

Indigenous agents and the school apostolate in ỤkwỤ̀àniland, 1910-1941

Jones Ugochukwu Odili

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities,
University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Abstract

In the 19th century, colonial educational policy reflected the hesitant approach of Britain to a field recognised in those days as the reserve of religious bodies, and for many years, the missionary societies had the field of education to themselves. Education in Church Missionary Society (CMS.) mission schools in Nigeria received no grants-in-aid from the colonial government. This article is a historical reconstruction, which places the spotlight on the well-articulated contributions of local people in their attempt to establish and fund schools using indigenous initiatives, personnel and resources. Based on the self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing policy of Henry Venn, the study reveals that although the establishment of schools in ỤkwỤ̀àniland (1910–1941) was originally the outcome of the expression of local needs, efforts and ideas, the Anglican Churches there saw in them an agency for promoting evangelism. This article, which makes a significant contribution in the area of the history of religion and education, recommends that local initiatives, needs and aspiration should be taken into consideration in the formulation of education policy in Nigeria in the 21st century.

Introduction

In the 19th century, colonial educational policy reflected the hesitant approach of Britain to a field recognised in those days as the reserve of religious bodies, and for many years, the missionary societies had the field of education to themselves. In 1865, it was reported that education received no assistance from government (CO 879 Parliamentary papers, 1865). The British Government prerequisite grants-in-aid indicated that only the English language should be used in mission schools as the means of communication. Anglican missionaries saw this measure as a design to stifling the spread of the Christian faith, and therefore rejected the grants-in-aids, which would have helped them solve a lot of their financial problems. The CMS, faced

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with acute financial constraints in the establishment and funding of schools, employed local initiatives, personnel and resources to establish and fund schools which they regarded as a crucial agency in the evangelisation of African societies such as Ukwuaniiland.

Much of the documentation of CMS activities in Africa was compiled by Western missionaries or their protégés. Such accounts were undoubtedly hagiographic. There is thus a need to focus on the well-articulated roles of indigenous noble patrons, men of local prominence, indigenous catechists, school heads, pupils and communities in the establishment and funding of schools in Ukwuaniiland (1841–1941). This article attempts to highlight the initial class of people to embrace Western education, the rationale behind their action and the people's reinterpretation cum indigenisation of an aspect of their worldview as they came into contact with Western education. Depending largely on primary sources, this article explores the curriculum content of and the recruitment of staff in Anglican mission schools in Ukwuaniiland from 1910 to 1941. While authenticating the self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing policy of Henry Venn, the study recommends that local initiatives, needs and aspirations should be taken into consideration in the formulation of education policy in the country.

Conceptual analysis

Wilberet Shenk's (1993) biographical report, *Henry Venn: missionary/statesman*, provides greater insight into the theory and administration of the self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing policy of Henry Venn. Venn was reported as saying that the great object of mission was the raising of a native Church. This implies that most mission churches that repudiated indigenous abilities, needs and idiosyncrasies would experience retardation. Henry Venn's key ideas have been assessed and placed in the context of current missiological thinking. Peter Williams' (2000) study reveals that Venn had to wrestle with cultural distinctiveness. Underlining Venn's evangelical philanthropy was the conviction that the native people were equal in their capacity to hear and respond to the challenge of Christ and equally, too, in the fundamental capacities in evangelising their people. He argued as follows, in relation to the many Africans he had met and instructed: "I have never been able to detect any inferiority of natural ability in my Negro pupils ... All exhibited an intellectual ability equal to that of Missionaries, in grasp of mind, vigour of thought, and force of expression" (Williams 2000:149, 150).

Venn's policy on an indigenous Church is best summarised in the following words (Williams 2000:167–170): "If we propagate Christianity amongst the natives, we must be prepared to let them have it without its

Anglicanism, which however valuable for us is unsuitable for them.” The objective was not to allow Christianity to be part of a process of “denationalising” converts so that they would become “Anglicised” but rather for it to be “nationalised” and thus to be placed in an advantageous position for permeating the whole race. This is the main thrust of this study, which explores how native agents employed the self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing policy of Henry Venn in implementing CMS educational policy in Ukwuani (1910–1941).

