

REPORT

AFRICA KNOWS ! CONFERENCE

Panel A02: History of Education in Africa – 24 February 2021, 2pm

1. Background

The panel, entitled, “History of Education in Africa” was held in the context of the Conference Africa Knows! led by the Hague University of Applied Sciences within the framework of the Africa 2020 Year of the Leiden African Studies Assembly on 24 February 2021 at 2 pm (GTM).

Through a series of comparative case studies within the continent and the adjacent islands, the objective of the panel was to draw an overview of how Education played a major role in the African societies during the colonial period.

Several themes were addressed:

1. The different types of educative systems and transmission of knowledge during pre-colonial times;
2. The role of education in the development of a new colonial society;
3. The kind of social place and social mobility reached in that new context;
4. The creation of original identities due to education in these different contexts, shaped by different religions (socially and politically).

The panel was convened by Marie Pierre Ballarin, researcher at the Institute of Research for Development, specialist of East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean¹. Prof. Vijaya Teelock, from the department of history at the University of Mauritius and Prof. Samuel Nyanhoga, historian and dean of Social sciences and Humanities at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi, were discussants.

We received 7 paper’s proposal (see abstracts below), however, due to several reasons (technical, family, professional), only 4 participants were able to actively contribute.

2. Four lectures were offered by senior and young researchers; and selected readings were provided in advance.

- First paper was given by Dr Hamitouche Youcef, from the University of Algier, who discussed the impact of French colonialism’s education policy on nation and state building in Algeria. Two approaches concerning French education system in Algeria were presented: the first one discussing how French educational policies contributed to the making of an Algerian elite which took power at independence. The second approach enhanced the fact that, on contrary, education could have been prohibited in order to avoid contestations against the French government. Discussions focused on the role of French education on the training of Muslim religious leaders
 - Second paper was given by Vojtěch Šarše from the Faculty of Arts in Charles University, Prague, who discussed how British and French colonizers imposed occidental values and languages in different parts of Africa and how it has impacted Gold Coast societies on the long term.
-

- Third paper was proposed by Felix Krame from the African Studies Centre Leiden who explored the role of Methodists missionaries of Freetown in the emergence of technical education in connection with trade union movements. See also <https://www.africaknows.eu/podcasts/>
- Fourth paper was given by Fernanda Marques on the Cape Verdean educational system who explored the concept of e locanationalization which aims at revolutionizing the relations between the national academy and local practices within the contemporary global framework of public aid for the development of education.

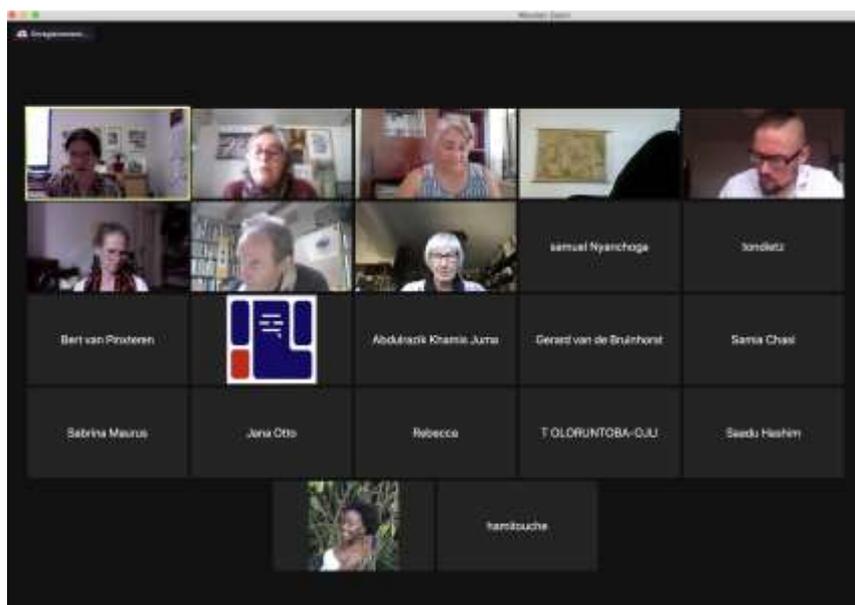
3. CONCLUSION

The four presentations were widely discussed by Prof. Teelock and Prof. Nyanchoga who considered them in the light of their own work in Mauritius and Kenya. This provided a very interesting comparative dimension and encouraged participation of other participants.

