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Abstract

This is the first of a two part paper which attempts a critical analysis of the success of the mission of the Catholic Church to educate holistically in Kenya. The milieus discussed are the schools set up by Catholic missionaries, during the colonial period. The missionaries’ primary goal was evangelization; the schools were increasingly recognized as a preferred forum and strategy for reaching it. Many benefits to the foundation of Christian communities in Kenya were reaped from these Catholic schools. Regrettable however, in Catholic education in the colonial period, was the failure to mediate a concurrence of values between its missionary protagonists and the African families and communities, who, as partner educators of the recipients of Catholic education also had their own aims for the education of their children. Very often, there was little regard for the latter. The missionaries were recognized by the Africans as being distinct from the colonizers. Yet their attempt to play into the advantages of collusion with the colonial government at the service of their evangelizing goals led many Africans to a sense of betrayal for their course, and a fragmented approach to Christian commitment. While recognizing that the said fragmentation has other roots besides, the authors decry the shortness of vision because of which the Catholic schools have played into this liability whose damages are experienced in many other facets of the African community lives.

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Introduction
This paper is a historical overview of the involvement of the Catholic Church in schools in Kenya, from the inception of western education at the end of the 19th century to the post independence period. While it highlights major historical shifts, its focus is an assessment of the attention given to the holistic development of the students championed by Catholic schools in Kenya in the 20th century. Missionary activity originated in Kenya at nearly the same time as Western colonization. For the first half of the 20th century therefore, the missionaries ran their schools under colonial rule. In this period Catholic missionaries, though not as privileged as the Anglicans from whose country hailed the colonial power, enjoyed relatively greater autonomy in the manner of running their schools than was to be the case when the government of post colonial Kenya took over.

The concern of the Catholic Church in education and in schools has always been to facilitate the realization of fullness of life (John 10:10) of the members of the school. This is synonymous with the enabling of integral or holistic development of these persons, as frequently stated in Church documents on Education (The Catholic School, 1977 no. 8, 29). It follows that the Church’s involvement in Kenyan schools ought to be read in this light.
The paper shows that the delivery of this mandate encountered challenges at different times. It recommends a focus on clarity of what in fact constitutes fullness of life, in a discerned African Christian sense, with due mindfulness of the realities of the times. This can offer increased potential for the Catholic contribution to Education in Kenya in a situation that faces new and ever more diverse challenges.

*Catholic Missionary Education in Kenya in the Colonial Period*

*Schools as a choice approach to evangelization*

The earliest reported Christian presence in Kenya was that of Portuguese explorers, the most prominent among who was Vasco da Gama who arrived in 1498. Da Gama is reported (Barrett et.al 1973:20) to have had Catholic Missionaries in his company and is credited to have erected a cross in Malindi. St. Francis Xavier, the 16th Century Jesuit Missionary stopped at Malindi in 1542 on his way to India and the Far East. An Augustinian monastery was started in Mombasa in 1564 under the protection of the Portuguese viceroy of India, and though a Catholic community possibly numbering up to 600 was in place by 1597, by 1740, Portuguese missionaries had faded from the Kenya Coast, and no African Christian community survived there (Ibid). There is no recorded continuity of these earlier missionary endeavors on the Kenyan coast until the more recent missionary movement of the 19th and 20th centuries.

In this latter thrust, the Holy Ghost Fathers (HGF) were the first Catholic missionaries on Kenyan soil, coming in 1890 from their first East African base in Bagamoyo, Tanzania. They soon spread their foundations into the interior, setting up a station in Bura 1891 (Bogonko 1992: 18) and opening up St. Austin’s in Nairobi in 1899, making it their headquarters (Baur 1994: 257). In all their centers, they set up educational units which were meant to improve the lives of
the people by training them in skills that would enable them to earn money, which was quickly becoming the mode of economic transaction in the region. St. Austin’s had an industrial training centre by the turn of the 19th century, the presence of which speaks for the breadth of vision of the missionaries, regarding education. They did not see it only as a means of preaching to the people in the schools, but also as a means to contribute to their technical, social and economic advancement.

