

## THE VARIED NATURE OF HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN THE TEACHING OF HISTORY IN CAMEROONIAN SCHOOLS

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Like most countries in Africa, Cameroon is a colonial construct. It has its specificities and paradoxes, which are quite mesmerising. Cameroon is one of only a few countries in Africa to have had three colonial masters, Germany, France and Britain and has serpented through Anglo-French Trusteeship, Federalism and the unitary state, to what is today just the state. Geographically, even Cameroon's location is ambiguous with an English-speaking sector located in West Africa and the French-speaking sector in Central-Africa<sup>1</sup> It is based on this standpoint that the Anglophones and the Francophones who graduated from the two colonial legacies and from two colonial educational systems reunited in 1961. It is vital to understand the path covered by the former German colony to achieve unification. After the defeat of the Germans in Cameroon in 1916, Britain and France were left to arrange the administration of this former German colony. Based on fundamental differences after the war as to the type of administration to be introduced to be styled on whose mood – Britain or France separated

<sup>1</sup> W Gam, Nkwi, *Voicing the voiceless: Contributions to closing gaps in Cameroon History, 1958-2009* (Bamenda, Langaa Research and Publishing CIG, 2010), p. 137.

the imperialist. This disagreement was enough for them to settle on the partition of the territory. With the partition effected in 1916 and endorsed by the League of Nations in 1922, each colonial power administered its own section differently. British Cameroon was administered as part of Nigeria and developed along the Anglo-Saxon line and France did not administer its own portion as an appendix to any French territory, but even so French Cameroon developed along a De Gaullist path and the Francophone culture. For close to three decades the peoples of the former German colony were separated. France granted independence to its own sector 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1960 and the independence of British Cameroon came through a United Nations organised plebiscite on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 1961 and reunification and independence of the two Cameroons on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1961.<sup>2</sup> It was from this juncture that all attempts to reunite the two educational systems to produce a national system responsive to Cameroon's political, economic, social and cultural aspirations to present have failed.

There was excitement and enthusiasm in the political scene for both systems to be united so as to create a single national educational system adaptable to Cameroonian needs. Apart from the political measures the legislative and administrative procedures for the harmonisation of the educational systems were high. A National Council for education was created as the forum for harmonisation. The council initiated reforms that resulted in the first federal law on education No .63/COR/5 of 1963. This was achieved through the initiative of a National Council for Education charged with the harmonisation of the educational systems of Cameroon. In June of the same year Law No 63/COE/13 of 19<sup>th</sup> June 1963 restructured the secondary school and a senior or high school cycle. Unfortunately, while the Anglophone side was implementing these laws on the harmonisation of education in the country the Francophones were not implementing these laws, but rather they maintained the French educational system and were attempting to wipe out the British system of education. Realising that the Francophones were adamant not to change, the Anglophones became intolerant and resistant to further changes proposed by the Francophones for the harmonisation of the two educational systems.

The Anglophones' resistance to changes in the educational system was reinforced by the introduction of the London General Certificate of Education

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2 For more on the political process in Cameroon see; VJ Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985: A hundred years of History* (Yaoundé, Navi-Group Publication, 1987); VJ Ngoh, "Dismantling the federal system", VJ Ngoh (ed.), *Cameroon: From federal to a unitary state, 1961-1972: A critical Study* (Limbe, Design House, 2004).

(GCE) examination curriculum in 1963 to replace the West African School Certificate Examination. This was followed with the return to the London GCE curriculum and the presence of the British volunteers in the Cameroon educational system. The West Cameroon Educational Reform of 1963, which was based on the Nigerian educational system, further perpetuated the desire for the British system of education from being assimilated by the Francophone system was the top priority of the Anglophone minority in Cameroon who fought<sup>3</sup> for the creation of an independent examination board for the Anglophone educational sub-system – the Cameroon General Certificate of Education Board (CGCEB) which was granted in 1993. This Board is charged with the responsibility of designing the curriculum and decides on the kind of textbooks to be used in schools and colleges in Anglophone Cameroon in consultation with the Ministry of Secondary Education. It has the sole responsibility of organising the complete process of examinations in this part of the country. On the other hand another examination board was created for the Francophone sub-system. The Baccalaurean Board oversees the examination processes of *Probatoir* and *Baccalauria* examinations respectively – the equivalent of the ordinary and advanced levels for the Anglophone sub-system.

