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The State of the Burundi's Post-Colonial Education System: Responsibility of the Former Coloniser or of the Local Politics and Governance?

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This article has examined the current state of the Burundian education system by relating it to the contribution of the former coloniser and the action of Burundi's post-colonial politics and governance in a context where what goes wrong in the field is unofficially linked to colonial action and imperialist influence. Data was collected using the qualitative method through interviews with experts in the field of education, historians, teachers at all levels, professionals, parents, students, and officials of the ministry in charge of education. The processing, analysis and interpretation of the data followed the thematic approach, and the results were confronted with the existing literature to conclude that the educational system in post-colonial Burundi suffers from the decline of the language of instruction, the almost non-existence of critical thinking skills in the curricula as well as the almost non-existence of innovative problem-solving skills. Moreover, after more than 60 years of independence, it has been proven that Burundi has no reason to continue blaming the former coloniser for the difficulties that haunt this sector.

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INTRODUCTION

In terms of development, decolonisation of Africa meant that it was up to the African leaders to show what they could do to manage and develop the economy, education, health, and security of their respective countries. It was an occasion, as argued by Eze (2023), to “become a master of one’s own world, and thus relate to others in ethically fulfilling ways”. Charton (2018) unpacks promises and optimism born by the independences’ era, even though tensions, ambiguities and complexities about future conflicts could be predicted.

But Africa was not the only to be colonised, other former colonies shared the same wishes or the same expectations following their respective independence. When India was granted independence in 1947, Temin (2023) speaks of radical optimism about material gains to the newly autonomous people. The Indian people conceived the postcolonial state as the vehicle for economic development, the only path through which formal self-determination and the principle of international sovereign equality would become a material reality.

While Latin America has not been spared, Irom (2018) recalls the convictions of citizens of Mexico, Argentina, Argentina, Paraguay, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Chile, when they led uprisings because they hoped to achieve the full development of their countries by being autonomous.

In East Africa, the speeches of independence heroes – as well as the speeches of contemporary presidents of republics – at public ceremonies in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda emphasise the desire to make their respective countries masters of their own world, particularly in the field of education, which seemed to remain dominated by the former coloniser after independence (Milford et al., 2021; Sebbowa, 2021; Dobrovoda, 2016).

However, even though all the former colonies shared the same enthusiasm and the same hope about decolonisation, the difference laid in the

behaviour or at least the understanding of the political leaders after independence. When it comes to achieving development in their countries, while Indian and the Latin American leaders claimed from the 20th century onwards, to be unstoppable, even by former colonisers or imperial powers (Rello, 2015; Jha, 2008; Weaver, 2018; Coronil, 2015), African leaders, on the other hand, when they try to solve the real problems of their societies, they always feel that colonisation is the reason why things are still not going well (Onuegbu, 2023).

For example, imperialism is the reason why China’s cooperative relations with Kenya, Angola and Zambia do not benefit the latter countries (Rapanyane, 2021); colonisation or imperialism is the reason why, in Tanzania, the entrenchment of Kiswahili as the language of instruction in schools remains problematic in favour of English, after the recommendation of the Tanzania’s National Cultural Policy in 1977 (Makulilo & Madeni, 2022); colonisation or imperialism is the reason why Uganda, though being a major producer of raw materials, remains a major consumer of manufactured goods (Devis, 2023) and colonisation or imperialism of France is the reason why the countries of francophone West Africa are constantly experiencing problems of coups d’états and insecurity (Engels, 2023).

In Burundi, state managers point to the German and Belgian colonisation as one of the main reasons why the civil war erupted after independence and still prevails, at least in a different form ((Nkurunziza, 2005; Hatungimana, 2011; Trouwborst, 2008). Another point, which was the *raison d’être* of this article, was a less widely spread assumption that Burundi inherited an “inadequate” educational system from colonisation (Hajayandi, 2020), with the result that school leavers or graduates are underperforming. But how can Burundi’s education system not be independent if it is not yet independent? Why can’t the political and governance initiatives in place produce the expected results?

Given that the previous research did not provide an evaluation of the state of education in a postcolonial era in Burundi, the present article aims at exploring the relationship between the current state of the Burundian education system, the colonial legacy and the politics and governance in place.