The Holy Ghost Fathers were the leading religious congregation in Catholic evangelization in the Nairobi and Coastal regions of Kenya (Baur, 1990:25 – 27). Eventually The Holy See placed Catholic missionary efforts in the central region of Kenya around Mt. Kenya under the Consolata Missionaries, and the western part of Kenya, under the Mill Hill Missionaries (MHM). These religious and missionary institutes opened up schools, and health care centers as part of their mission establishments. Indeed, “the pride of most missions was their schools” (Ibid: 201).

The priests were assisted in their educational and other ministries by orders of religious brothers and sisters, many of whom opened and ran schools. Thus Nyabururu centre was opened by the MHM in 1910 (Bogonko 1992:19), while St. Mary’s Yala was under the Brothers of Christian Instruction. Dutch Holy Ghost Missionary Fr. Michael Witte began Central Training School Kabaa in 1924, training teachers and also seminarians. This centre would later become a secondary school facility for African Catholic boys in 1930 and be relocated to Mang’u in Kiambu in 1940, to become the present-day Mang’u High School. The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa opened an interracial school in Mombasa. Precious Blood Sisters had begun education work in Bura in 1925. Theirs was to become the first secondary school for girls in the
Coast Province in 1965. They also opened another in Riruta, Nairobi in 1957 (Baur 1990). Thus from the earliest days of Catholic mission work in Kenya about half of Catholic missionaries were engaged in education work, and Catholic schools were among the network of “bush schools” that were started for African children in the early years of the 20th century.

**Education for what purpose? Conflicting values**

Within the schools, the three R’s were the core of the curriculum – constituting reading, writing and arithmetic as well as religion. So much did the early mission schools emphasize religion that these schools have been called ‘prayer houses’ (Bogonko 1992:19). In the meantime, the quality of academic work was so low that it could be said that “too many pupils forgot the three R’s faster than they learnt them” (Baur 1994:271).

The religious emphasis in all the Catholic schools was Catholic doctrine, while in schools under other Christian churches, was likewise their own doctrine. Thus the missionaries brought a divided Christian faith to the children of Kenyan communities who had hitherto known cultural unity of religion and life. In addition, the churches brought the spirit of intolerance of the faith traditions of other Christian denominations; they did not do much to encourage the development of good relations with other members of the community who did not share the Catholic faith (Baur, 1990:226 – 227, Muhoho 1970:154). This is one of the ways in which the Catholic schools participated in the fragmentation of the African society. Doing so, they interjected the predominant character of European intervention in African societies during the colonial era, namely, divide and rule. Such fragmentation did not contribute to holistic development of the students who often ended up alienated from some members of their communities and from their holistic African cultures.
The exposure to western education, fueled especially by the missionary enthusiasm for evangelization, was at the expense of African indigenous education, which quickly faced the risk of becoming corrupted. Not only did children spend much time in mission schools and churches, but they were also ‘educated’ to depart from many African traditions. They became alienated from the socialization systems of their communities. With the loss of its own self-propagation systems and authority, the African community began to disintegrate as observed by Bogonko, “The traditional society began falling apart as Africans began receiving exotic, irrelevant, theoretical education” (1992: 92). The disconnection with African culture can be considered the single most destructive aspect that Christian education brought upon African communities and African societies. African communities have never recovered from this disconnect, and its impact on social dissolution has been profound. It is the view of the authors that this destruction of African communities from within has had so strong an impact even on the possibility of building African Christian communities, that it can be considered to be counter to the mission of evangelization. From their own perspective, the missionaries intended to improve the lives of the African people, primarily by bringing them the “good news” of the gospel, and in other ways they judged to be worthwhile, such as the provision of health services and education.

