



## *Comparing Colonial Education Discourses in the French and Portuguese african Empires: an essay on hybridization*

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*Comparación de los discursos de educación  
colonial en los imperios africanos francés y  
portugués: un ensayo sobre la hibridación*

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## **Abstract**

This essay analyzes Portuguese, French and British educational rhetoric highlighting relations between the colonial administration and the central structures of power, pinpointing ambiguities and ambivalence's which went across the different structures of imperial authority, namely the discourses about the government, the civilization and the education of the colonized. The study proposes to go beyond a "traditional" vision of educational change, i.e. a concept based on the analysis of influences, forces or relations of cause-effect about the political aspect of education. In contrast with the perspectives that consider colonies as homogeneous cultural identities, as extensions of the metropolitan ideas and practises, I tend to emphasize the symbiotic relations that developed between the Empires and the metropolis. This position contradicts a representation of colonialism as a coherent and consistent process and defines the colonial scenario as a context of conflict between colonizer and colonized, in which the ideas and practises about the processes associated to the civilization of Africans are open to negotiation and restructuring of different kind. To address educational change from a comparative perspective also means to analyse how the discourses about colonial education became known and circulated, at the transnational level, and also to understand how these discourses became accepted as a norm and therefore transformed in local strategies and concrete programmes of action. That perspective facilitates the understanding of the discourses about education that crossed the colonial space which produced internal disparities relatively to the processes of school expansion, to the pedagogical models and to curriculum organization, contradicting the concept of educational policy as the local implementation of programmes produced in the European metropolis.

*Key Words:* History colonial education; Comparative education; Empires; Discourse analysis; Colonialism; Africa

## **Resumen**

Este ensayo analiza la retórica educativa portuguesa, francesa y británica destacando las relaciones entre la administración colonial y las estructuras centrales del poder, señalando las ambigüedades y ambivalencias que atraviesan las diferentes estructuras de la autoridad imperial, es decir, los discursos sobre el gobierno, la civilización y la educación del colonizado. El estudio propone ir más allá de una visión «tradicional» del cambio educativo, es decir, un concepto basado en el análisis de influencias, fuerzas o relaciones de causa-efecto sobre el aspecto político de la educación. En contraste con las perspectivas que consideran las colonias como identidades culturales homogéneas, como extensiones de las ideas y prácticas metropolitanas, tiendo a enfatizar las relaciones simbióticas que se desarrollaron entre los imperios y la metrópoli. Esta posición contradice la representación del colonialismo como un proceso coherente y consistente, y define el escenario colonial como un contexto de conflicto entre colonizador y colonizado, en el que las ideas y prácticas sobre los procesos asociados a la civilización de los africanos están abiertos a la negociación y reestructuración de diferente tipos. Abordar el cambio educativo desde una perspectiva comparada también significa analizar cómo se conocieron y difundieron los discursos sobre la educación colonial, a nivel transnacional, y también cómo estos discursos fueron aceptados como norma y, por lo tanto, transformados en estrategias locales y programas concretos de acción. Esa perspectiva facilita la comprensión de los discursos sobre educación que atravesaron el espacio colonial, los cuales produjeron disparidades internas en relación a los procesos de expansión escolar, a los modelos pedagógicos y a la organización curricular, contradiciendo el concepto de política educativa así como la implementación local de programas producidos en la metrópoli europea.

*Palabras clave:* Historia de la educación colonial; Educación comparada; Imperios; Análisis del discurso; Colonialismo; África

## 1. Colonial discourse analysis

For different reasons, the idealised discourses and the official versions about colonial education in the African context clash with the local circumstances of government forcing the revision, sometimes the subversion, of principles and objectives defined by the metropolitan governments. Very often we realise that the same ‘author’ interprets the reality he observes according to the statute and the local from where he speaks and acts, frequently making use of arguments of a total opposite signal<sup>1</sup>. Following short what Michel Foucault called ‘the governmentalisation of the State’ *to govern at a distance*<sup>2</sup> implies the invention and the construction of a vast set of technologies which link calculations and strategies developed in the political centres thousands of points distributed in the space<sup>3</sup>. As such, the analysis of the discourse is linked to the superposition of discourses produced at the global level with the discourses produced at the local level, a process through which the relations of *power-knowledge* are developed in parallel to the technologies of *government at a distance*. These discontinuities in the *scripts* of educational *governance* (Meyer et al, 1997), permits to understand the co-existence of cultural references and clear political positions, even opposite, in the lusophone (and franco-phone) space. They underline, on the other hand, the importance of the networks of global diffusion (Ramirez and Rubinson, 1979; Ramírez and Boli, 1987) and of a specific reception, of internationalisation and of indigenisation, of supra-national integration and of intra-national diversification (Schriewer, 1993). These sharing, as I did demonstrate elsewhere (Madeira, 2006), results in totally different appropriations, sometimes even opposed, from pre-suppositions inscribed in the discourse about education, making clear how the discourse productions are used to legitimise the practices of inscription and domination destined to the populations and cultural contexts with characteristics very different among them.

