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INTRODUCTION

Imperialism, internationalism, and education in Africa: connected histories

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ABSTRACT

This text introduces the themed issue "Imperialism, Internationalism and Education in Africa: Connected Histories". It provides an overview of the history of education in twentieth-century Africa, highlighting its major problems, themes, and actors. Arguing for a transnational and connected approach to this field of research, it also explains how the four papers included in the issue allow to address the multiple entanglements between educational internationalism and imperialism in the late colonial and early postcolonial period.

From the nineteenth century onwards, colonial education was a highly debated issue within colonial administrations, as well as an essential part of the widely proclaimed "civilising mission" of the European states.[1] Many questions were raised, both overseas and in the metropoles, involving an ever-increasing number of actors, individuals, and institutions: what were, our should be, the purposes of the so-called "native education"? What kind of education should be provided, and to whom exactly? Were the "natives" physically and mentally prepared for Western curricula? What would be the political, economic, and cultural costs of such education and what could be the unintended consequences of such efforts? Answers to these, and other, important issues varied considerably according to stakeholders and local contexts.[2] Conservative or progressive arguments about the uses and goals of education were put forward, being frequently aligned with conceptions and justifications of imperial and colonial rule or human "progress". As a result, the tensions between an imperialism of "benevolence" and one of "inevitability" – simply put, between visions aiming at significant, and transformative, religious and humanitarian interventions, and those based on racialised considerations oriented towards more pragmatic, exploitative policies[3] – shaped the ways

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This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

[1]Rebecca Swartz, *Education and Empire: Children, Race and Humanitarianism in the British Settler Colonies* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019).

[2]Ana Isabel Madeira, "Portuguese, French and British Discourses on Colonial Education: Church–State Relations, School Expansion and Missionary Competition in Africa, 1890–1930," *Paedagogica Historica* 41, nos 1–2 (2005): 31–60.

[3]For the imperialisms of "benevolence", "obligation", and "inevitability", see Andrew Porter, *European Imperialism, 1860–1914* (London: MacMillan Press, 1994), 20–6.

in which education was thought about in relation to colonial situations.[4]

Admittedly, the evangelisation of populations was a key aspect of colonialism, especially in the eyes of missionary societies, with multiple motivations and strategies, in a highly competitive, and sometimes markedly conflictive, process. The dispute over the granting of ecclesiastical rights entailed political, economic, and religious dimensions, shaped distinct patterns of relationship between colonial administrations and missionary bodies, and, naturally, influenced the answers provided by many to the questions mentioned above in the imperial capitals, in the Holy See and across the empires. Discussions took place about the role ecclesiastics and missionaries should play in the provision of educational services to colonial populations (settlers and colonised alike) as well as about these services' rules, resources and specific purposes. Therefore, throughout the nineteenth century and certainly in the age of "new imperialism", right until the global decolonisation momentum, the consequential entanglements between projects of evangelisation and education – which varied in time and space – played a key role in colonial ventures.[5]

Education also occupied a central role in the political debates on welfare and modernisation policies, which were frequently immersed in concepts established in literature, paintings, postcards, or advertising that underlined the putative "backwardness" or "laziness" of the "natives", among other recurrent stereotypes.[6] This was especially the case after World War I, when educational issues became more and more intertwined with social and economic development plans seeking to foster a class of skilful workers able to fulfil the colonial *mise en valeur*.[7] Labour policies, strongly conditioned by patently racialised forms of classifying local populations and in many instances still shaped by the troubled transitions from slavery to "contract" labour, determined the imagination of the educational enterprise in overseas territories. This was abundantly clear in several debates conducted at the League of Nations or at the International Labour Organization in the interwar period, for instance.[8] Against this background, numerous proposals were drawn up that focused on adapted,[9]