METHODOLOGY

Using the qualitative method, this analysis purposefully gathered data through interviews with three Burundian educationalists, three historians, three officials from the Curriculum and Pedagogical Innovations Office of the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, three teachers, three students, three professionals and three parents. The choice to involve teachers, students and parents in this project was motivated by the intention to involve all the stakeholders who have a direct influence on school life in the community. Involving historians, educationalists, and officials of the ministry in charge of education in Burundi was motivated by the wish to bring in the perspective of experts, especially as there is not enough literature on this topic in Burundi. The decision to involve professionals/businesspersons was due to the fact that, as employers of school leavers, they hold the position of evaluators of learning outcomes based on competencies expected. The number three in each group of participants was taken at random because the researcher found the sampling enough. The participants involved were known to the researcher and deemed approachable. The data collected were processed, analysed, and interpreted using the thematic approach of the qualitative method (Matta, 2019)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following lines highlight the results of the analysis and discussion. Some of the participants' views have been reproduced with attribution to their authors. However, to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, identification codes have been assigned to them. For example, participants from the educationalists category were coded with the initial letter E,

participants from the Historians category were represented by the initial letter H, and S for students, T for teachers, O for officials of the ministry of education, Pr. for professionals and Pa for parents. The initial letters were followed by participants numbers (E1, T3, S2, O3) and the pronouns used to designate them are they, them, them, etc.

Management of the Burundian System of Education During Colonial Era

Formal education began with German colonisation in 1902 and was run by missionaries of the White Fathers (Rwantabagu, 2017). Some Burundians, according to the considerations of the colonisers, were able to access education despite the disparities. For example, some Burundians did not have access (Nduwayo, 2017) or the children of the colonisers did not attend the same schools as the children of autochthones, except a little later in 1950 when the Collège du Saint-Esprit, for example, was interracial.

The Belgians, after the Germans, organised a form of education aimed at 'evangelisation and literacy' because they 'did not want to train intellectuals but rather auxiliaries who would support the colonial regime in the administration (H3), especially before the initiatives following the first World War to develop education into "coherent national education system" (Rwantabagu, 2017). The colonisers developed primary, secondary and university curricula, decided on teaching methods and approaches (E1) and recruited teachers who were largely Belgians and French (Chrétien, 2017). There was one nuance: the system introduced in Burundi differed from the system in place in the two respective colonising countries. Of course, participants H1 and H3 in this study affirmed that the intention of the coloniser or former coloniser since 1962 was not to train 'the Burundian elite' but rather to train 'auxiliaries' who would help them to govern or at least easily welcome the 'European civilisation'.

However, it is well known that Burundi, like all colonised African countries, benefited enormously from the colonial contribution to the education system. Colonies owe colonisers, first

and foremost, the introduction of formal education in the current sense of the term, the construction of many primary, secondary and university education establishments, the provision of school textbooks, etc., with a predominant role played by the catholic missionaries (Chrétien, 2017).

Despite the impact of the former coloniser in advancing the field, it is also known that the colonial legacy has left administrative, socio-economic, and diplomatic after-effects (Chevallier, 2007). Among the countless challenges that Burundi had to deal with after independence was the establishment of a coherent education system, this time with a view to training the elite, unlike the action of the former coloniser.

Management of the Burundian Education System After Independence: A Descriptive Approach

Chock of Transition

Chrétien (2017) and E2 point to two key facts in the management of education after independence. The first is the presence of Belgians and French, who "occupied practically all the posts of prefects of secondary schools and played a decisive role as advisers to the ministers and heads of the various directorates: this was blatantly obvious in the Ministry of Education". It is worth pointing out that the 'omnipresence' of the former coloniser in the structures of the independent state was in no way a rejection of independence. However, it was desirable to be on the side of the former coloniser who would normally have to leave, but also on the side of the newly independent country, because there were not yet any qualified officials to take over.

Jean-Pierre Chrétien, quoting from the *Revue Nationale d'Education du Burundi*, no.1 and 2 (1964), points out that with independence in 1962, Burundi had 'around twenty graduates, exactly 13 in 1962, to which should be added 14 university-level priests. Moreover, some of those who took part in this study, H1, H2 and E3, felt that independence had been precipitated hence the position of the Parti Démocrate-Chrétien (PDC)

was right. At least 5 or 10 years of preparation were needed. H3 also suggested that decolonisation should have been a collaborative process between the former coloniser and the colonised.

