

Impediments to the Development of Female Education in British Southern Cameroons, 1922 - 1961

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Abstract: *The importance of female education in a society cannot be underestimated. It leads to the development of healthier and more empowered children who will eventually become the leaders of their communities. From 1922 to 1961, British colonial administration was mandated by the League of Nations and later on by the United Nations Organisation to develop western education in British Southern Cameroons with a view to prepare the citizens to be politically, economically and socially able to manage their affairs at independence. The territory was administered as part of the British protectorate of Nigeria and was not given any close attention to its educational development in general and female education was particularly neglected. At independence in 1961, the percentage of educated people was insignificant and the impact of education on female population was very deficient. Despite the fact that education was neglected generally in the British Southern Cameroons, the females were affected the most. The objective of this paper is to examine the factors that militated against parents sending their girl children massively to school. The paper seeks to illuminate on the hurdles faced by the females in the pursuit of western education in the territory during the period under review. Based on archival, oral and secondary sources, this article intends to demonstrate that female education was neglected by the administering authorities and other related factors.*

Key Words: *Challenges, Female, Western Education, British Cameroons.*

I. Introduction

“If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation)” This maxim came to the lime light through Dr. James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey, a renowned Ghanaian educator and sociologist in his speech campaigning for the inclusion of women in the Achimota College in Ghana.¹ It bears the fundamental belief that education is beneficial to all and incorporate the notion that when women are educated, the family and the nation enjoy the benefits widely. However, in recent decades, the maxim has gained further momentum in education and development discourses, as it has frequently been supported by activists advocating for an end to gender inequality.² As a result, female education has gained grounds in recent times but it was not a subject of interest before and particularly during the British rule in Cameroon. During the colonial era, female education faced many challenges that accounted for the gender gap that existed in education in Southern Cameroons between 1922 and 1961.

Factors that perturbed female education from gaining the attention it deserved in Southern Cameroons included local beliefs, cultural practices and attitudes to gender roles such as whether education improved or reduced a girl’s chance of marriage undoubtedly held girls back from school.³ Cultural resistance was not always consistent in all communities in Southern Cameroons and varied in specific parts of the territory and in some ethnic groups. Expectations about gender roles differed at different stages of the life cycle of the territory.

The safety of the girls to and from school was of major concern to their parents, which became an important factor that perturbed female education in the British Southern Cameroons.⁴ The parents felt that schools were unsafe or that the journey to school was perilous and too far from home especially secondary

¹ Serena Suen, “The Education of Women as a Tool in Development: Challenging the African Maxim”, *Hydra Interdisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, No 2,(2013), 10.

² Ibid.

³ Interview with Mary Nsang, retired teacher, Fundong,aged 75, 22/04/2021.

⁴ Sb/a/1929/6, The Education in Africa and other parts of Nigeria 1929, 4.

schools. Before 1956, there were no secondary schools in Southern Cameroons. The girls were therefore obliged to attend secondary schools in Nigeria.⁵ The Roman Catholic Mission authorities were conscious of this fact and always made sure the safety of their female students was of utmost importance. For example, in 1948, Miss Rebecca Bongka had to travel on foot to Nigeria to further her education.⁶ Rev Father Nabben made travel arrangements for her including transport, placing her under the care of the Reverend Fathers at the various stations en route.

The Divisional Officer pointed out that unprotected girls could not with safety trek from Mamfe to Abakaliki in Nigeria, where there was no motor transport.⁷ Some parents thought that sending their girls to Nigeria was putting them at risk of sexual assault or other forms of violence. Too often, their feelings were right on target. For example, in 1953, two of the three girls who gained scholarships to study at the Holy Rosary Collage Onitsha were refused admission but they carried no letter explaining the reasons for this nor the mission sending any related information by post. These girls were unfortunately robbed of their property on their way back. As explained by the acting resident Bamenda, it was miraculous that two of the girls of under 14 years of age ever reached home safely. One of the girls, Elizabeth Njenku was ill and admitted in hospital in Onitsha.⁸ According to the Roman Catholic Fathers, these girls' parents were in great distress over the treatment accorded to them.⁹ Fear of the unknown therefore was a big challenge that parents had to deal with before sending their girl children to school.