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[4]On the history of education in Africa, see Damiano Matasci, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, and Hugo Gonçalves Dores, eds., *Repenser la "mission civilisatrice". L'éducation dans le monde colonial et postcolonial au XXe siècle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2020); Damiano Matasci, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, and Hugo Gonçalves Dores, eds., *Education and Development in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa. Policies, Paradigms and Entanglements, 1890s–1980s* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Peter Kallaway and Rebecca Swartz, eds., *Empire and Education in Africa: The Shaping of a Comparative Perspective* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016). For the postcolonial era, see Céline Labrune-Badiane, Marie-Albane de Suremain, and Pascal Bianchini, eds., *L'école en situation postcoloniale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012).
[5]Andrew Porter, *Religion vs. Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990); Claude Prudhomme, *Stratégie missionnaire du Saint-Siège sous Léon XIII (1878–1903). Centralisation romaine et défis culturels* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1994); and Hugo Gonçalves Dores, *Politics and Religion in the Portuguese Empire in Africa (1890–1930)* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2021).
[6]Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
[7]Albert Sarraut, *La mise en valeur des colonies françaises* (Paris: Payot, 1923). For a comprehensive analysis, see Joseph M. Hodge, Gerald Hödl, and Martina Kopf, eds., *Developing Africa: Concepts and Practices in Twentieth-Century Colonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).
[8]Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, *The "Civilizing Mission" of Portuguese Colonialism (c. 1870–1930)* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 109–94; and Daniel Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization. The International Labour Organization, 1940–70* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 17–27.
[9]Céline Labrune-Badiane and Étienne Smith, *Les Hussards noirs de la colonie. Instituteurs africains et "petites patries" en AOF (1913–1960)* (Paris: Karthala, 2018).

mass,[10] fundamental,[11] or vocational education,[12] stressing the practical and technical aspects of education while minimising or sidelining the apparent negative, or less fruitful, consequences of curricula that provided literary or humanistic content.[13]

These and other issues were debated, sometimes fiercely, within imperial and colonial circles. As hinted above, they were also gradually discussed within international fora, whether by governmental or non-governmental entities. Indeed, with the internationalisation of imperial and colonial affairs fostered by the League of Nations,[14] and the growing involvement of non-state actors in the process, "native" education ceased to be a mere national/ imperial and local/colonial issue. New ideas and agendas emerged, and new questions were raised. Inter-governmental organisations and other transnational groups, such as the Phelps-Stokes Fund, the International Colonial Institute, and the International Missionary Council,[15] started to intervene in colonial education's plans with their own knowledge and agendas. In doing so, they impacted on the inner workings and the governing methods of colonial empires, sometimes while attempting to improve related living conditions or enhance the efforts, and the results, of the so-called "civilising mission".[16]

After 1945, the decolonisation process and the tensions raised by the Cold War brought new actors and arenas into the educational debates. The United Nations and its specialised agencies, more particularly the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as a wide range of public and private actors on both sides of the Iron Curtain came to offer alternative options that could nurture the expectations of liberation movements, and then later newly independent African countries.[17] Despite this new context, where the United States (see Anton Tarradellas' article) and the Eastern bloc (see the articles of Constantin Katsakioris and Tim Kaiser et al.) played a relevant role, colonial empires continued to be engaged in devising educational policies that could help achieve their reformist and developmentalist goals (see Damiano Matasci's article).[18] Cooperation between experts and administrations notably increased, especially after the creation of the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara in 1950, which would later offer a first space for inter-African collaboration.[19]

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[10]Michael Omolewa, "Programmed for Failure? The Colonial Factor in the Mass Literacy Campaign in Nigeria, 1946–1956," *Paedagogica Historica* 44, no. 1–2 (2008): 107–21.

[11]Joseph Watras, "UNESCO's Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946–1959," *History of Education* 39, no. 2 (2010): 219–37.

[12]Mutiat Titilope Oladejo and Jimoh Suberu, "A Historical Analysis of Vocational Education in Western Nigeria, 1930s–1960s," *International Journal of Arts and Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2016): 108–22.