It is pertinent to explain that native agents refer to missionaries of African descent who, familiar with their people’s religious and socio-cultural milieu, evangelised their kith and kin during the “modern” missionary enterprise. The school apostolate, however, refers to the use of the school as a medium for evangelism.

A concise ethnography of the Ukwuani

The Ukwuani-speaking people of the Niger Delta occupy the area lying approximately between longitude 6°6 and 6°42 East, and latitude 6°31 and 5°251 North. The Ukwuani comprise one of the major ethnic groups of the Delta State region (*This Day*, 17 April, 2002; AWETO, 2003). The geographical position of Ukwuani places the country within two belts, namely the deltaic swampy forests, which occupy the southern and south-eastern coastal towns and villages, and the tropical rain forests, situated in the northern part of the territory. Many Ukwuani people are large-scale farmers. Those living in communities traversed by rivers and creeks also fish. Rubber and palm oil extraction have been the major source of income. Indigenous arts include basket weaving, metalwork and sculpture (*Okpu-Uzo*). The Ukwuani are also widely known for their music, having produced such artistes such as Charles Iwegbue, Ali Chukwuma, King Ubulu, Rogana Ottah, John Okpor, Queen Azaka, Orji Moore, Eric Enuma and many others. They remain a socially tightly knit group. Community unions and clubs are the rule, even among those people who have emigrated to North America, Europe or Asia. The people are deeply religious, and like other African societies (Mbiti 1969) believe in the Supreme Being (*Chukwu*), pantheon of divinities, myriads of spirits, the ancestors (who play vital roles in their lives) and magic.

Grimes and Grimes (2003) note that the dialects called Ukwuani (Ukwani, Ukwali and Kwale) form a cluster within the Igbo language cluster. Nevertheless, the Ukwuani dialect is distinct enough from *Igbo* and is considered a separate *Igboid language*. They are by origin a mixture of Bini (Benin) and Igbo extradiations (Odili 2010).

Historical background to the development of education in Ụkwụ̀àniland

The first attempt to plant Christianity in Ụkwụ̀àniland was during the Niger expeditions of 1841, 1845 and 1857. The first treaty between the Obi and the British commissioners was formally signed on 28 August 1841. After the signing of the treaty, Captain Trotter took the opportunity to preach to the Obi concerning "the true God". Reverend Schon, a European missionary, requested Simon Jonas, an Igbo ex-slave and interpreter recruited from Sierra Leone, to read and translate into Igbo the Beatitudes from St Matthew's Gospel. This reading was followed with a question to the Obi relating to whether the contents were not good enough for his people. To which the Obi replied, *O ma ka* ("Very good") (Okolugbo 1984). The Obi were particularly impressed with the intelligence of Simon Jonas and requested that he be left behind at Aboh to teach the people. Simon Jonas thus had the honour of becoming the first teacher to be stationed in Ụkwụ̀àniland and on the Niger. The disaster and failure of the 1841 Niger mission expedition forced the members of the expedition who survived to take Simon Jonas along with them on their return journey, to the disappointment of the Aboh people (Dike, 1956). During the 1854 Niger expedition, the party, like that of 1841, again arranged to station Simon Jonas at Aboh to teach the people until the return of the expedition. Jonas did satisfactory introductory work and secured the friendship of the people who were anxious to retain him. The chiefs offered a site for a mission-school station and it was definitely marked off, but Crowther realised that Aboh would be unsuitable for European missionaries because the rising of the river flooded the whole town and large market canoes had to paddle along the streets. He, however, promised the chiefs that he would soon send one or two teachers to live among them. The reception accorded Crowther might have moved him to promise the Aboh people the services of a teacher or two and the opening of a mission station and a school (Ifemesia, 1962). While the Aboh people were anxious to receive the gospel and Western education, the geographical position of the town placed it at a disadvantage in Crowther's scheme.