Secondly, it was a kind of resistance on the part of the former coloniser to the appropriation of the education system by the Burundians. According to Chrétien, the Belgians refused to accept the '1965 education reform: a project for cultural emancipation'.

At that time, the Burundian government's determination to adapt the content of the subjects to be taught 'in the light of the needs of the country and its young people' was not only in the rhetoric but also in the actions. The commitment of the Burundian authorities, supported by the international community, led to several scientific meetings and technical commissions, with the result that curricula were reformulated in 1967, even though they were not 'Africanised, and even less a 100% Burundian-ised'.

Management Difficulties

As pointed out in the previous section, no one can claim that Africa was sufficiently prepared for decolonisation. Burundi was faced with a serious problem of education management. Referring to the study 'Analyse Globale du Système Educatif' commissioned by UNICEF in 1997, Rurihose (2001) mentions a low level of educational planning. He also refers to the inadequacy of the system's management structure, which themselves undergo 'frequent changes, further reducing the system's planning possibilities. In addition, there were "ineffective mechanisms for monitoring the quality of teaching and evaluation".

Gradually, Burundi had to take charge of the country's general governance and that of education in our case. However, the question remained: how was Burundi going to teach itself in a context where there was a shortage of qualified teachers? How was Burundi going to build its own schools of sufficient quality and quantity? How was Burundi going to procure its own textbooks? How was Burundi going to

change its education policy, from selective education aimed at evangelisation and literacy to inclusive education with an elitist and intellectualist character (Guillebaud, 1962)?

To deal with the shortage of qualified teachers, Burundi had to promote 'secular education, i.e. education steered and managed by the state, which was strongly resisted by the Catholic Church, because they held sway over education until 1954 (Mvuyekure, 2003). The state set up primary teacher training colleges (écoles de formation d'instituteurs, EFI), which were replaced by the pedagogical lycées, and teacher-education schools designed to provide initial training for future teachers.

Within the Official University of Bujumbura (UOB), founded by the Royal Decree no. 001/350 of 10 January 1964, the Pedagogical Institute (IP) was established in 1980 to provide 2-year training courses for lower secondary school teachers. In 1967, the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) was created also to train teachers. The 1977 reform merged UOB and ENS for the current University of Burundi, as prescribed by decree n° 100/620 of June 29 in 1977. The return of ENS to autonomy in 1999 was one of a few changes aimed at training qualified secondary school teachers. Master's and doctoral training began in 2010 and 2017, respectively (Badogombwa, 1986; UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Africa, 1986).

To address the issue of infrastructure, Burundi has built several educational facilities, initially in partnership with the Catholic Church and later with other religious denominations, cooperating with international organisations, and later with the involvement of local authorities in the communal secondary schools' project. Since 2005, many schools have been built as part of the community works campaign led by the then Head of State.

After independence, the country will also have resolved the issue of textbook supply. Burundi has acquired subjects' textbooks under several partnerships but never in sufficient quantities. Unable to expect everything from external aid,

Burundi has since included funds allocated to this heading in the annual budget, but the issue has remained that they are still insufficient and unevenly distributed (Republic of Burundi, 2017). Some schools, especially those in relatively remote areas, have always had problems with textbooks and other teaching aids.

A Series of Reforms

Time is probably the reason. The motives behind the reforms that have taken place in Burundi, or their merit, are controversial. According to Rurihose (2001), these reforms were 'motivated by cyclical pressures', in contrast to the opinion of Rwantabagu (2017), who believes that these reforms were 'part of an overall strategy geared towards the cultural and social development' of the whole Africa. In his study entitled 'Système éducatif burundais: crise, tâtonnements et incohérences', Rurihose (2001) compares the Burundian educational system and its reforms 'to a ship lost in the high seas, without captain or compass, with first-class passengers taking turns at the helm, swearing by all the gods that it is the right direction'. Sixteen years later, Ndayisaba & Robert (2017) assume that Burundi's education system is undergoing 'planned but often thwarted development'. Of the many reforms that have taken place since independence, this article reviews four of them because they are esteemed to have touched the heart of the education system: the reform of the curriculum. But in any case, all agree that 'the Burundian experience has already shown that improvisation, trial and error, and haste in reforming the education system have led to failure and harmful consequences for future generations' (Ntibashirakandi, 2011).

