

The Contemporary Situation as to Population Education

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INTRODUCTION :

COLONIAL DEPENDENCE AND THE ADVENT OF MALTHUSIANISM

To understand the present situation of African population education, we must go back to the period of colonial dependence. As we know, colonization, with its political subordination, involved the violent incorporation of Africa into the capitalist system of production with its economic, social and cultural consequences. In the new towns of administrative or industrial type, new social classes emerged. In the field of law and *mores*, the system of monogynous marriage and the nuclear family required by the industrial economy was imposed. Christianity justifies the nature and structure of the nuclear family by theological argument; Malthusianism introduces the economic argument to justify small families.

This evolution had remarkable effects in two respects. With regard to demography, and although overall figures are lacking, it meant depopulation. This depopulation was the result of many factors : wars of conquest, forced labour, wars between colonial powers, and within the society, prolonged celibacy of young men and accumulation of wives by rich men and old men as a result of the monetization of the dowry (brideprice).

A local example taken from colonial history (1) bears witness to this. For French Equatorial Africa :

in 1900 : population	15 000 000
in 1913 : population	9/10 000 000
in 1914 : population	4 950 000
in 1921 : population	2 860 868
In the French Congo (Oubangui-Chari, Moyen-Congo, Gabon)	
in 1911 : (31 Dec)	4 280 000
in 1921	1 577 565

Rate of regression : 63 %.

(*) Paper presented to UNESCO — Meeting on Population Education and Educational Reform in Africa, 30 August - 4 September 1976, Dakar. Translated from the French. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author's alone and not necessarily those of UNESCO.

The effort made by the health centres (very few in number) located in the administrative capitals, and also with a limited number of beds, doctors and resources, and serving mainly the Europeans and « evolved » Africans, proved to be negligible (2).

With respect to ideology, two different conceptions of life and of man emerged : the indigenous conception adhered to by the peasants and workers, and the imported conception. From these stemmed two educational systems : one indigenous, more or less democratic, destined for the mass of the people, and the other, elitist, destined for a minority of town-wellers and rich people, but dominant.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITUATION

These are : breaks in methodology, sociological contradictions, unsuitable pedagogy and its consequences.

1. *The demographic bases : relative increase and underpopulation.* (3).

Owing to its high fertility and a rate of natural increase estimated at 2.5 % for the continent as a whole, and also thanks to the mass health drive by the independent States and its effects (lower infant mortality and higher expectation of life at birth), the population of Africa is increasing steadily. In 1971 it was estimated at 372,331,000, distributed as follows :

	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>Density per km²</i>
West Africa	117,269,000	19.1
North Africa	87,646,000	10.3
East Africa	81,012,000	15.9
Southern Africa	43,279,000	8.5
Central Africa ..	43,125,000	8.0

According to projections of the mean variants, the population may rise to 550,618,000 in 1985 and, by the end of the century, to over 800 million.

The major structural feature of the present population, as throughout the Third World, is its youth (— 15 years : 43 % ; 15-59 years : 53 % ; + 60 years : 4 %).

In this demographic stock, West Africa, with the highest fertility, birth rate (52 per 1000) and density, is the most highly populated sub-region of the continent. However, this density, though it exceeds that of North America (11/km²) and that of Latin America (14/km²), is not as high as that of Western Europe (94) and of Asia (76).

Yet although the population pressure is still strong in certain areas (Nile valley in Egypt, Iboland in Nigeria, Burundi (134/km²) and Rwanda (145/km²), the African population is on the whole of low density in relation to the total area of the continent (12/km² in 1971), in relation to the area of arable land, and to the identified

mineral reserves. As the Senegalese demographer Landing Savané says, « there is no immediate danger of Africa being over-populated » (4).

2. *The breaks in methodology*

Tradition would suggest a global approach to the population question and an integrated education. *L'essai sur la problématique philosophique dans l'Afrique actuelle* by Marcien Towa (Yaoundé) (5) reveals the intellectual crisis from which Africans have not yet emerged. As Nkrumah's book *Consciencism* (6) shows, they are trying to reformulate philosophies of man's global development integrating ideology, politics, economics, aesthetics and ethics. This is because, in general, Africa is still living with unsuitable educational systems inherited from the colonial system in which theory is divorced from practice, and training/education is divorced from economic life and employment. The Declaration of the Conference of African Ministers of Education, which met in Lagos from 27 January to 4 February 1976, takes note of this methodological deficiency and suggests a remedy (7).

