Education and Human Capital in Colonial Africa

Léonard Wantchékon

March 8, 2022

Plan

- **Introduction**
- **Patterns in the Data: Investment, Disparities & Curriculum**
- **Impact**
  - Socio-economic Mobility
  - Inequalities
  - Empowerment: Emergence of African Intelligentsia & Political Elite
- **Conclusion:** Key Takeaways, Open Questions & Future Research

I. Introduction

The Status of Education and Human Capital in Colonial Africa

Introduction: Supply of Education

Why did colonial powers establish schools in Africa?

- By early 1900s, growing governance and trade interests required educated Africans.
- Africans in public service were paid 3/5ths of what Europeans got in British colonies and were paid less as part of the "native cadre" in French colonies making them a cheap source of labor (Goldthorpe, 1955; Duke Bryant, 2015).

Introduction: Supply of Education

But they faced a dilemma,

- Officials feared that educated Africans would demand more freedom when met with the hard limits to social mobility in colonial society (eg. Ball, 1983; Gamble, 2017).
- *"The high cost per head is a necessary result of our African policy, born of bitter experience in India; a policy of caution and firm foundations, advancing from a few selected and well-equipped centres in slowly widening circles, secondary education being restricted with reference to local demand and the more urgent claims of primary education."* *Arthur Mayhew, Secretary of the Colonial Office Advisory Committee on Education, Great Britain. Quoted in Ball (1983).*

II. Patterns of Colonial Education

Data on Investment, Disparities, and Curriculum

Patterns: Summary

1. Small investments in education were made by colonial powers which had important effects on social mobility and political engagement.
2. Africans demanded more Western education.
3. Colonial powers feared that education would threaten their control, so primary education remained *scarce* and secondary education essentially *non-existent*.

i. Investments in Education

Investments in Education

- Education was financed entirely by colonies with no contributions from metropole (Huillery, 2009).
- Investment tended to concentrate over time as marginal investments flowed to areas with existing facilities and locally high demand for education (which, in turn, was fueled by earlier investments in education).
- Low level of investment made in education through grants to missionary schools. In turn, missionary schools were generally run on the initiative of Africans.
    - E.g. Uganda 1938: 8,456 African teachers taught in primary schools, while there were only 285 European teachers (Frankema, 2012).

Investments in Education: British Colonies

30 percent was covered by school fees: missionary home funds only filled some gaps; African tax payers provided the bulk.

Table 2 presents colonial government educational expenditures per person enrolled between 1900 and 1950. The figures are presented in constant British pounds of 1910, based on a price index of British public services from Feinstein (1972, p. T132). The data have been retrieved from the annual accounts of government revenue and expenditure as published in the colonial blue books and includes expenses on the education department (central administration), on government schools, and the subsidies (so-called "grants-in-aid") to missionary schools.

Source: Includes grants for missionary schools (Frankema, 2012).

British Colonies: Missionary Schools

Nigeria, Southern	59,002	266,342	91.1	97
Mauritius	9,635	24,607	50.6	61.6
Uganda	11,954[a]	267,837	100	98.9
Nyasaland	61,091[a]	206,202	100	99.9
Kenya	2,432	129,101	100	92.2
Tanganyika		66,753		85.6
N. Rhodesia	2,400[a]	122,312	100	99.2
S. Rhodesia		ns		ns
Bechuanaland	2,236	14,239	100	98.4
Total/weighted average	170,638	1,179,993	93.3	95.5

Source: Online Supplementary material, table A1.
Notes: [a]Sierra Leone 1890, Southern Nigeria 1914, Uganda 1905, Nyasaland 1905. The figure for Northern and Southern Rhodesia in 1900 is a guesstimate for the combined territories of Rhodesia.

That mission school expansion was more of an African, rather than a Western, undertaking has often been disregarded in conventional explanations of African educational development. In fact, the *Africanization* of the mission was an absolute prerequisite for the scale of enrolment expansion witnessed before 1940. The success of the missionary effort did not depend on a passive acceptance by Africans of Western culture and religious values—Africans taking the *initiative* to spread the gospel and develop the infrastructure needed

Source: Frankema, 2012

Almost all education was through missionary schools.

Investments in Education: French Colonies

	Mean	s.d.	25%	Median	75%	Min	Max	N
from drinkable water								
Colonial period								
Number of teachers per 100,000 hbt from 1910–1928	4	5	1	3	4	0.2	28	99
Medical staff per 100,000 hbt from 1910–1928	8.5	15	1	4.4	9	0	111	98
Public works expenses per capita from 1910–1928 (in 1910 FF)	0.44	1.2	0.05	0.13	0.31	0.003	9.7	99
New teachers per 100,000 hbt over	4.6	6.7	1.2	2.7	5.2	–12.3	41.5	99

Data for French West Africa, excluding Saint Louis, and Dakar.
Source: Huillery, 2009