This essay proposes to go beyond a “traditional” vision of educational change, i.e. a concept based on the analysis of influences, forces or relations of cause-effect about the political aspect of education (Wolf, 1982; Thomas & Postlethwaite, 1983, Wesseling, 1991). In contrast with the perspectives which consider the colonies as homogenous cultural identities, as extensions of the metropolitan ideas and practices, I tend to emphasise the symbiotic relations which developed between the Empires and the metropolis (Said, 1993; Cooper, 1994; Thomas, 1994). This position contradicts a representation of colonialism

1 About that we can show some paradigmatic examples, either in France or en Portugal: Jules Ferry, a most bitter assimilator in the metropolis reviews his position after an inquest which took place in Senegal; Antonio Enes, was very critical in relation to the role of the Church in the education, at the end, whilst General-Governor of Moçambique, goes in defence of an important role for the missionaries in the colonial context; Lopo Vaz de Sampaio e Melo, who defended the persecution of religious orders in the metropolis considered, at the end, their destruction in the colonies appalling etc.

2 While strategies of power, the principles of government imply in complex and variable relations between the calculations and acts of those who look for exercising the domination over a territory, a population, a nation and a microphysics of power acting at a capillary level among the varied practices of control which develop at the level of a given territory. “To govern at a distance” involves processes of translating different kinds through which associations between the objectives of the authorities which wish to govern and the individual projects of organisation, groups and individuals which are subjects to the government are forged. Cfr. Nikolas Rose. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999: 19 e 48.

3 Foucault, Michel. “Governmentality”. In the Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality, G. Burchel e P. Miller (Eds.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991: 103.

as a coherent and consistent process and defines the colonial scenario as a context of conflict between colonizer and colonised, in which the ideas and practices about the processes associated to the civilisation of Africans are open to negotiation and restructuring of different kind (Kumar, 1991; Thomas, 1994; Bhabha, 1997; Cooper & Stoler, 1999). Therefore the approach that I will sketch here emphasises the contradictory and conflicting aspects contained in the colonial discourse (Thomas, 1994; Stoler & Cooper, 1997). This implies in a particular understanding about the political and cultural relationship which was developed among the colonies and the metropolis and, within this perspective, exploits it from the configuration of the discourse field about education considering that it limits a historically space in a set of other mechanisms that crossed the colonial space.

This methodological choice is tried and aims at exploring two possibilities which have been of interest to the scientific community within the frame of historical-comparative research in education. On the one hand, to analyse the lack of continuities between the official ideological concepts about education (incorporated in the discourses which originated in the metropolis or even locally) and the strategies of school expansion put in practice in the colonial contexts; on the other hand, to map the circulation of discourses about education at the level of colonial peripheries, highlighting the processes of transfer and of selective taking up which go across the colonies themselves (Nóvoa, Carvalho, Correia, Madeira & O, 2002; Schriever & Keiner, 1992; Schriever, 2006; Popkewitz, 2005; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Madeira, 2006).

As such, to look at educational changes from a comparative perspective means to analyse how the discourses about colonial education became known and circulated, at the transnational level, and also to understand how these discourses became accepted as a norm and therefore transformed in local strategies and concrete programmes of action. In that sense it is easy to understand why discourses about education which crossed the colonial space produced internal disparities relatively to the processes of school expansion, to the pedagogical models and to curriculum organisation, contradicting the concept of educational policy as the local implementation of programmes produced in the European metropolis.

I believe that, from this theoretically defined place, we are able to question other types of relations between the colonial administration and the central structures of power, as well as to question ambiguities and ambivalences which went across the different structures of imperial authority, namely the discourses about the government the civilisation and the education of the colonized (Slemon & Tiffin, 1989).

