

INDIGENOUS AGENTS AND THE SCHOOL APOSTOLATE IN UKWUANILAND, 1841–1941

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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 C.M.S. mission schools in Nigeria received no aids in grants from the colonial government. This article is a historical reconstruction, which brings to light the well-articulated contributions of local people in their attempt to establish and fund schools using indigenous initiatives, personnel and resources. Resting on the self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing policy of Henry Venn, the study reveals that, although the establishment of schools in Ukwuaniland 1841–1894 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, an important contribution in the area of the history of religion and education, recommends that local initiatives, needs and aspirations should be taken into consideration in the formulation of education policy in Nigeria.

Keywords: education policy, evangelism, local initiatives, Nigeria

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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 (C.O.

879 Parliamentary Papers 1865). The condition imposed by the British government for giving grants in aids was that only the English language be used in mission schools as a means of communication. Anglican missionaries saw this measure as a design to stifle the spread of the Christian faith, and therefore rejected the grants in aids, which would have helped them solve many financial problems. The C.M.S., faced with acute financial constraints in the establishment and funding of schools, employed local initiatives, personnel and resources to establish and fund schools, which they conceived as a crucial agency in the evangelisation of African societies such as Ukwuaniland.

Much of the documentation of C.M.S. activities in Africa was done by Western missionaries or their protégés. Such accounts no doubt were hagiographic. There is, therefore, the need to bring to light 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 Ukwuaniland, 1841–

1941. The study further 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 in to contact with Western education. Depending largely on primary sources, this article explores the curriculum content of and the recruitment of staff into Anglican mission schools in Ukwuaniland, 1841–1941. 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.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN UKWUANILAND

The first attempt to plant Christianity in Ukwuaniland 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 requested Simon Jonas to read and translate into Igbo the Beatitudes from St. Matthew's Gospel. This reading was followed with a question to the Obi 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

by 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 Ukwuaniland 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 good 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 he discovered that the rising river flooded the whole town, and large market canoes were padding 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 Ukwuaniland 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, Rose, a Sierra Leonean, was posted to Obiaruku as church agent cum school teacher 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 the school had started to make steady progress. Otene was in charge of recruiting teachers. He spent his time with and bought 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, Monday Amudo, a C.M.S. church agent and school teacher, was sent to them in 1913 (Agwuaturu 2002). This was, however, an unofficial arrangement. Hence, the onus of catering for him fell on 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. They came to establish 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. There were also those who went because they thought it was a good thing to do what others were doing. With these methods they drew some of the early pupils who included Benson Maledo, Aaron Ochonogo and

Humphrey Enumejo (Okuegbue 2002). Some adults were interested in learning the alphabet and knowing how to write their names. They were equally 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 did 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 coming to 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 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 co-operation of Ambrose and a few converts, a small mud house for the Anglican agents was set up, and schoolwork began in earnest. With the help of Ambrose, a night school for those who spent all day on the farm, was opened. The school, however, was closed down after a short time due 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, the doctrinal heritage, the way of life and core values of the new faith they were embracing. The indigenous agents were in this sense first and foremost preachers. They used several avenues to make the people they met turn around to embrace the Christian faith (Ajayi 1965; Atandele 1966; Babalola 1988; Coleman 1986). Initially, direct preaching was employed. The areas of convergence in beliefs, namely, the places where Christian doctrines echoed 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 and disturbed the religious sensibilities of the custodians of traditional religious heritage. Some Anglican doctrines were, in the eyes of the adult representatives of traditional religion, simply illogical and even nonsensical. From painful and frosting experiences, indigenous agents realised that conversion by direct appeal to doctrinal logic and the threats of heaven and hell just did not produce the kind of result they had hoped for. On account of 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; Erivwo 1979).

The early schools were staffed and managed by agents whose primary objective was to convert the Ukwuani people to Christianity through education. The result of this association of evangelism with education was that the conversion of some Ukwuani to Christianity was largely through the local mission school rather than through a group of local Christians or through a church building. Thus, one of the first contacts between Ukwuani and Christianity had been through the association of children and local Christian school teachers and catechists, because they were local while outsiders were looked at 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 persuasion in their simple way. In fact, the majority of Ukwuani converts within this period were converted while schooling. For instance, B.C.E. Nwosu, the first Abbi District Superintendent, believed that, without grounding the converts in religious education, the Gospel would not leave a visible and lasting impact on them. 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 Ukwuani children as men and women depended upon the formation of their minds (D.C.C. 1936). All schools conducted 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 had outgrown the school-going age and when they embraced the gospel, they went directly to the church to profess the new faith. However, for a great number of the children, it was the other way round – from the schools to the church. In fact, the elementary schools delivered a continuous stream of baptismal candidates. Undoubtedly, the schools were a great evangelistic agency, the result of regular religious instruction in the Bible and fundamental doctrine, and the employment of none but Ukwuani Christian teachers whose roles would be examined. According to S.U. Ewefah (2002):

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 within the district, at least quarterly.