The Kirundisation and the Ruralisation

This curriculum reform was introduced in 1973 with the aim of confronting learners with local realities, mother tongue and culture. It was a reform intended to transform primary school inherited from the colonial system into a community school for integrated rural development, a reform whose execution began in 1973 within the framework of the UNDP/UNESCO project BDI/73/019 (UNDP,

1983). The general objectives of the kirundisation and the ruralisation were, respectively, the use of Kirundi, the national language of Burundi, as the language of instruction and the adaptation of primary education programmes to the rural world. Thus, school curricula were reformed for this purpose by the Bureau of Rural Education (BER), which was responsible for implementing this reform.

At the time of implementation, the project was hampered by the mentalities of teachers, parents, and pupils, but above all by the fact that the national examination (French: *Concours national*), which was organised at the end of the primary cycle, required a good knowledge of French, a vehicle of secondary, technical, and higher education, which therefore exerted pressure in its favour, at the very base of the system. In other words, prioritising Kirundisation, despite its importance in the country's priority sectors (Bukuru, 2008), would increase the probability of failure in the national examination.

Furthermore, according to practitioners, ruralising people who were already rural did not make any sense. Again, while re-ruralising rural people was not so harmful, ruralising the town dwellers seemed inappropriate (E1). It should be noted that the same resistance to the ruralisation of post-colonial Africa occurred in other countries such as Tanzania, Nigeria, Somalia, Senegal, and the DR Congo (Rwantabagu, 2017); a propaganda which later took the name of Africanisation of the curriculum or decolonisation of the curriculum to the detriment of the European-centred curriculum (Jansen, 2023).

The Integration of English and Kiswahili

Burundi's membership in the East African Community, where the official language is English and the most common language of communication in the sub-region is Kiswahili, motivated the decision to introduce English and Kiswahili in the school curriculum since primary school in 2005. The introduction of the two languages, which were added to Kirundi and French, was done 'without any planning in terms of human and material resources' even less

without consulting experts. This compromised 'the quality of language acquisition in learners, exposed to confusion and interference', with 'the risk of making young learners incompetent in each of them' (Rwantabagu, 2017). It was only in 2019 that the decision was reviewed after finding that the reform causes a lot of linguistic interference, that it complicates the evolution of language learning and that the teachers are not competent enough, especially since they had not been prepared for the reform. After fourteen years of the impossible trial, a decision de reform the reform falls with little systematisation and progressiveness of languages and their skills. The provisions of the presidential decree n° 100/078 of 22 May 2019 put especially that Kirundi will be taught in writing and French in speaking and that the latter will be taught with recourse to writing from the second year. English will be introduced orally from the third year onwards, then in writing from the fifth year, and Kiswahili will be introduced orally in the fifth year before the written language is introduced in the sixth year.

The Basic and Post-Basic School

Basic education extends over four cycles: the first cycle is made up of the 1st and 2nd year, the second cycle includes the 3rd and 4th year, the third cycle is formed by the 5th and the 6th year classes, while the fourth cycle is made up of the 7th, the 8th, and the 9th years. The first three cycles correspond to the old primary school, while cycle four corresponds to the middle school in the old education system. After basic education, the student enters the second cycle of secondary education, henceforth called post-basic education. This course, which extends over three years, includes the humanities, sciences, technical and languages sections (Nduwingoma et al., 2020).

Still motivated by Burundi's membership in the East African Community, the basic school was initiated with the ambition of 'allowing all children to complete the first three cycles in good quality, and to promote an increased number towards the fourth cycle of three years', with the possibility of making it a 'natural extension of

primary school, eventually accessible to all young Burundians' (Republic of Burundi, 2012).