Investments in Education: French Colonies

Source: Huillery, 2009

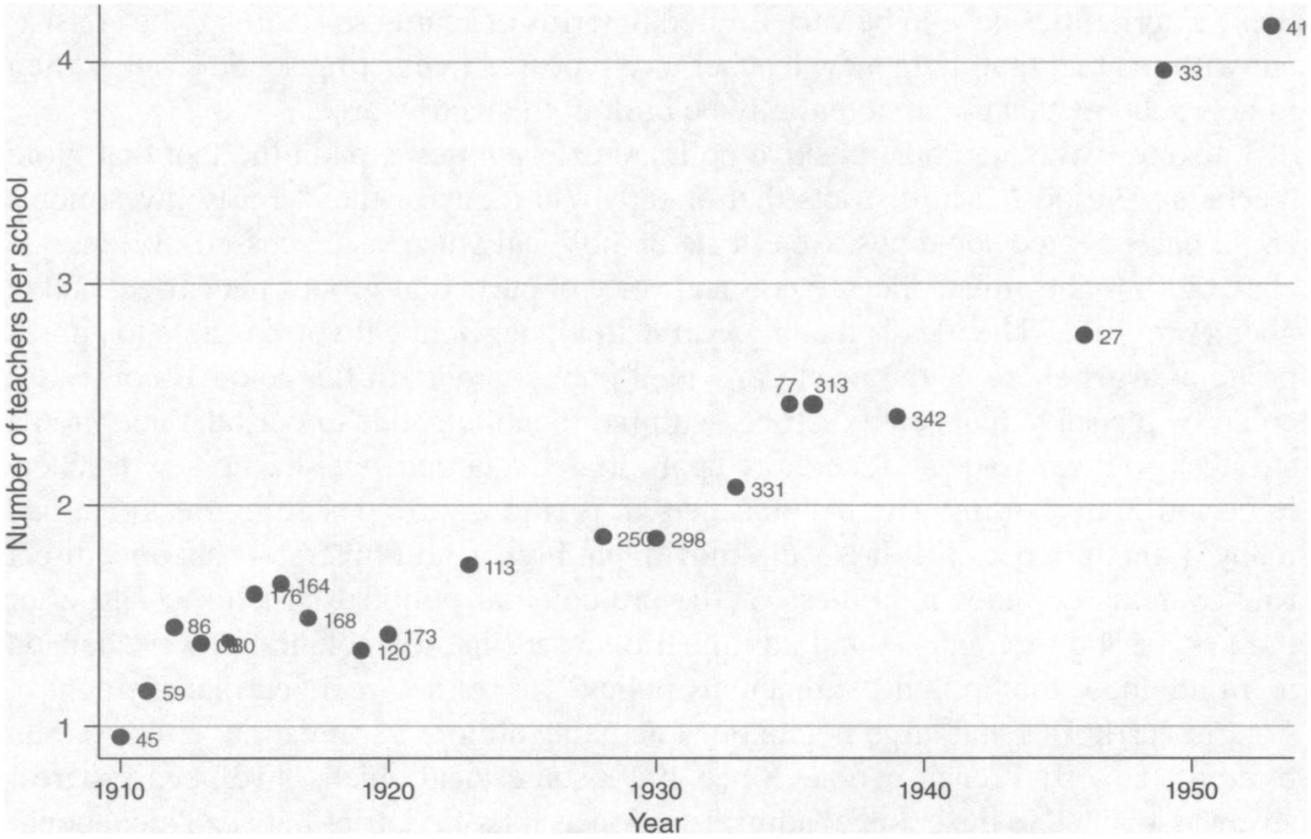


FIGURE 9. THE EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF TEACHERS PER SCHOOL

Note: Markers correspond to the number of schools in the sample

- Huillery (2009) finds that teachers/school increased over time.
- Possible explanations:
  - increasing returns on investment

  OR
  - greater demands from Africans
- But the increases in educational investment was concentrated in areas that already had better access.