Okuegbue (2002) stated that the vernacular was the language of instruction. The indigenous agents were convinced that once 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 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 who had not successfully passed an examination in Religious Knowledge, which, as was pointed out 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 craving for the English language, and the urge to acquire skills so as to improve one's social situation, were but a few. Some of the young converts were attracted to the mission schools by socio-economic factors rather than by 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. 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 forgoing survey, we can conclude that, while the church agents regarded education as the handmaiden of the Gospel, pupils were attracted to the mission schools for various reasons.

The schools were set up amidst 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, hence they were sometimes called 'school chapel'. These schools were set up through the voluntary efforts of the people, especially the indigenous 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' accommodations 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 which the C.M.S had to contend with 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 constant requests for teachers to open new stations. Faced with an acute shortage of staff, the C.M.S. adopted two missionary strategies that had already been successfully tried in Sierra

Leone (Odili 2010: 198). The first strategy was to recruit pioneer indigenous lay agents from among converts in the various congregations. The second method was to establish training institutions for the education of the agents in order to enable them to 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 indigenous lay agents comprised women and men of little or no education, without formal training for the work ahead of them. In fact, they learnt missionary service by serving as missionaries in their own humble way. On their level of education prior to their employment as preachers of the Gospel, C.O. Asueka (2004), a retired catechist in Emu-Unor, recalled:

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, very few completed their primary school education before they were employed. Some only passed through Sunday school, while others had been 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 C.M.S. 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 asserts:

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.[...]

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 situation at hand was the case of Akubueze, the schoolmaster at Utagba-Ugbe, who was assisted by C.Y. Otanku who had been a cook. Later on, he was enrolled as a teacher at a salary of £20 per annum.

Although the response of the people to the Gospel in Ukwuaniland was passive, it was not so with the 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 with food, without receiving any payment. A retired head teacher, C.O. Asueka (2004) recalled that:

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

Earlier mention was made that the recruitment and training of African agents began in the colony of Sierra Leone. However, only a few of the first generation of missionary agents who joined the Niger Mission from Sierra Leone had had the advantage of formal education. On the other hand, a great 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 had justified the employment of this category of agents:

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 (cf. Onyeidu 2004: 32).

In the Ukwuani mission field, an acute lack of missionary agents of all grades was evident from the beginning. Initially, the Ndokwa District depended heavily on volunteers from the Isoko, Urhobo and Igbo areas, as it had no training infrastructure of its own in its home base. Recruitment from these areas was, however, scanty and irregular. Besides, the vastness of the Ndokwa District meant that even an army of missionary agents would be insufficient to occupy the mission field at any given time. C.O. Asueka (2004) aptly captures the staffing problem during this period under review, '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 very few spiritually minded men could be got from the aforementioned areas while the mission field was constantly expanding, the native converts decided to look inwards in order to remedy the staff problem. Two main steps were taken in this direction. For one, some of the promising Ukwuani 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 Ukwuani pioneers were mainly tradesmen and women, and farmers who had not received any formal education. Indeed, they learnt on the job. Examples of such indigenous agents were mentioned earlier.

This was how a great number of Ukwuani converts began a life work of pastoral agency. A good example of pastoral agents who fell under this category were D. Otuata, G.O. Ishiekwene and H.C. 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 of those who were then working in the mission fields was suitable training. However, the D.C.C. in 1939 at Abbi decided that two kinds of training were needed: one for girls and boys to be school

mistresses and masters, and another for those who had worked as school mistresses and masters and were suitable for further training, with a view to becoming catechists, and in some cases at least proceeding to holy orders. The first Anglican clergy of Ukwuani origin, the Reverend Emmanuel O. Okolugbo, was ordained in 1966.

TYOLOGIES AND FUNCTIONS OF TEACHERS IN UKWUANILAND, 1841–1941

Meanwhile, it is pertinent to look at the categories of serving agents in the Ukwuani mission field. In fact, the kind of services expected of a particular agent influenced the nature of the training to be given to him. The agents of the Church Missionary Society in Ukwuani 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 school masters (Onyeidu 2004). For the purposes of religious instruction and evangelisation, the agents were engaged as different cadres of scripture readers, interpreters, Christian visitors, local helpers, evangelists and catechists. Admittedly, some categories of agents phased out as a result of increased education and the changing circumstances of the mission. But, 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. Thus, there was no clear-cut division of labour in the mission as each agent played many parts according to the circumstances in which he found himself. Examples of agents who fell under this category were P.R. Anyabene, K.C. Agbadaobi, P.O. Isume and I.M. Johnson (Onyenike 2006).