On the pedagogical level, great innovation consists in the manifest intention of a change of paradigm or posture, consisting of breaking with the usual practices dominated by a teaching/learning of the traditional type. The prescription of Article 7 of Law No. 1/19 of 10 September 2013, on the organisation of basic and post-basic education is unequivocal: 'the Burundian education system opts for a learner-centred pedagogy. The profile of the individual formed by the Burundian education system as organised by the provisions of this law is an individual shaped by knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills. This pedagogical reversal is confirmed by the curriculum for basic education, drawn up by the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research: 'basic education requires a mode of organisation and teaching of a new type' (Nduwingoma et al., 2020). Its purpose is 'the development of the individual and the formation of a being deeply rooted in their culture and in their environment'. As for this output profile, 'laureates of basic education will be individuals shaped by knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills; individuals with the qualities of competence, creativity, imagination and innovation; individuals open to the world, able to work in interdisciplinarity, tolerant and committed to the fundamental values of the human person' (Nduwingoma et al., 2020).

Basic training is not only designed to serve as a transition to post-basic, but it is also made 'to offer training solutions to some of the young Burundians who will not pursue studies at the post-basic level, and to on the other hand train a skilled workforce capable of supporting the economic development of the country' (Republic of Burundi, 2018).

The BMD System

The BMD (Bachelor-Master-Doctorate) was not a national initiative. It was a choice that seemed dictated by the recommendations of donors and Western partners, particularly the French

cooperation, on which Burundi depends for the realisation of its major projects, including educational ones (Hajayandi, 2020). However, it is an educational reform (Bologna reform) proposed by the European Union to its southern countries to allow the internationalisation of higher education. The BMD adopted in Burundi in 2011, aims, according to Chabchoub (2019), two main innovations:

- ✓ Except for the medical programmes, the university course would be three years for a bachelor, i.e., 180 credits, two years for Master, i.e., 120 credits and three years for a doctorate, i.e., 180 credits;
- ✓ Introduce a profound reform as follows:
 - Teach otherwise rather than by lecture methods;
 - Evaluate otherwise;
 - Learn differently, therefore actively.

For the implementation of the reform, it was necessary to renovate the training programmes by also inserting new sectors responding to the current needs of regional and international society thanks to the harmonisation of the programmes, thus facilitating professional integration as a solution to exponential unemployment. This system was welcomed by a few difficulties, in particular the grouping of course titles into teaching units or modules, respect for the order of succession of titles and teaching units according to prerequisites and the distribution and programming of lessons in semesters, while giving a considerable place to the personal work of the students (Hajayandi, 2020).

Teachers, too, not being sufficiently prepared for the reform, did not fail to show reluctance, especially since the reform was more demanding in terms of lesson preparation, diversification of teaching methods, the technology assistance, despite the computer illiteracy (Nijimbere, 2015).

Despite this reform currently, more than 10 years ago, Burundian students remain less favoured compared to students from where the reform

emanates because they do not learn in the same socio-economic and technological conditions but, above all, with a background extremely different. However, thanks to the empowerment of learning, many are beginning to appreciate the skills of the system graduates, compared to the old system. While the BMD system is appreciated by university teachers, they nevertheless deplore the level of candidates aspiring for higher education (results of the 2nd and 3rd reforms); their attitude is described in the following analysis.

Critical Analysis of the Current State of the Burundian Education System

Describing the current state of Burundi's education system and assessing the results of the efforts already invested in this sector is not an easy task. What is more, the existing literature does not go into the depths of education to identify the current situation, apart from the structural, demographic, and logistical aspects of education. This article, therefore, attempts to provide a critical analysis after involving, in this debate, teachers, parents, professionals, students, educationalists, historians, and ministry officials responsible for education and comparing the results with the literature.

From the general to specific, the Burundian education system is in a state of continuous regression. If generations are compared, those of today are far less competent than those of yesterday (Pa2, Pa3, Pr.1, Pr.2, T1, T3, S2). The widespread expression in Burundi's towns and villages' *ntā mashūre y'ūbu* or *'abīze bīze kēra'* translated literally as 'nothing is the education of the current era' and 'studied those who studied before' respectively, bear witness to the widespread conviction that Burundian education is in a state of regression. In concrete terms, the Burundian education system suffers from three major shortcomings, which have not been remediated by the reforms undertaken in the past. The system is threatened by a decline in the level of the language of instruction, lacks an initiation to critical thinking, and lacks innovative problem-solving skills.

