher learning" (TC 1955: 91). It is important to note that at the same time that the UN was urging France to establish a higher education institution in Cameroon, a decree of April 1950 established an Institute of Higher Studies (*Institut des Hautes Etudes*) in Dakar, which became the *Université de Dakar* in 1957. However, when French Cameroon gained independence in 1960, there was no university in the country.

Unlike France, Britain was not pressured to establish a university in British Cameroon. Besides the probable reason that it was a territory with a population of less than 500,000 (O'Field 1958: 8), administered as an integral part of the colony of Nigeria, Britain pointed to the small number of Southern Cameroonians with secondary education who were willing to attend university. In its response to resolution 110 (v), Britain acknowledged that "the educational facilities in the territory were still backward and inadequate" and committed "to do everything practicable to improve the state of affairs as far as their present staff and budgetary position permits." Britain argued that "access to higher education depends on qualifications, not means," and that,

"There is a considerable range of scholarships available to suitably qualified candidates from the territory. All candidates who fulfilled the entrance requirements to the University College Ibadan, Nigeria could go there on government scholarships. They were also eligible, on the same terms as Nigerians, for British Council, Nigerian government and Colonial Development and Welfare Fund scholarships.... A major problem however, was that suitably qualified candidates were few in the territory." (UN, 1950: 39; United Kingdom 1949: 142-143)



The low number of secondary school graduates could be due to the fact that the only secondary school in the area between 1939 and 1949 did not start educating high school graduates until 1945. In that year, the school sent thirty-seven candidates. The situation changed, however, when a second secondary school, Basel Mission College, opened in Bali in 1949. This meant that by the mid-1950s, there were over 100 students ready to study in Southern Cameroons (Ndille 2014), mainly because two branches were established in each school (Southern Cameroons 1955). These figures and the fact that the administrative authority only awarded three scholarship places to Southern Cameroonians each year, regardless of the number of applicants (Mbile 1999: 11), demonstrate the validity of the justification for its policy of higher education through foreign scholarships.

During the 1952 UN Visiting Mission to British-administered Cameroon, there were many complaints about the lack of educational facilities in the area. The Chairman of the Cameroon Youth League, Dr EML Endeley, was very outspoken on the matter. He reiterated his association's 1944 petition to the Elliott Commission on Higher Education, regretting that the administering authority had not contributed anything to the educational structure of the area for over eight years, except allowing missionaries to open new primary schools (Ndille 2014). He again called for some government secondary schools and a higher educational institution for British Cameroon (Trusteeship Council 1952), as had been done in Nigeria. Several other petitions were sent to local British administrators such as the Commissioner of Cameroon and the Governor General of Nigeria (Southern Cameroons 1957; 1958b). Despite these comments, the UK continued to refer to University College Ibadan in Nigeria and universities in the UK (Gwei 1975: 251) as institutions for the higher education of the people of British Cameroon.

The decision to send Cameroonians to universities in Nigeria and the United Kingdom instead of establishing their own university in the country was maintained until independence in 1961. According to the British authorities, the British universities were well equipped for basic research in all fields. Ibadan University College not only taught in English but also had research facilities in areas relevant to Nigeria and Cameroon (United Kingdom 1952: 155). Although these arguments seemed to convince TC, the situation on the ground in Cameroon did not suggest that people were receiving optimal higher education in this way. Apart from the fact that the poor state of the roads made it difficult to travel to Nigeria for any reason (Ndille 2018: 35, 38), the official stance of the administrative authority to offer a maximum of three scholarships to British

Cameroonians continued to be to the detriment of much of the population of British Cameroon who wanted to acquire higher education.

### **Impact of the Expatriate Scholarship Option on Human Resource Production in British Cameroon and French Cameroon**

It has been shown that the unwillingness of Britain and France to establish higher education institutions in their respective spheres of influence in Cameroon was justified by a system of government scholarships. This section looks at this foreign scholarship option and how it facilitated educational advancement and prepared an indigenous elite to take power, while fulfilling a requirement of the trusteeship system.

In 1947, four Cameroonians were in the United Kingdom on scholarship. By 1949, nine Cameroonians were government scholarship holders - seven studied in the UK and two at Ibadan College. Another Cameroonian was in the UK on a British Council Scholarship in Accounting and Bookkeeping (UK 1947; 1959). In 1952, when the second UN visiting mission arrived in Cameroon, only thirteen Cameroonians were studying at foreign universities on scholarships from the British colonial government and the British Council (United Kingdom 1952:155). As the visiting mission noted, Britain's efforts were not enough to meet the growing demand for higher education in the area. It urged the United Kingdom "to seek by all means, including international assistance, ways of increasing the number of scholarships available to indigenous persons for higher education" (UN 1954: 342).