Among them, Prof. Christel Adick (Ruhr University of Bochum, Germany) offered precisions on the Fante Constitution of 1871, one of the points raised in the debate, which led to the draft of a formal schooling in West Africa. This constitution originated in Fanteland, a coastal region of the Gold Coast (modern-day southern Ghana), and was the main achievement of a historical movement which sought to unite several smaller kingdoms and communities into a Fante Confederation (1868–1873)².

On his side, Prof. Ton Dietz (Scientific coordinator of Africa knows!, African Studies Centre) Leiden highlighted the fact that historical knowledge is needed about the role of the teachers unions and its leaders in the anti-colonial struggles of the 1950s and probably also earlier. This will stimulate a comparison on the roles played by teachers unions in different African countries.

The **panel** attracted a public of around 20 people, from different regions of Europe and Africa, who participated quite well in a serene and kind atmosphere.



² Adick, Christel: An African contribution to the constitutional right to modern schooling 150 years ago. In: International Review of Education - Online First (2020) : <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-020-09862-xh>

Abstracts

Africa Knows! AEGIS

This panel proposes an overview of how Education played a major role in different African societies during the colonial period.

Education in Africa is not new. Through a series of comparative case studies within the continent and the adjacent islands, this panel will draw an overview of how Education played a major role in the African societies.

We will especially consider:

1. The different types of educative systems and transmission of knowledge during pre-colonial times;
2. The role of education in the development of a new colonial society;
3. The kind of social place and social mobility reached in that new context;
4. The creation of original identities due to education in these different contexts, shaped by different religions (socially and politically).

We will pay close attention to the trajectories of individuals and/or groups evolving within this specific context that had a major impact on their identity, social status and standard of living.

Establishing control: methodism, artisans, and industrial education reform in Sierra Leone, c. 1870-1895

Felix Kram (African Studies Centre Leiden)

This paper explores the efforts made by Wesleyan and Free Methodist clergy and laymen in conjunction with the emerging artisan trade union movement to establish government funded technical education. Various schemes to establish a technical school were proposed throughout the final quarter of the nineteenth century in a very active and highly political Freetown press, although they remained unsuccessful until the 1890s. Using a variety of archival and newspaper sources this paper argues that efforts to establish such a school combined social and economic concerns over eroding standards of workmanship and declining artisan wages with religiously inspired moral claims about the foundations of a just society. Moreover, the churches remained politically influential in an era of declining African influence on the colonial administration because of their crucial role in the colony's education system. Indeed, artisans professed the social virtues of teaching children, particularly boys, a craft instead of preparing them for a white-collar career. The latter was presented as morally corrosive by artisan organisers and by contrast strict artisan apprenticeships were perceived to be morally beneficial to the community. The nascent artisan movement was intimately involved in the various Methodist churches through their own activities as lay preachers, trustees, and congregation members. Methodist trade unionists and their allies combined commitments to improving the quality of workmanship, regulating the supply of labour, and raising the social standing and economic position of artisans with instilling Christian virtue in the colony's young population. Government education was envisioned to strengthen the bonds between master and apprentice artisans, thereby reducing the oversupply of poorly qualified labour. The colony's populations' longstanding commitment to education was given a new twist to reorder the political economy. While the alliance between the colony's commercial middle class and the nascent artisan trade unions was partly based on shared socio-economic concerns over controlling the labour of young people. It was strengthened by a shared view of the world which had been instilled since childhood. Thus, education was crucial in three senses. Firstly, the artisan organisers of the late nineteenth century had cultivated connections to politically influential persons as early as their school days. Secondly, this education

imbued with a shared conception of the world. Thirdly, education reform was used as a means to shape the colony's political economy.