Distance from home to school was another barrier to female education.¹⁰ Insufficient educational infrastructure was one of the challenges faced by female students from gaining education in Southern Cameroons. Schools were very few and far apart from each other. In most cases, the nearest schools from settlement areas needed about three hours of trekking before getting to school and same distance to cover from school to their homes. Simon Awasum Soh in describing the scary journey from Southern Cameroons to Nigeria for educational purposes had this to say;

We trekked through footpaths, undulating hills and valleys, crossing dangerous streams and rivers. Not many students could even afford to wear shoes. A majority of us wore what was called Dschang shoes. Shoes made from used motor tyres. They were durable. Those of us from Bamenda trekked 7 days and those from Kumbo nine days and those from Nkambe 11 days. Generally ... only those with tenacity and hardworking survived. We suffered.... Even discipline was severe and draconian. In our class we were about 76 and we graduated about 16. It was a hell of a time for many of us. We saw the seven colours of the rainbow of suffering.¹¹

The tedious and dangerous journey to and from Nigeria to pursue Secondary education caused many girls not to gain secondary education in Southern Cameroons.¹² From Awasom's account on their journey to Nigeria, very few girls could withstand the trauma of the journey, thereby widening gender gap in schools because only few girls who could venture the journey undertook such difficult journey to Nigeria for educational purpose.

In the British Southern Cameroons, the poor staffing situation in general and inadequate female teachers to be specific was another reason for poor female enrolment in schools. The presence of few female primary school teachers was a real problem to girls' enrolment in school. Parents were sometimes very reluctant to send their daughters to school if there were no female teachers to teach and take care of their girls. These parents were scared that male teachers might impregnate their girls, as was the case with some girls who were sexually exploited by their male teachers.¹³ Most of the girls in primary school were mature girls who became

⁵ Interview with Lucy Mesode Epie, Reverend Sister on retirement and she was of the pioneer batch of St. Francis Collage Kumba, St. Francis Collage Campus, aged 95, June 1,2021.

⁶ Sb/a/1947/1, Training of Women Teachers 1947,15.

⁷ Sb/a/1947/1,15.

⁸ Sb/a/1947/1,15.

⁹ Joseph Nfi, *Nigerians on Mission in the British Southern Cameroons*,81.

Sb/a/1947/1,177.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Roland Ndille, "The Perils of Secondary Education for British Southern Cameroons in Colonial Nigeria 1922-1962: Reading Meaning in the Testimonies of our Grand Fathers", *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, (2018),No. 11, 40.

¹² Joseph Nfi, *Nigerians on Mission in the British Southern Cameroons*,78.

¹³ Interview with Ngong Helen Nain, farmer, Njinikom, aged 86, 04/09/2020.

tools for sexual exploitation for male teachers, reason why one of the resolutions passed in November 1945 School Committee meeting was in view of the establishment of a government college at Enugu for the women of the Eastern province which included the British Southern Cameroons. Then, for the particular urgent need in the Eastern province which for trained women teachers, this subcommittee strongly urged the Education Department to allocate adequate places to Cameroons women students in order that the various educational bodies concerned could carry out the proposal for the education of girls and women.¹⁴ This point supported the fact that one of the reasons why fewer girls were enrolled in schools was the fact that there were fewer female teachers in those schools, reason why there was the need to train more female teachers as resolved by the school committee way back in 1945.¹⁵

Another challenge faced by female education during the British rule in the Cameroons was the fact that the girls and women themselves did not want to attend schools or what they referred to as “Learning Book”.¹⁶ The girls rather preferred to carry out activities that would provide them with more food. They were conscious of the infertility of their soil and therefore requested help to make their soil more productive. In other words, they wanted to be taught the improved methods of farming which would enable them enjoy high productivity.¹⁷ These girls and women also wanted the kind of education that will enable them to learn better ways of cooking and preparing their traditional food. They equally wanted lessons on how to care for the children or baby craft.¹⁸ This therefore was a major challenge because the girls had no idea of the benefits of western education and wanted to maintain the *status quo* thereby limiting the number of girls who attended schools.