The first Anglican Church in Ụkwụ̀àniland after the Aboh saga was opened in Obiaruku in 1910 through the agency of one Otene and his wife, Beatrice, in conjunction with Bishop James Johnson's men (Okolugbo 1984). In 1911, they sent representatives to St Luke's Church Sapele to ask for a catechist cum school agent. In response to their demand Ross, a Sierra Leonean, was posted to Obiaruku as a church agent cum school teacher at about the end of 1911. When Otene complained about the inefficiency of Ross, one Emedo of Orogun in Western Urhobo was sent to replace him in 1913. Emedo opened a primary school where he taught the English alphabet. He was transferred in 1915, but before his transfer, the church and school had

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started to make steady progress. Otene was in charge of recruiting teachers. He spent his time and foodstuff catering for head teachers. He went from house to house compelling parents to send their children and wards to school.

At Emu-Unor, Godwin Okeriaka and Abraham Osaele trekked down to Abraka to worship for some days at the end of which they demanded that a church teacher be sent to them. In response, one Monday Amudo, a CMS agent and school teacher was sent to them in 1913 (Agwuaturu 2002). However, this was an unofficial arrangement. Hence, the onus of catering for him moved to the infant Church. This was done in kind and not in cash. The personal belongings of the agents who headed the church at Emu-Unor were carried on foot from Abraka to Emu-Unor. These agents established an evening school. They went from house to house requesting parents to send their children and wards to school. Some children, attracted by the school songs, came on their own. Other children also went to school because they thought it was a good thing to follow the example of others. These methods attracted some of the early pupils such as Benson Maledo, Aaron Ochonogo and Humphrey Enumejo (Okuegbue 2002). Some adults were interested in reading the alphabet and learning to write their names. They were also attracted to the evening school, which became a morning school a year later. Godwin Okeriaka grasped the importance of the school approach to evangelism. He often woke up earlier than the head teachers to ring the church/school bell. He would not mind trekking to Abraka to report and ask for the dismissal of any teacher or head teacher guilty of the slightest act of misconduct such as arriving at school late. The pupils dreaded him more than they did the teachers.

Between 1914 and 1917, in the Ogume clan, Ambrose Ossai Onekpe was so closely associated with the Anglican agents that his lounge was turned into a guesthouse for the visiting agents. At first there was neither a church nor a school building. A section of Ambrose's house served both purposes. The average attendance of the pupils ranged from 14 to 20. With the cooperation of Ambrose and a few converts, a small mud house was set up for the Anglican agents and schoolwork began in earnest. With the help of Ambrose, a night school for those who spent all their day on the farm was opened. The school, however, was closed down after a short while owing to poor attendance (Maduagu 2004).

Indigenous agents and the school apostolate

At the heart of the complex package embedded in conversion was the indoctrination of new members. Through this process, converts were inducted into the ethos, doctrinal heritage, way of life and core values of the new faith they were embracing. The indigenous agents were in this sense first

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and foremost preachers. They used several avenues to make the people they met turn around to embrace the Christian faith (Ajayi 1965; Ayandele 1966; Babalola 1988; Coleman 1986). Initially, direct preaching was employed. The areas of convergence in beliefs, namely the places where Christian doctrines echoed the traditional values and beliefs merely reinforced the conviction of the elders about what they already knew and firmly believed in.

The areas of “doctrinal differences”, which should have influenced their persuasive effort, often seemed to produce jarring notes in the ears and religious sensibilities of the custodians of the traditional religious heritage. Some Anglican doctrines were, in the eyes of the adult representatives of the traditional religion, simply illogical and even nonsensical. From a [painful and frosting experience], indigenous agents realised that conversion by direct appeal to doctrinal logic and the threats of heaven and hell simply did not produce the kind of results they had hoped for. Owing to the less productive effects of these earlier attempts at critical dialogue with the local people, they turned to other tools and techniques for enhancing conversion (Anderson 1977; Eriwo 1979).