Equally, a ‘Christian visitor’ functioned as an evangelist. She or he was required to visit house after house, family after family with the intention of making Christ known and leading the people to Him. One of the earliest Ukwuani agents engaged in the service of the C.M.S. was M.O. Osaewe of Abbi. He was accepted as a scripture reader (in Igbo language). Otene of Obiaruku were engaged as ‘Christian visitors’. D.A. Otuata was employed as an interpreter. 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’ has been mentioned previously. These were mainly volunteers from the local Christian congregations who 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. Though not officially appointed by the society, the ‘local helpers’ depended on the charity of local congregations to enable them to keep body and soul together. Very few of them were subsequently absorbed as full-time pupil-teachers or evangelists. Among these were Jecto Ossai of Obiaruku (Osabikwu 2006), J.M. Ibemene of Ashaka (Nduka 2006)

and J.C. Ofuna of Abbi (Eseagwu 2006). Seen without any prospect of advancement in social status, this class of ‘local helpers’ was phased out and replaced with more qualified agents. Asueka (2004) proposes some reasons for this:

The local helpers do not seem to realize that they are not agents of the C.M.S. and that, therefore, no future for them at all. By taking charge of different schools, 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 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 one another. However, in some Ukwuani communities where the dearth of teachers was acute, the monitors performed the same functions as pupil-teachers. Asueka (2004) recalls:

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, 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 to one another.

The catechists, evangelists, interpreters, head teachers and teachers in Ukwuaniland spent most of their time 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 some 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 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 a sermon, helping dying or very sick people and presiding at funerals. ‘Fairly easy tasks’ included marking 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 what to do 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. It is most likely that trained agents had less to do with such tasks because of their modern catechetical formation.

Education (or lack of it) did not seem to affect the more spiritual and pastoral view of the laity about the agents in any way. The agents enjoyed the respect of 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. Reasons for the respect given to the agents included personal character, the 'sacred' character of the agents, and their qualities of leadership. Personal characteristics included age, respectability, modernity, intelligence, sociability, gentleness, justice, good humour, calmness, decency, politeness, sincerity, zeal, talents for reading, singing and public speaking (oratory).

Their 'sacred' character took three main forms. The most popular and most varied expression was the idea that these leaders had a vocation or a 'sacred' character distinct both from that of missionaries and laymen. The second view was that these pastoral agents reflected the sacred character of a missionary in as much as he was the representative of, or collaborator with, missionaries. Finally, there was the more revered view that they were a positive link between the missionaries and the people, both Christians and non-Christians.

Among the criteria for selecting catechists, teachers, evangelists and interpreters were the following: the candidate must have led a normal Christian life, shown active faith and good moral conduct, and preferably had to be a properly married man. He had to possess faith, leadership skills and integrity, and had to be intelligent enough to have practical ability and efficiency to do work. Such a candidate had to be 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 had not had sufficient education.

It should be noted that most of the agents were married. As married people they led good Christian lives and their families were looked upon as models, excelling any other good Christian family. Their married status gave them some guarantee of maturity and better moral behaviour. Moreover, as they were settled, there was hope for continuity in their work. In some communities, families seemed not to be very dynamic, they tended to be what the husbands were. If husbands were pious, exemplary and zealous, the rest of the family followed suits especially the wives, a

few of whom accompanied their husbands on their evangelical campaigns and in the discharge of their duties.

CONCLUSION

With the coming of Christianity, Anglican agents introduced literacy, which greatly fascinated some Ukwuani people. The new skill was important because it seemed to give special powers to an individual that other members of society did not possess. In fact, some Ukwuani 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 Ukwuani placed the new skill 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. Just as medicine men had to undergo formal training before they were fully admitted into the profession, so pupils had to go through a period of instruction in mission schools before they could secure the new power. Literacy resulted not only in relatively well-paid employment in the government and private sectors, it also effected 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 next as Christian adherents.

This new interest in Western education manifested itself in the establishment of schools. Since the C.M.S. lacked sufficient funds to build and maintain schools over wide areas, it had to depend on the co-operation of the local people in the provision of land and the construction and maintenance of buildings and personnel. The initial volunteering by and later recruitment of local personnel of various categories was necessitated by a dearth of trained teachers. Sometimes, communities paid teachers’ salaries and provided them with accommodation. Consequently, local initiatives, needs and aspirations had to be taken into consideration in the formulation of education policy in the country.

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