The colonial government insisted on racial segregation in the schools. Right from the establishment of the first Directorate of Education for the British Protectorate in Kenya in 1910, there were three categories of government-aided schools, A, B, and C, corresponding to the three categories of races: the superior race – the Europeans, the middle race – the Asians, Indians and Goans, and the inferior race – the Africans, respectively (Muhoho 1970:71). The missionaries followed the government demand and created racially separated schools (Ibid: 223). The Holy
Ghost Fathers for example had Kabaa catering for African students while St. Mary’s school Nairobi catered for non-Africans. The Loreto sisters had a European school opened in 1921 in Nairobi, a Goan school at the current Catholic Parochial School in the city centre in 1924 and later an African girls’ school in 1936 in Limuru (Baur 1990:47). Right from the start and until Kenya achieved independence from British rule, the missionaries did not challenge, but rather cooperated with this colonial government racial discrimination policy. The failure to draw attention to and stand against a violation of the dignity and equality of all human persons, going against a fundamental principle of Christian faith and education may be viewed as one of the ways in which the missionaries failed to witness to the fullness of life for all, of which they intended to be witnesses. It was contradictory to proclaim the “good news” for all people on the one hand while propagating racial segregation on the other, without betraying the essential message of the beauty and integrity of every human person created by a loving God, irrespective of race. According to Baur (1990) the missionaries found themselves prisoners of the colonial system which would not allow them to run schools in contradiction of the colonial policy. Missionary compliance with the policy in order not to jeopardize their license to evangelize the African people was often viewed by the latter as collusion with the racist system. There was not enough evidence of missionaries desire to depart from this colonial policy, and whatever efforts as might have been made did not convince the African people.

Besides the three R’s and religion, education in Catholic schools included life skills such as hygiene and technical skills such as carpentry, dress-making and housekeeping. As mentioned above, the African people valued these skills (Anderson 1970: 16) and the discipline, often exemplified by the religious personnel of the schools and underscored by school rules (Njoroge
1999: 234). The exemplary presence of the sisters, the brothers and the priests, was a memorable part of the education of the students in Catholic schools. Together they contributed to the profound impact these schools had on their students, especially in terms of faith formation and personal discipline.

A great appreciation of missionary education paralleled the demand for higher literacy education for the African people. The exclusion of Africans from academic education was in line with the colonial policy. Some missionaries observed that the Africans had little regard for Christianity and were only keen on getting a western literary education (Bogonko 1992: 22). Evidently the missionaries’ intentions in providing western education to the Africans differed from the Africans’ interest in receiving the same, and conflict was bound to ensue. The former were focused on teaching the message of the gospel to the Africans, along with the minimum literacy skills to support this primary concern. Some technical education to usher the Africans into western civilization and economy and to enable the Africans to render services in the missionaries’ and settlers’ establishments was also regarded as important. The Africans were interested in an education that would open them up to the new standards of life brought and lived by the Europeans, to enable them interact with the Europeans on a more equal footing, and participate in the new emerging economic and social conditions of life (Bogonko 1992: 45). Later in the colonial period, higher standards of literacy education was seen as crucial for preparing their people for political independence, again a value many Europeans did not share.

The colonial government’s education policies for Africans were focused on providing a workforce technically qualified to support the colonial economy, and certainly not on meeting the social or economic needs of Africans (Bogonko 1992: 62). Some of the leaders of the
Catholic Vicariates at the time explicitly shared these views that the Africans were to be educated only enough to make of them competent manual workers\(^1\). The Catholic missionaries’ justification for this view, however, was that the Africans needed to be trained into a positive disposition to technical and manual work (Sifuna 1980: 57).

It is interesting to note the observations of the Phelps-Stokes Commission\(^2\) which visited East Africa in 1924 with the agenda to review educational developments for the African people. Like the missionaries the Commission observed that the colonial government taxed the Africans highly, but gave them very poor services in return (Muhoho 1970: 119). The Phelps-Stokes Commission recommended that missionaries run the African schools and the government increased subsidies to the schools and supervised them. This would increase funding to African schools and improve the quality of education offered there. But Catholics missionaries feared that government subsidy might come with control on syllabi, which would have been an unwelcome development. Because of this fear, they had withdrawn from the Grants-in-Aid Scheme of the Government in 1918, causing a measure of degenerate relationship with the education office of the colonial government (Sifuna 1980: 57). A struggle concerning the right of the government to control of schools was to continue throughout the colonial period. The concerns of the Africans themselves were hardly at the centre of these tussles, and so their welfare was subordinated to the interests of the external interveners. From a fullness-of-life perspective, this is one of the major lacks in the Western education championed by missionaries,