## 2. 'National' Types, Systems of Government and Comparison of Educational Policies

«L'*autre* est la raison d'être de l'Éducation Comparée: l'*autre* qui sert de modèle ou de référence, qui légitime des actions ou qui impose des silences, que l'on imite ou que l'on colonise. L'éducation Comparée fait partie d'un champ de pouvoirs au sein duquel s'organisent des centres et des périphéries, se construisent des pratiques discursives qui consacrent des *sens* et définissent des *limites*... Notre attitude intellectuelle subit l'influence du rôle joué par l'Europe (l'Occident) en tant que référent silencieux de toutes les histoires. Comme si l'Europe était la seule catégorie théoriquement connaissable, toutes les autres histoires n'ayant droit qu'à un statut empirique» (Nóvoa, 1998 : 51-52).

The characterisation of educational policies through the identification of differences and similarities of the colonial administrative systems implemented by France and England in Africa is widely documented in the literature which compares the government of the two European powers (Bets, 1961; Deschamps, 1963; Crowder, 1964; Clignet & Foster, 1964; Ipaye, 1969). These descriptions, generally originated in the metropolis and frequently supported in official reports and in speeches of political propaganda, tend to oppose the French colonial system, essentially bureaucratic, centralised and assimilating to the English system considered more pragmatic, decentralised and liberal. The differences between these two ideal types would be originated in the 'historical' characteristics and in the "political" culture of the two nations. One is republican, even Jacobine, based on a humanism defined by theoretical and abstract principles, thus resulting in a universalistic, unifying and egalitarian tendency. The other, embedded in a political culture more "aristocratic", inspired on a liberal conservative and in the *laissez faire* doctrine, would rather tend to respect the position and the culture of local authorities – considered to a certain extent, as "peers" according to the noble tradition of the English gentry – attitude which supposedly, favour the practice of a kind of "indirect government".

Another series of myths were associated to the construction of a polarized image of the French and English political systems. For example, the one that argued that the French implemented a colonisation system without doctrine and method, in contrast to the British colonisation (and de-colonisation) process, based, from its onset on the preparation for "self-government"; the persistence of direct government methods, based on the principles of domination-subordination, on the French system, in contrast to the autonomy the English gave to the Africans, in relation to meeting the needs and the "welfare" of the indigenous populations. This set of representations would have re-enforced the idea according to which the French cultural policy tended, especially, to administrative uniformity, unification between the metropolitan territories and those from overseas, tending therefore to the construction of an educational system aiming at assimilating the Africans to the French culture, or at least, submitting the interests of the indigenous people to the civilising mission of the mother-Nation. In summary, France would have bet in the training of a local elite cultivated according to the French moral values and cultural habits, a process which could be considered based on the "assimilation" doctrine. Regarding England, the discourse about colonial policy tended to present a representation based on opposing principles, based on the adaptation to the local conditions and on the respect for the native indigenous authorities – the "indirect rule" – implying in a truly decentralising policy aimed at training the Africans for "self-government".

It is not difficult to imagine that, similarly to the "national" and governmental types, the comparative styles also tended to reproduce the set of evidences which the historiography of European colonisation in Africa crystallised around the opposition between the francophone and Anglo-Saxon "systems" thus making it possible to describe the educational results met by both nations. The construction of representations, based on the principle of complementarity between the *art and the science of government*, subordinated to political interests of a supra-national nature, aimed at very often illustrating the "good government" of the colonised populations. In fact, despite the ruptures of paradigms implemented by British and French critical anthropology and sociology during the 60s and 70s, the reading of the colonial phenomenon went on, in recent times, to inspire stereotyped representations of these deliberately radicalized representations.



"British Europeanisers [...] hoped to turn their subjects into black Englishmen, complete with middle-class standards and Methodist morality. French Europeanizers [...] hoped to transform tribesmen in French-speaking citizens of the "republic one and indivisible". Portuguese Europeanizers dreamed of their country's Lusitanian mission and envisaged their future empire as an overseas extension of Portugal with a special pattern resembling Brazil's" (Gann & Duignan, 1971: 216).

The analyses of the governor's reports, of the local administration and of private groups, for example, constitute a fundamental basis of work for the dismantling of this stereotyped perspective, exclusively centred on official documents, with permits to mix up the similarities and relativise – or re-enforce – the differences, underlying the contradictions of the discourses about education in a colonial context. On the other hand to work on discourses about education originated in different spaces and times (the colonial space of France and Portugal) makes it possible to widen up the table of comparison centred in the unit state-nation for the vast dimension of the colonial Empires. By enlarging the scope of comparison analysing these discourses as configurations allows us analyse the diffusion, transformation and appropriation of concepts and pedagogical models as well as their transformation in technologies of educational incorporation (models of teaching, school, curriculum) within the frame of networks of knowledge.