The early schools were staffed and managed by agents, whose primary objective was to convert Ụkwụàni people to Christianity through education. The result of this association of evangelism with education was that the conversion of some Ụkwụàni to Christianity was largely through the local mission school instead of a group of local Christians or a church building. Thus, one of the first contacts between most Ụkwụàni and Christianity had been through the association of children and local Christian school teachers and Catechists, because they were local, while the outsiders were regarded with suspicion. The children as agents of conversion were always around and had enough time to devote to this assignment, which they usually did through simple persuasion. In fact, the majority of the Ụkwụàni converts during this period were converted while at school. For instance, BCE Nwosu, the first Abbi District Superintendent, believed that without grounding, the Gospel would not leave a visible and lasting impact on the converts in religious education. He insisted that unless a progressive Christian education followed closely on the evangelistic appeal, the result of evangelism would not be enduring. He maintained that the future lives of Ụkwụàni children as men and women depended upon the formation of their minds (DCC minutes 1936). All schools operated by the agents were intended to be primarily evangelistic.

As noted earlier, a significant number of boys and girls, unlike the adult converts, became Christian adherents because they had passed through the mission schools. The adults were no longer schoolchildren and when they embraced the gospel, they went directly to the church to profess their new faith. However, for a great number of the children, it was the other way round

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– from the schools to the church. In fact, the elementary schools provided a continuous stream of baptismal candidates. Undoubtedly, the schools were a great evangelistic agency, and the result, one feels bound to say, was of the regular religious instruction in the Bible and fundamental doctrine, and the employment of none but Ukwuàni Christian teachers whose roles would be examined. Ewefah (2002) stated the following in this regard:

The instructions that were given in the schools were purely elementary, great importance was attached to religious instruction for, which time was set apart on the timetable; reading, writing, arithmetic, scripture and religious knowledge was taught in all schools, and a pupil must pass in these five subjects to pass his standard. Daily attendance in class for religious instruction as a rule was compulsory on the part of all scholars and the giving of this instruction was one of the most urgent responsibilities of the church agents cum catechists in-charge.

The district superintendents were said to have paid regular visits to the various schools in the district at least quarterly.

According to Okuegbue (2002), the vernacular was the language of instruction. The indigenous agents were convinced that once the pupils were able to read and understand the scripture in their own language, the cardinal aim of evangelism would have been achieved. To them, this was more important than preparing the pupils for further secular education. Vernacular education was insisted upon as a basis, and the rule was strictly enforced that no English could be taught before the pupil could read the Bible in the Igbo language. No pupil could be promoted to a higher standard if he or she had not successfully passed an examination in Religious Knowledge, which, as indicated earlier, was taught in the vernacular.

It is pertinent to state that a combination of factors attracted the pupils to Western education; the idea of acquiring the white man's civilisation, the ability to read and write like him, the desire to speak English, and the urge to acquire skills in order to improve one's social situation, were some of these factors. A few young converts were attracted to the mission schools by socio-economic factors, rather than the desire to change their former religion. Most of them were not yet rooted in the traditional religion of their ancestors. Besides, most communities' demand for the establishment of schools was merely based on rivalry between them. For the slaves, the main attraction to the school was liberation from the social stigma in which they found themselves. Surprisingly, these slaves improved their social and economic standing earlier than the freeborn. From the foregoing survey, we can

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conclude that while, the church agents regarded education as the handmaid of the gospel, the pupils were attracted to the mission schools for various reasons.

The schools were set up in the midst of financial constraints. The first primary schools in the mission fields were made of raised mud walls with thatched roofs. In most cases, such buildings served as both school and church, and they were thus sometimes called "school chapels". These schools were set up through the voluntary efforts of the people, especially the indigenious converts. Some communities requesting the appointment of teachers to teach their children were asked to back up their demands with a sum of money for the maintenance of the school teachers (Okuegbue 2002). Teachers who benefited under this system were called "local fund teachers". Some of the bright pupils who passed through mission schools in Ukwuani were absorbed as pupil-teachers. The building of schools and the provision of teachers' accommodation helped to attract and retain the teachers in the mission stations (Ewefah 2002).

