

# **THE TEACHING OF HISTORY IN HIGH SCHOOLS AND TECHNICAL COLLEAGUES IN CAMEROON: PATERNALISM OR NEOCOLONIALISM SINCE 1960?**

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**Abstract :** *In the aftermath of its independence, Cameroon, called upon to define itself the main lines of its development, sets up at the level of education a system which seems nowadays to glorify the metropolis. Thus, the different arrangements of the programs stand out with difficulty from Western studies. However, the teaching of history should not only give students a greater awareness of their cultural identity and promote understanding between peoples, but also shape in them, national integration, and the strengthening of patriotism. This teaching seems somehow to be oriented towards the knowledge of Western civilization. In addition, the manuals put in place or used remain and remain those written by the tenants of Eurocentric thought.*

**Key words:** *history; teaching; education; textbooks.*

## **1. Introduction**

The education system in Cameroon is set up through the political will to literacy, socialize and enhance citizens. Thus, since 1960, multiple commissions have been organized and have sat in order to revise the programs in History, Geography and Education in Citizenship and Morality (ECM). The last one, which dates from February 9, 2001, does not always seem to meet the expectations and hopes raised by a good number of historians of the territory. This is all the more remarkable when we observe that all the programs adopted since 1960 are difficult to separate from the studies of Western civilization. We then wonder if this initiative is part of the colonial administration system or a metropolitan imposition through neocolonialism? More, Cameroon is it so poor in past events of such fate that the need imposes to go to search elsewhere? These are the lines of exploration that this study proposes by presenting and deciphering some programs of technical and vocational secondary education.

## **2. Some programs in the history of commercial and industrial technical education in Cameroon and the reasons for their adoption**

### **2.1. Presentation of some second cycle programs: case of second and first year classes**

In the second class (Order n° 60 / D / 53 / MINEDUC / IGP / ESTP of February 9, 2001) revising the programs of the classes of the First and Second cycle of technical and vocational secondary education, the annual program provides for seven lessons distributed as follows:

- Lesson 1: political ideologies in France
- Lesson 2: Political ideologies in Great Britain
- Lesson 3: Economic and Social Ideologies in England

- Lesson 4: the consequences of the movements of ideas in the world
- Lesson 5: Scientific and Technical Advances in Africa: Egypt
- Lesson 6: Scientific and technical progress in Europe
- Lesson 7: Scientific and Technical Progress in Asia: China.

Concerning the first classes (Order n ° 60 / D / 53 / MINEDUC / IGP / ESTP of February 9, 2001), they have a set of twelve lessons throughout a school year. Thus, we have:

- Lesson 1: scientific, technical and economic transformations
- Lesson 2: social transformations and the working class condition
- Lesson 3: ideologies: liberalism and socialism
- Lesson 4: the evolution of production techniques since 1850
- Lesson 5: the evolution of work since 1850
- Lesson 6: the socialist international
- Lesson 7: imperialist doctrines
- Lesson 8: conquests and resistance in Africa
- Lesson 9: conquests and resistance in Cameroon
- Lesson 10: the economic exploitation of settlements
- Lesson 11: Africa and the First World War
- Lesson 12: Cameroon and the First World War.

### **3.1. The actors and the reasons for adopting these programs**

#### **3.1.1. Those involved in the review and adoption of programs**

According to the explanatory memorandum for the revision of the History and Geography programs of 2001, it is " on the instructions of the hierarchy that a technical commission composed of experienced teachers, English and French speakers, proceeded to the revision and to the updating of the History and Geography program of vocational technical secondary education. " And if we observe closely, we realize that this hierarchy is nothing other than the minister in charge of responsible for secondary education. This one works in collaboration with the inspectors, the delegates, the secretariat of education and the heads of establishments. The Minister gives instructions to the latter authorizing them to update the programs intended for teaching (circular n ° 53 / D / 64MINEDUC / IGP / ESG / IPN-HG). This is why this block has been put in place for years to bring a broad vision to teaching in Cameroonian schools with a view to perfecting the education system. This initiative cannot be implemented without objective reasons. For that, what justifies the government's attitude to look into the overhaul of programs?