ii. Disparities in Educational Investment

Disparities: Unequal Investments in Education

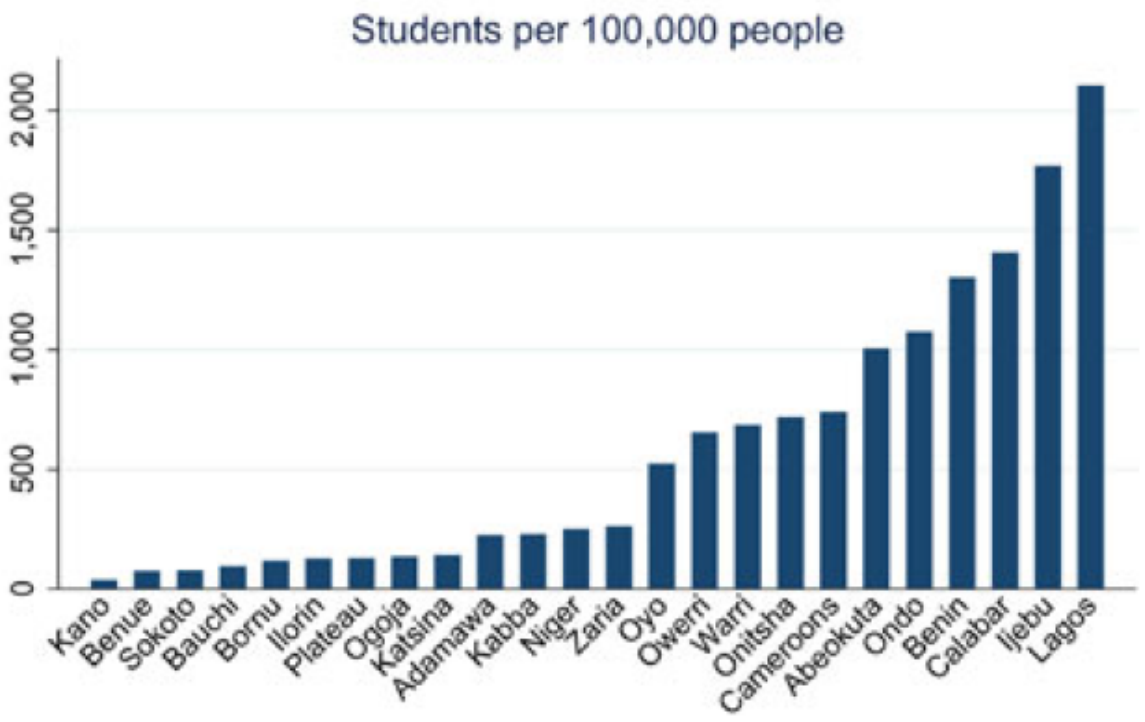
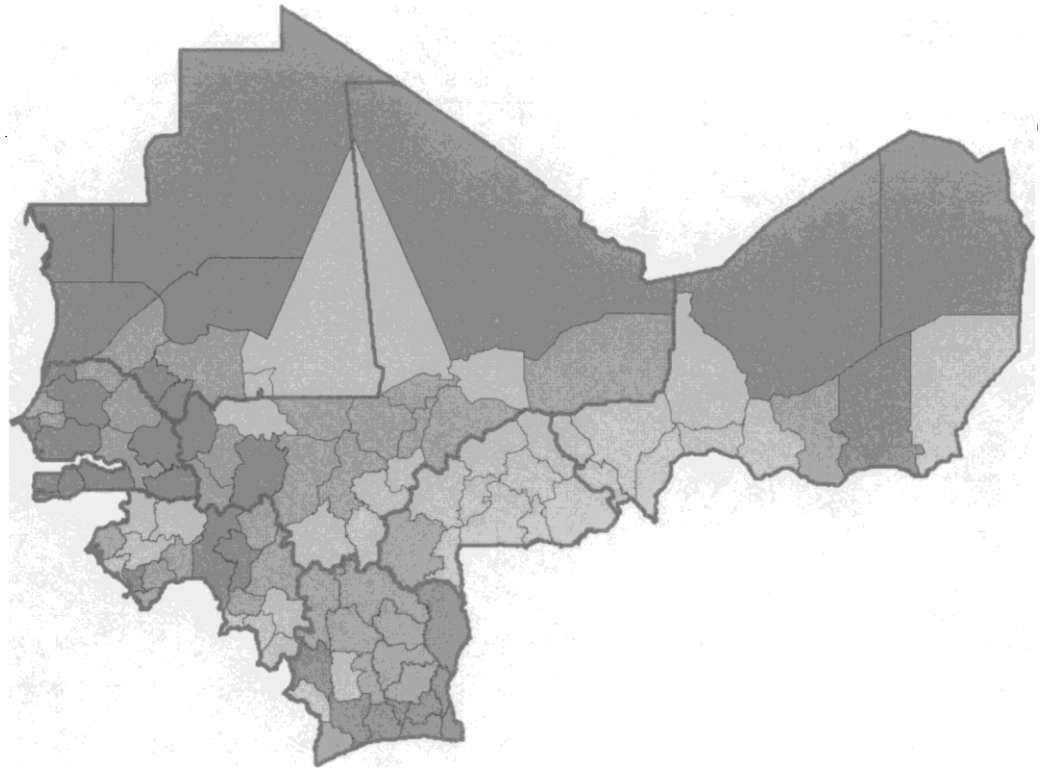


Figure 1. Total students in Nigeria by district (1910-1939)
Source: Ricart-Huguet, 2021

- Large disparities in enrollment across the districts of 16 British and French colonies.
- Schooling was concentrated in coastal areas with or near pre-colonial trading posts.

Spatial Disparities



- Important regional disparities existed in colonial education investment, with larger investments made in coastal areas (Huillery, 2009).

- Huillery (2009) finds that much inter-district disparities were also random, based on traits of colonial administrators. But effects have been *persistent*.

Source: Huillery, 2009

Gender Disparities

Table Average attendance in Government primary schools in 1928.

Province	N of Sch.	Boys	Girls	Total	% of Girls
Colony	5	584	79	663	11.9%
Benin	14	1,994	136	2,130	6.3%
Calabar	6	1,356	67	1,423	4.7%
Ijebu	---	---	---	---	---
Ogoja	2	225	17	272	6.2%
Ondo	1	132	13	145	8.9%
Onitsha	3	781	24	805	2.9%
Owerri	7	1,512	107	1,619	6.6%
Oyo	1	197	28	225	12.4%
Warri	4	707	105	812	12.9%
Total	49	8,440	703	9,143	7.6%

Data on Nigeria. Source: Okonkwo & Ezeh, 2008

Despite the existence of matriarchal traditions in many parts of pre-colonial Africa, colonial education for women was most severely limited.

Primary Enrollment (1950)