This article therefore examines the use of textbooks in Cameroon in the teaching of history in the secondary and high school<sup>4</sup> levels in Cameroon schools. In it I argue that the use of textbooks varies from public to denominational or private (mission schools) to lay private (sole proprietorship or limited liability) institutions. While the state publishes and makes official the textbooks to be used in schools in the country, the private and lay private institutions decide on what kind of textbooks to be used by their schools. While the use of these books are made more compulsory in mission schools to both the teachers and the learners, the public or Government and lay private school may decide to use them or not. In as much as there are variations in terms of publication and authorship, the content remains the same, which is tied to the curriculum. These differences in the use of textbooks in Cameroon schools have prompted some teachers to create a summary of the original text on the official booklist to produce pamphlets with hints on how to interpret

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3 NB Francis and AR Fonteh, *The Cameroon GCE Crisis: A test of Anglophone Solidarity* (Bamenda, Langaa Research and publishing, 2008, CIG).

4 The secondary school level or first cycle is the junior level after primary school which last for six years and the junior secondary has a five year duration. In the fifth year the candidates are expected to write a national examination which is a transition to the senior or high school level or second cycle, with at least a pass in four of more subjects. At the end of the second year another national examination is written with a pass in two or more subjects a candidate can secure admission in to a university or any higher institution or professional schools

examination questions. Learners pay less than the cost of the official textbook for these creations. In the mission schools these “teacher made books” are not accepted for use by learners.

It is important to note that most of the textbooks accepted by the government for official use are written by government school teachers. The mission schools encourage their teachers to write for use by their schools. The lay private schools oscillate between the official books, and those from mission schools. Of relevance is that they make frequent use of pamphlets. Pamphlets are made by teachers to supplement the absence of the textbook by students caused either by scarcity, cost and are more simplified or focused towards examination and are less costly. Interesting is the fact that they are made by the teachers on the spot who at times force it on the students most probably because they are not in possession of the original. Again, teachers produce these books to make up for their poor pay or salary while the students themselves who find these pamphlets easy to read go in for them. These differences in authorship and publications has been conditioned by the fact the government has not encouraged teachers who are not on the official payroll to write. To increase the pay of the mission teachers their employers encourage them to write and make use of the compulsory books. Secondly, the educational system in Cameroon is examination oriented, this gives room for teachers to write based on that.

Whether there are books on the official booklist or private or lay private, they do not meet the requirements of international norms of textbooks. A textbook should consist of a registration number, a publishing and or printing house, editor(s), and the content and to an extent the quality of the paper. The books used in the school system in Cameroon do not meet these criteria more so, because publishing houses are scarce, editors are scarce and expensive to hire, and above all books that are specialised in the reconstruction of Cameroon, Africa and World histories are expensive. It would be preferable to say the books used in the secondary and high school levels in the teaching of history in Cameroon are co-supplementary textbooks.

Since the Cameroonisation of the GCE in 1977 and the advent of the GCEB in 1993, both the structure and the course content of Ordinary Level and Advanced level history has evolved significantly. Forms 1 and 2 treat the history of the Great Empires in Africa, civilisations, Islam, Christianity, inventions and inventors and the advent of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. Therefore, in these forms the focus is on the early history of Africa

and part of British history. Given that these are topics that no single textbooks has included, teachers then make use of specialised textbooks authored by African and European historians on these subjects to compose a volume for Cameroon schools that will answer the questions posed by the curriculum. It is important to understand that in the French section of Cameroon, especially in the denominational and lay private schools reserved for Anglophone learners, they prefer books coming from the Anglophone section of the country rather than those authored by Anglophones who have taken up residence in the French zone. The contention here is that the textbooks coming from the Anglophone zone have met the conditions for official examinations controlled by the GCEB. Some principals of public schools in the Francophone zone sometimes do the exception by not respecting the official books and make use of books from mission schools. The reasons advanced is that they are co-authored and better edited, supervised, focused and in better language which explains why these mission schools perform better in official and public examinations.