[13]Sybille Küster, "'Book Learning' Versus 'Adapted Education': The Impact of Phelps-Stokesism on Colonial Education Systems in Central Africa in the Interwar Period," *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 1 (2007): 79–97.

[14]Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[15]See e.g. Peter Kallaway, "Education, Health and Social Welfare in the Late Colonial Context: The International Missionary Council and Educational Transition in the Interwar Years with Specific Reference to Colonial Africa," *History of Education* 38, no. 2 (2009): 217–46.

[16]Dominique Marshall, "Children's Rights in Imperial Political Cultures: Missionary and Humanitarian Contributions to the Conference on the African Child of 1931," *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 12, no. 3 (2004): 273–318.

[17]Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and José Pedro Monteiro, "International Organizations in Colonial Africa," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.440 (accessed March 16, 2021).

[18]For the intersections between Cold War and development see e.g. Sara Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

[19]Damiano Matasci, "Une 'UNESCO africaine'? Le Ministère de la France d'Outre-mer, la coopération éducative inter-coloniale et la défense de l'empire, 1945–1957," *Monde(s). Histoire, Espaces, Relations* 1, no. 13 (2018): 195–214; and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and Hugo Dores, "Competing Developments: Intercolonial Organisations and Colonial Education (1940s–1970s)," in *Education and Development in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa: Policies, Paradigms and*

The wave of the independence in the early 1960s furthered this array of opportunities and possibilities. For the African governments, education was a crucial priority. Setting up capable and efficient educational programmes – from primary to higher education – occupied the minds of political leaders, educationalists, and intellectuals that faced the challenges of reorienting and even replacing the existing colonial structures with a new system that was less dependent on the former imperial paradigms and closer to their new political tenets.[20] This task was made necessary also because the last decades of imperialism left scarce accomplishments, with low school-enrolment rates, high illiteracy, and shortage of qualified local personnel, among other unquestionable shortcomings.[21] Therefore, as announced at the conference on the development of education held by UNESCO in Addis Ababa in 1961,[22] African countries pursued different ways to form their own qualified cadres and enhance mass schooling policies, mostly thanks to foreign aid and international cooperation, leading to what has been called a "world educational revolution".[23]

Following in the footsteps of the debate opened up by other scholars in *Paedagogica Historica*,[24] this themed issue assembles a collection of articles that address some key aspects of this historical evolution. More specifically, it aims to explore the ways in which visions of internationalism and dynamics of internationalisation affected the formulation of educational policies, especially in the late colonial and early postcolonial period.[25] Our objective is twofold. On the one hand, we want to contribute to transnationalising the history of education in Africa. Apart from a few though very significant exceptions, historical analyses still tend to be framed within empires, states, or colonies. Drawing on recent theoretical reflections, these essays adopt a "connected approach"[26] that overcome those frameworks, exploring the circulation and transfer of ideas, models, and practices, but also the attempts to implement and adapt them locally, as shown by Damiano Matasci and Tim Kaiser et al. in their articles.[27] Accordingly, although it is centred on African countries – in particular, Ghana, Nigeria, and Mozambique, as well as territories

Entanglements, 1890s–1980s, ed. Damiano Matasci, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, and Hugo Dores (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 237–62.

[20]Marcelo Caruso and Daniel Maul, eds., *Decolonization(s) and Education: New Polities and New Men* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2020).

[21]For an African account, see Abdou Moumouni Dioffo, *L'éducation en Afrique* (Québec: Éditions science et bien commun, 2019 [1961]).

[22]Damiano Matasci, "'Un rendez-vous africain'. L'UNESCO, la fin des empires coloniaux et le plan d'Addis-Abeba (1945–1961)," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 41 (2020), https://www.histoire-politique.fr/index.php?numero=41&rub=dossier&item=383 (accessed March 16, 2021).