These girls were expected to spend their lives in looking after the home and children and working in the fields to be able to contribute to the wellbeing of the family rather than “wasting time” going to school.¹⁹ Most of the fortunate girls who were allowed to attend school ended at the primary level. In 1953, only two girls from the Roman Catholic Mission Girls’ school, Shisong, Bansa passed the Entrance Examination to Cornelia Connelly Collage (girls) R.C.M. Oyo. As there were no other competitors, these two candidates were accepted. They were Teresia M. Sendze and Angela Asheri.²⁰ This is an indication that parents were not well informed on the importance of the education of the girl child, so they preferred giving the girl children out for marriage. Education for these parents was aimed at preparing their girls for marriage and raising children, so western education was not necessary. This factor therefore accounted for low enrolment of girls in schools.

The British failed to do adequate sensitization to the Southern Cameroonian parents to make their girls understand the fact that education or “book” could make the girls more useful to themselves and their communities. This explains why in the Trusteeship Drafting Committee Report on the Condition in the Cameroons under the British Administration, the council urged the administering Authority to continue its efforts to improve school attendance and to stimulate interest in education and also to continue its study into the causes of the apathy in schooling and the measures necessary to improve on it.²¹ Dr. Kaberry, the lady anthropologist encouraged the government to go ahead and give consideration to the girls’ wish of making them better wives and mothers than to encourage them to see education in a wider perspective since all the needs of the girls were geared towards making them better farmers, better housewives and better mothers. That was their interest, no more no less.²² The British however did not encourage female education but rather limited it to Domestic Science because they still considered the place of the woman to be the kitchen.

Corporal punishment was entrenched in the school systems in Southern Cameroons. It was often connected to poverty, for example in response to non-payment of fees and lack of uniform or books. Parents and girls complained about this recurrent practice but powerless to stop it. Parents who did not want their girls to suffer these humiliations preferred keeping them at home than sending them to school. This fear mostly came from parents of the royal families who saw teachers as slaves who for no reason could assign princesses to work for them or beat them up since corporal punishment was very common during the period under review. These parents saw the school as a place of maltreatment and suffering. They preferred sending stubborn boy children

¹⁴ NW/SC/a. 1928/2, School Committee: General Correspondence Relating To, 273.

¹⁵ NW/SC/a. 1928/2,273.

¹⁶ Sb/b/1932/4, Education in the Cameroon Province: Policy,7.

¹⁷ NW/SC/a.1928/2, School Committee: General Correspondence Relating to,2.

¹⁸ NW/SC/a.1928/2,2.

¹⁹ Report by Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons Under United Nations Trusteeship for the year 1952,London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1954.105.

²⁰ NW/SC/a. 1950/1, Application for Scholarships,216.

²¹ NW/Cc/1955/1, Trusteeship Council Drafting Committee Report on Condition in Cameroons Under British Administration,25.

²² 20, Monthly Reports of Basel Mission Primary Schools.

to school so that they would be corrected in school with the use of the cane.²³ To avoid corporal punishment or other harsh treatment in school, parents preferred keeping their girls at home and giving them lessons in indigenous education. This limited the number of girls enrolled in schools.