In the Catholic missions as a whole and Our Lady of Lourdes College Mankon, Bamenda, the history textbook used is the *New Companion History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, book one and two*. This book is co-authored by four teachers of the Catholic Education Agency of the Archdioceses of Bamenda among whom are Nyinchia Godwin Gham and Nfor Augustine Fanka. It is used only by schools in Bamenda and some lay private schools at which the authors give part-time teaching. What is of relevance here is that a textbook can be used by other mission schools, both within the same denomination for example the diocese of Buea or Mamfe if one of the authors is from there, or just by simply lobbying with colleagues and or the education secretaries of sister dioceses. While on the other hand it can be used by other denominations for example the Presbyterians and or Baptists for similar reason. The exception to this rule may come from conservative Pentecostal Missions who demand that the authors should be members of their community.

At the end of each chapter, revision questions are provided for class revision and for the learners' private studies. Teachers recommend that learners should use the questions at the end of each chapter to practice for the examinations. This is common for all textbooks used in all the schools. But seldom do the teachers repeat the same phrasing of the question in a class test or annual examinations. This textbook is accompanied by a work book for learners'

practice of the lesson taught. The method of testing the learners at the junior level is based on the Multiple Choice Question and structural systems. The first method is in line with the official examination conditions while the second method is aimed at developing the writing skills of the learner. Every learner is in possession of this textbook in class. The teacher constantly makes reference to the book for illustrations, equally instructions are given for a learner to read some portion from the book in the hearing of the class. Assignments are given and the learners are asked to draw maps from the text book into their note books.

The lay private schools like Saint Frederick Comprehensive High School (SFHS), Saint Michael Academy of Science and Arts (SMASA) and Progressive Comprehensive High School Mankon (PCHS), use these textbooks but their use by both teachers and learners is not compulsory. Very few learners are in possession of history textbooks in particular. The reasons are three-fold: the first is that most of the learners in these schools come from low income homes and non-salary earners, secondly the parents of the learners see no reason to buy textbooks after they have paid school fees and the third is that the schools themselves do not lay emphasis on the learners to have them. They are interested in the collection of school fees since the motive of most private venture is the maximisation of profit. They ensure that the teachers give the learners all the notes in class and thus the learners like their parents and school management do not see the need for text book, but endorse the workbooks.

In public or government schools, the situation is not very different. The teachers emphasize history textbook use but do not make it mandatory. They occasionally give assignments on the prescribed textbooks and encouraged student to do group work. Like their colleagues in lay private schools they hardly make use of the textbooks in class or use them in classroom teaching. The history textbook used for forms one and two is *History For Beginners Book one* and *Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools*. Form 3 or mid secondary school level has a different history textbook from the first two levels. The curriculum for the GCE examination begins at this level and the focus is on the history of Cameroon only. The topics which are treated in this class are from the arrival of the imperialist along the coast of Cameroon to the end of the German rule in 1916 and beyond. The curriculum emphasises that the history of Cameroon is treated completely here. But given that it is almost impossible, it is spread for three years more so to keep the student current with events right to the end of their examination. Secondly, because

out of the 50 MCQ for the examination, 25 are from Cameroon and of the 4 questions in the second section essay two should be answered from Cameroon with a compulsory stimulus or extract question from the two. Most of the specialised textbooks on the early history of Cameroon were reconstructed by Eurocentric historians, Anthropologists and Sociologists *inter alia* Ardener Shirley, Delancy Mark, Rudin Harry, Chilver and Kaberry and some Cameroonian Historians like V.G. Fanzo and Ngoh Victor Julius. It is with these specialised textbooks that teachers of history used to write textbooks to be used by their learners. In the Catholic Mission School, the text book used is *Certificate Approach to Ordinary Level History 3-5: Cameroon, Africa and World*, authored by two teachers of the agency Nfor Augustine Fanka and Nzelenmuyuy Ernest. This text is accompanied by a workbook and other question and answer pamphlets to guide learners towards the end of course examinations. In government schools the recommended textbook is *Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools*, by Anucam books

The last two years of the secondary school level maintain the same books. At this level, there is the introduction of African and world history. In government schools the world history book used is *The World Since 1914* by Jeo Scott. However, the lay private school make use of a teachers' hand out which is oriented towards the examinations. Past GCE questions are answered for the learners who sometimes resort to cramming rather than studying for knowledge but for examinations reasons.