\(^1\) See for example the “Catholic Reply to the Education Report”, quoted by Muhoho 1970:142.
\(^2\) This Commission was set up in the early 1920s to assess the education of African people in English speaking Africa and in the USA. It focused on the needs and challenges of the African people and made educational recommendations for meeting these needs and challenges to colonial administrations around the continent.
including the Catholics, in the colonial period. Even in education in Catholic schools, the African people were not accorded the dignity to choose what kind of education would be most suited to their children. During Vatican II, when the role of the Church in Education was discussed, the very right of parents to decide on the kind of education their children ought to have been underscored (Gravissimum Educationis 3). Evidently, African parents were only demanding what they understood clearly as their right; Vatican II would confirm it as natural justice. Throughout the colonial period, the missionaries were to be criticized by the Africans for promoting an education which did not take care of the needs for development of African children.

The Phelps-Stokes Report also decried the failure of the educators to develop a methodology for character development. Besides moral and religious instruction the report singled out the importance of moral development and an overall school atmosphere which reflected an interest in character development. It also insisted that all subjects be related to real life experiences so as to have an impact on life. Albeit the centrality of these two pillars in African traditional education systems, their deficiency in African schools in the colonial dispensation shows the extent of dissociation that western education had made of African schools from African roots. To date the two issues of moral sturdiness and relevance continue to be a challenge in education in Kenya. Missionary education then, and Catholic education since, has not done much to interrogate these concerns and introduce valid solutions to the fragmentation that issues from them.

A key aspect of an integral education, according to modern educational thought, is to incorporate the aspirations of the learner so as to heighten involvement and performance (Pring
In this, the Catholic and other missionaries did not fare well. From a Christian perspective, it can be said that their understanding of fullness of life was considerably limited, and in many cases, missionaries were so much children of their own cultures and their times that they did not distinguish between the essence of the Christian message of fullness of life and the derogatory influences of their cultures.

An important moment for the development of Catholic schools in the colonial period was the visit in 1928-1930 of Monsignor Arthur Hinsley, a papal delegate to English-speaking Africa (Njoroge 1999: 234-235). Hinsley recommended that Catholic missions focus on schools even more than on churches. It was his view that the control of the schools would be central to any future prospects of evangelization. He also encouraged sisters to open and run schools for girls, since he believed that Africans should not be educated only to be servants of white people, but to a higher standard to improve their own lives (Muhoho 1970: 156).

Following his visit, the missionaries across the three Catholic Vicariates – Nairobi, Nyeri and Kakamega – agreed, in 1930, to have Kabaa - later transferred and renamed Mang’u in 1940 - be the Catholic High School for boys for the colony. The Catholic missionaries had been slow to start secondary schools for their African youth, claiming that they did not have sufficiently qualified pupils for whom to start high school education (Sifuna 1980: 57). Again, this represents conflict of values, for who would have been in a position to prepare the students for high school education if not the missionary educators themselves? If they were not doing it, how would they ever get to students who were ready for it?

The post World War II period, however, saw an increase in the number of Catholic secondary schools as well as expansion and development in already existing ones (Muhoho
1970). This increase was facilitated by an influx of Catholic religious men and women orders into the country. Triggered by the recommendation of the Beecher Report\(^3\) that African schools be put predominantly under the control of the missionaries, Catholic bishops encouraged religious orders to come into the country and open new schools.

**Western Education for African Girls**

Female education faced roadblocks emanating from the restraint the parents felt they needed to exercise against the over-exposure of the girls to culturally hostile ideas and ways (Baur 1990: 205-206). Their role was traditionally understood as being on the home front; it was not always evident to parents that a western-style education was either necessary or useful for their daughters. Through the witness of the missionary sisters and the wives of protestant missionaries, appreciation and even attraction of western education for girls increased in African communities. African communities began to appreciate that an educated girl brought social status to the family (Ibid: 206). African communities in general might have been more amiable towards the benefits of literacy education for the girls, especially when it became evident that these were to the profit of the whole family and community. Since Western education tended to stress individual benefit rather than communal gains, it was rightly viewed by Africans as suspect because it introduced new layers of social stratification, not always beneficial to the family and community. Though the level of education of these first western educated girls was low, comprising the minimums of literacy, numeracy, religion, nutrition and hygiene; it contributed to the integral personal development of the women and of the society. Many of these

\(^3\) This commission was set up by the Colonial Government in 1949, to look into the problems of the scope, content and methods of African education. It was led by Archdeacon L. J. Beecher and the missionary representation on the commission was 3 out of 10.
educated women became leaders at local community levels, influencing the household and local communities in positive ways. In post-independence Kenya, certainly the children of these women were among the first to pursue high levels of schooling. It can be said that the exemplary witness of the missionary women was a blessing for the African girl child, and though the uptake on this opportunity was not tremendous in those early days of the opportunity; it was the missionary efforts that must be credited with the efforts to produce major transformation in the place and role of women in African communities, for the better.