Source: Frankema, 2012

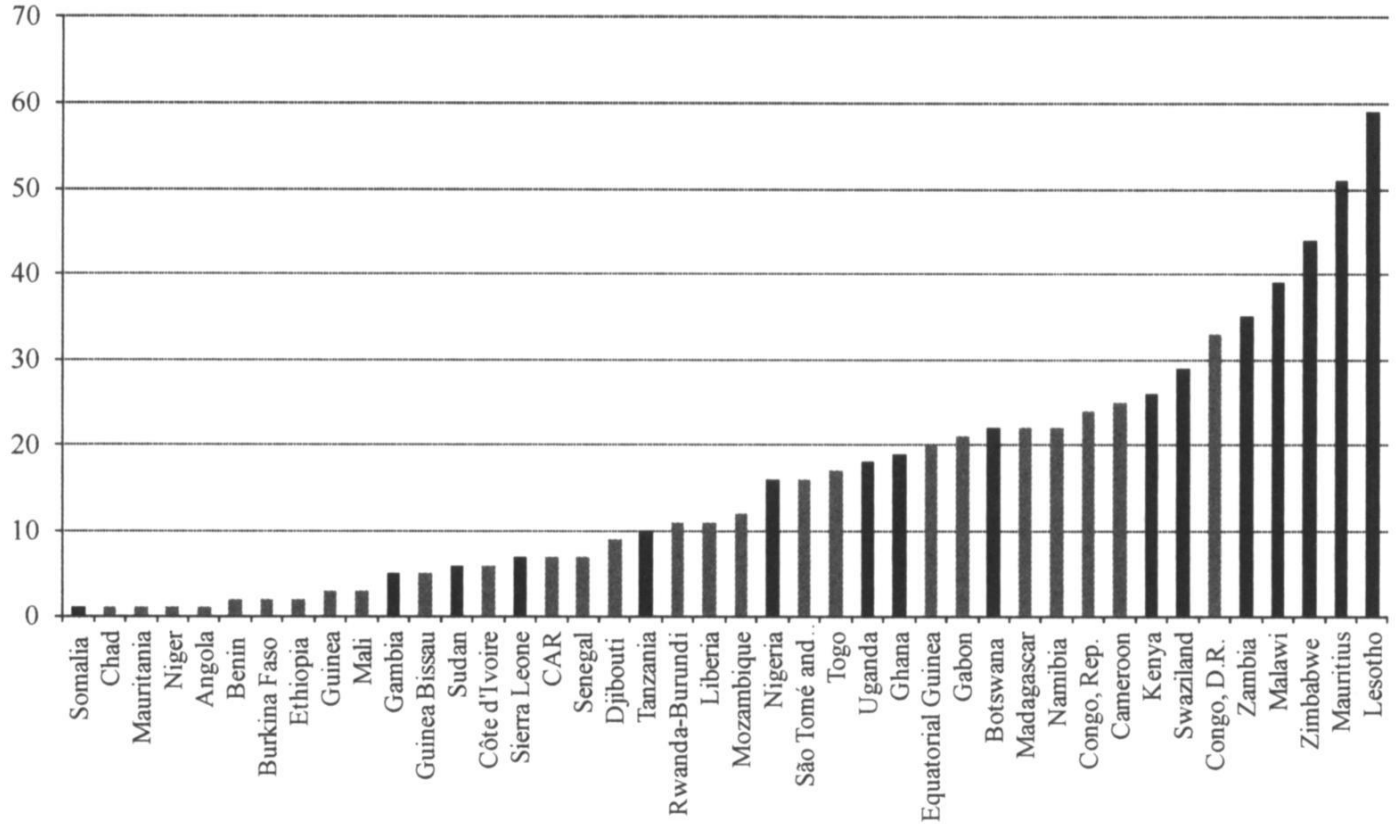


Figure 1. *Gross primary-school enrolment rates (age 5–14) subdivided by British (black) and non-British (grey) African colonies, 1950.*
Source: UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook 1964, table 9.

Even by 1950, most countries had primary school enrollment levels below 20%

Secondary Education

- Both French and British colonial administrators were especially wary of secondary education.
- Even in 1939, no secondary education was available in Central Africa (Ball, 1983).
- The first secondary school in French Equatorial Africa was founded in Brazzaville in 1935 (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 2021).
- Educational policy was based on a *pyramidal system*: expanding primary education but severely restricting access to secondary education (Duke Bryant, 2015 ; Gamble, 2017).

Secondary Education: Nigeria

All secondary schools in Nigeria till 1910. Source: Ogunyemi, 2015

S/N	School	Date Founded	Founder	Enrolees
1	CMS Grammar School, Bariga, Lagos	1859	CMS Mission	Boys only
2	Methodist Boys High School, Lagos	1878	Methodist mission	Boys only
3	Methodist Girls High School, Lagos	1879	Methodist Mission	**Girls only**
4	Baptist Academy, Lagos	1885	Baptist Mission	Boys only
5	Hoppe Waddell Training Institute, Calabar	1895	Presbyterian Church of Scotland	Boys only
6	St Andrew's College, Oyo	1896	CMS Mission	Boys only
7	St. Anne's School, Molete, Ibadan	1896	Catholic Mission	**Girls only**
8	Baptist Training School, Ogbomoso	1897	Baptist Mission	Boys only
9	Oron Training Institute (now Oron Boys High School)	1897	Presbyterian Church of Scotland	Boys only
10	St. Paul's College, Iyienu, Awka	1900	CMS Mission	Boys only
11	Methodist Boys High School, Oron	1903	Methodist Mission	Boys only
12	Wesleyan College, Elekuro, Ibadan	1905	Methodist mission	Boys only
13	Abeokuta Grammar School, Abeokuta	1908	CMS Mission	Boys only
14	King's College, Lagos	1909	Colonial Government	Boys only
15	St. John's College, Bida	1909	CMS Mission	Boys only
16	Alhuda College, Zaria	1910	Colonial Government	**Girls only**

Southern Nigeria had one of the most developed secondary education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. The vast majority of these were missionary schools, with limited support from the colonial state (Ogunyemi, 2015).

iii. Curriculum

Curriculum

- *"The more practical and rudimentary the education is, the more useful schools will be; it's a matter of turning young natives into workers who speak and write French."*

  – Camille Guy, lieutenant governor of Senegal, 1903 (Gamble, 2017).

Curriculum: Overview

- *Adapted curriculum:* refers to the idea that Black communities required less advanced, more localized education which was separate from European education.
- British colonies gave grants to private missionary schools rather than investing in public education systems (Frankema, 2012).
- Grants were contingent on mission schools providing vocational training alone (Ball, 1983; Zvogbo, 1981).
- In practice, students spent most of their days in indentured labor with no real education going on in schools (Ball, 1983).