#### **3.1.2. Reasons for adopting these programs**

The states general of education and the 1st national forum on technical and vocational secondary education had recommended the overhaul of education programs because of a number of data deemed unsatisfactory. In fact, since the independence of African countries, the Cameroonian government in the search for the intellectual balance of its citizens never tired of revising the programs allocated to

teaching. In History, Geography and ECM, the redesign of the programs has only taken place several times. We can have as examples:

- The History and Geography programs adopted by the conference of ministers of national education of French-speaking African and Malagasy countries in 1963 (circular n° 53 / D / 64MINEDUC / IGP / ESG / IPN-HG),
- The reorganization of the programs of October 8, 1973 (Circular n° 70 / G / 49 / MINEDUC / SG / SAP of 08/10/1973),
- The reorganization of the programs of February 16, 1979 (Circular n° 21 / D / 1964 / MIEDUC / SG / IGP / IPN-HG of February 16, 1979),
- The reorganization of the programs of November 15, 1990 (Circular n° 53 / D / 64 / MIEDUC / IGP / ESG / IPN-HG of November 15, 1990),
- The reorganization of the programs of May 28, 2001 (Order n° 3645 / D / 64 / MINEDUC / SG / IGE / IGP / SH)

These various modifications are justified by the government's concern to give students a broad awareness of their identity, to promote the strengthening of the current understanding between peoples on the one hand, national integration and the affirmation of the Cameroonian personality (Circular n° 53 / D / 64 / MIEDUC / IGP / ESG / IPN-HG of November 15, 1990) In view of these orientations, the revision of the History programs thus placed the emphasis on:

- Adaptation to the needs of the future technician;
- The agreement of a large place to the study of the History and the geographical framework of the country where the future technician will have his activity;
- The privilege of the thematic approach of the facts in History without neglecting the chronology;
- The promotion of scientific, technical, technological and economic culture;
- a concern of updating, because those existing were very old.

All of these main lines constitute the leitmotif which in 2001 would have pushed the minister in charge of secondary education with his collaborators to reorganize the programs in the different classes. After more than a decade of using these new programs above, what can we see?

### **3.1.3. History programs adopted in technical education in Cameroon between paternalism and neocolonialism**

If the independence of the French-speaking African states were to lead to the "Africanization" of personnel and educational programs, it was difficult to make a sudden break with the colonial heritage. The structures could not function without transitional aid from French technical assistance and the very content of the lessons raised questions. Indeed, the elites of African governments were often attached to the French cultural model and it seemed necessary to ensure a certain homogeneity for African students wishing to pursue their higher studies in France. Political independence therefore did not mean the end of the links between the old metropolis and the African part of its Empire. The search for a balance was negotiated in the many cooperation agreements concluded between 1960 and 1962(Manner, 2010: pp. 163-190).

In view of the analysis made by this author, it is clear that since colonization there have been very deep roots between France and its colonies as well as its associated territories. For this, measures had been taken to strengthen ties after decolonization. The Africanization of educational programs was proving difficult in a context where independence had been acquired in bloodshed and in the division of nationalist leaders. In the name of technical assistance, many agreements had been signed between France and its former possessions after 1960.

#### 4. Towards the establishment of intellectual neocolonialism in Africa and Cameroon

Long before the end of the tutelage, the French metropolis had already thought about its relationship with its colonies and associated territories after independence. This is why, as early as 1944 in Brazzaville, she had debated on the bases of a new association between her and her overseas territories. She decides to set aside the spirit of secession among Africans in exchange for their aspirations to become adults, to be involved in the management of their own affairs and the realization of their own destiny. At the same time when France granted independence to its overseas territories, an academy had been created in West Africa with at its head, a rector, structures and diplomas comparable to what existed in France. (Capelle, 1990).