### **3. The Educational Rhetoric and the Construction of the Empire: Portugal and France**

#### **3.1. Portugal**

The system of Portuguese colonisation in Africa, based, from a doctrinaire point of view, on the basic principles of the international Liberalism, whose general characteristics entered Portugal via the double French and English influences, was set essentially on the historical mission and on the colonial vocation which justified the historical, geographic and political imperative of our stay in the continent. Emphatic and a somehow messianic, this discourse went through the political cycles and the transitions of the regime, with few changes, from the end of the Monarchy up to the implementation of the "Estado Novo". Centred on the civilising mission, on the nationalisation of the Empire and, later, on its "portugualisation", the Portuguese colonial idea aimed at the construction of a link between the colonial unity and the national identity, to justify the national grandeur, relatively to the internal public opinion as well as externally in relation to other potential European colonies. In this aspect the Portuguese colonial policy was clearly inscribed in the dynamics of international agreements which regulated the association of the "right to exploitation" to the "right of civilisation", an argument which presupposed the sharing of a set of principles, transversal to several colonising powers<sup>4</sup>. Based on this doctrine, the Portuguese colonial endeavour in terms of education by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was oriented mainly by the principle

4 I recall for the purpose the three African conferences: the Conference of Berlin, 1884; the Conference of Brussels, 1891; the Treaty of Versailles, 1919, and later on the Conventions of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1919.

of the “assimilation to the national culture”, although it distinguished, in practice, the “civilised” population (the white colonial population, Portuguese or from European origin and mestizos who came from the urban areas of the coast) from the “non-civilised” population (Black Africans, mainly from the rural areas). The teaching in the colonies was being built, from the early days, within the framework of this duplicity of public, implying a set of modalities of teaching, content and strategies of differentiated school incorporation. However, the type of primary education offered was based on a type of school inspired on the European metropolitan model, with a uniform basic curriculum, academic and, in the case of the schools aimed at teaching the Africans, (rudimental primary schooling) simplified.

Similar to other areas of the imperial dominance, Portugal was late, relatively to France and England, in the definition of a colonial educational policy, at least until the mid thirties in the twentieth century. This lack of definition, was considered responsible for the inefficiency of the colonial administration along with the co-existence of opposite opinions about the project of colonisation and, consequently, of education. As a result, the education governance tended to evidence a centralised tendency, mainly ‘direct’ in outlook; anticlerical, internally, but multi-confessional in the external propaganda; hesitating, at the level of strategies of incorporation of the African masses, and ambiguous in relation to the status that these could adopt in the cadre of the Portuguese colonial administration. In administrative terms, and in practice, the decentralisation attempts which gave more manoeuvre to the intervention of the governors and high – commissioners in the colonies until the mid-twenties, were not able to compensate, from a legal point of view, the tendency of the colonial assimilation to the metropolis. What did change where, instead, the arguments used to justify their new powers. Bear in mind, for example, the discourse about the characteristics of the Portuguese colonialism of exception, that of the “undefined people between Europe and Africa” (Madeira, 2003: 44 - 47) turned towards the “singular predisposition of a hybrid colonisation of the tropics”, according to Gilberto Freyre, thesis already divulged in the international circles, through the work of Sir Harry Johnston *The Negro in the New World* (1910), a book referred to by a whole generation of Portuguese-Africans to confirm the thesis of the “kindness of the Portuguese” in the African colonisation<sup>5</sup>.

Different from the paternalistic image that Portugal tried to show in the international circles, and in spite of successive governments (monarchic and republican) claiming for themselves the mission of civilising as a right of tutelage over people they considered to be under their political jurisdiction and moral protection, the mission of “educating the bodies” and “save the souls” finished up to be given to the Portuguese Catholic Church. In this respect, the unity of action of the Catholic Church, disputed and controlled regularly at least up to the thirties, succeeded in moving across the different positions which, in the metropolis and in the colonies, became aligned by divergent conceptions, even contradictory, up to the beginning of the Second World War. In simple words, for Portuguese Catholic Church “to civilise” meant “to Christianise”, a mission for which the

5 Cfr. Sir Harry H. Johnston, *The Negro in the new world*. New York: Macmillan, 1910; in spite of Sir Johnston’s words of praise for the Portuguese about the procedures of colonisation used in the African colonisation, we shall not forget his position as Vice-president of the Royal Geographical Society of London and his diplomatic post as Consul of England in Moçambique (1890), when the British Crown fought with Portugal the limits of the frontier in the South. In fact, in publications at a later date, Harry Johnston abandoned the diplomatic register even inverting the sense of the praise. See «Race problems in the new Africa». *African Affairs*, vol 2 (4), 1924

regular priests claimed themselves historical rights. The anticlerical conceptions which attempted to annihilate or control their action in education were of different kinds. The perspectives which were claimed of French influence, represented by the liberalism of the eighteenth century, defended a civilising action Illuminist by its origin based on the respect for equality among men – an argument strongly supported by a conception essentially legal of equality among people.