Recruitment of teachers

In the mission field of the Niger Territory, one of the most difficult problems with which the CMS had to contend throughout the period under study was the acute shortage of staff. To their credit, the few missionary volunteers recruited from Sierra Leone to the Niger Mission contributed immensely to the foundation of the mission. However, as time went on, they were phased out because of retirement, invalidation, death and the expansion of the mission field and with the constant requests for teachers to open new stations. Faced with an acute shortage in staff, the CMS adopted two missionary strategies that had already been successfully attempted in Sierra Leone (Odili 2010:198). The first strategy was to recruit the pioneer indigenious lay agents from among the converts in the various congregations. The second method was to establish training institutions for the education of the agents in order to enable them fit properly into their newfound vocation of missionary work. While the first method served the immediate needs of the mission, the second approach had future prospects in view.

The first generation of the indigenious lay agents comprised women and men with little or no education and without formal training for the work ahead of them. In fact, they learnt missionary service by serving as missionaries in their own humble way. Regarding their level of education prior to their employment as preachers of the Gospel, Asueka (2005), a retired catechist in Emu-Unor, stated the following:

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Some years ago the supply of mission workers was very limited, and women and men were accepted as evangelists with little or no education. Some could only read and write in Igbo language with difficulty, while others who had been to school were far ahead of others.

Among the first- and second-generation teachers and evangelists, few completed their primary school education before they were employed. Some only passed through the Sunday school, while others were artisans in their previous occupations. A good number of them began by rendering voluntary unpaid services to the mission as “local helpers”. Some of these were absorbed officially into the service of the CMS. It is reported that Ossai Ndenu of Umutu who was engaged as an interpreter was only a communicant. Paul Agbadobi of Amai, a carpenter, was employed as an evangelist without further training. On the qualification of Isaac Osanekwu of Abbi, David Adenu (2005), a third-generation convert, commented as follows:

He was one of the most earnest of the Abbi Christians, and was well qualified for the work of an evangelist. He could read the scriptures in the Igbo language fluently and had learnt to write; he must have been of age when he first heard the Gospel Message. He was an able and fearless preacher of the Gospel.

He goes on to say:

A great want of those who were then working in the mission was suitable training. A lot of those employed in the Ndokwa District were transferring from being carpenters or printers or servants to becoming spiritual agents without any systematic training.

A case in point was Akubueze, the schoolmaster at Utagba-Ugbe, who was assisted by CY Otanku, a pleasant fellow who had been a cook. Later he was employed as a teacher with a salary of £20 per annum.

Although, the response of the people to the Gospel in Ukwuàniland was passive, this was not so with the number of missionary volunteers. The lay agents who initially volunteered as “probational teachers” and “learner evangelists” depended on the local congregations in which they laboured for occasional help for food without receiving any payment. A retired head teacher, CO Asueka (2004) recalled the following:

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Several appeals were made to young Christian converts to offer themselves as probationer evangelists to go and labour amongst other villages and communities in Ụkwụàniland. The communities who were anxious to get teachers were asked to raise some amount of money for the support of the probationers.

As mentioned earlier, the recruitment and training of African agents began in the colony of Sierra Leone. Only a few of the first generation of missionary agents who joined the Niger Mission from Sierra Leone had the advantage of formal education. However, the majority were artisans, cooks and stewards in Sierra Leone before they volunteered to go back to their “roots” in order to serve in whatever capacity they were employed in the mission. The Anglican mission justified the employment of this category of agents as follows (Onyeidu 2004:32):

Our experience is that in the initial stages of missionary work the best agents are those not far removed from the people by superior education, who have a simple faith, and are able to read the vernacular scriptures intelligently and can apply them as the rule of life.

In the Ụkwụàni mission field, the acute shortage of missionary agents of all grades was evident from the outset. Initially, the Ndokwa District depended heavily on volunteers from the Isoko, Urhobo and Igbo areas because it had no training infrastructure of its own in its home base. Recruitment from these areas, however, was scanty and irregular. Besides, the vastness of the Ndokwa District meant that even an army of missionary agents would have been insufficient to occupy the mission field at any given time. Asueka (2004) aptly captures the staffing problem during this period as follows: “From the very outset of the mission, there was difficulty in getting a supply of labourers from the Igabo (Isoko), Urhobo and Igbo areas.”