The process of Africanization of education had to take place in this particular context, straddling the new national ambitions of African states and a strong centripetal tendency linking them to the French system. The search for a balance was negotiated in the numerous cooperation agreements concluded between 1960 and 1962, which were to organize the transition between the two political systems (Manner, 2010: pp. 163-190). With the establishment of this new legal framework, consultation between France and African countries was developed around a series of meetings which regularly brought together French and African representatives from 1959 (Liaison bulletin, Ministry of National Education, 1960: 3 ).

The table below mentions the various agreements signed at the end of the said meetings.

**Table 1: List of the main educational cooperation agreements between France and the African and Malagasy States (1960-1964)**

Country	Agreement dates	Primary education	Higher Education	Publication in the Official Journal, Laws and decrees.
Cameroon	November 13, 1960	X		August 9, 1961
Cameroon	August 8, 1962		X	Aug 4, 1963
Council of the Entente (Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Upper Volta, Niger)	April 24, 1961	X	X	February 6, 1962
Federation of Mali	June 22, 1960		X	July 20, 1960
Gabon	Aug 17, 1960		X	November 24, 1960
Guinea	July 29, 1961	X		April 19, 1962

Madagascar	April 2, 1960		X	July 20, 1960
Mali	February 02, 1962	X		July 10, 1964
Mauritania	June 19, 1961	X	X	February 6, 1962
Chad, Congo, Central African Republic	Aug 15, 1960	X	X	November 24, 1960
Senegal	May 15, 1964		X	January 16, 1966
Togo	July 10, 1963	X		June 10, 1964

Source: Manner, 2010: 163-190.

By observing this table closely, we realize that these legal agreements reinforced the domination of France on its former territories. Gold, the French community established by the constitution of October 4, 1958 recognized the internal autonomy of African states previously belonging to the French Union. In the field of education, each state became responsible for its own education system. Unfortunately, after their signatures, it proceeded to experiment with its intellectual neocolonialist system.

## **5. The experimentation of intellectual neocolonialism in Cameroon**

### **5.1. Educational programs glorifying metropolises**

Despite the initiatives of the Ahidjo and Biya governments to strengthen the education system in Cameroon, the finding remains almost alarming because these developments are difficult to separate from the studies of Western civilizations. However, history teaching in technical and vocational secondary classes in the country should support future technicians in:

- Become aware of your cultural identity,
- Develop a national feeling and contribute to the affirmation of the national personality,
- Create a self-awareness allowing him to situate himself in relation to others,
- Strengthen your sense of patriotism,
- Promote national integration,
- Put within his reach the true historical knowledge of his country and his continent,
- Make him know his living environment so that he can measure its potentialities and limits for his development.

On the other hand, these programs do not really fit in with the socio-cultural realities of the African continent, thus leaving wide thought to believe that the cradle of humanity is without history, as the tenors of the Hegelian conception have maintained in the past. When we take a look at the programs in our vocational high schools and technical colleges, it is clear that they participate in the complacency or the glorification of our ancient metropolises. In the second year classes, the emphasis is on the study of political, economic and social ideologies in France and England. Four lessons out of the seven in the program focus on this theme, or 71.42% of the program.

In the first year classes, five out of twelve lessons still seem to swear allegiance to these powers. These lessons focus on ideologies already studied in second and fourth year. To this must be added the study of the evolution of work, of production techniques, of the working-class condition and of the socialist international in Europe. These lessons leave enormous indelible consequences on the training of students.

At the end of his schooling, the technician learning in Cameroon is unable to express himself with ease on the facts and historical knowledge of the continent in general and of Cameroon in particular. In addition to these neocolonialist methods linked to the development of programs, French assistance or paternalism is added, which paralyzes the education system in Cameroon.