Violence in school was another factor for poor girls' enrolment in schools. In situations where parents sent both boy and girl children to school, they most often started paying fees of the boys and providing their school needs before that of the girls thereby exposing the girls to corporal punishment, which stood as a hindrance to girls enrolling in schools during the British rule in Cameroon.²⁴ Violence in school took many forms, including corporal punishment, verbally abusive comments, gender violence, bullying (peer violence), and gang-related brutality.²⁵ Teachers perpetrated some of these forms of violence and other school personnel, sometimes children, and young people themselves were the perpetrators. The physical location of a restroom or a playground was not in itself necessarily dangerous; rather, it was the social environment of the school that turned these physical spaces into sites of violence against the girls.²⁶ Though it was a usual occurrence, the Basel mission indicated in their circular letters that the worse crime that could be committed in schools was the crime of a male teacher seducing female pupils. The Male teachers were cautioned never to allow girls to enter their houses for any reason, never to be in the same room with only one pupil and never to touch the girls. All these rules were to avoid suspicion.²⁷ This practice did not stop thereby acting as a hindrance to female education in Southern Cameroons.

Expectations, attitudes and biases in communities and families, economic costs, social traditions and religious and cultural beliefs limited girl's educational opportunities. Some parents believed that sacrificing a daughter's work at home or in the fields would jeopardize family income and survival. For poor families, bearing the opportunity cost of sending a girl to school may not seem economically justifiable in the short term.²⁸ This was especially the case in homes that had not embraced the idea that women had the right to paid jobs or where jobs for educated women were scarce.²⁹ Decisions about whether to send daughters to school were often taken based on the costs and benefits to the entire family. In these cases, the problem was often more on the supply side the availability of safe, accessible and girl-friendly schools, employment possibilities for females, educational information for parents than with any lack of demand for education from families.³⁰ In areas where communities had been trained to work together on issues of common concern, parents, including very poor ones, accepted to send their daughters to school even though some refused categorically making gender equity in school impossible.³¹

The payment of school fees was quite a challenge to female education. The few parents who embraced western education for their children were obliged to withdraw them when payment of school fees was introduced. Parents who had many children and unable to pay school fees for them withdrew the girls from school and allowed the boys to continue schooling since they considered girls the property of their husbands and attached little attention to their education.³²

A case in point was that of the *fon* of Bali who in a council meeting, argued that if girls were exempted from paying school fees at least up to class II Infant, the number of girls in both Native Administration schools and mission schools would increase.³³ The *fon* of Bali went ahead to tell the house that parents found the extra expenses incurred in sending their daughters to school a waste because in assessing the dowry of an educated girl no consideration was given to money spent on their education.³⁴ This was a clear message that the *fon* of

²³ Interview with Lucy Mesode Epie, Reverend Sister on retirement and she was of the pioneer batch of St. Francis Collage Kumba, St. Francis Collage Campus, aged 95, June 1,2021.

²³ Idem.

²⁴ Interview with Mesode Magdelene, retired trader, Limbe, aged 79, March 15,2020.

²⁵ Emmanuel Solomon John, "Female Education in Developing Countries", *RainGate*, Jan, 2017, 4.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ 7295/ 1954-1962 Circular letters from / to the Supervisor, Basel Mission Schools, Southern Cameroons, 11.

²⁸ Ahmad Kainuwa, Najeemah Binti Mohammad Yusuf, "Cultural Traditions and Practices of the Parents as Barriers to Girl-Child Education in Zamfara State Nigeria", *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, No 3, 11,(2013),4.

²⁹ Sb/a/1929/6, The Education in Africa and other parts of Nigeria 1929,3.

³⁰ Sb/a/1929/6,4.

³¹ NW/Ba.1949/1, Trusteeship Council Visiting U.N. Charter and General Matters, 37.

³² Interview with Njie Catherine Namondo, retired teacher, Buea, aged 78, May 19,2020.

³³ NW/SC/a.1928/2,6.

³⁴ NW/SC/a.1928/2,6.