When it became obvious that only a few spiritually minded men could be recruited from the aforementioned areas while the mission field was constantly expanding, the native converts decided to look inwards in order to remedy the ongoing staff problem. Two main steps were taken to resolve the issue. For one, some of the promising Ụkwụàni converts were engaged in their various stations as mission agents. Like the earlier communicants who were seconded from the Isoko, Urhobo and Igbo mission fields, these Ụkwụàni pioneers were mainly tradesmen and women, and farmers who had not received any formal education. Indeed, they had learnt on the job. Examples of such indigenous agents were cited earlier.

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This was how a great number of Ukwuàni converts began a life work of pastoral agency. Apt examples of pastoral agents in this category were D Otuata, GO Ishiekwene and HC Onyam (Usama 2009). With simple faith, they began in a humble way without professional training as teachers or evangelists. As would be expected, the major challenge for those who were then working in the mission fields was suitable training. However, in 1939, the DCC at Abbi decided that two kinds of training were needed – one for girls and boys to be schoolmistresses and -masters, and one for those who had worked as schoolmistresses and -masters and were suitable for further training, with a view to becoming catechists, and in some instances, at least proceeding to holy orders.

Typologies and functions of teachers in Ukwuaniland, 1841-1941

At this stage it would be pertinent to examine the categories of serving agents in the Ukwuàni mission field. In fact, the kind of services expected of a particular agent influenced the nature of the training given to him. The agents of the Church Missionary Society in Ukwuàni mission field were employed in different capacities, which sometimes overlapped in the course of missionary labour. The categories of agents located in various primary schools included caretakers, monitors, pupil-teachers and schoolmasters (Onyeidu 2004). For the purposes of religious instruction and evangelisation, the agents were engaged in different cadres as scripture readers, interpreters, Christian visitors, local helpers, evangelists and catechists. Admittedly, some categories of these agents were phased out as a result of increased education and the changing circumstances of the mission. However, in their time, they performed useful and sometimes dual functions. For instance, a capable agent could perform the roles of a schoolmaster, catechist and interpreter in the same station. Hence there was no clear-cut division of labour in the mission as each agent played many parts according to the circumstances in which she or he found himself. Examples of agents who fell into this category were PR Anyabene, KC Agbadaobi, PO Isume and IM Johnson Onyenike (2006).

Equally, the so-called “Christian visitor” functioned as an evangelist. She or he was required to visit house after house, family after family with the intent of making Christ known and leading the people to him. One of the earliest Ukwuàni agents engaged in the service of the CMS was MO Osaewe of Abbi. He was accepted as a scripture reader (in the Igbo Language). Otene of Obiaruku was engaged as a “Christian visitor”, DA Otuata was employed as an interpreter and Paul Oyeneke worked for three years as “caretaker” in Abbi where he showed much zeal for evangelisation (Onyenike 2006).

The group of agents called “local helpers” were referred to previously. These were mainly volunteers from the local Christian congregations who

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taught in the mission schools, while at the same time itinerating as evangelists. They were men of little formal education but zealous for the Christian faith. Although not officially appointed by the society, the “local helpers” depended on the charity of local congregations to enable them keep body and soul together. Only a few of them were subsequently absorbed as full-time pupil-teachers or evangelists. Among these were Jecto Ossai of Obiaruku (Osabikwu 2006), JM Ibemene of Ashaka (Nduka, 2006) and JC Ofuna of Abbi (Eseagwu, 2006). Because they were seen as having no prospects of advancement in social status, this class of “local helpers” was phased out and replaced with more qualified agents. Asueka (2004) suggest the following reasons for the phasing out of this class of agents:

The local helpers do not seem to realise that they are not agents of the C.M.S. and that, therefore, no future of them at all. By taking charge of different school, they lost all chances of acquiring knowledge themselves and so must remain in a rut or forget much of what they themselves first learnt.