Lowering of the Language of Instruction

This is a remarkable decline in language skills, where the one who has done primary school other times is more expressive in a correct language than the one who has completed past-basic school today (S1, Pa1, E2, E3). One of the university lecturers (E2) contacted in this regard believes that the first sign that education is going badly is precisely this drop in the level of French as a language of instruction. They find it very shocking that candidates for higher education have a very low language level. As a language teacher, they find it 'almost impossible to teach advanced level concepts designed for university students such as writing an essay, the figures of speech, etc. while students miss the basics such as conjugation of simple tenses, construction of sentences, etc.'

In the same way, professionals regret this decline in language skills. One director general of a public company (Pr.1) interviewed about this situation deplores that the young people hired lately 'are not even able to write an administrative letter. When they try to, they produce terrible French'. This phenomenon worries researchers such as Nduwingoma et al. (2020), and they insist that 'the mastery of it [French] is a prerequisite for effective learning in so far as French is at the same time a school subject and the main vehicle of other knowledge in the Burundian school system'. They explain that the main reasons for this situation are, among others, the reform of teaching four languages at the same time because it creates confusion and interference or even barriers to language learning.

Unfortunately, it is obvious that the decline in the level of mastery of the language of instruction leads to the slowing down or dysfunction of the learning process in general. As observed by Mazunya & Habonimana (2010), 'a public opinion continues to deplore a drop in educational level which would be much more linked to that of the level in French as the language of instruction'.

From the above, Burundi's language teaching policy should be reviewed with greater delicacy;

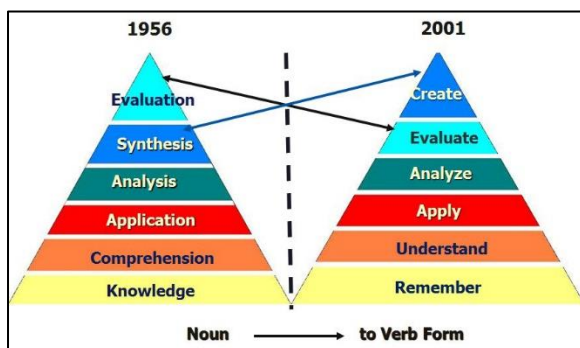
otherwise, it will continue to undermine the country's education system.

Critical Thinking

Reasoning, thinking, or critical thinking is not the ability to criticise the words of others or the simple observation of facts nor memorisation, but rather, according to Boisvert (2016), a 'well-developed, effective, reflective and rational thinking'. Referring to Ennis (1985), Boisvert goes on to say that critical thinking is 'reasonable, reflective thinking directed towards a decision about what to believe or to do'. One of the most important objectives that education today must achieve is the ability of learners to reason critically.

In 1956, the American educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom published a classification of educational objectives in the cognitive domain, known as the taxonomy of objectives. This classification, which was slightly revised in 2001 by Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), is still the most widely used in teaching today. Bloom's taxonomy is a growing development of skills classified as remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating, as in the image below. It is a taxonomy of the cognitive domain, bearing in mind that there are also psychomotor and social-emotional domains.

Figure 1: Bloom's Taxonomy/Cognitive Domain

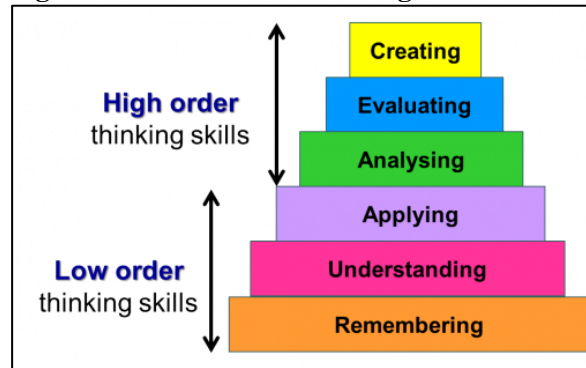


(Wilson, 2020)

In a teaching-learning situation, memorisation of knowledge is not sufficient unless it is understood. Understanding itself is not enough unless the application of the acquired and understood knowledge takes place. While many believe that application is the ultimate level, the learner still