The granting of partial self-government status in 1954 led to the establishment of the Cameroon Scholarship Board in 1955 (South Cameroon 1955). This relatively increased funding for Cameroonians studying in West Africa and the United Kingdom. The annual government scholarships increased from £17,200 in 1955-56 to £18,550 in 1957-58. The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) granted £500 annually, while the Southern Cameroons Development Agency (SCDA), established in 1956, provided an additional £200 in scholarships (Federation of Nigeria 1958: 48). Despite this increase in scholarship allocations, only 47 university scholarships were awarded in British Cameroon in 1957 (United Kingdom 1957:148).

In 1958, eight new scholarships were awarded to study in Ibadan, three to Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone and nine to the United Kingdom. According to the British Council, in 1960-61, Gambia and Sierra Leone, which had smaller populations than British Cameroon, had 280 and 833 students, respectively, at UK institutions of higher learning. However, only 65 students from British

Cameroon studied in the UK that year (British Council 1961: 16). These figures reflect an embarrassingly large discrepancy in higher education between the British colonial territories and the Trust Territory of Cameroon, which was under British administration, due to policies that did not favour Cameroon. It must be remembered that until 1960, most of the British colonies in West Africa maintained public higher education institutions, and apart from the number of scholarships awarded to British Cameroon, these disparities could be attributed to this factor.

As independence approached, Southern Cameroon's Minister of Social Services and Member of Parliament (MHA), V.T. Lainjo, became concerned about the future of the territory's political and economic leadership. Lainjo commissioned a study that looked at all the potential human resources of Greater Cameroon in higher education institutions around the world. The study revealed that in that year (1958), only 116 Southern Cameroonians had enrolled in higher education institutions in Nigeria or abroad since 1954, including self-promoted candidates (Buea National Archives, File Sb/a/1958/1). The study projected that by 1961, the country could expect about 86 graduates with tertiary degrees to enter senior administrative positions. By 1965, it was hoped that the number of graduates would reach 116, but this unfortunately proved to be too high. A 1959 study by the British colonial government on the consequences of the territory's withdrawal from the Nigerian Federation found that there were no more than twenty graduating natives in Southern Cameroon, including a handful of doctors and lawyers (Philipson 1959: 8, 10).

In fact, at independence in 1961, out of 112 senior staff in Southern Cameroonian ministries, only 21 Southern Cameroonians were in senior positions (Burns 1965: 72). With Nigerian and British staff leaving *en masse* after 1961, the staffing situation was chaotic, especially at the senior levels of most ministries. The government suspended civil service regulations and began to promote experienced civil servants in a desperate effort to fill senior administrative positions. This had its own political and economic consequences for the new state (Ndille 2019: 153-154). As the 1958 Visiting Mission had predicted, it was clear that “the past inadequacy of the educational facilities, of course, bore, importantly [*negatively*] on the rate of Cameroonization of the public services” (TC 1958: 11).

In French Cameroon, the administrative authority made it clear that the number of high school graduates in Cameroon was not high enough to justify the cost of establishing a university. In rejecting Resolution 110, they noted that “for a fairly long time to come, it will be wiser to keep to the system of scholarships given to the young men desirous of pursuing higher studies” (France 1952: 261). In 1947,

150 Cameroonians were studying in France on French government scholarships. This number included secondary school students, advanced students and participants in the '*stages des perfectionnement*' (in-service training). During the academic year 1946/47, it was decided to send a selected number of students on scholarships to French *lycees* and colleges, as secondary education facilities in the country were inadequate.

From 1947, talented civil servants were also sent to France on scholarships to further their education in administrative and technical institutions. With these scholarships, the number of Cameroonian scholarship holders in France rose to 221 in 1949, of whom only 37 went on to higher education (France 1950: 244). The 221 scholarships cost the national budget 30 million CFA francs (France 1950: 244). The number of Franco-Cameroonian university scholarship holders in France increased from 37 in 1949 to 57 in 1951 and to 82 in 1952 (France 1951: 257). In 1952, there were also three Cameroonians at the Medical School in Dakar. In 1954, a total of 109 scholarships were awarded to Cameroonian-French expatriates (Trusteeship Council 1955: 91).

Pressure from the United Nations to establish a university in Cameroon and increase the number of scholarships, as well as the French government's attempt to justify its failure to comply with Resolution 110(v), led to an increase in scholarships from 183 in 1955 to 196 in 1957 (France 1955: 1957). In the year that French Cameroon became a state (1957), the total number of Cameroonian scholarship holders in France was almost 500 (France 1955). In 1955, the Cameroonian national government rented 200 rooms in the *Cité Universitaire* in Paris to house Cameroonian scholars. In addition, the government supported the wives of the scholarship holders by accommodating and caring for them in France for one year (SOGEP 1950: 44).