Curriculum: Senegal

- Adapted curriculum was offered in Senegalese village and regional schools, 1903 (Gamble, 2017):
  - French, Arabic (in Muslim areas), reading, writing
  - Basic math, metric system, elements of geometry, drawing
  - Basic modern and contemporary history focused on French West Africa
  - Elements of physical and natural sciences applied to hygiene, agriculture and local industries
  - Practical training in agriculture as well as woodwork and metalwork

Curriculum: Nigeria

Syllabus for primary schools 1909 (Code of Education, 1909)

Obligatory subjects for boys	**Obligatory subjects for girls**
Colloquial English and Nature study	None
Reading with translation into vernacular, meaning of words and simple Grammar	Same as boys
Arithmetic	Same as boys
Hygiene and sanitation	Same as boys
Manual Training to include drawing or shorthand from standard III	Domestic Economy – Cookery or Bakery, Plain Needlework and Laundry.
Moral Instruction	Same as boys
Optional subjects	**Optional subjects**
History and Geography	None
Singing	Same as boys
Drill and physical exercise	Same as boys

Source: Okonkwo & Ezeh, 2008

III. Impact

Social Mobility and Political Engagement, Sources of Disparity, and Empowerment

Impact: Summary

1. **Social Mobility and Political Engagement:** Those who had access to Western education had significant inter-generational impacts.
2. **Inequalities**: There were big disparities in access to education based on region, gender, and religion.
3. **Empowerment**: Disparities have tended to persist into post-colonial times creating intelligentsia and political elite.

i. Social Mobility

Wantchekon et al. (2015): Colonial Education & Social Mobility

- Individuals who were part of the first two cohorts to receive education at colonial schools in Benin had higher living standards and better social networks compared to uneducated individuals.
- The educated individuals were also much less likely to be farmers and much more likely to be politically active.

Wantchekon et al. (2015): Colonial Education & Social Mobility

TABLE I

SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR THE FIRST GENERATION

	Treated parents	Untreated parents in village w/ school	Untreated parents in village w/o school
Number of siblings	3.370	3.059	2.964
	(2.366)	(2.326)	(2.114)
	[73]	[153]	[139]
Primary education or more	0.963	0.008	0.008
	(0.189)	(0.092)	(0.091)
	[82]	[119]	[122]
Secondary education or more	0.098	0	0
	(0.299)	–	–
	[82]	[119]	[122]
Farmer	0.143	0.784	0.842
	(0.352)	(0.414)	(0.367)
	[84]	[111]	[95]
Water	0.258	0.146	0.092
	(0.440)	(0.355)	(0.290)
	[89]	[164]	[152]
Living standards scale	0.677	−0.195	−0.188
	(1.159)	(0.887)	(0.835)
	[84]	[151]	[143]
Member of party	0.425	0.107	0.050
	(0.498)	(0.311)	(0.219)
	[73]	[149]	[139]
French language	0.955	0.085	0.013
	(0.208)	(0.280)	(0.114)
	[89]	[164]	[152]
White friends	0.457	0.084	0.035
	(0.502)	(0.278)	(0.186)
	[70]	[143]	[141]
Social networks scale	1.661	−0.350	−0.451
	(0.864)	(0.539)	(0.425)

Intergenerational Effects: Benin

TABLE XIII

OUTCOMES FOR FIRST-BORN DESCENDANTS ONLY

	(1) Education	(2) Living standards scale	(3) Social networks scale
Individual-level treatment	0.297**	0.535***	0.374***
	(0.126)	(0.141)	(0.128)
Village-level treatment	0.451***	0.393***	0.408***
	(0.084)	(0.102)	(0.112)
Observations	383	341	375

Notes. Dependent variables are indicated in the column header. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by extended family. All regressions control for gender, number of siblings, and include commune and decade dummies. *$p < .1$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$.

Wantchekon et al., (2015) show strong inter-generational effects in social mobility and political participation.

ii. Inequalities

Spatial Disparities and Persistence: Huillery (2009)

- Localities that had higher levels of public investment in the early colonial period continued to have higher levels of investment in later periods, leading to better outcomes even into the present day.