**The Kenya Education Commission and the 1968 Education Act**

The government of independent Kenya was faced with the task of setting up modalities of control and leadership in education in the new republic. These were set out clearly in the Education Act of 1968, which was preceded by much consultation and negotiation with the religious bodies, especially the Catholic Church. The Kenya Education Commission, under the chairmanship of Professor Simeon Ominde, was set up in 1964 and charged with the responsibility of studying the educational needs of the country and making recommendations to the government for the way forward. There was no doubt that education would be a key factor in the building of the new nation, enhancing national unity, economic independence and cultural identity and pride. The defined terms of reference of the Commission were to cover all these areas that together could constitute an integral development for the individual learners and, subsequently, for the nation.

During the colonial era, the missionaries had had a significant role to play in the making of education policy for Kenya. The missionaries were members of the Education Board of 1910 (Muhoho 1970:74) and were invited and accepted to send representation to the 1919 Education
Commission (Ibid: 93). The Catholic and Protestant missionaries played a central role in the Central Advisory Council of African Education, “which in fact was the body that formulated educational policy since their recommendations were hardly ever refused, in principle by the Government” (Ibid: 184). The first Ominde Commission did not have a single missionary or church agent on it. This signaled to the churches the change in their policy-making contribution with regard to education in Kenya (Muhoho 1970).

As they were charged to do, the Kenya Education Commission in its 1964/65 report - “Kenya Education Commission Report” popularly known as the Ominde Report - substantially underscored the main thrusts of education in post-colonial Kenya. The main recommendations were the assigned responsibility of education to the Kenyan nation:

1. Education is a function of the Kenyan nation; it must foster a sense of nationhood and promote national unity.

2. Education in Kenya must serve the people of Kenya and the needs of Kenya without discrimination.

3. Our public schools are an instrument of the secular state, in which no religion is privileged, but must respect the religious convictions of all people.…

8. Education must promote social equality and remove divisions of race, tribe (sic) and religion. It must pay special attention to training in social obligation and responsibility.

At independence, the Kenyan education was styled on the British system, championed mainly by the missionaries: “not only was it teaching a new religion and unfamiliar code of ethics, instilling in the students a distaste for the African social background … it was also
implanting in them respect for bookish education and contempt or ridicule for practical and technical subjects” (Otiende, Wamahi and Karugu, 1992:74). To the Commission, the missionaries largely represented independent educational authorities; it considered itself as charged with forging a way forward for one nation. The missionaries had not only accepted racial segregation but ingrained religious segregation through their schools since they did not feel obliged to admit to their schools, students from different Christian churches, or those from other faith traditions. Ironically, racial segregation was to later be ably replaced by class segregation as education costs would begin rocketing out of the reach of ordinary Kenyans, bringing a divide as to which child could attend which school, according to financial abilities of the parents.

The Ominde Commission made recommendations that were in effect a change of philosophy of education towards greater social equality of the races, ethnic nations and religions (Otiende, Wamahi and Karugu 1992: 81). It chose a religiously neutral path since education, seen as a social service, could not be used by the state to entrench any religious claims without injustice to freedom of conscience and belief. In the recommendation of the Ominde Report, religion was not to be excluded in the school system but rather to be taught as an academic subject within a joint syllabus of the churches (Ominde Report, :59). Christian denominations were no longer to be factors dividing Kenyan children in schools. The former managers of the Church schools were to be regarded as sponsors of the schools, subject to the choice of the local community to continue having the Church’s influence in the school. The meaning of sponsorship had to be worked out in bits and pieces between the publication of the Ominde Report and the final cast of it in the Education Act of 1968.
The period between the Ominde Commission report in 1964 and the Education Act in 1968 was one of tension and misunderstanding, characteristic of any time of change. During these transitional years, many heads of Church schools did not know who to refer to as the guide for developments in the schools. Herein was the beginning of a long struggle between the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Catholic Church education personnel. Lines of authority and points of reference were often unclear for personnel working in former church schools. On a number of issues, there had to be bargains between the MOE and the Catholic Church, and on many counts, the settlements arrived at were less than satisfactory to the Church.