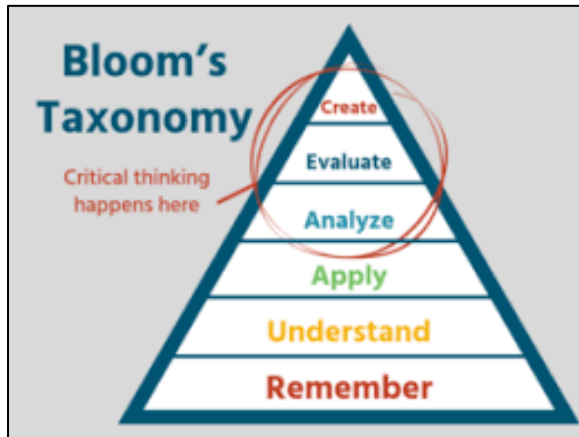
needs to be able to analyse what has been learned, evaluate it, and create solutions or new perspectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Thus, critical thinking becomes this ascent from lower-order thinking (the three base levels) to higher-order thinking (the three top levels) (Kuniawan, 2018).

Figure 2: Ascension of Thinking Skills



(Наринэ, 2019 October 10)

In light of the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy, very few times teaching gets to the third level—application. Only the 1st level (remembering/memorising) and rarely understanding (2nd level) are at the centre of the learning activity. Evidence for this is the evaluation system widely used in several countries, Burundi in particular. A learner capable of reproducing course notes (remembering) is said to be intelligent by the examiner. It is rare that the assessments offer learners an understanding of works, even less application and analysis. One day, a foreign visiting teacher approached the researcher to ask the question, 'what is wrong with students? They do not adequately answer the why questions! The answer was none other than this kind of question requires reflection on the information provided by the course to finally come up with an almost original idea. However, as the image below shows, critical thinking takes place at the highest levels, in the highest order of reflection. How can one start creating while they have not gone through understanding, applying, analysing, and evaluating?

Figure 3: The Position of Critical Thinking

(Montoya, 2021 September 7)

The Burundian education system is far from allowing learners to do this cognitive escalation, especially since the higher the level is, the more difficult it becomes for both learners and teachers. They do not just want to give beyond the first level of cognitive learning when there are still five. In higher education, the BMD system today requires students to do reflective work, to bring out their points of view, and to promote the autonomy of learning. However, the problem remains that the candidates have not been prepared to think from a younger age, so it becomes difficult to start it at university, all because the Burundian education system is not built on critical thinking skills.

In short, the almost non-existence of critical thinking skills should be of concern to policymakers to enable the country's young people to solve life's problems using critical thinking.

Problem-Solving

Problem-solving skills are, unfortunately almost non-existent in the Burundian educational system. One of the teachers (T3) who participated in this study suggested that problem-solving skills are in the Burundian curricula. They gave examples of problem situations provided for in mathematics lessons where learners are called upon to solve. An official of the ministry of education (O2) who also participated in this study added that currently, with the objectives of the basic and post-basic system, there are works called 'integration situation' (integrated approach), which are

intended for initiating learners to solve problems of real life.

However, this point of view is strongly rejected by most of other participants (E1, E3, T2, T1, Pa3, S1, Pr.2), who argue that the system laureates are still bad at problem-solving. The first crux of the matter, as supported by Egbert & Roe (2014) and Karakoç & Alacaci (2015), lies in the difficulty of designing a school programme that establishes a link between school theory and everyday life. The Burundian educational system is very theoretical and generalist to the point even the problem-solving situation is provided for as a theory. Informants of this study (E1, E2, H2, O1, Pa1, Pa3, Pr1, Pr3) provided some of the examples of real-life problems which school leavers are expected to address. People learned enough physics in high school, with lots of formulas like electric power equals voltage multiplied by current ($P=VI$); energy is equal to power multiplied by time ($E = P \times t$) etc. However, following the total absence of the application of these formulas, school leavers are still unable to solve a small problem of electrical failure that arises at home, and they must resort to a 'technician' who has not necessarily been to school to learn theories but who consecrated their time with practical things. Thus, solving problems in mathematics, biology, and English at school is not solving problems in life. It is here, then, where our system cannot bridge the gap between school and life after (Mintrop & Zumpe, 2019; Anderson, Goddard & Powell, 2011).