Bali was sending to the education authorities in Southern Cameroons that for gender gap in education to be closed or reduced, something extra needed to have been done to change the *status quo*. In his opinion, the authorities should exempt girls from paying school fees in order to encourage more girls to be enrolled in schools. Unfortunately, the plea of the *fon* was not considered because as from July 1958, the government joined the voluntary agencies to increase school fees paid by students in government institutions and in Women's training College, Enugu.³⁵

The payment of school fees came with a lot of resentment from some Southern Cameroonians for example the *fon* of Bafut disputed that the fees in his school (Native Administration school Bafut) was too high and that it should be reduced to allow villagers with many children to be able to send their children to school.

This however, affected girls from Southern Cameroons who had to pursue secondary education in Nigeria. Meanwhile in 1949, school fees were charged in all except vernacular schools that caused financially unstable parents to keep girls at home so that the limited resources available would be sufficient to push the boys through school.³⁶This therefore limited girls' opportunity of attending schools in the British Southern Cameroons.

One of the difficulties to which even the administering authority had frequently drawn attention to was the lack of enthusiasm for education in general and female education in particular among the population.³⁷ During the period under review, a number of native authorities in the Cameroons and Bamenda Province instituted the system to support primary schools and the system spread although slowly.³⁸ Educational support at home started with family members clearing a study space, asking questions, monitoring progress at school, helping with homework or resolving any problems that were likely to lead to difficulties in their children's studies. Girls had to tend to household duties first and made sure there was not any shopping to do while the boys concentrated on their bookwork.³⁹ This limited girls' participation in school.

Gender norms prevented many girls from acquiring education because most of the household chores were considered the responsibility of the females in most Southern Cameroons' societies.⁴⁰ Their role in the family therefore caused her most often not to be registered in school because of their contributions to the household were considered more valuable than their going to school. ⁴¹These girls could only turn to their bookwork after all house chores had been done and often late at night, when everyone was already sleeping.⁴² Hence, they had erratic sleeping schedules and suffered from drowsiness in class. Overall, mothers were more concerned about their children's school problems and fathers were more focused on boys than girls' education.⁴³ There was thus a marked tendency to favour males at the expense of females, who were oppressed by prejudice. Given that, the study area was and is still largely a patriarchal society, even mothers expected more from boys than girls. As a result, girls' education was not valued in Southern Cameroons as that of their male counterpart since the general perception was that girls' education was a waste of time because she will end up as a wife and would be unproductive.⁴⁴

In addition, females were held back from school because their parents feared that if they were educated, they would no longer respect them or their husbands when they eventually get married.⁴⁵ These parents saw western education as a threat to the institution of marriage and family. They suffered from the false perception that an educated female would not want to get married. Studies rather prove that, while an educated female is more likely to marry late, she would marry and when she does, she would have the tools necessary to be a good wife, mother and community woman. Parents however disregarded the voices and interests of their daughters to be heard. The parents or guardians went as far as engaging a baby girl at birth to the boy whom they selected for her to marry when she became older, which they said custom demanded. This practice was known as betrothal.⁴⁶

³⁵ 7295, Circular Letters from/to the Supervisor, Basel Mission Schools, Southern Cameroons, 1954-1962.

³⁶ NW/Bb.1949/1, Trusteeship Council Visiting U.N. Charter General Matters, 38.

³⁷ Sb/a/1929/6, The Education in Africa and other parts of Nigeria 1929,4.

³⁸ NW/Ca/1955/1, Trusteeship Council Drafting Report on Conditions in the Cameroons Under the British Administration,412.

³⁹ Interview with Mutchu Christopher Bumaha, retired teacher, Akum, aged 82,July 4,2021.

⁴⁰ Emmanuel Solomon John, "Female Education in Developing Countries", *RainGate*, Jan, 2017, 4.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Pinar Mercan, Perception of Parents Regarding Girls' Education, Sivas Case , Degree of Master of Science in Middle East Technical University,2010,20.

⁴⁴ Pinar Mercan, Perception of Parents Regarding Girls' Education, Sivas Case,20.