On the other hand the utilitarian perspectives, relating the education effort to the exploitation of the colonial resources, considered the «education through the inculcation of working habits» the most viable option, arguments which tended to call forth the efficacy of the association between the “civilizing duty” with the “right to explore”. Lastly a third path - one which would end up by imposing itself in the arguments and practices of the colonial government until the independencies – defended a Portuguese type of “assimilation”, crafted at the image of “Greater France” extending the grandiosity of the Portuguese spirit to the overseas provinces. This thesis suggested that the economic and social advancement of the indigenous population depended on a set of principles moral and spiritual in character. Paradoxically, was during this phase, coincident with the rise of “Estado Novo” regime that the role of the Catholic Church began to be officially recognized as determinant for the colonization process, that is to say, instrumental to the “nationalization” of the Portuguese Africa.

By implicitly associating Church evangelization with the State action in the “assimilation” of the African peoples, this policy approached the British incorporating strategy which clearly associated for a long time “civilizing colonialism” with “State colonialism”. The presuppositions of this association where, nevertheless, very different from the British imperialism ones. The “right to explore” arguments, in juridical terms based on historical accounts and the “civilizing duty” supported by a moral imperative, articulated to produce a “lusophone bread”. This variant was at the same time liberal (since it was funded on the idea of economic resource exploitation) and, at the same time humanist, based on the idea of the assimilation of the dark races plunged in the “secular night” to the spirit of the national culture.

### **3.2. The French Civilizing Mission: To “cultivate” the African mind**

As with the British case the French presence in West Africa went through different phases. In Gifford and Weiskel work, a pivotal comparative study of the colonial systems in Africa, two particularly important periods in the history of French colonization are considered (Gifford and Louis, 1978: 663-711). A first “pre-colonial” period (1815 – 1890) and a second moment, characterized by the consolidation of the “colonial rule” (1894 – 1945). During the first phase the French colonizers were faced with two major problems. In Senegal, due to deficiencies in the colonizing process, the French were having problems both in controlling the rise of the trade communities that were establishing in the coastal areas at a rising rate and of expanding its influence to the interior territories. As such the administration policy began by authorizing teaching in the local languages at the public schools (1816), by tolerating the missionary activity (1820-1830) and it ended up by handing out education to the Catholic Church<sup>6</sup>. This laissez-faire attitude was justified by the argument that schooling was a means whereby the French influence could be extended and preserved among the traditional authorities, in particular in the mainland territories, ruled by Islamic leaders.

6 Cfr. Joseph Gaucher. *Les Débuts de l'Enseignement en Afrique Francophone: Jean Dart et l'École Mutuelle de Saint-Louis du Sénégal*. Paris, 1968.



In most Haute Volta schools, in the Ivory Coast and in the northern Islamic territories of Senegal the French school system task was to educate the individuals that could eventually assume the role of traditional authorities. In these schools, some of them destined to the sons of tribal chiefs and gentile authorities the curriculum was centred on teaching the French language and some subsidiary subjects related with local aspects of everyday life (Gifford & Weiskel, 1978; Gann & Duignam, 1971). The remaining schools were targeted at the training of interpreters and administrative functionaries aiming at consolidating the commercial relationships and at minimizing antagonisms between the local populations and the French colonial administration.

As a philosophy, the discourse on “assimilation” progressively transformed into a cultural imperialist doctrine, reflecting the wish of forging the political and cultural uniformity of a “Greater France”. Education represented a means by which the overseas territories could be integrated in an increasingly expansion Empire and a strategy for the transformation of Africans into *black Frenchmen*. French assimilationist objectives manifested themselves in the type of the administrative organization, highly centralized, by which the colonies were considered as extensions of the metropolitan territory. However, It would be misleading to think that the assimilation policy was to be the norm in every colonial situation or even that the assimilation policies translate in effective control of the education matters in all colonies. In spite of the creation of the Colonial Ministry, in 1894; the French were far from ensuring a tight control over the colonial education systems, of providing enough well prepared teachers, of financing the schooling functioning, a set of factors that cumulated with a ill defined educational political strategy (Gifford & Weiskel, 1978; Kiwanuka, 1993). In fact, up to the first decades of the twentieth century, the educational provisions were made by the local administration, attempting to respond to the educational needs of each territory whether in quantitative or qualitative terms (Clignet, 1968). At the end of the nineteenth century at the peak of the metropolitan assimilationist rhetoric, the development of the educational structures in North and West French Africa was very much dependent on the funding arising out of private initiative such as the *Alliance Française* or in the hands of Catholic missionary societies.