If the “local helpers” were not accorded any status in the grading of the agents, the same cannot be said of the monitors and pupil-teachers who were officially recognised from the outset as agents in the service of the missions. It was not the monitors’ business to teach, but to see that the girls and boys in their classes taught each other. However, in some *Ukwuani* communities where the dearth of teachers was acute, the monitors performed the same functions as pupil-teachers. Asueka (2004) recalls the following:

There was no difference whatever between the duties of the monitors and those of pupil-teachers except that the more important classes in the school were entrusted to the pupil-teachers. Monitors were girls and boys who had passed the third standard and, therefore, had learnt all that we were taught in our schools. However, they required some experience and testing before being classified as pupil-teachers.

Above the rank of monitors were the pupil-teachers from, which most of the agents were recruited for further education. From this humble beginning, some of them advanced in status to become senior schoolmasters, school-mistresses and catechists. For instance, A Ochai of Abbi, B Maluagbene of Utagba-Ogbe and S Oseji of Umutu were employed as pupil-teachers. Irrespective of the capacity in which the various categories of indigenous agents were appointed, their functions were complementary.

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Most of the catechists, evangelists, interpreters, head teachers and teachers in Ukwuani land spent most of their time involved in the following activities: teaching religion or giving instruction, visiting Christians or the sick, preparing adults for catechism, presiding over Sunday services, collecting church monies, preparing lessons, keeping registers and reporting regularly to the district superintendent, and a little of their time was reserved for work on their farm or vocation. These agents worked throughout the year. However, the best season was the dry season because most people were then available at home and there was less work on the farms.

The aforementioned duties of these agents could be classified into easy, fairly easy and difficult tasks. The "easy tasks" were instructions to children and adults, preparing the liturgy for the Sunday service, leading in singing and prayers, preparing catechism lessons, preaching sermons, helping the dying or sick and presiding at funerals. "Fairly easy tasks" included making people learn catechism by heart, collecting church levies and dues, teaching new songs, keeping the baptismal register and giving religious lessons in primary schools. The "difficult tasks" included trying out new methods, teaching other lay agents the ropes and running youth movements. Generally, trained agents found it easier than untrained agents to do most of the tasks, probably because of the training they had received. Nevertheless, untrained agents found it easier to collect church levies and dues, to make people learn catechism by heart, to instruct children, to help the dying and to preside at funerals than the trained ones. Trained agents were probably less involved with such tasks because of their modern catechetical formation.

Education or lack of it did not seem to have affected the more spiritual and pastoral view of the laity of the agents in any way. The agents enjoyed the respect of the different sections of the population. Among the general populace, Christians and non-Christians, age, sex and personality had more to do with attitude than education. This may be due to the gerontocratic and patriarchal structure of Ukwuani society. The reason for the respect accorded the agents included the following in order of magnitude: personal character, "sacred" character and their qualities of leadership. The personal characteristics included age, respectability, modernity, intelligence, sociability, gentleness, justice, good humour, calmness, decency, politeness, sincerity, zeal and talent for reading, singing and public speaking (oratory).

Their "sacred" character assumed three main forms. The most popular and varied expression was the idea that these leaders had a vocation or "sacred" character distinct both from that of the missionaries and laypeople. The second view was that these pastoral agents reflected the sacred character of a missionary in as much as she or he was the representative of or collaborator with missionaries. Finally, there was the more reared view that

they were a positive link between the missionaries and the people, Christians and non-Christians.

The criteria for selecting catechists, teachers, evangelists and interpreters included the following: the candidate must have led a normal Christian life, shown active faith and good moral conduct and was preferably a properly married man. He must have possessed faith, leadership skills and integrity; and intelligent enough to have practical ability and efficiency to do the work. Such a candidate must have been a man dedicated to God and the community, that is, a man of influence. Whereas the majority of the candidates were selected on matrimonial, religious and self-commitment grounds, few were chosen on professional grounds. Most of the agents were people who more or less had not had enough education.

It should be noted that most of the agents were married. As married people they led honest Christian lives and their families were looked upon as models, excelling in comparison with other good Christian families. Their married status was a guarantee of maturity and sound moral behaviour. Moreover, because they were settled, there was hope for continuity in their work. In some communities, the families did not seem to be that dynamic – they tended to be what the husbands were. If they were pious, exemplary and zealous, the rest of the family followed suit, especially their wives, a few of whom joined their husbands on their evangelical campaigns and helped them discharge their duties.