Regional Disparities and Persistence: Political Elites

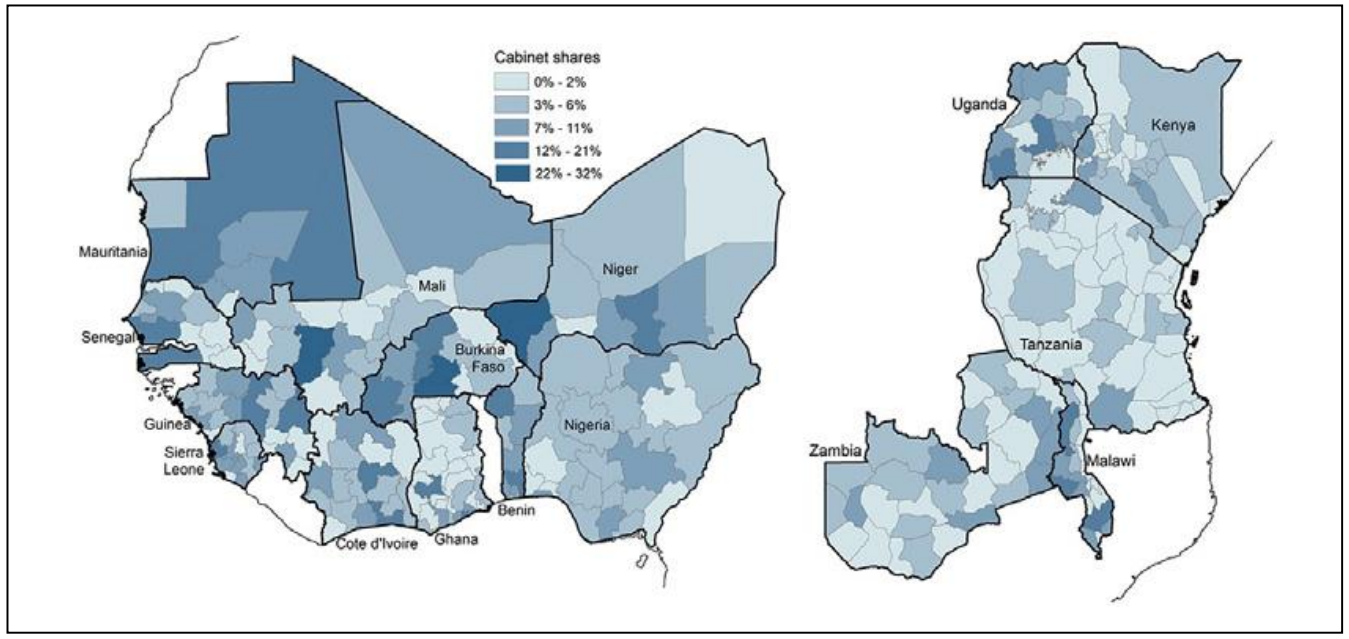


Figure 4. Birth locations of ministers in East and West Africa (1960–2010 average).

Source: Ricart-Huguet, 2021

- Ricart-Huguet (2021) shows that regional disparities in political representation derive from colonial-era education provision.
- Cabinet ministers continue to hail disproportionately from areas with high levels of colonial education provision.
- Huillery (2009) shows that localities that had higher levels of public investment in the early colonial period continued to have higher levels of investment in later periods, leading to better outcomes today.

Regional Disparities and Persistence: Northern & Southern Nigeria

- 1914: **Northern Nigeria** had eight primary school, two technical government schools, **512** total pupils. **Southern Nigeria** had 541 primary schools (out of which 487 mission schools), **65,000** total pupils (Annual Report of the Colonies).
- 1952: school enrollment amounted to **900,000/2.35 million** children in Northern Nigeria and **120,000/2.5 million** children in Southern Nigeria.

iii. Empowerment

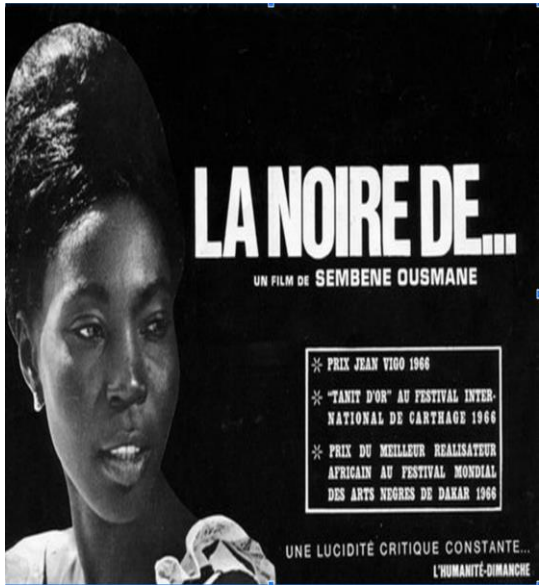
The Emergence of an African Intelligentsia and Political Elite

Demanding Education

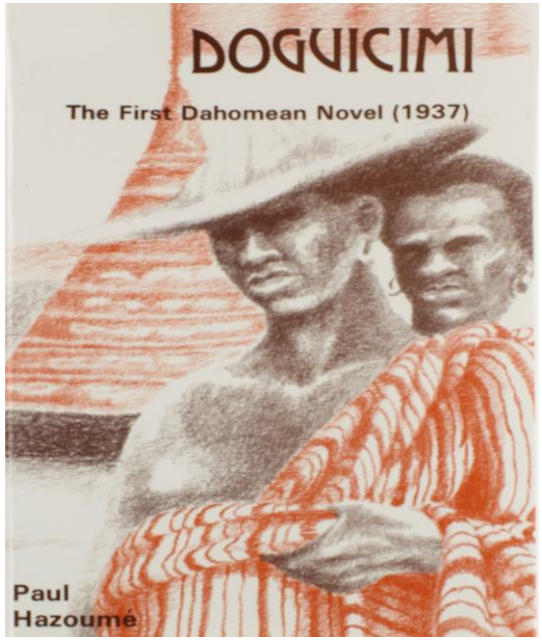
- Despite severe restrictions on supply, Africans saw education as a source of empowerment and demanded more of it.
- *"Never in the course of my experience of the tropics have I found a place where the people were so avid for education. It is the only country, I fancy, where the schoolboy, without being a prig, is more anxious to go to school than his parents are to send him."* - Colonial official, Ghana, 1919 (Davidson,1973)

Breaking Barriers

- African filmmaker, Sembene Ousmane (top-right) and writer, Paul Hazoumé (bottom-right), both at most, attained high school education.
- Still, their ideas and artistic contributions are world-renowned, especially Ousmane's contribution to film (top-left) and Hazoumé's contribution to literature (bottom-left).