The government created the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in 1967 through the Teachers Service Commission Act, as one employer for all teachers. In effect all teachers in Catholic schools, including religious and priests, were to be under the TSC. They could be posted anywhere in the republic, irrespective of what their religious leaders might have wanted. The bishops quickly presented their predicament with the matter since the religious in their congregations lived in communities and organized their lives accordingly. The government gave allowance that the TSC would second these Catholic religious teachers in the postings chosen by their religious superiors. Catholic religious personnel thus became employees of the government as heads of schools and teachers.

A more challenging matter was how to guarantee that Catholic schools got Catholic teachers. The bishops again got together and bargained for and secured the right to deter or cause the transfer of the teachers to the schools under their charge. Teachers were also to be posted to schools of their religious denomination, as far as possible, to integrate them in the building of a school character according to the sponsors’ guidance. Though this resolved the issue on a
theoretical level, it was to prove very difficult for the church to have a strong say in the posting of teachers who were not religious. This has been a thorny issue in Catholic sponsorship of schools. Very often the diocesan education offices did not know which teachers had been posted to their schools. Although they could influence the transfer of teachers, these were typically the rights that had been exercised only in cases of gross misconduct on the part of a teacher. Teachers at an institution had a key role to play in the promotion of the integral development of the students. Not to be in a position to closely monitor the kind of teachers in a school for which a sponsor has charge was to considerably diminish the ability of the sponsor to ensure an education that promoted integral development of students. That was de facto the position the Catholic Church found itself in the public schools for which she was sponsor.

Though the burden of financing education in the whole country was heavy on the new and young economy, the pressure of the above-mentioned ideals and following on the recommendation of the Ominde Commission (Ominde Report no. 571), the Government of Kenya pushed towards nationalization of all schools. The attempt drew resistance from the churches. The Catholic missionaries were concerned that their most effective channel of evangelization was about to be lost. In addition, there had been a large investment in schools under the Catholic Church, especially in the years since Monsignor Hinsley’s visit in 1930. The Catholic Church, however, did not offer viable alternatives to the proposal by the Government. In the whole process towards the 1968 Education Act, the Catholic Church found herself unprepared for the moves the Government was making, and often in a reactionary position. There was hesitancy, on the part of the Church, to take a proactive position vis-à-vis education in independent Kenya, given that most of the leadership in the Church was still predominantly
European, and not wanting to antagonize the new African Government. The Education Act was therefore not derived from a proactive and creative approach, especially in those aspects that affected the Church. As Muhoho (Ibid: 237) observed, “haphazard and make-shift solutions were used while nothing short of a Charter was needed. Bishops should have spelled out, convincingly, an educational policy which could be helpful rather than hostile to ‘nation-building.’”

There were some protagonists in the circle of Catholic education in the 1960s who would have championed the view that they should continue to own their schools and even to expand them (Robinson 1965:19-29). The way forward that they proposed was for the Church to improve greatly the standards of their schools and to share responsibility considerably with lay people. Fostering greater collaboration between parents and teachers was proposed as one of the most important ways to improve the quality of education in the Catholic schools. Even as early as 1965 therefore, the Catholic Church was self-critical in looking at standards in its schools and admitting to finding them wanting. In addition, there would not have been a lack of creative contributions to the direction Catholic schools should have taken, given the foregoing proposal of greater collaboration with lay Christians and strategy to improve quality. It is only regrettable that these currents of development were swept away or seemingly over-whelmed by the unpredictability of government direction, and the bishops’ concern not to be understood as against the steering of the new government. Negotiations were deficient yet stakes were high. It is not surprising that the decisions arrived at were lacking in clarity and open to abuse, as happened in subsequent years.
The Education Bill promulgated in 1967 and passed as 1968 Education Act transferred the management of the secondary schools to Boards of Governors (BOGs). The church which had founded each respective school became its sponsor. Through a reactionary process of negotiation, the Churches secured some delineation of the rights and responsibilities of the school sponsor as channels through which they would continue their mission in the schools. The following, with some annotations, is a list of some of these rights and responsibilities:

- The appointment and transfer of priests and religious will be by the bishop or religious superiors, in consultation with the TSC, which became the employer for all teachers in government schools whether church sponsored or not.