At the high school or second cycle level the three sections of history are maintained but with emphasis on details. The approach, method and style of writing the textbooks are very different. It has to meet the required standard of the Advanced Level syllabus. In the mission schools mentioned above the books used are *Standard African History, Cameroon History Since 1800* by Ebanek John and *World History for Secondary Schools* by Tefu Emmanuel. In government schools they use *Elaborate African History for Advanced Level GCE* and *Essential Modern World History*, by Bate George Enow.

In order to prepare to teach history in all the forms, the use of specialised text is necessary. The books are listed in the table below:

## For Cameroonian History

Authors	Titles
S Ardener	<i>Eye-Witness to the Annexation of Cameroon, 1884-1887</i>
Elango Z Lovett	<i>The Anglo-French Condominium in Cameroon, 1914-1916: A History of Misunderstanding</i>
Eyongetah Tambi and Robert Brain	<i>A History of the Cameroon</i>
VG Fanso	<i>Cameroon History for secondary school and colleges Vol 1</i>
VG Fanso	<i>Cameroon History for secondary school and colleges Vol 2</i>
Le Vine Victor	<i>The Cameroon Mandate to Independence</i>
Ngoh Victor Julius	<i>Cameroon 1884-1985</i>
Ngoh Victor Julius	<i>Constitutional Development in Southern Cameroons, 1946-1961</i>
Ngoh Victor Julius	<i>History of Cameroon Since 1800</i>
R Harry	<i>The Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914</i>

## For African History

Authors	Titles
Ki-Zerbo Joseph	<i>General History of Africa</i>
Onwubiko KBC	<i>History of West Africa</i>
R Oliver and A Atmore	<i>Africa since 1800</i>
J Vansina	<i>Oral Tradition as History</i>

## For World History

Authors	Titles
RD Cornwall	<i>World History in the Twentieth Century</i>
D Richard	<i>An Illustrated History of Modern Europe</i>
N Lowe	<i>Mastering Modern World History</i>
M John	<i>Twentieth Century World History</i>
HL Peacock	<i>Modern European History</i>

Given that the books in the table above are scarce and expensive most learners of history cannot afford them. This has resulted in making teachers resort to pamphlets and other make-shift and supplementary documents discussed above. Consequently the teachers resort to producing alternatives to help the learners and facilitate their teaching. These are mostly question and answer guides with past examination questions with ready-made answers to them. Prominent history teachers who have made their name in this domain include; Batey George Eno with his famous *Path Finder*, used by both teachers



and learners in Cameroon, Atu Robert and Ndifon Walters Gham and their *Success in Cameroon, Africa and World History* and others. Some of the titles of these reads thus; *The cure to World History, History Made Simple, Ease Revision Guide History for learners* and so forth. The titles are attractive and the content is appealing to the learners who rush for them, for use instead of a history textbook; they made references in them to support any historical argument. These alternatives are absent at the junior levels, and therefore most learners at this level do complete this level without ever seeing a history textbook or its supplementary one. The reason is simple the market is not there because the learners are not preparing to write any public examinations, the teachers do not waste resources producing what is not needed.

In the teaching of history in the secondary and high school levels in Cameroon apart from the use of textbooks there are other teaching aids needed in class to facilitate the teaching and learning processes. These include; maps, charts, tables, statistics, photographs, power point and computers. Like the text books these are completely absent in all the schools in Cameroon.

The Cameroon educational system and educational planners have failed to make use of textbooks in the teaching of history mandatory to both teachers and learners. This is explained by the fact the educational system is examination oriented that the need for further research and reading as far as the discipline history is concern has been relegated to the background. This problem further inhibits the effective mastery of the facts and events in history generally. To rescue history from banalised mire, it must transcend and move out of the examination system to academic and knowledge base system. This is the only way to move towards meaningful qualitative and quantitative development of the teaching and learning of history.