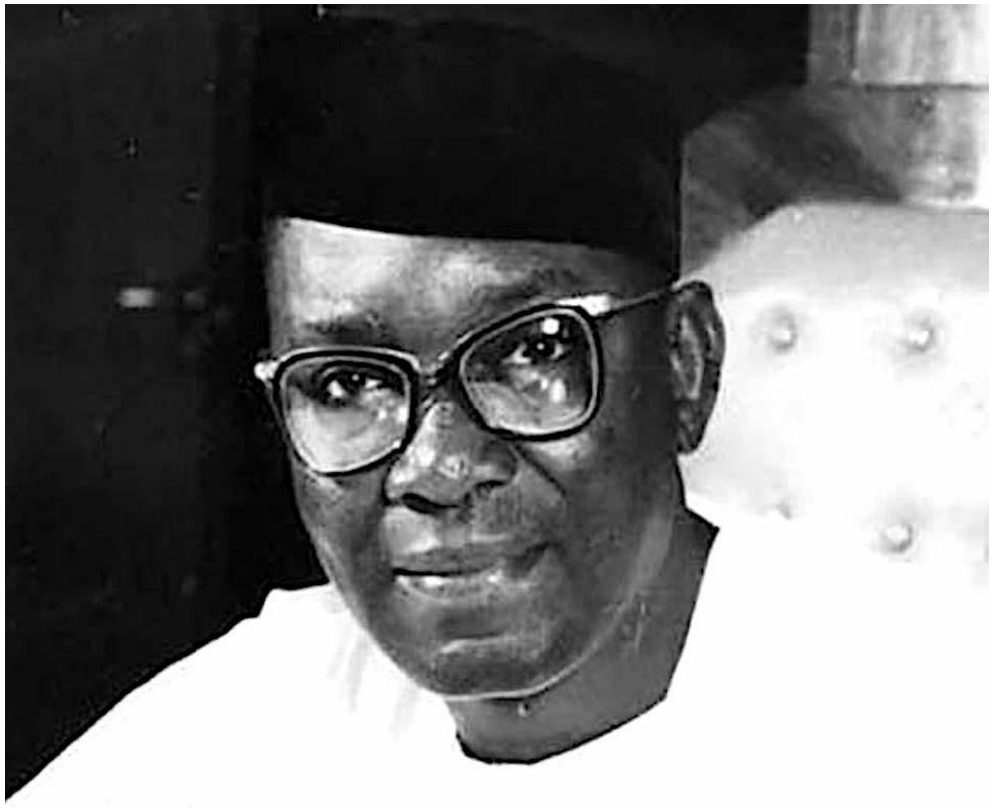






Connecting to African Diaspora: Nnandi Azikwe

- Nnandi Azikiwe moved to the US for graduate education and attained at faculty position at Lincoln.
- He served as the first president of Nigeria and propagated evolutionary vision on decolonized education: *"The African is not, and never has been, a problem; there is no such thing as an African educational problem; those who believe in such an oddity, are problems in themselves." (Azikiwe, 1934*
- His paper, *How Shall We Educate the African?* (1934) introduced the need for African anthropology, ethnology, and ethnography in secondary and collegiate education.
- He posited that African educators should focus on the social sciences whilst providing necessary agricultural and industrial education.
- Azikiwe stressed that technical/vocational training should be emphasized to the extent that Africans are educated as human beings and "not museum specimen or a fossil or preserved animal for scientific experimentation."



African Diaspora

Dr. Kojo Tovalou, Nephew of Behanzin, with Marcus Garvey (1924)



Married Roberta Wood



Roberta Dodd Crawford, Lyric soprano

Chicago Singer Weds Prince Houenou of Dahomey in Paris

Paris, Oct. 6 (UP).—Roberta Dodd Crawford, a singer from Chicago, and Prince Kojo Touvalou Houenou of Dahomey, whose ancestors once commanded the finest Amazonian army in the world, were married here today.

The Prince and his bride will leave on the next ship for Dahomey, French West Africa, where the religious ceremony will be held at Ouidah Cathedral. The Prince, who has studied law and medicine in France and served in the medical corps during the World War, is related to former King Behanzin of Dahomey.

OCTOBER 6, 1932.