- The sponsors, together with the BOG, have the responsibility to maintain the religious tradition of the school. This responsibility and its accompanying rights were, like many others, far from clear in meaning and scope.

- The sponsor will have the right to enter the school for the purpose of religious instruction and supervision thereof, and for pastoral work among the teachers and pupils. Given that the schools were soon to be led by persons who owed their first allegiance to the employer, the TSC, it was to be with difficulty that the Church would cultivate the leverage to safeguard this right.

- The sponsor has the right, in consultation with the school administration, to use the buildings of the school during ‘out of’ school hours free of charge. Should any damage occur in that period, the sponsor would be required to undertake the cost of the repairs.
• The sponsor would be responsible for the preparation of the Religious Education syllabi and schemes of work, subject to the approval of the Minister for Education. This right was to be fulfilled in an ecumenical setting among the Christian Churches in subsequent years.

• The sponsor may increase from the given (3) the number of weekly periods provided for Religious Education to 4 or 5.

• The sponsor has the right to be consulted in the placement of staff in the school. The greater part of this right was soon neglected especially as pertained to teachers. To date, only in the placement of school principals does the sponsor really enjoy any measure of this right.

• In particular, the appointment of the principal of the school will be by the TSC in consultation with, and as far as possible with the agreement of the sponsor.

• Students were recommended to go to the school of their religious affiliation. No student could however be denied a place in a school on the grounds of religion.

• The parents of a student can request that their child be exempt from religious practices in the school. If on the other hand, the parents request that the student attends religious worship that is not provided for in the school, the school should make arrangements for the provision of such worship in the school. The last two rights challenged Catholic schools to inclusiveness and to take care of the religious needs of persons of other faiths in their school. It has been a useful way of growing a more religiously tolerant society, and on the whole Catholic schools rose up well to this responsibility (KEC, 1982: 42-43).

    The main consequence of the lack of active participation of the Church in the development of the Education Act was to find herself without the means to enforce the rights provided for by the Act. For example, the teachers in a Catholic sponsored school normally felt
responsible to their employer, the TSC. If for any reason, the Church officials were dissatisfied with the performance of a teacher, it could sometimes be a long-drawn process to redress the situation unless the dissatisfaction is rooted in something severe. The Church has had to depend on the good will and understanding of officials in the TSC and the MOE to execute some of its rights. The former were not always forthcoming, and extended periods of tension and dissatisfaction have not been rare.

Another example of this handicap of the church lies in the maintenance of the religious tradition of the sponsor; this has been reduced in practice to mean the teaching of Christian Religion Education (CRE) and isolated moments of pastoral care within the schools. The characteristics of the Catholic School (Catholic School, 1977: Nos. 33-37), which is in essence the on-going and critical syntheses of faith and culture, should influence every aspect of the curriculum, and thus ensure focused efforts to facilitate integral personal development of the students. These, unfortunately, were not safeguarded by the sponsorship agreement enshrined in the Education Act. Tied up in a system strongly controlled by the Ministry of Education, and with limited scope of intervention, the Church would later find that this lapse of safeguards would present difficulties for the efforts at ensuring the Catholic tradition in her schools. In so far as the Church was unable to safeguard its rights and responsibilities in the schools, her capacity to ensure the integral development of the students is compromised. In the context of our focal subject – that of ensuring integral development of the members of the students – these developments are regrettable because schools have become very vulnerable to all kind of external interventions, not necessarily to the profit of the fullness of life of the school community members. The Church’s role in the schools has in some situations been diminished that even in
cases of excessive interference by civic authorities, or the commercialization of the education enterprise, imposition of excessive number of subjects and text-books, Catholic schools have rarely been able to declare a stand in favor of more pedagogically sound approaches. They have seemed to be at the mercy of government policy no matter the developments, and the public outcries.