### **5.2. Technical assistance and internships granted to Cameroonians: a vast field of experimentation with neocolonialist milestones**

At the time of independence, the workings of African states were still to be built and the essential object of cultural agreements was to organize French technical assistance. It consisted of providing supplies of material and money, but one of the most urgent tasks was to provide French personnel and to train Africans. In the context of education, the needs were not the least. Inspectors and teachers were needed for the courses. Thus, many French people in the framework of bilateral cooperation remained in Cameroon to ensure management in the field of education. In doing so, they have occupied positions of great responsibility and have long dictated their points of view to the Cameroonian governing body. This is more noticeable in the programs and manuals used. While it is true that Cameroonian authors appear in the list of textbooks (E. Mveng for example), it should be noted that most of the authors used for the preparation of lessons come from the metropolis (Sentou and Carbonell, 1982). . Sometimes it is less qualified or less literate executives than the nationals who are at the base of the orientation of the education system; which leaves much to be desired in terms of performance. Sometimes it is managers who are less qualified or less literate than the nationals who are at the base of the orientation of the education system; which leaves much to be desired in terms of performance. Sometimes it is less qualified or less literate executives than the nationals who are at the base of the orientation of the education system; which leaves much to be desired in terms of performance.

**Table 2: Distribution of teachers in West Africa during the 1963-1964 school year)**

	Number of technical assistance teachers	Total number of teaching staff	Proportion of technical assistants in the teaching staff
First degree	470	27 762	1.69%
Second degree short cycle	1,149	1,518	75.69%
Second degree long cycle	1,863	2 190	85.07%
Superior	1,042	1,151	90.53%

Source: Ministry of Cooperation, General Directorate of Cultural and Technical Affairs, Activity Report, 1963-1964.

Apart from this technical assistance in matters of inspection or teaching, a few rare training seminars have been organized in France where certain Cameroonian teachers of nationalities have been invited to take part. These intellectual meetings are the places where French policies are popularized since they serve as models for the assisted states. After half a century of freedom, Africa in general and Cameroon in particular should already take commendable development initiatives. Historians should tirelessly address questions relating to the continent's historical past.

In principle, if the historian is the guardian of tradition and the guardian of time, what should we leave to future generations as historical riches in our civilizations? Should we sit back and let the recommendations of Ki Zerbo and Cheik Anta Diop sink, which called for the history of Africa to be rewritten? If the latter have led and won the fight around an existence of African history, it is high time for historians of the present century to highlight it and include it in school curricula.

## **6. The need for a new overhaul of programs**

### **6.1. The reasons**

Several motivations plead in favor of a need to revise history programs in Cameroonian technical and professional establishments. It is from the observations resulting from the socio-cultural evolution of the Cameroonian populations that these ideas of redesigning the programs were born; because those in place are considered unsatisfactory. In addition to making the glory of the old powers, the following observations emerge:

- They are repetitive (case of 4th year, 2nd and 1st year classes),
- They are very old and unsuited to the realities for a world that has become competitive at the international level,
- They do not take into account the specificities of technical education with the Cameroonian reality in a world in perpetual change,
- They are very long in some classes,
- They do not put enough emphasis on the technological and economic aspect,
- They are poorly organized, especially with regard to the study of Cameroon.

In the light of these difficulties, it is urgently desirable that the authorities take a hard look at this issue so that Cameroonian citizens can be taught their history as well as that of Africa.

### **6.2. Why teach Cameroonian and African history to Cameroonians?**

We cannot understand the current situation of the African continent without analyzing it in the light of the continent's complex legacies. This one was "born" neither with the independence some fifty years ago, nor with the colonization nearly a century before, nor with the "discovery" by the Portuguese at the end of the 15th century: the Europeans only discovered and built "their" Africa, even though they were, without knowing it, the latest arrivals in a long history of globalization. Because Africans have never lived in isolation, if only because humanity was born there (Coquéry Vidrovitch, <http://aggiornamento.hypotheses.org/qui-sommes-nous>).