3. *The sociological contradictions*

The first contradiction is that between the populationist aspirations of the mass of African peoples for whom life is bound up with fertility, and the governments' population policies. The conclusions of two studies made in West Africa agree that these aspirations are a fact.

The first study is that of the African Professor P.O. Olusanya of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Ibadan, Western Nigeria, on differences in fertility in relation to the educational factor (8). A questionnaire was circulated in June 1966 to the population of two districts of the town of Ibadan : Sango and Bodija. The families consist of 793 males and 790 females, mostly of Yoruba origin (60 % as against 16 % Edo, 9 % Ibo, etc.) and mainly Christian (Protestants : 25 % ; Catholics : 19.8 % ; Moslems : 25%), a majority being school-educated (71 % of the heads of families, men : 26 % and 2 women) with a minority of workers, farmers and artisans. Of this population, 263 women were interviewed, 155 in Sango and 108 in Bodija.

An overwhelming majority of these women expect the population of the Nigerian nation to increase.

School education	Less than now	Same as now	More than now	Don't know
None (G1)	2,7	0,9	69,9	26,6
Primary & Modern (II) ..	4,1	—	87,8	8,1
Secondary (III)	4,6	—	95,4	
University (IV)	—	—	100	
All groups	3,4	0,4	82,5	13,7

In the view of 40 % of university women, there is nothing wrong with the couple having a large family if it has the means to bring up the children. The economic difficulty is the major reason given by 92% of the women to justify legally the regulation of family size. While the majority of the women approve the establishment of a family planning centre in Ibadan (GI : 29,1 : GII : 56,9 : GIII : 94,8 All G : 56,4), only a minority has knowledge of birth control methods : 2.7% of group I (3 out of 112), 12.2% of group II (9 out of 74), 42.1% of group III (32 out of 76), and only a tiny fraction actually use them (17 out of 44). Contraception is associated with the idea of a more or less immoral action. In short, apart from divergences of view due to education (family size, relation to the standard of living, children), this Ibadan survey reveals a universal attachment to the ability to procreate, and — paradoxically — little tendency for educated women to practise contraception and a tendency to have large families which the author regards as a temporary phenomenon.

The second study, by the American professor Barbara G. Lewis, of Rutgers University, New-Brunswick (New Jersey, USA) pursues the same goal as the previous study, dealing with *fertility, employment and the status of women in town.* (9)

The survey by questionnaire conducted in Abidjan in 1973-74 covered 750 women between 20 and 44 years old, from three important ethnic groups (Bété, Baoulé, Malinké), differentiated as to their residence (one residential district : Cocody, one housing estate : Treichville), as to their educational level, their childbirth history, their husband's occupation and his socio-economic status.

The predominant attitude among the Ivory Coast women interviewed is favourable to large families, as is shown in the table below.

No education or Primary education	Secondary or post-secondary technical education
No. of children wanted	No. of children wanted

	0 — 4	5 +	Total	— 4	5 +	Total
Communication with husband	(68)	(299)	(367)	(43)	(44)	(87)
	18,5	81,5	88,2	49,4	50,6	39,15
	86,1	88,7		38,4	40,7	
Yes	(11)	(38)	(49)	(69)	(64)	(133)
	22,4	77,6	11,8	51,9	48,1	60, 5
	13,9	11,3		61,6	59,3	
Total	(79)	(337)	(416)	(112)	(108)	(220)
	19,0	81,0	100,0	50,9	49,1	100,0

Here, the use of modern contraception «had no quantitative effect on family size ». The author concludes : « The ability to procreate and pride in having a large family are still strong and widespread values. In our view, any official campaign in favour of smaller families would offend many women, and would probably not induce much change in behaviour. This kind of official position, justified on the grounds of abstract welfare (we are not taking a stand as to whether this welfare exists) would directly conflict with the personal and social values favouring a high level of fertility.

