

EDUCATION IN THE COLONIAL ERA

The Phelps-Stokes Commission

26/03/2024

-Stream A-

THE PHELPS-STOKES COMMISSION

Origins:

- The Commission had its origin in the **Phelps-Stokes fund**.
- The fund was set up in New York under the will of Miss Caroline Phelps-Stokes to **further the education of the negroes both in the USA and Africa**.
- The fund trustees had **earlier sent an education commission to West, South & Equatorial Africa in 1920-21** to investigate challenges in education delivery.
- The commission's report **generated a great deal of interest**.

Cont...

□Context:

- ✓ Representatives of protestant Churches met in Edinburgh in 1910.
- ✓ They looked at matters of common interest-including educational problems in Africa.
- ✓ International Missionary Council established, with J.H. Oldham appointed as Secretary.
- ✓ Oldham urged the Colonial Office to formulate a clear-cut policy on education.
- ✓ By mutual understanding, it was decided that the trustees of the Phelps-Stokes fund be invited to undertake an education survey.
- ✓ This time in East and Central Africa.
- ✓ In November 1923, a new Commission was authorised.
- ✓ It was invited to Central Africa by the British government following complaints from missionary bodies regarding the negative attitudes of the BSA Co. towards education.

Cont...

Aims

□ The Commission was charged with a **three-fold task**:

- (i). To **investigate the educational needs** of the people in the light of their religious, social, hygienic & economic conditions;
- (ii). To **ascertain the extent** to which their needs were being met;
- (iii). To **assist in the formulation of plans** to meet the educational needs of the natives.

Phelps-Stokes Commission Cont...

Composition:

□ Composed of **eight members**.

✓ Dr. James Aggrey, an educationist from Gold Coast;

✓ Dr. J.H. Dillard (USA), president of the Jeans fund;

✓ Dr. H.L. Shautz, Agriculturist & Botanist from the USA;

✓ Rev. Garfield Williams, Education Secretary of the Church Missionary Society;

✓ Maj. Hanns Vischev, Secretary of the Colonial Office Advisory Committee on Native education in tropical Africa;

✓ James Dougall from Scotland;

✓ C.T. Loram of South Africa;

✓ **Dr. Thomas Jesse Johns, Chairman of the Commission.**

Phelps-Stokes Commission Cont...

□ Recommendations

✓ Following meetings with the **missionaries, government officials and traditional leaders**, the commission came up with a number of recommendations:

1. Education must be adapted to the conditions and needs of society (Concept of Adaptation);

✓ It must be a **preparation for life;**

✓ And **life for an African meant life in the village;**

✓ **Chief aim of education therefore, is to raise the standard of living among the village community;**

✓ Concentration should be on **hygiene and health;**

✓ Encouragement of **agricultural development;**

Phelps-Stokes Commission Cont...

- ✓ The teaching of industrial skills;
- ✓ Raise the status of women and girls.
- ✓ Developing character through religious training and physical recreation.

Recommendations Cont...

2. Government to appoint a Director of Native Education- to coordinate and unify the educational activities of the missionary societies.
3. An Advisory Committee to be appointed with representatives of the government, the missions and the settlers.
4. Government to subsidize the educational work of the missions.

Phelps- Stokes Commission Cont...

5. Aid for the maintenance of European missionaries to supervise the educational work of their mission stations.
6. Financial provision to be made for teacher training and the employment of visiting teachers.
7. An institution needed to be established to provide higher education to those who could profit from it

☐ Comment on the Concept of Adaptation

- ✓ Constituted the education policy during the colonial period.
- ✓ Created utilitarian and agriculture-based education system.
- ✓ Contributed to increased illiteracy.
- ✓ Contributed to the slow development of secondary and tertiary education.

Phelps-Stokes Commission cont...

Conclusion

- ❑ The recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes commission to a greater extent contributed to the formation and articulation of policy on organisation and administration of education provision in British Colonial Africa after 1924
- ❑ They (recommendations) also determined the nature and content of the curriculum, teacher and methodology of the education which was provided from 1924 to 1953

References

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