According to Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, the African continent has a rich and diverse history. This one must be the subject of interminable excavations and of which the researchers must invest themselves to nourish the thought. For this, it is

important to bring it to the knowledge of the daughters and sons of the continent so that they find their real social and cultural identities. Africa has provided so much to humanity that it becomes immoral to let darkness hang over this glorious and worthy history. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch even says that from this story, the world owes a lot to Africa. This debt can only be known through the teaching of said history. For her:

- Africa was located at the crossroads of three worlds, the first of which has been mentioned since Antiquity and the second described since the tenth century by Arab travelers and geographers: the Mediterranean-Afro-Asian world, the oldest, which was sustainably supplied with gold from Western Sudan via trans-Saharan caravans. Herodotus spoke of it already in the 5th century BC, evoking the Phoenicians who practiced this "silent barter" beyond the "Pillars of Hercules".
- the Indian Ocean world, which flourished between the 5th and 15th centuries, and was nourished by gold from Zimbabwe via the major port of Sofala, which was its main outlet on the Indian Ocean. An archaeologist even exclaimed that the eastern coasts of Africa were "paved with Chinese porcelain".
- Finally the Atlantic world, the last to arrive, only in the second half of the 15th century. The Europeans did not "discover" Africa, they only discovered "their" Africa. And since at the same time they discovered the gold of the Caribbean and the silver of Mexico, it is the men they are going to traffic in Africa. What is more: it is African gold that financed Portuguese shipbuilding and the first plantations (Coquery Vidrovitch, <http://aggiornamento.hypotheses.org/qui-sommes-nous>).

The importance of this declaration is summed up in the diversity of the historical richness of the continent. Thus, it is important to tidy up the programs in Cameroon by emphasizing the major themes referring to the life of Africans in general and Cameroonians in particular. We know the greatness of the medieval African empires (Ghana, Mali, Songhai) which established their power on this international trade. Africa has therefore been a major supplier of raw materials essential to European industry. This role has been impeccable in the globalization of trade through trans-Saharan or transatlantic trade.

In the French programs, one wonders if the citizens of the metropolis also receive the teachings concerning Cameroon. Even though in 2009 the history programs in French colleges and high schools have undergone changes in this direction, it must be said that these new programs have created a lot of commotion. A French collective called "Our history is our future" has launched a campaign "to promote and defend the history of France and its teaching in public education" by fighting the integration of the teaching of African history in these French colleges and lycées. For this collective:

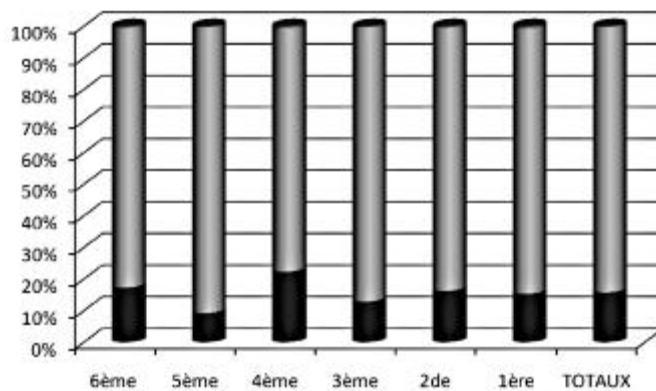
The teaching of African history provided for by the new programs (decided upon when Xavier Darcos moved to National Education) (...) would have sacrificed the teaching of Louis XIV and Napoleon for the benefit of that of the history of France. 'Africa. Historian Dimitri Casali, one of the main voices who brought the debate to the fore, assures us that the fourth year program includes the study of the slave trade (3



hours) "while the entire history of the Revolution and the Empire ships in less than 8 hours ". Likewise, Louis XIV, would henceforth be studied at the end of the fifth year program "at the end of an enormous program on which we will have lingered at length on the African civilizations of Monomotapa and Songhaï and on the Eastern slave trade" (Sionneau, When teaching, in [http:// nouvelleobs.com](http://nouvelleobs.com)).