People would lose confidence in the public health services and the problem of birth control and the use of contraception, hitherto a family and personal matter, would become a problem of public ethics. Most of those interviewed in our sample are not interested in contraception because the woman « wants more children » ; very few say they disapprove of contraception because it is against God or against nature. Whatever the aims government policy, it would not seem desirable to transform this pronatalism into a generalized opposition to birth control ». (10).

The same fundamental aspiration is found among the twenty-eight ethnic groups which were surveyed by Angela Molnos : (11) « In East Africa the more meaningful question is : why did people in the past, and partly even to-day, want to have as many children as possible ? In nearly all societies covered by this survey, there was a pervasive sentiment that it was good to have a numerous progeny. The general and diffuse motives accompanying this sentiment were that many children meant wealth, prestige and the blessings of God and ancestors.

The ideal of fertility was firmly impressed into the traditional images of the « proper man » and « proper woman » in East Africa. Barrenness, sterility or limited fertility were socially considered humiliating conditions and misfortunes. Conversely, children constituted the most important visible signs of success and achievement. Offspring were essential to ensure a man's social position and to confer on him prestige and influence within his lineage and the community at large. Many children were also closely associated with virility, proud signs of male potency. Likewise for a woman, the regular birth of children was indispensable to ensure her status ; indeed, children were the justification of her very existence. All women wished to avoid the pitiable condition of being a childless or « subfertile » wife.

The more precise reasons for wanting many children... were : to continue the lineage and commemorate the ancestral spirits ; to acquire social power ; as labour force ; for physical protection of property ; as security in old-age ; also the need to achieve a definite sex among children strengthened the desire for more offspring ».

Faced with this general aspiration of the people, the national States have divergent population policies. Some, accentuating the cleavage which occurred during the colonial period, have officialized

« birth control ». The choice is justified by the argument that population growth is an obstacle, if not the main obstacle, to economic development. That is Ghana's position. Other States, such as Gabon, have officially returned to populationism. For them, population growth is strength, it is a factor of development.

The second contradiction is between the ideologies and practices of the different social classes. Ideologically, as we said, the emerging bourgeoisies defend the Malthusianism required by the industrial economy. The above-mentioned surveys indicate that the educated people from secondary and technical schools and universities want a reduction in the number of their children and in the size of their families. But the actual facts bring out two anomalies in relation to this dream : these literate people have many more children than is expected, and while they are able to maintain these children physically, they do not usually manage to give them the necessary education. « Although the educated women say that they want a small family », writes B.C. Lewis, « the actual size of their families contradicts their statement. It is possible that despite new attitudes, the educated women have not taken any effective steps to change the size of their family. It also seems, taking into account a late first pregnancy, that at the end of their studies they were more fertile — or more precisely that they gave birth to more children than the less educated women ». (12)

On the other hand, the situation of the peasants and workers, which is anti-Malthusian from the ideological point of view, is more tragic : they have many children and they have difficulty both in looking after them and in giving them an education.

4. The inadequacy of present teaching systems for the needs of development.

For the development of authentically African, modern and democratic nations, as the States want, the present facts of education are not adequate either on the theoretical or practical level.

As to theory, the measures usually classified today under the concept of population education — «sex education », « family planning », « family welfare » etc. — do not fully correspond to the concept. They consist rather of information and technology mainly concerning the adjustment of the mechanics of procreation. There is a need to include socio-demographic information, socio-juridical information, health education, etc... As to practice, educational action proves inadequate either because of its narrow scope, or its inconsistency, or its alien origin.