⁴⁵ Interview with Mutchu Christopher Bumaha, retired teacher, Akum, aged 82, July 4,2021.

⁴⁶ Interview with Enongene Patricia, farmer, Mutengene, aged 80, April 30, 2020.

Another factor that hindered female education was male chauvinism or preference of boy's interest over that of girls.⁴⁷ Many poor families prioritized their sons' education and kept girls at home to assist with household duties.⁴⁸ In addition, especially in rural areas, many parents did not want their daughters to go to school; they were scared that education would alienate them from traditional values and compromise their ability to be good wives and mothers.⁴⁹ African women were linked to earth, fire and water, three of the four elements in traditional culture.⁵⁰ Furthermore, during the British rule in the Cameroons, some parents or guardians did send their daughters to school but they then pull them out because they were afraid they would be raped, which brought down their value when the time for marriage came because in many of the Southern Cameroons societies, females were still treated as property.

To prevent the possibility of rape, females were kept at home where it was perceived they would be safe, thus missing their chance to enjoy western education.⁵¹ It was so prestigious for a girl to be married off as a virgin so many parents were scared that the virginity of their daughters would be tampered with on their way to or from school. This fear caused many parents to prefer keeping their daughters at home than sending them to school which could bring shame on the family through rape.⁵² These parents failed to understand that a good education would help the girls to better understand how to take care of themselves and avoid rape.

Child marriage was another factor that blocked females from making a life for themselves based on their own choices.⁵³ Many parents and guardians thought they were doing what was best for these girls but in fact, they were stealing their voices and stunting the growth and the potential these females possessed as agents for change for themselves, their families, and their communities.⁵⁴ As indicated in the report to the General Assembly of the United Nations, the development of education for girls would spread the conception of the role of women in the society, giving them a consciousness of their status and dignity, which would lead them to resist the requirements and usage of old and harmful customs like early marriages.⁵⁵ This was in a bid to raise the status or the condition of the women in Southern Cameroons which was not the best and a call for concern when the British took over Cameroon.⁵⁶

II. Conclusion

This article examined factors and issues that inhibited the development of female education in British Southern Cameroons from 1922 to 1961. It was found that the British colonial administration neglected female education. There was the risk of safety for the girls at school and serious transportation problem that led to poor access to education by the girls. The perception of female western education by the parents and their fear of violence on the girls in school made matters worse. It was also found that, family and societal attitudes, exorbitant school fees, gender norms, fear of the unknown, resistance from the girls and child marriage were factors that perturbed female education in the British Southern Cameroons. Female education in Africa as a whole and British Cameroons to be precise has been a subject for debate. African parents have always seen their girl children as an assistant to household issues. They therefore preferred traditional education that would help them fit squarely into their job description. The British Administration did not change the *status quo* for the girls as the type of education reserved for them was aimed at making the girls useful only to their households. This

⁴⁷ Ahmad Kainuwa, Najeemah Binti Mohammad Yusuf, "Cultural Traditions and Practices of the Parents as Barriers to Girl-Child Education in Zamfara State Nigeria", *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 11, No.3, (2013),5.

⁴⁸ Sb/a/1929/6, The Education in Africa and other parts of Nigeria 1929,3.

⁴⁹ Gita Subrahmanyam, "Gender Perspective on Causes and Effects of School Dropout from Primary and Secondary Education in Developed Countries - an overview, London School of Economics", <http://www.sida.se/publications,2016>, accessed on May 17, 2021.

⁵⁰ Gwendolyn Mikell, African Feminist Studies: 1980-2002, A Review Essay for the African Gender Institute's "Strengthening Gender and Women's Study for Africa's Social Transformation" Project,9.