[23]John W. Meyer, Francisco O. Ramirez, Richard Rubinson, and John Boli-Bennett, "The World Educational Revolution, 1950–1970," *Sociology of Education* 50, no. 4 (1977): 242–58.

[24]Joyce Goodman, Gary McCulloch, and William Richardson, eds., "'Empires Overseas' and 'Empires at Home': Postcolonial and Transnational Perspectives on Social Change in the History of Education," *Paedagogica Historica* 45, no. 6 (2009): 695–706; and Marc Depaepe and António Nóvoa, eds., "The Colonial Experience in Education," *Paedagogica Historica* 31, no. 1 (1995).

[25]The notion of "internationalism" – whether in its expression as an idea, ideal, or practice – is used here as an umbrella term for describing a wide range of connections between individuals and institutions from different states, regions, and locales. For a recent account of the history of internationalism, see Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). On the entanglements between imperialism and internationalism, see Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and José Pedro Monteiro, eds., *Internationalism, Imperialism, and the Formation of the Contemporary World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[26]Simon J. Potter and Jonathan Saha, "Global History, Imperial History, and Connected Histories of Empire," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 16, no. 1 (2015), https://muse.jhu.edu/article/577738/ (accessed March 16, 2021).

[27]On these methodologies, applied to the history of (colonial) education, see Rebecca Swartz and Peter Kallaway, eds., "Imperial, Global and Local in Histories of Colonial Education," *History of Education* 47, no. 3 (2018); Rita Hofstetter and Joëlle Droux, eds., *Globalisation des mondes de l'éducation. Circulations, connexions, réfractions (XIXᵉ et XXᵉ siècles)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015); Barnita Bagchi, Eckhardt Fuchs, and Kate Rousmaniere, eds., *Connecting Histories of Education: Transnational and Cross-cultural Exchanges in (Post) Colonial Education* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014).

of the French empire – research carried out by the contributors goes beyond the continent's boundaries to enquire about the connections with Western countries (the United States, France), the Second World (Soviet Union, East Germany) and the Global South (Vietnam and Cuba), unveiling networks crossing a world immersed in the Cold War's polarised perceptions.

On the other hand, this themed issue allows for a more sophisticated understanding of the institutionalisation and evolution of "international development".[28] In an age of global decolonisation, educational plans sustained the emergence of new, and often competing, "modernising missions".[29] Producing citizens and training competent economic actors were key issues for both colonial administrations – especially in late colonialism – and the governments of newly independent countries. The former looked to the education of colonial peoples as a way to reshape and, eventually, maintain imperial solutions, frequently using their (perceived) accomplishments as proof of a beneficial colonial rule. The latter saw it as a way to lay the paths out of a colonial condition and, as importantly, to imagine and build a postcolonial society.

Certainly, for African leaders and elites, plans and programmes set up by the colonial administrations could in different ways be reclaimed and adjusted to their political and economic objectives, thus sustaining nation-building processes.[30] Furthermore, after independence, European metropoles tried to keep and transform their links with former colonies through cooperation and aid agreements, fostering the flows of qualified personnel, equipment, and expertise. But in the meantime, African countries also looked for alternatives to post-imperial states' models, drawing on the vast and growing reservoir of development aid policies provided by international organisations (UNESCO and later the World Bank)[31] as well as by the United States and socialist countries, whose educational systems became increasingly appealing to local elites.[32] It is therefore no coincidence that the 1960s – the United Nations' "decade of development"[33] – were a "golden age"[34] for international educational cooperation, thanks to the flourishing of a number of scholarships and teaching programmes specifically designed for students of the Global South (see Tarradellas' and Katsakioris' articles).[35]

Using different approaches and connecting different historiographies, the four articles gathered in this issue offer a fresh and new perspective on the way in which the African continent, and the so-called Third World more generally, became a global arena where educational models, visions, and projects emerged, circulated, and competed. Based on extended and multisite archival research, these case studies shed light on the debates that

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[28]Corinna R. Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

[29]Ed Naylor, ed., *France's Modernising Mission: Citizenship, Welfare and the Ends of Empire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[30]Laurent Manière, "La politique française pour l'adaptation de l'enseignement en Afrique après les indépendances (1958–1964)," *Histoire de l'éducation*, no. 128 (2010): 163–90.