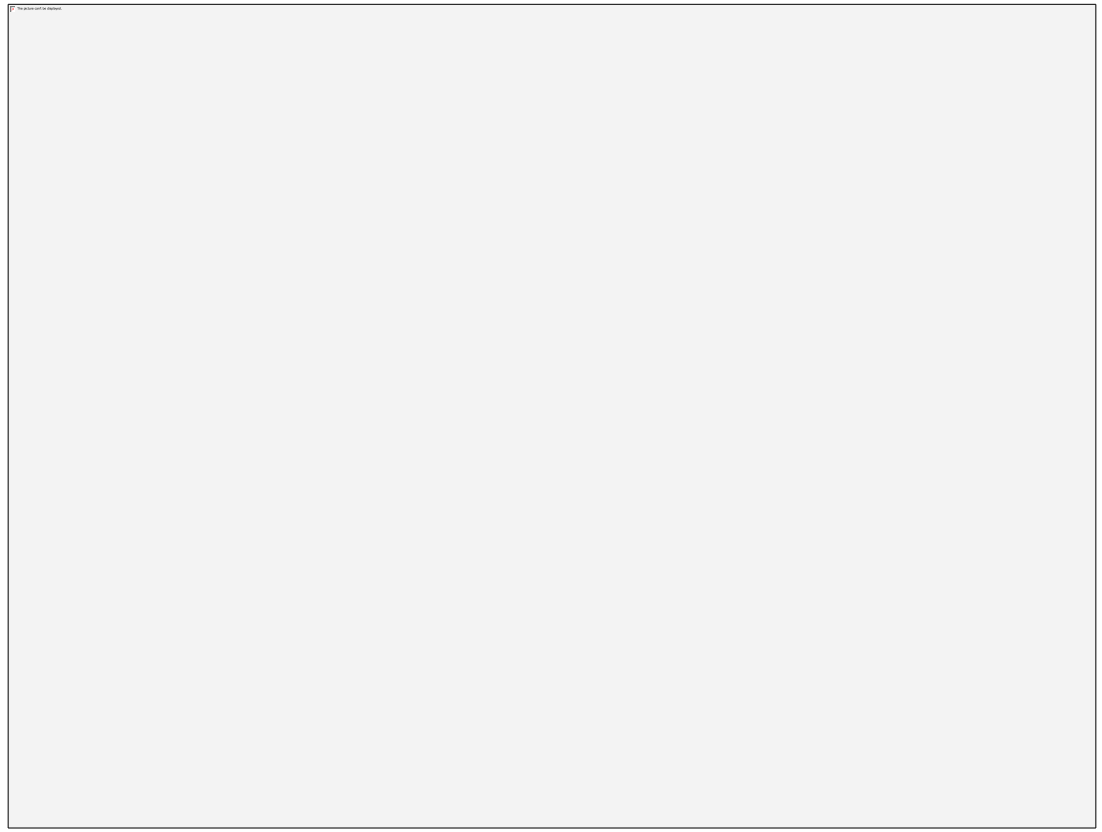


Prince Kojo Touvalou Houénou

Emergence of Indigenous Political Elite: Control vs. Empowerment

- Rather than help create a collaborative local elite, education *empowered* African nationalist leaders.
- Educated Africans went on to lead anti-colonial movements, the pan-African movement, and linked their struggles to the international socialist movement (Wantchekon et al., forthcoming).

Emergence of Indigenous Political Elite



- Fifth Pan-African Congress, 1945

"We are determined to be free. We want education. We want the right to earn a decent living; the right to express our thoughts and emotions, to adopt and create forms of beauty. We demand for Black autonomy and independence…"

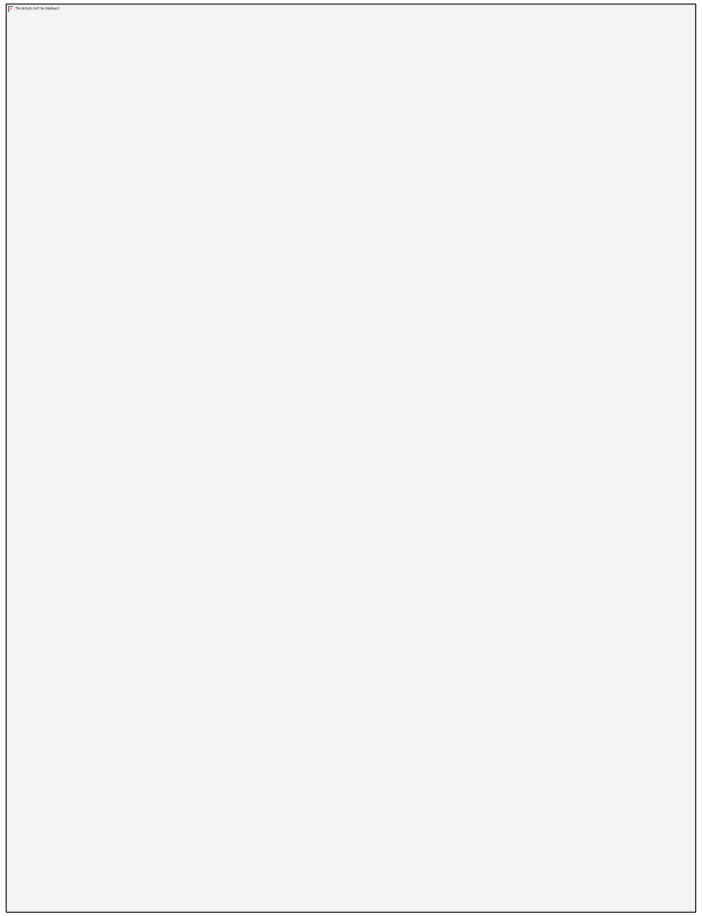
Connection to International Socialist Movement

- Nkrumah and Nyerere both belonged to the upper class
- Completed graduate education in England and US
- Founders of PanAfrican Movements and African Socialism



Kwame Nkrumah, the first prime minister & president of Ghana (left) and Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania (right).

Demanding Education: FPE in Nigeria



Obafemi Awolowo, pioneer of FPE

- In Nigeria, dissatisfaction with missionary education ultimately led to the institution of the Free Primary Education scheme (FPE) in the 1950s.
- The was the biggest expansion of education in colonial Africa, nearly doubling the number of primary schools in the region between 1952 and 1954 (Ajayi,2008).

Results: FPE in Nigeria

- Over 50 percent of children between the ages of six and twelve years were beneficiaries of the FPE.
- The FPE provided a wider base for entrants into secondary schools, trade schools and teacher training colleges, which quickened the pace of the development of middle-level manpower.
- In contrast to 1954 when one out of five pupils in primary school was a girl, by 1966, almost two out of five were girls.
- Overall, the FPE created positive spillovers for the labor market and the economy.



Primary Education in Benin

IBERE Primary School,
Sixth Grade



IV. Conclusion

Key Takeaways, Open Questions, and Future Research

Key Takeaways

- In places where education was available, it became a source of empowerment for Africans.
- The supply of education was restricted to the point that colonial education was non-existent in most parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.
- The fact that Africans did so much with the little education they received, despite the efforts of colonial powers to suppress dissent, highlights the transformational power of education for individuals, families, and societies.
- Historical distortions persist into post-colonial times, therefore expansion of quality education remains an urgent necessity.

Open Questions and Future Research