This narrowness mainly characterizes traditional education. Firstly, subsistence farming, which was the economic finality of populationism, is no longer adapted to the needs of growth in the context of the market economy. Africa, which has to exchange the wealth of

its sub-soil and the products of its agriculture for foreign exchange, machinery and consumer goods, knows that no nation today can satisfy all its economic and socio-cultural needs by its own production alone, especially if it is still economically dependent and under-industrialized. Secondly, the eugenics of yesterday contradicts the principles of equality and the right to life which inspire the modern democracies. Here and there, certain institutes have a vocation for rehabilitating all kinds of crippled and disabled people. Thirdly, most of the social institutions which ensured the expansion and transmission of that education have broken up. The ethnic groups have lost their political and cultural autonomy ; the age grades have been replaced or supplemented by economic associations (cooperatives and mutual aid societies), occupational associations (trade unions), or cultural associations (clubs) ; the lineage has shrunk and has become defunctionalized in favour of party cells (political function), denominational groups (religious function) the schools (educational function) and households (economic function). Fourthly, this traditional education implies a « magical » view of techniques and tools which, because they are poorly developed, justify an authoritarian type of training when young people are initiated into them. But progress and the efficiency of the techniques and tools of experimental science make possible a critical and increasingly democratic type of teaching.

The first feature of modern education is a certain inconsistency between the two structures : family and school. What is happening is that, apart from the elements of traditional education held by the mothers, and the ethics of islamic or christian origin whose effects appear after a certain age and are more or less limited in relation to school education, the families, in which parental authority and that of the older people in general has already deteriorated to some extent, leave it to school education and books to teach about the major aspects of life.

But the educational institution to which the African family entrusts this function lacks an integrated curriculum which would impart to young people of the same age an education adapted to coping with the problems of sex life, marriage, procreation, production, family health, political life, and death, in a development context. The primary schools, which only reach a fraction of the school-age population, do not usually add to literary learning (speech and language) either a good theoretical and practical mastery of the environment or the learning of technical skills which would ensure integration into the productive system.

Secondary education accentuates the defects of the primary school : dichotomy between literary training and economic training, between theoretical training and preparation for life, ignorance of the African vision of life, ignorance of the laws and institutions relating to marriage, ignorance of matters such as sexual physiology, psychology and family anthropology health etc... It is not until the specialized

types of training (schools for male nurses or midwives, technical high school) that some part or other of this education can be received.

It is outside the formal school institution that systematic educational measures with a wide impact are developed. The first is what is called *health education* for which the Ministries of Health are responsible. It is generally a type of mass education for the urban and rural populations. It is positive, because it institutes new habits of mother and child welfare. Whereas this form of modern education is already integrated into African civilization, its *mores* and its world outlook, this is not the case with modern birth control or family planning or the contraceptive techniques and products which go with it.

Inspired by a Malthusianist ideology, birth control was first imposed from an essentially negative angle as an external strategy for reducing the African population. As such, it was looked on as a form of imperialism and genocide which has been denounced by many African nationalists (Dr. Ondaïe ; Mme Marie Angélique Savané) (13). In practice, Africans use the new techniques not to avoid pregnancies, but to space the births, which will in the long run, at national level, merely reduce the rate of population increase. Moreover, being designed in a purely economic and technological spirit, this method is not yet integrated into the *mores* and ideology of the mass of African peoples. This explains its non use by a number of educated women (Nigeria) or its clandestine use by many women and girls. Lastly, at their present cost, these techniques and products are still reserved for an elite, the urban women and, among them, for socially privileged women, i.e. rich and/or educated.

Yet the most powerful means of training, outside the school, particularly for the young, are the mass media. For the subject we are concerned with, they are usually substitutes for the school of today rather than additions to it. Apart from the radio and television broadcasting systems, and apart from the daily newspapers and certain sport and cultural journals, most of the mass media (cinema, women's magazines, detective novels and romantic noveles) are of typically *alien origin*. In the absence of thorough studies of these various elements, we will mention the cinema, a decisively influential medium, « living image of a whole world outlook » (M.A. Savané). In many French-speaking nations, at least in West Africa, its foreignness is first of all socio-cultural. The cinema halls belong to European (mainly French) companies and Arab companies (mainly Lebanese and Syrian). Culturally speaking, the films are an extension of advanced industrial and bourgeois civilization which is consistent with the economic system which the centre of world capitalism is developing in the nations of the periphery. The content of most of these films disseminates a certain moral ideology which is antagonistic to the African outlook on life. Whether the films come from Europe, North America or Asia (India and Japan), three themes dominate this ideology : individualism

(which goes together with a certain heroism, sexual perversion, passionate love, hedonism, the search for artificial paradises), money (together with the quest for profit and luxury by means of trickery, theft, lies and crime) and violence (which implies domination, destruction and death by arms and war). These films erode the principles of communal and natalist ethics and attempt to turn African youth away from them.