[31]Phillip W. Jones, *International Policies for Third World Education: Unesco, Literacy and Development* (London: Routledge, 1988); and Philip W. Jones and David Coleman, *The United Nations and Education: Multilateralism, Development and Globalisation* (London: Routledge, 2005).

[32]For a recent and comprehensive account of socialist educational cooperation, see Jane Weiß and Ingrid Thea Miethe, eds., *Socialist Educational Cooperation and the Global South* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2020).

[33]Amy L. Sayward, *The United Nations in International History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 94–105.

[34]Eric Burton, "Decolonization, the Cold War, and Africans' Routes to Higher Education Overseas, 1957–65," *Journal of Global History* 15, no. 1 (2020): 169.

[35]Ludovic Tournès and Giles Scott-Smith, eds., *Global Exchanges: Scholarships and Transnational Circulations in the Modern World* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018).

sprung up in a wide range of circles and unveil the wide range of actors involved, from educational and colonial experts – a dynamic community eager to collect data and draw projects – to international institutions and national administrations, without forgetting African governments and individuals.

The first article, by Damiano Matasci, offers a first significant example of the interconnections between internationalism and empire. By looking at the experiments in fundamental education carried out in 1950s French Africa, he sheds lights on the way in which a new developmentalist paradigm emerged in the wake of the conceptual work promoted by UNESCO since its inception in 1945. Matasci analyses the circulation of ideas and individuals between international and imperial circles, highlighting the nature and scope of postwar technical cooperation. He also shows how fundamental education was implemented in the field, through small-scale projects which were carried out by teams of experts (including Africans) and aimed to raise the living standards of rural and often isolated populations.

Moving to the postcolonial context, the article of Tim Kaiser, Ingrid Thea Miethe, Tobias Kriele, and Alexandra Piepiorka follows the links between the European socialist countries and the Global South by looking at the case of the Workers' Faculties which were established in the former to train adequate cadres for the development of a socialist society that would be transplanted to other places such as Mozambique, Cuba and Vietnam. Crossing four continents, Kaiser et al. trace the processes of transfer and local interpretation (adoption and adaptation) of these educational institutions, showing the North–South relations and South–South connections. By covering different geographical and cultural environments, the authors highlight the tensions rising between "education" as a means to provide social equality and "education" as a tool for a nation's socialist development.

In a way, Constantin Katsakioris takes the opposite route to Kaiser et al. Instead of tracing the road from the European socialist countries to the postcolonial world, he follows the hundreds of Ghanaian students that went to universities and technical schools in the Soviet Union. This concerted strategy, devised by Kwame Nkrumah and the Soviet authorities, to create a socialist-shaped elite aimed to train a leading group for the country's socialist turn and to foster links between Ghana and the socialist camp. Katsakioris recounts that group's initial expectations, concerns, and disappointments regarding the reality in the Soviet Union. He also shows how Nkrumah's fall in 1966 and the hostility brought by the new Ghanaian regime and its Western-educated elites rekindled the students' relationship with this country.

The making of a new postcolonial elite is also examined by Anton Tarradellas, but on the other side of the Iron Curtain, in the United States. He shows that, thanks to the role played by the African Scholarship Program of American Universities set up in 1961 through a partnership between the United States Government and several American universities, the development plans devised for Africa's modernisation often addressed particular, sometimes conflicting, agendas of each party involved, imposed not only by negotiation but also by force. Tarradellas also follows the African students enrolled in this scholarship scheme as they returned home and the ways in which they would participate in the development strategies that the programme intended to promote.

Disclosure statement

Notes on contributors

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