The Tati Training Institute and Self-Determination in the BuKalanga Borderlands (1932-1941)

Ross Melczer (University of California, Santa Barbara)

In partnership with Kalanga communities in what is today Botswana and Zimbabwe, intellectual, educator, and nationalist K.T. Motsete founded the Tati Training Institute, the first secondary school in Botswana in 1932. Based on a prudent reading of the archive pertaining to Motsete and analysis of the clandestine subtext embedded in his writings, this paper argues that despite redeploing liberal terminology and demanding multi-racial partnership in the 1920s and 1930s, Motsete and his Southern African intellectual colleagues accommodated British imperialism as a strategy to deflect colonial depredations and encourage African self-determination. Motsete's school was the actualization of a profound political and socio-economic strategy to advance African communities. It emerged out of a complex mixture of Africans' pursuit of education, resistance to colonialism, ethnic struggles, and the uncertain promises of development on the margins of the British Empire. The BaKalanga were engaged in a resistance movement led by she (chief) John Madawo Nswazwi (1875-1960) against the bolstering of the colonial border that violently split their community between Southern Rhodesia and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. They were colonial outliers who embraced Motsete and European-style education as a means to manage their socio-economic position and retain cultural continuity in the face of emerging challenges presented by colonialism and the politically dominant Africans and Europeans in the region. Thus, TjiKalanga speaking communities embraced European-style education as a means to unmake their political isolation and socio-economic marginality. Yet, Motsete faced the ever-present challenge to promote the school in a manner where it would generate favor in the minds of the British government and the school's European benefactors. Despite his immense education and tactful political and educational strategy, he was ultimately frustrated by the inherent inadequacies of African liberalism and unable resolve the dilemma of promoting European-style education within the context of British imperial rule.

Ge'ez intellectual tradition and its critique on modern education system

Setargew Kenaw Fantaw (Addis Ababa University)

Ethiopia has been known for its longstanding tradition of Ge'ez education system - also known as church or Abinet education - , covering from elementary literacy to instructing students in poetry, liturgical music, and exegesis. It was on top of this that Western, modern education was introduced about one-hundred and twenty years ago. Since then, there has been a confrontational - open and at times oblique/disguised - relationship between the two education systems. But then, much of the critique of those who subscribe to classical, traditional scholarship on the modern education system has not been closely considered, explored and studied. Assuming the victor's stance, it was the voice of the critics of the Ge'ez education that has come out more explicitly and boldly over against the nature and mode of offering of its lessons. This paper inquires into what has been neglected so far and try to articulate the observations of the scholars of the Abinet schools on the basis of selected critics. There have been generic criticisms such as that modern education has instilled a lot of egotism into its apprentices, that it has only created power-mongers, generations of atheists, etc. But then, these reprimands (which may not be totally unfounded) and other well thought out critiques have not been subject of reflection and scholarship so far. This study, based on quite scanty beginnings in this this direction, makes therefore an in-depth investigation into the assessment that Ge'ez education scholars have made on the modern education system and bring out insights that could be useful for a fruitful and dialogical meeting between the two systems.

Educational policy of French colonialism in Algeria and its impact on Algerian culture and soc

Youcef Hamitouche (University Algiers)

This paper will study the impact of French colonialism on nation and state in Algeria. Any nation which wants to maintain its national identity is bound to affirm its proper culture and identity.

However, Algeria is one of the countries which face a nation and identity crisis.

Before the French colonization Arabs-speaking and Berber-speaking groups had coexisted in one integrated nation, society and culture.