Many French intellectuals therefore persist in teaching the history of foreigners at home because, according to them, this exercise would have a negative impact on the teaching of the history of their great figures that we continue to teach in Cameroon. It is easy to understand the intellectual terrorism carried out by French neocolonialism in the teaching of history in Africa and Cameroon. In 1962, a conference was held in which the question of inserting African historical facts into French programs was part of the agenda. At the end of the day, the analysis of the history programs recommended by the said conference clearly shows the reluctance to integrate the lessons devoted to Africa into the teaching content: this distribution does not exceed 19% for the entire secondary level (Manner, 2010: 163-190) as shown in the diagram below.

**Figure 1: Distribution of lessons devoted to Africa in the history curricula recommended by the conference of June 1962**



Source : Manner, 2010: 163-190.

Compared to 71% of lessons on Europe taught in the 2nd grade in Cameroon, only around 12% are given at the same levels in favor of Africa as a whole and not Cameroon in France. Faced with this situation, Africans owe it to themselves to defend their ideas in order to impose their dreams, their awareness-raising methods, their great autodafés where they have become all consenting slaves of European myths. They must also intensify research on the history of their continent, failing which Nicolas Sarkozy will continue to be right when he declares that:

The tragedy of Africa is that African man has not entered history enough. The African peasant, who for thousands of years has lived with the seasons, whose ideal of life is to be in harmony with nature, knows only the eternal recommencement of time punctuated by the endless repetition of the same gestures and same words. In this imagination where everything always starts anew, there is no room for the human adventure, nor for the idea of progress. In this universe where nature commands everything, man escapes the anguish of history which grips modern man but man remains motionless in the midst of an immutable order where everything seems to be

written in advance. Man never rushes into the future. It never occurs to him to leave rehearsal to invent a fate for himself. The problem of Africa and let a friend from Africa say it, there it is. The challenge for Africa is to make more history (Sarkozy, 2007).

Likewise, African teachers must realize the gravity of things and put more emphasis in their teaching on the values of Africa. The ruling political class must also stop playing the role of puppet in order to allow a real take-off in the teaching of the true history of their country. If this is not the case, we will also agree with De Jean Sevilla when he quotes Robespierre and Trotsky who, while praising the domination of metropolitan ideas, affirmed that these " managed to pass, despite these leaders (...) who had no real revolutionary consciousness and who gave themselves ridiculous feelings to furnish their mediocre moral life without real adventure " (Sevilla, 2004: 3).. This act aims to make a clean sweep of the African past and illuminate that of metropolitan France. This is why we qualify it with Sevilla as intellectual terrorism. Moreover, he himself in his paragraphs affirms that:

In 1950, the elites extolled Stalin. In 1960, they ensured that decolonization would bring happiness overseas. In 1965, they ignited for Mao or Castro... For fifty years, the minds refractory to this discourse were discredited, and the facts which contradicted the dominant ideology were ignored. This is intellectual terrorism (Sevilla, 2004: 3).

Teaching African history to Africans would make it possible to break with the scraps of knowledge of this history in the classrooms which boils down to the slave trade and colonization. These major themes would also make it possible to fight gently and with solid arguments against prejudice and racism.

## **7. Conclusion**

The technical and commercial secondary classes in Cameroon, in the light of this study, truly constitute the bases for the materialization of neocolonialism and intellectual terrorism. These programs which are taught there only perpetuate the domination of the old metropolises while the country and Africa as a whole have a very rich and unknown history. Programming this knowledge for the benefit of students would be welcome for the advancement of the continent. The world is constantly changing, which is why each block of the globe must move to carve out a place of choice for itself in the concert of the great nations. This is undoubtedly what prompted Camille Niaufre on the subject of the teaching of African history to think that:

The revaluation of the history of ancient Africa in school curricula appears to be the logical mirror of the evolution of the world, less European-centered and more multipolar. But while the inclusion of the study of "Han China at its peak" or "Classical India in the fourth and fifth centuries" in the sixth grade program, responding to the same logic, has done little. waves, the introduction of the study of the great African empires still arouses strong reactions. The oblivion into which they fell in the collective culture is deep, and the representations inherited from centuries of domination are still powerful (Niaufre, in [http: // wordpress.com/about-these-ads/](http://wordpress.com/about-these-ads/))

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