⁵¹ Sb/a/1929/6, The Education in Africa and other parts of Nigeria 1929,5.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Emmanuel Solomon John, "Female Education in Developing Countries", *RainGate*, Jan, 2017, 4. , Pinar Mercan, Perception of Parents Regarding Girls' Education, Sivas Case , Degree of Master of Science in Middle East Technical University,2010,20.

⁵⁴ Pinar Mercan, Perception of Parents Regarding Girls' Education, Sivas Case,20.

⁵⁵ Report by Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under United Nations Trusteeship for the year 1952, London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1954.105.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

implied that they were only given education that equipped them to be good homemakers and excellent mothers. Female education has been seen to be central though it met with multiple challenges.⁵⁷

Despite these hurdles, some of the women braved the odds and emerged so that by independence in 1961, some of them held key positions in government and impacted the society in several dimensions. Some of these women included Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, who was the first woman from British Southern Cameroons to obtain a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree and beside many posts held, she became the pioneer Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea, Anna Nangah Atang Foncha acquired western education at Njinikom in Southern Cameroons and at Teachers' Training Centre at Ikot Ekpene in Nigeria.⁵⁸ She became a mission teacher and taught in several schools including the St. Joseph's girls' school Mankon.⁵⁹ She finally rose to the rank of head teacher and did so much to encourage female education. She founded the Catholic Women's Association (CWA), which today has over 16,000 members around the world and as the wife of the prime minister of the territory, she encouraged many parents and girls to pursue education.⁶⁰

Gwendoline Burnley attended both primary school and secondary school in Nigeria. She earned her bachelor's degrees in 1958. She continued to serve as a civil servant in various positions until her appointment to the West Cameroon Legislative Assembly in 1968. Following her appointment, she was the only woman among the twenty-nine members of the West Cameroon Legislative Assembly. She served as secretary of the West Cameroon Bureau, a position of power, until the dissolution of the Assembly in 1972. Ahidjo appointed Burnley to his CNU, where she served as one of the five women among the 120 central committee members.

Josephua Mua, received western education during the British rule and became the first female parliamentarian in the West Cameroon Legislative Assembly from 1959 to 1961. Mua, however, was propelled into the limelight when she casted the deciding vote in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly on whether Southern Cameroons should join newly independent French Cameroun. Prudencia Chilla was also a beneficiary of western education during the British administration period and became a female parliamentarian during the 1970s and a cofounder of the CWA with Anna Foncha. She was the first Anglophone woman to publish an autobiographical novel, *Promise*, never openly identified as feminist albeit the feminist undertones of her novel.⁶¹ Gladys Endeley also received the formal education that politically powerful women of the period required; she attended Aggrey Memorial College in Arochukwu, Nigeria from 1943–48, then University of Leeds in the UK from 1955–58 to study the social sciences. Upon returning home from Nigeria, she worked for the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) as an accounts clerk. Gladys later worked in the West Cameroon Ministry of Local Government and the West Cameroon Ministry of Natural Resources.

Kate Ebenye Idowu, who had earned domestic science degrees abroad as a young woman during the period of British rule become one of Cameroon's best-known domestic science teachers in the 1960s. Idowu published a cookbook in the 1970s, *Auntie Kate's Cookery Book*, a culmination of her teaching experiences when heading domestic science courses in Buea. In spite of these challenges that these women faced to attain educational and professional training during the period under review, their success story became the springboard for girls since independence.

⁵⁷ Simon Ngenge Tata, *British Colonial Administration, the Catholic Church and Women Emancipation in South/West Cameroon (1920-2014)*, (At –Mishad Publishers, Benue State – Nigeria, 2018),48.

⁵⁸ Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoue, *Gender, Separatist Politics, and Embodied Nationalism in Cameroon*, (United States of America, University of Michigan Press, 2019),3.

⁵⁹ Interview with Mary Nsang Ngwabou, retired teacher, Boyo Division, Aged 75, October 10, 2020.

⁶⁰ Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoue, *Gender, Separatist Politics, and Embodied Nationalism in Cameroon*, 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid*,17.

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