

Keystone of Progress and "Mise en valeur d'ensemble " – Colonial Discourse on Education and Development

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In British and French colonial Africa the 1920s marked a turning point in colonial policy, which changed from predatory colonialism to planned exploitation. Although the economic benefit for the metropolis was the prime target of the colonial development plans, social development – especially health and education – was also an important component for the colonial planners' considerations. To secure the sustainable growth of an export-oriented production of raw materials and to assure political and economic control in the occupied territories, colonial governments needed the training of agricultural producers, craftspeople, and workforce in mining and transport as well as the formation of a small local elite ready for unconditional collaboration with the colonial power. My contribution deals with French and British planning in "education and development" and provides a comparative analysis of documents of the most prominent colonial planners in the 1920s: Colonial minister Albert Sarraut ("La mise en valeur des colonies françaises", Paris 1923) and Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, Governor of the Gold Coast ("The Keystone", London 1924).

To Guggisberg education was the "keystone of progress" and "what is uppermost in the thoughts of all Africans". Sarraut made his plan about a complex setting of values, where economic progress had to be supported by education and health.

Both conceived education not only as a means of knowledge transfer and professional training, but over all as a training of the character, which made Africans "valuable" subjects of the colonial projects, but while Sarraut limited his mission to "civiliser au sens plein du mot", Guggisberg develops a three step model from primary education, over "secondary schools of an educational standard that will fit young men and women to enter a university" to the foundation of an university college in the Gold Coast.

Both were committed to their metropolitan model of education and its key values, but only Guggisberg insisted on the fact, that primary education should be provided in local African languages, and "all Europeans whom we are employing in our educational system shall learn the vernacular."

And while Sarraut saw education as a means to prevent communist (anti-colonial) agitations in the French overseas territories, Guggisberg was motivated by the desire of the local elite to obtain more and better education.

Sarraut and Guggisberg drafted two rather different strategies for education, which had just one and the same target: making the colonised an ideal subject of the colonial government.