Local needs and aspirations

Culture emerges as a distinctive group of people struggling in their daily existence to exploit and subordinate their physical, social and spiritual environment in order to meet their economic, security and other sundry needs. As the group attempts to provide for its needs or find solutions to its emergent problems, it finds it expedient to devise rules or norms of behaviour and create values and principles that govern social relationships and interaction. In the process of institutionalising such a system of norms and values, social cultures emerge. People thus create culture as a means of adapting to the environment. Consequently, their cultural practices are necessarily affected by the particular pressures and opportunities of the surroundings in which they live.

Some of the local initiatives, needs and aspirations of Nigeria are as follows:

- (1) the need for the funding and maintenance of schools, especially in the swampy rural areas of the country;

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- (2) the need to create an enabling environment for cultural innovation and development by guaranteeing freedom of expression for the citizens and cultural stakeholders;
- (3) the need to reconstruct the historical memory and conscience of Nigeria and the Nigerian diaspora;
- (4) curriculum development reflecting the cultural heritage and peculiarities of each ethnic group, tribe and region in Nigeria;
- (5) the need to promote cultural democracy which is inseparable from social and political democracy;
- (6) the development of the dynamic values of the African cultural heritage that promotes human rights, social cohesion and human development;
- (7) the provision of research grants for herbal medical technology and indigenous healthcare/delivery systems in the country;
- (8) the development and use of indigenous terminologies in the teaching of science and social science-based subjects such as Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Mathematics, Government/Political Science and Economics in post-primary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria; Nigeria's own languages are central to Nigerian development and should occupy a key position in the development of educational policy of that country;
- (9) the promotion of indigenous scientific knowledge, which will allow members of a given society to adjust to that society's physical and social environment;
- (10) the promotion of indigenous knowledge and technologies because technology acquired by self-development is relatively inexpensive and can be readily adapted;

One should note that the totality of technological devices and non-material ideas and techniques, especially indigenous technology, represents the culture of people. Indigenous technology refers to the technology that has been garnered by a people in a given locality, which is unique to their society or culture (Ulluwishewa 1993:11 cited in Odili 2013:14). The real problem is that some of the educational policy plans for technological developments in Nigeria favour technological imports from advanced nations. The theoretical drive to generate an internally based development often dies at the level of the theories. Until there is a committed drive to look within and enhance the development of indigenous initiative, technological development will be

difficult to attain. Hence this culture of consumerism goes against powerful advancements in technology.

Conclusion

With the coming of Christianity, Anglican agents introduced literacy, which greatly fascinated some Ụkwụàni people. Although the primary concern of the missionaries was evangelism, the Ụkwụàni's response varied. To some, literary skills were important because they gave certain individuals special powers which other members of society lacked. In fact, some Ụkwụàni were drawn to the Anglican Church by the quest for literacy, which was widely perceived as the "white man's magic". In describing literacy as the "white man's magic", the Ụkwụàni were placing these new skills within the scope of their cultural experience. They believed that there was an inherent power or energy pervading the universe that could be tapped in various ways to the advantage or disadvantage of the individual or community. Literacy was seen as a manifestation of that mystical power. In the same way as medicine men had to undergo a formal training before they were fully admitted to the profession, pupils had to go through a period of instruction in mission schools before they could secure this new power. Literacy resulted not only in relatively well-paid employment in government and private sectors, but it also created a new social status that was both respected and feared. Since mission churches controlled education, those who wished to acquire it enrolled in mission schools, first as pupils, and then as Christian adherents.

This new interest in Western education manifested itself in the establishment of schools. Since the CMS lacked sufficient funds to build and maintain schools over wide areas, it had to depend on the cooperation of the local people for the provision of land, construction and maintenance of buildings and personnel. The initial volunteering and subsequent recruitment of local personnel of various categories were necessitated by the dearth of trained teachers. Sometimes, the communities paid the teachers' salaries and provided them with accommodation. Consequently, local initiatives, needs and aspiration should be taken into consideration in the formulation of education policy in Nigeria.

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