On the other hand the French educational policy was very much influenced by the British educational experience, in such a way that the principles of “indirect rule” inspired several colonial governor strategies as with the case of Lyautey, Gallieni or Van Vollenhoven. Appointed High-Commissioner to the Maroc in 1907, Louis-Hubert Lyautey administrated the protectorate (1912-1916) by granting his support to the local Islamic chieftaincies and by seeking cooperation with the sultanate regime. His administration was marked by the respect of the local habits, both in religious and cultural terms. Joseph Simon Gallieni, on his turn, governed Madagascar (1896 – 1905) on the basis of the “oil spill” principle considering that education was essential to the development of the local populations. Gallieni interested himself in the local cultures, favouring the local languages protection, themes about which he produced extended works and remarks (Dimier, 1998; Clignet & Foster, 1964). Lastly, Joost Van Vollenhoven, appointed Governor-general of the French West Africa in 1916, granted the traditional authorities with unprecedented powers and responsibilities in the colonial administration, paying particular attention to the “*évolués*” natives. No doubt Vollenhoven was trying to develop the state strengths by using the traditional authorities as counterparts and not as opponents, and certainly this could be considered as a way of colonial control devise. Nevertheless, this was much closer to the British “indirect rule” style than it was to the French “assimilationist” or even “associationist” native policies.

The acts approved in parliament, in 1902, calling forth the secularization of all schools run by the Catholic Church in West Africa and the climate caused by the Dreyfus affair gave way to a new phase in the organisation of the school system in the colonies. The expansion of a European school system and the need to control the missionary supply on education called forth a reorganisation of the public sector. The two decrees passed by Governor-General Ernest Roume in 1903 fitted neatly in the anticlerical feelings that were becoming evident since 1880, when Jules Ferry, Ministry of the Public Education had promoted a compulsory, laic and free educational school system. Under Roume's new administration the universalization of education turned out to be one of the central objectives of the French civilizing mission in Africa. Clearly influenced by the thinking of Gallieni and Lyautey, and pedagogically supported by Gustave Le Bon and Léopold Saussure theories, Roume considered that assimilation was not an attuned policy to a vast and diverse province such as the French West Africa (Le Bon, 1894; Saussure, 1899). By contesting the frenchifying metropolitan policies, Roume thought that the Africans should evolve according to their own lines, and under this conception, the curriculum should be "adapted to the colonial needs". Henceforth a free, secular system of education was created granting particular emphasis to the French language as a medium of teaching. The educational structures were set up in order to respond to the colonial pragmatic needs and were divided in *écoles de villages*, designated to the training of interpreters, the *écoles regionales* aimed at the training of administration functionaries, and the *écoles urbaines* for the training of Africans that were to fill posts in the French colonial administration. The urban schools directed to the European and to the "assimilated" individuals were designed to work along metropolitan lines whether in terms of the teaching staff as with regards to the curriculum. Rural or regional schools were destined to the native population and, as such, the curriculum was adapted to the local populations' special needs. This two apparently opposed principles (assimilation/adaptation) were used in twofold ways: one directed at the expansion of school opportunities (at the elementary level), crafted for the majority of Africans, the other directed at limiting their access of assimilated natives (to the secondary level school opportunities).

In 1907 Ernest Roume retired being replaced by William Merlaud-Ponty in the government of French West Africa. Ponty's perception of native educational policy could not be more dissimilar than that of his predecessor as was shown by his circular published in 1909 under the theme of *Politique des Races*. In this document the new Governor-General clearly demonstrated his preference for the principle of "direct rule" this implying a reduction of the intermediaries between the local administration and the traditional authorities in the villages. In this way a new native policy orientation emerged downplaying the role that had been previously accorded to the traditional authorities in the French colonial administration. In educational terms Ponty was very well aware of the French civilizing mission towards the Africans, and as a result the "adapted education" path was object of serious revisions. In 1914 in the eve of the I World War, Merlaud-Ponty appointed Georges Hardy as the new General Inspector for Education in the French West Africa. Though they were never promulgated, Hardy's directives reinforced the laws and decrees passed by Ernest Roume from 1903, marking the return to an ambiguous educational policy midway the consolidation of a metropolitan school model and the construction of a school system "adapted to the needs of Africans" (Gifford & Weiskel, 1978; Gann & Duignam, 1971). However, Hardy's efforts apparently concentrated on the separation between those fit to receive a European type of education drawn at the image of the metropolitan school system and, on the other end, a mass schooling model destined to incorporate the vast majority of the African natives.