The Algerian society is characterized by the common adherence of both Arabs and Berbers to Islam nation.

With the French colonization, Algeria knew the breakdown of both its nation and national identity. The French colonialism followed a policy of dismantling Algerian common nation, cultural identity and society since 1830, through spreading French education in Algeria.

Thus, the French military repressive means are not enough to dominate the country, therefore it was necessary to concentrate on cultural factor, particularly the Muslim education system, and to replace it by the French educational system, for European settlers and a few Algerians people.

There were two Approaches concerning French education system in Algeria: the first one which favours educating some Algerians people, and was led by Republicans (like Jules Ferry), with the aim of conquering Algerians brains and hearts, through public instruction and educational culture and France can assure its presence in Algeria. The second approach, refused to educate Algerians and was led by colonialists, who thought that those who will be educated in French education would turn back against France's presence in Algeria.

In addition, the French colonialism, before spreading and extending French education, had tried to remould Algerian society along the French image.

As a result, after independence, Algeria knew and faced an elite duality, as well as the split of Algerian society, and the struggle between the French speaking elite and Arabic speaking elite.

What was the basis of cultural strategy of French colonialism to undermine Algerian culture and society? What was the content of the educational program in Algeria? How symbolic violence influenced Algerian native students Through French textbooks? What were the effects of French culture on Algerian culture and society?

Us and Them: The otherness in perspective of colonial politics.

Vojtěch Šarše (Faculty of Arts, Charles University)

British and French (or Belgian) colonial politics were devastating in African colonies, through the cultural and identity alienation they had changed the colonized societies. Until today the consequences are visible and objects of various discussions and not only in academic sphere (and all over the world). One of the most powerful aspect of those politics was European educational system brought to African continent, system which in some cases stayed rooted even after the decolonization (until today in some Sub-Saharan universities – specially in francophone countries – they study so-called *Lettres Modernes*, examining the French classicistic theatre etc.). The colonizers along with their own knowledge imposed the occidental values and languages (even nowadays Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o or Boubacar Boris Diop fight against the omnipresence of English or French). To stress the superiority, the colonizers defined the "local" languages as almost criminal discourse, punished by several different manners (physical punishment, symbol of shame etc.). In the same time, to legitimate their presence in colonies and even gain the support of the public opinion, the colonial powers stressed the white man's burden through the colonial propaganda. Several hundreds of those works were released in the last thirty years of colonial period (specially in Belgium). Most of them were about new schools established in colonies by European powers. Those institutions enlightened the people

of Africa usually portrayed as retarded children dependent on decisions of colonizer. In this paper, we will analyze one short "documentary" movie made in British colony in Africa, Gold Coast, called *I will speak English*.

Cabo Verde – Is the locanationalization of the global a way towards decolonization of knowledge?

Fernanda Marques (FCSH, Universidade Nova de Lisboa)

In a time of deep change in the world, accelerated by the pandemic of COVID19, it will be urgent to revolutionize learning and "bring the future to the present" of the School in Cabo Verde, a small archipelagic and sahelean state with about 520,500 inhabitants, half of whom are in the 0-24 age group, transforming difficulties into opportunities.

Based on a documentary analysis for the period from 1975 to 2015, of the flows and ideologies underlying public development aid, and on a personal experience, of thirty years, dedicated to the Cape Verdean educational system, I look for ways that can lead to the construction of a new teaching-learning paradigm in public schools. After the independence of the archipelago, in 1975, the Cape Verdean educational system adopted the general structural model of the former colonizer, mixed with the different contributions and guidelines of public aid for the development of education. The investment made since independence in terms of human resources, particularly in the training of teachers, in infrastructure, programs, study plans, curricula and manuals, translates into "comfortable" indicators.

It will be the moment to locanationalize the educational system, revolutionizing the relations between the national academy and local practices within the contemporary global framework of public aid for the development of education. Is the locanationalization of the global a way towards decolonization of knowledge?