Although the scholarship programme was very expensive, the French authorities still preferred it to opening a local university in Cameroon. The reform of secondary education in the early 1950s upgraded local secondary schools to *lyceums* (Cameroon 1952: 132). Thus, in 1958, in the area's secondary schools, 102 out of 351 candidates attained the *Baccalaureate* Part I, 94 out of 134 attained the *Baccalaureate* Part II, and 566 out of 1,641 candidates attained the *Brevet d'Etude du Premier Cycle* (BEPC) – the lower secondary certificate (TC 1958:18). In the region, there was an above-average secondary school performance that could easily be absorbed by a higher education institution, but not by the scholarship system.

The scholarship system was not productive in terms of the economics of education. By 1959, each scholarship student cost the government of French Cameroon

742,000 CFA francs annually. Since the expected duration of higher education was between four and six years, the entire course of study cost the government 3 to 5 million CFA francs per student. Higher education scholarships accounted for 12.1 per cent of the total education budget (which was 14.06 per cent of the state budget) (SOGEP 1960: 45). This enormous sacrifice yielded only limited returns, as the demand for highly qualified labour for higher administrative positions continued to skyrocket.

In 1957, the French colonial administration signed the Cameroon Statute. It provided for Cameroonian citizenship and Cameroonian parliamentary democratic institutions (Nghoh 2019: 139). This statute made Cameroon a state, and in May the first government with a Cameroonian prime minister was formed. As in British Cameroon, the new self-governing state was endowed with its own civil service. As Amadou Ahidjo (the then prime minister) told parliament in 1958, “we intend to take gradual steps to replace French officials by Cameroonian officials.” (Kuoumengi 1983: 271-2) Interestingly, the decree had introduced a class of civil servants for whom a level of education higher than the baccalaureate was required (Michel 2018: 180; Kuoumegni 1983: 272), but the prime minister only had a post-primary degree in postal radio (Mukete 2013: 501; Ewombue-Monono 2018: 365). There were no university graduates in the area. The civil service jobs that required tertiary education were far more numerous than those that the scholarship system had produced. This justified the long stay of former colonial administrators in the territory to work as technical advisors. In 1975, twelve years after the creation of the Federal University of Cameroon, there were 357 French lecturers compared to only 169 Cameroonians (Ramoupi and Ndille 2017: 203). Apart from this, in 1972, there were 576 civil servants in France alone in various administrative positions in the country, 334 of them in the primary, secondary and other research services (Atayo 2000: 61). As in the British sector, none of the members of the first two governments in French Cameroon had a university degree (Republic of Cameroon 2022; Ewombue-Monono 2018; Mukete 2013).

### **Justifying the Scholarship Concept for Higher Education in Cameroon: A Decolonial Reading**

The situation of higher education in British and French Cameroon reveals what the French historian Paligot recently described as “the reality of philanthropic domination” which went “deeper to a second level of an utilitarian conception of education where Africans only qualified as auxiliaries of colonial conquest” (Paligot 2021: 1). For such a plan to have materialized to the point it was in both

territories at independence in 1961, only some rudimentary basic education was sufficient for the people while higher education remained an ostentation. Paligot goes ahead to argue that

“[t]he colonial school especially in French territories had a schizophrenic operating system; on one side, it was important not to over educate the colonised; at the risk of them questioning their domination. On the other hand, it was necessary to give satisfactory attention to those who requested it, in order to avert revolts. [That is why among the] youths who manifested the desire to go and study in universities abroad, the scholarships were awarded with parsimony after an implacable study of documents including an application for French citizenship as they were considered in the metropole as French subjects for which this level of education reserved for French citizens could not be extended.” (Paligot 2021: 1-2)

According to Bathelemy, French Cameroon suffered in two ways. First, from the general idea that France had of the education of the African population under its tutelage, and second, as will be seen below, from the idea of investing in a territory that was not directly its own. Such education “was not intended to produce free-thinking citizens” who, as Paligot asserted above, would question their rule and rise up against their “master”, “but it was intended to produce simple, obedient auxiliaries who would facilitate that rule” (Bathelemy 2010: 8). This, of course, meant that by 1960, only one in twenty-four people in French Africa had attended primary school (Balthazar 2020). Looking at the situation in the context of higher education through scholarships, the picture is even bleaker. From a similar perspective, Mukete has argued the lukewarmness with which the British provided higher education to Southern Cameroonians, justifying the title of the second chapter of his book: *I Admire Imperial Britain with Reservation* (2013: 349). The author, who also served as the lone Federal Minister for Southern Cameroons in the Federal Assembly in Lagos in the 1950s and was at the forefront of advocating for the people of Southern Cameroons, claims that