In any case, the superposition of different strategies and discourses about the colonial education policy allow us to question the idea, much celebrated by traditional historiography, of a homogeneous and universal type of school curriculum aimed at the transformation of Africans into “black Frenchmen”. On the contrary, we may perceive that perhaps until the 30’s of twentieth century the policies pursued in the French West Africa territories tried, precisely, to avoid the excessive frenchification of the native population. For that purpose the continuous prevalence of a dual educational system (one for Europeans and assimilated natives) the other aimed at the mass of native population, regardless the more or less importance given to the traditional authorities, was always a strategic means of controlling the eligibility for cooperation with the colonial administration<sup>7</sup>. That does not implies however the workings of straightforward imperial ideology of assimilation. As I have tried to show the building of a school curriculum in the French West Africa was very much conditioned by individual strategies and governing styles predicated on the Governor-general’s interpretations emanated from Paris. Likewise, the discourse on “adapted education”, although inspired in the British colonial South-Saharan Africa experiences worked more often as a constraint than as a possibility for the majority of natives. It meant generally speaking an emphasis on a practical and moral education while downplaying a more scientific curriculum.

## 4. Concluding remarks

Lord Lugard Governor-General of Nigeria (1914 – 1919) the great colonial doctrinaire between the two wars, was a forerunner in the comparisons of the British and French colonial systems. Lugard knew well the French colonizing doctrines and he maintained close contacts with Maurice Delafosse at the head of *École coloniale* (1909 – 1926) as well as with his successor, Henri Labouret with whom he created and directed the *Institut international des langues et civilisations africaines* (London). Lord Lugard cherished the opinion that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the French colonial doctrines had evolved from assimilation to association and that they were approaching the “indirect rule” British policy. On the other hand, Maurice Delafosse had, more than once, contested the idea that “indirect rule” was a prerogative exclusive to the British colonial system:

«Il serait plus sage d’observer ce que font les Anglais dans celles de leurs possessions qui sont analogues aux colonies françaises voisines, Gambie, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Goald Coast où la proportion de l’élément européen et de l’élément indigène, de même que le stade d’évolution de ce dernier, se présente approximativement sous le même aspect qu’au Sénégal, en Guinée, en Côte-d’Ivoire et au Soudan. Nous constaterions alors que cette centralisation que d’aucun reproche si fort à la France dans son administration coloniale est aussi accentuée chez nos voisins que chez nous»<sup>8</sup>.

7 As Ruth Ginio attempted to show in an article published in *Cahiers d’études africaines*, most of the chiefs that were integrated in the French administrative system were not “traditional” rules but were appointed and trained by the French. In fact, only on rare occasions, African chiefs who had ruled before French colonisation received the titles of *Chefs supérieur* or *Roi*, and were allowed to continue to rule over their territories. Cfr. Ruth Ginio, French Colonial Reading of ethnographic research: The case of the “Desertion” of the Abron King and its Aftermath. *Cahiers d’études africaines* (166), XLII-2, 2002, pp.337-357.

8 Delafosse, Maurice. «Politique coloniale. Pour ou contre la décentralisation. L’excès en tout est un défaut». *Dépêche coloniale*, 1<sup>er</sup> Août (1923).

The lack of continuity between the idealised discourses and the local practices were, more frequently than one thinks, a fact transversal to any of the colonial empires which have been studied. I should add that, in my opinion, such discrepancies were mainly associated to local or inter-state contingencies and constraints (related to historical conditions, geographical locations and concrete political rivalries) rather than to divergences or even ideological antagonisms related to programmes of action (or *scripts* of government) of a national-metropolitan nature. In fact when we focus on discourses which circulate in the interior of the different colonial contexts the contingencies of the colonial administration and the ambivalence of the European policies concerning education reveal themselves even clearly. This suggests that the colonial exercise was ruled by, not rarely, a set of commitments, arrangements and *bricolages*, *scaffoldings*, tending to articulate orientations very often abstract and general, making use of schemes, techniques and informal arrangements of discourse regulation, specifically in the field of education and in the teaching of the natives<sup>9</sup>.