5. *The social consequences*

Imported social consequences stem from this maladjustment of education to the needs of development. There are first the various forms of social failure : school dropouts, rural-urban migration, prostitution, under-employment of the population with increased unemployment, diseases of social origin with the increase in delinquents, mentally sick, drug-takers and alcoholics, and the crisis of the family with the large number of divorces. Then there are the forms of population destruction : genocides, which are the effects either of external domination (colonial wars of the Angola type) or of internal segregation (Sharpeville and Soweto), homicides and suicides the number of which has risen in Africa, particularly in the towns. In the absence of general statistical data for Africa, here is a sample of these destruction, in the colonial period, among some African ethnic groups with their frequency compared to that of the other continents (Paul Bohannan : *African Homicide and Suicide*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1960).

a) *The numbers*

Ethnic groups	Tiv (Nigeria)	Busoga (Uganda)	Kavirondo (Kenya)	Juluo (Kenya)
Population	800 000 (1953)	500 000 (1900)	617 641	—
Period considered	1931-49	1952-54	1949-54	1949-54
<i>Homicides</i>	122	100	114	46
Women	20 %	(1947-54)	—	—
Men	80 %	—	—	—
<i>Suicides</i>	—	100	158	220
		(1951-54)		
Women	—	69 %	49 %	41 %
Men	—	31 %	51 %	59 %

b) *Comparative frequency per 100,000 inhabitants between the Various continents*

<i>HOMICIDE :</i>			<i>SUICIDE :</i>		
Chile	(1953)	8,2	Japan	(1953)	20,5
Ceylon	(1954)	5,2	England	(1953)	10,8
United States	(1953)	4,8	United States	(1953)	10,1
<i>Busoga</i>	(1952-54)	4,0	Ceylon	(1954)	8,0
Japan	(1953)	2,0	<i>Busoga</i>	(1952-54)	7,0
Italy	(1953)	1,8	Italy	(1953)	6,6
England and Wales	(1953)	0,6	Chile	(1953)	4,4

Conclusion

In order for an African education to flourish that will be conducive to socially adjusted behaviour with regard to sex life, marriage, reproduction, production, health and culture, there is one first necessary condition, and that is the establishment in the African Nations, if they do not yet exist, of new, modern, living and democratic educational systems, of which so-called « population education » is only one aspect or one perspective.

The novelty of these lies in a dual break : a break with the imported models whose application constitutes an alienation and an obstacle to development. The modern character of these new systems will be due to general scientific information and especially to biological, demographic, economic, legal, psychological, psycho-sociological and anthropological information relating to Africa. In particular they will stress, in scientific terms, on the basis of African intuitions, the socio-cultural factors of individual and collective health and the importance of an environmental culture for the life of the people. To be truly living, these educational systems must take the needs of the people as the starting-point, and must be linked to economic life, open to the needs of employment, so that education can become what it was in the past, a factor of production and of human health. Lastly, if these systems become living not for a minority or an elite, but for the mass of the people as they were traditionally then their democratic nature will cease to be theoretical, it will become real. That is the condition as regards method.

The second condition for the development of this African education is of a sociological nature. This education must take into account the fundamental « populationist » aspiration which the majority of Africans are expressing today, and the practical arrangements they seek in order to achieve this aspiration.

But, again from a sociological point of view, we know that educational systems are also political institutions, whose design requires an ideological choice and the availability of financial resources. In the last analysis, it is the orientation which the States or the parties that govern them are going to give to the African nations, to their economies and to their cultures, and the resources they devote to the implementation of the projects, which constitutes the third condition for the success of this education.

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 - (2) SURET-Canale, *op. cit.*, p. 516.
 - (3) Colloque sur la population en Afrique francophone, centrale et occidentale, Abidjan, 27-29 June 1973.
 - (4) Population et développement, in *Famille et développement*, n° 3, July 1975, C.R.D.I., Dakar.
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 - (14) SAVANE : *op. cit.*