“Here was a clear case of colonialism at its worst. British administering authorities in the Southern Cameroons were influenced by the need to continue to provide openings in the colonial civil service in Cameroon for their countrymen.... The correspondences I received from young Cameroonians in this regard made me believe that Britain was not wanting Cameroonians to be trained to occupy senior posts in Cameroon. I could not help to believe that the colonial civil services were considered by the colonial ‘masters’ as places in which to find employment for their

young people. To my mind, the responsible officers on ground were simply subconsciously playing their role in trying to prolong as much as possible, the need for their country men in the civil service of the Cameroons. This was unfortunate at a time when the talk en vogue was the Cameroonization of the civil service in preparation for independence.” (Mukete 2013: 291)

The second level of suffering in which the territories found themselves, to which I promised to return above, has to do with the status of the Cameroons as mandates administered on behalf of the League of Nations and the UN in relation to the British and French colonies. While territories with this status, measured against the commitment made in 1922 and 1946, could have reached an even higher level in achieving development goals, the opposite was achieved because of the design of the mandates and thus the attitude towards investing in them. They believed that the future of the mandated areas was uncertain. Consequently, little or no capital investment was expected in an area like Cameroon whose future was uncertain (Jones 1944: 18). Thus, if the administrative authorities had money to invest in capital development, building schools or roads, it was not unnatural for them to put this money into the colonial territory they administered, which they knew would permanently belong to them. Against this background, the distinction between colonies and mandate territories in terms of investment priorities had a negative effect on the mandates, as Britain and France prioritised the development efforts of the colonies over the mandates.

It is therefore not surprising that Britain and France hardly pursued a determined policy of economic and social development in Cameroon, including higher educational structures, as they did in their West African colonies. Moreover, as Lord Lugard had explained,

“The trusteeship thus viewed is not a mere sentimental expression of what is called humanitarian conscience in regard to native races. It does not ignore the claims of congested populations of Europe to share in the bounties of nature in the tropics, or just and proper claims of those who have spent capital and effort in development to reap their reward.” (Lugard 1925: 151).

Lugard's assertions rationalised the exploitation of the mandate areas with the consequence that where such exploitation was not possible, investment such as in higher education could not be made. This investment approach worked even

within the mandate areas, where development priorities were determined by the exploitable resources in the area (Aka 2002: 153).

Another level of application of the decolonial framework here is that which goes beyond the exploitative nature of the administrative authorities and aligns the League of Nations and the UN with what Quijano (2000) has called Western power and imperial power working closely together to inscribe coloniality on the African continent, rather than as guarantors and overseers of the international moral responsibility and accountability of mandate holders in the administration of mandated territories. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), it is difficult to separate the administrative authorities from international organisations such as the League of Nations and the UN because the administrative authorities were and are the same powers that monopolise the permanent seats and veto power in these organisations and ensure that their ideologies prevail over all others in terms of global governance. This explains why, despite the reasonable demand for a university for the African UN Trust Territories, the scholarship option advocated by Britain and France was retained despite its unproductiveness. This power dynamic makes it clear that the UN is part of the Euro-American dominated world system and is another world order that has saved the world from decolonisation and de-imperialisation, the realisation of which obviously depended on a highly educated elite produced within its own institutions (Clapham 1996).

## **Conclusion**

This article has demonstrated that in both British- and French-administered Cameroon, the provision of higher education through a scholarship system had limited returns compared to the needs of these non-self-governing areas. This is also the case when considering similar developments in the British and French colonies of West Africa in the late 1950s (Aka 2002). This happened despite the much heralded proclamations that the mandates and trusteeships were “secret trusts of civilization... with claims of benefitting from “a better system of administration” (Wright 1930:691) than colonies. The evidence presented in this article supports the conclusion that the idea of a ‘sacred trust of civilisation’ was a hollow and demagogic slogan that served only to placate international sentiments at the time, especially those opposed to the annexation of the German colonies (Joseph 1975: 65). It also underscores the conclusion that not much could be expected from the League of Nations and the UN in this regard, since the policy was led by the same people who held guardianship over Cameroon.



Nevertheless, the justifications for denying higher education facilities to the people of Cameroon before independence never matched the incredible need for such facilities on the ground. The PMC and the TC were clear that no country could rely exclusively on foreign scholarships in the long run. They were also aware that it would be difficult to find a reasonable number of highly qualified people for territorial administration if there was no institution in the territory that offered affordable higher education to the population; the most reasonable institution would have been a publicly run one. By maintaining their high-cost, low-return models through the system of foreign scholarships, Britain and France were fulfilling their own colonial ambitions of exploitation and subjugation while jeopardising Cameroon's development.

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