Needless to say, at least until the eve of the II World War, the definition of an education policy in the African colonies was more dependent on the native policies of the colonial powers and on the prevalent views about the natives role (and the Europeans) in the colonization process than anything else. As such the educational debates were subordinated to the doctrines that originated in different fields of production (native policy, colonization doctrines, economic exploitation, work force formation, etc.) other than the strictly pedagogical or educational fields (theories and philosophies of education, models of schooling, types of curriculum).

Notwithstanding, when we compare the Portuguese and French colonial doctrines we come across the same type of hybridizations which also show at the level of the educational discourses. The construction of a dual educational system, one for the masses, the other for the Europeans and assimilated (or *evolués*) was a feature characteristic both to the Portuguese and French colonial educational structures. The appropriation of the concept “adapted education” by the Portuguese and French colonial administration also bear some resemblances since it implied a particular strategy, somehow ambiguous, on the educational system supply side. For the Portuguese colonial administration, the concept of “adapted education” was tied to a restrictive type of curriculum aimed at the masses, with emphasis on agriculture, manual skills and domestic sciences, implying a strongly moral character. In this respect, French and Portuguese doctrines converged into an understanding of the type of moral teaching that should be given at the primary school: it involved a secular moral, based on the principles of the Enlightenment, as opposed to the British understanding of a truly religious social gospel committed to the formation of character which was strongly embedded in the evangelic Protestantism. These two conflicting ways of envisaging the human development through education also had consequences at the colonial level. For the Portuguese and French administration *education* was a right that should be guaranteed to each citizen, a right that committed the State to the provision of an educational free, compulsory and secular school system. To the British colonial administration *education* was a privilege to be privately acquired

9 I refer to the concepts of “*bricolage*” and “*scaffolding*” in the semantic area attributed respectively by Tomaz Tadeu da Silva and Thomas Popkewitz. Cfr. Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (2000). *Teoria Cultural e Educação. Um vocabulário crítico*. Belo Horizonte : Autêntica, pp. 21-22 ; Thomas S. Popkewitz (1998). *Struggling for the Soul. The Politics of Schooling and the Construction of the Teacher*. New York & London: Teachers College / Columbia University, pp. 30-31.



making possible to any group, association or institution to come forward with a particular type of educational offer. In the English tradition education was not a given fact, it was a market for individual and collective advancement closely tied with economic and social development.

Therefore, the assimilation in the Portuguese and French civilizing educational doctrine implied an increase in cultural homogeneity and huge standardization, a fact that called forth centralized mechanisms of diffusion and appropriation of school models and pedagogical theories (with clear implications on system organization, curricula, teacher training, funding and administration). Somehow paradoxically, language issues were pivotal in changing the politics of education since the Portuguese and French colonies were taught in the imperial language downplaying the vernaculars as a medium of teaching. The British, on the contrary, were more concerned with the formation of habits, of skills and of a conduct attuned to the formation of a workforce prepared to accept the concepts of individual and collective progress and modernisation. As long as the masses could master this understanding the language of apprenticeship was secondary for that matter. Due to the difficulties of “governing at a distance” the costs involved in assimilating the Africans to the European metropolitan mores were much higher than in the British colonies where the civilizing task was supervised but had been handed out to the private initiative.

To analyse the field of utilisation of these ideas, concepts and theories it is not the same as to analyse the set of strategies which are implied in the defence of a particular kind of *Education* for the African people. It is not a question of perceiving which meanings associated by each colonial nation to the notion of “direct government” or “indirect”, “colonisation” or “nationalisation”, (and, the same way: “civilisation”, “instruction”, “education”, “assimilation”, “association”, “adapted education”, “teaching of adaptation”. The procedures which support the doctrinaire building which constitutes the school system, in articulation with the attempts to maintain or modify the appropriation of the discourses with the knowledge and the power they carry with themselves, are difficult to separate ones from the others (Foucault, 1977 [1971]). It becomes, therefore, indispensable to identify and organise the reading of facts which compound these discourses: to locate the debates and to analyse the controversies, to identify the themes and arguments; to describe the structure of the intrigue; finally, to perceive the constitution of the “societies of discourses” through ideas, theories and concepts which are used in the colonial government, in a general sense, and their effects upon the government of the colonised subjects, in particular. Nikolas Rose once wrote that the concepts “are more important for what they do than for what they mean” (Rose, 1999: 9). I would like to add, quoting Antonio Nóvoa (1998), that we cannot understand the colonial discourse without being able, «to think about the *other* in time of our own thinking», asking questions about how discursive events about this *other* are produced, and how these statements are related to each other in order to constitute a «discursive practice» (Foucault, 2005 [1969]: 38-39, 68 e 159).



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