Of course, another problem arises here, which is the unpredictability of the future (Robinson, 2007, January 7). No one knows what will happen tomorrow; no one knows the skills that young people will need in the next 5 years since the world is changing rapidly even.

Today, given the technological factors or the complexity of the problems to be solved, the use of innovation is essential (Gao & Dong, 2022). Innovation is the ability to solve an entirely new problem by adapting old skills to the present situation. It is also the ability to solve an 'old' problem in a different way than usual if it gives

more advantages. Innovation or creation is the highest level of critical thinking and problem-solving. However, a theoretical system that leaves no room for application will never allow innovative problem-solving because this exercise is at the highest level of thinking.

Technical Accountability

When we speak of shortcomings or weaknesses that characterise the educational system in post-colonial Burundi, it is necessary to establish technical accountability for these results. It should be remembered that, in the problem statement of this article, the accusations levelled at the former coloniser with regard to the current state of the education system were at the centre. Now, having raised some three shortcomings: the problem of the declining level of the language of instruction, the almost non-existence of critical thinking skills, and the almost non-existence of the ability to solve life's problems in an innovative way; who between the former coloniser and the current educational policy and governance is technically responsible?

About the Language Matter

As French is the second language in Burundi, it is naturally and normally difficult to learn, like all foreign languages (Abdulhamid, 2014). But the big problem is not the difficulty of learning it, but the decline in the level of its mastery compared to the previous generations, even though it remains the language of instruction. As researched by Mazunya & Habonimana (2010) and Nduwingoma et al. (2020), it was shown that the loss of hours of French at primary level and the lack of qualifications and experience of teachers, especially in rural areas, are the main causes of this decline in the language of instruction.

Now that this is the case, who is to blame for all this? The former coloniser or the local education managers? How would the former coloniser benefit from multilingualism? Is this a Belgian or Burundian system? In any case, the part played by the former coloniser is insignificant; on the other hand, all the reforms relating to language teaching were an undertaking of local politics and

governance. The Ministry of Education is invested with all powers and responsibility to raise this issue, and the former coloniser would not oppose it.

About the Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Matters

In practice, the problem lies at two levels: the level of curriculum development and the level of lesson delivery, although this article will not dwell on the second level because its effectiveness results from the effectiveness of the first, which is already deficient.

At the level of curriculum development, the design could have taken into account the integration of critical thinking skills and innovative problem-solving. However, if we look at the Burundian school curricula, they are designed according to the subject-centred model, with reference to Ümran (2020). While the subject-centred design takes considerable account of the subject and all means of learning it, learner-centred design takes account of the individual difficulties of each learner, while problem-centred design starts from the problem itself to provide a solution.

One of the educationalists approached for this article (E1) deplores the fact that education specialists are almost never involved in reform or curriculum design projects. Only subject experts are invited to draw up the curriculum for their subjects. Yet education experts are better placed to advise on teaching approaches and methods that encourage critical thinking, problem-solving and innovation. Ntibashirakandi (2011) does not mince his words, suggesting that such projects should call for in-depth study by real experts in different fields: educational sciences, economics of education, management, and evaluation of educational projects etc.

In short, after more than 60 years of independence, even if it is the former coloniser who is funding the development of curricula in Burundi, even if international experts are invited to these sessions, Burundian should always defend its interests for the benefit of its young

people, by integrating elements that stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving from an early age. Today, the education system of our former colonisers is far better than ours; hence, it would even be a mistake to say that we inherited an inadequate education system from the former colonisers. A historian, H1, recalls that African countries are not the only ones to have been colonised. This is to say that after independence, each country should take into account all the issues leading to its sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to examine the Burundian education system and to establish the technical responsibility between the former coloniser and local politics and governance for the state of the Burundian education system. Starting with a brief overview of education management during the colonial era and moving on to the period when education management was in the hands of the nationals, it was shown that Burundi had carried out many reforms, such as Kirundisation and ruralisation, multilinguist, basic and post-basic school, the BMD, etc., but without any clear planning. As a result, the education system in post-colonial Burundi is characterised by the decline of the language of instruction, which in turn has led to the decline of the school system and the virtual non-existence of critical thinking and innovative problem-solving skills. Moreover, after more than 60 years of independence, it has been proven that Burundi has no reason to continue blaming the former coloniser for the difficulties that haunt this sector.

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