**Appraisal of the Catholic Missionaries’ Interventions in Schools vis-à-vis the Interest of the Integral Development of Students During the Colonial and Early Post-Colonial Period.**

It has been indicated already that initially, the missionaries opened schools in order to use them to increase church membership. Vatican II and subsequent developments in the understanding of the mission of the Church have shifted emphasis to the development of the theology of the Kingdom of God as contrasted to the theology of the Church. With this shift in emphasis, the Church understands herself as an agent of the Kingdom of God which is greater than the Church. There is, accordingly, a change in the understanding of the role of the Catholic school and the Catholic Church’s involvement in education. In a pluralistic world such as is Kenya today, the Church’s mission in education is broader than simply to use the school as a means to bring in more members to the Church. Education is now regarded as one tool to enable the Church to carry out its total program of evangelization, in the sense that ‘evangelization means bringing the “good news” into all the situations in which humanity is found, so as to renew humanity’ (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 1974, no. 18). Subsequent engagement of the Church in the politics of school in Kenya assumes this greater perspective. It is also an on-going balancing act between adhering to Catholic identity in the narrower sense of insisting on Catholic rituals and rhymes of life, and maintaining a broader Catholic identity where the attempt to safeguard an
atmosphere of Christian dignity for all takes the upper hand. Each of these ‘moments’ has its place in the life of the school, requiring the wisdom to discern the place for the one or the other.

Christian educators were at the forefront of the repudiation of African culture in Colonial times and continued the same albeit, in subtle ways, in Post-Colonial times. African values thus, relegated to the backyard were increasingly identified with magic, witchcraft and other forms of abuse. A major blow for African educational values was the loss of the educating role of African elders and of educating the community. With the transferred loyalty of African youth from the elders of their communities to the missionaries and their agents, the African educating community became fragmented. In some cases, even the family lost its hold on its children. The cumulative impact on African communities and African youth is the sense of a missing link in socialization resulted in lack of a deep sense of identity and authority that springs from having consistent role models. Rossana (2004) underscored the tragedy of the lack of role models for young people in the world of today. The curative processes for this malign must be embraced also by the Church as an education agent in the country, with a moral sense of responsibility for making a different kind of a future for Kenyan youth through cultural and community reconstruction.

**Conclusion**

This paper constitutes part I of a two-part reflection on the role of the Catholic Church’s involvement in Education in Kenya. It has covered the period from the inception of Western Education and Christianity in Kenya untill the period immediately after independence when the foundations for a post-colonial Kenya Education dispensation were being laid.
Efforts of missionaries to initiate, and run schools for Africans, before and during the Colonial period were a major contribution to the development of the people of Kenya, even with the major caveat of the cultural erosion that resulted. Missionary-educated African persons were in the leadership of the movement to free the country from Colonial rule. This is in spite of the perceived deficiency of their effort and intentions in the view of the protagonists. In addition, Catholic schools played a central role in deepening the Christian faith of young people, providing the Church with its first great evangelizers and community builders. By their own admission, the graduates of Catholic schools learnt precious lessons for life, which helped them embrace their civic and family responsibilities with commitment. Many graduates of Catholic secondary schools of the 1950s and 60s have been champions and leaders in many fields of Kenya’s development, displaying heroic commitment to service of society.

Such achievements would likely be very much more fruitful for the young people in societies that provide cultural identity and pride. Thus, while the contribution of missionary education to development in Africa cannot be ignored, the impact of their approaches to African cultures has been to weaken the foundations on which an African Christianity would have grown. Without these cultural and communal foundations the hope for lasting integration that can come out of a holistic education is considerably compromised. In its ongoing engagement with educational developments in Kenya, the Catholic Church can emphasize the path of cultural reconstruction. The opportunity of a Catholic school is a prerogative of developing communities of holistic development to make this option sustainable in the lives of the young people and their families. The efforts and opportunities embraced in this direction will be part of the reflection on
holistic development and fullness of life as engaged in Catholic education in the 1970 to the start of the 21st Century, which will be the subject of Part II of this paper.


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