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DECOLONIZATION: DOES THE TEACHER HAVE A ROLE?

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DURING THE past fifteen years the movement for political independence in the former colonial countries has just about been completed. With the achievement of independence, however, has come the gradual realization that political independence is only the first, and in some ways the easiest step along the path to real independence. Recently, interest has begun to focus on the issue of psychological independence; national leaders seek to create distinctive national ideologies and cultures which reflect the traits of their people. The mental processes created by the set of socializing institutions built during fifty or more years of colonial rule are not easily modified, particularly when many of these institutions remain virtually intact, functioning essentially as before.

Substantial changes can occur only by ultimately bringing about changes in the major socializing institutions of the society. Of the major institutions, education has a number of characteristics which make it a prime candidate for instrumental use in social change. Particularly in developing countries, education is the major path to the new life styles offered to those who are successful. Education combines the provision of means with the selections system which determines who will get the rewards. In addition, education is often controlled on a national level by an administratively centralized mechanism which provides the means for modifying the goals and content of the system.

Yet, changing the educational system is a formidable task. In addition to the conservatism which characterizes educational institutions everywhere, attempts to change education in newly independent countries have their own pitfalls. Educational policy decisions have immediate and extensive political repercussions which even the most idealistic leader cannot ignore. Added to this is the fact that systems in developing countries are typically transplants from the colonial nation and are staffed by large numbers of expatriates whose attitudes and values are firmly rooted in the culture of the colonial power. Change, of necessity, involves modifying the attitudes of those who run the institutions or replacing them with others whose feelings reflect the new goals.

This paper will address itself to the question: Of the various kinds of staff typically available for secondary schools, which kinds are the most likely to be willing and able to act as agents of decolonization? The discussion will be based on data collected in Ugandan schools in the late 1960s.¹ Specifically, the study involved a questionnaire response from approximately 1100 teachers in 31 secondary schools drawn from the population of 72 schools in Uganda.

¹ Readers interested in the full study are referred to D. R. Evans, *Teachers as Agents of National Development* (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., forthcoming, spring, 1971.)

The schools were randomly selected from a geographically stratified listing of all secondary schools. *A priori* grouping of the teachers was made based on a series of assumptions about important sources of difference between teachers and on some administrative realities. From experience in the schools it seemed that culture and sub-culture within a dominant culture provided key divisions between teachers. The categories finally used, by and large, represented the realistic choice which the Ministry faced. Ministry officials could choose to recruit more or less from a particular source, but generally found it impractical to do much choosing from within groups.

The seven groups which resulted differ markedly in many of their basic attitudes and generally come from different cultural backgrounds. Motivation for teaching and commitment to the job tend to vary across groups. In addition to the seven original groups two student groups were added to the sample, both groups being in the final year of their training before entering the teaching profession. Their responses were kept separate because they represent different educational histories and have different career patterns. Following is a brief description of each group. The percentages indicate the proportion of the total sample represented by the group described.

British Trained (32%) These are British teachers who are trained and generally experienced. They are employed at relatively high salaries on two year contracts.

British Volunteer (9%) This group contains the Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) program and Graduate Volunteer Service Overseas Program (GVSO). They are generally untrained and serve for periods of six months to two years. Their pay is a subsistence allowance. The group also contains the Teachers for East Africa (TEA) group. These teachers are recent graduates who undergo a one-year teacher training course at Makerere University in Africa, and are then placed in schools at full salaries for a two-year period of teaching.

U.S. Peace Corps (10%) The group consists entirely of American Peace Corps volunteers. They are paid a subsistence allowance comparable to that of the British volunteers and serve two year terms with the option of extending for one more year.

Missionaries (7%) This group consists of all those teachers who are on Beecher terms. Their salary is about one-half that of the teachers on contract. They tend to serve for long terms and are frequently in positions of authority in the schools.

Asians (12%) All the Asian teachers are included in this group regardless of their nationality (40% hold British passports, 30% are citizens of Uganda, and

30% are citizens of India) or background. They are almost all on local terms, and about half of them have been teaching for long periods in Uganda.

Africans (16%) This group contains all the Africans teaching in the schools. They are all on local terms. Their length of service varies depending on the availability of more prestigious jobs with the government and in business.

Bachelor of Education This group is composed of the third year students in the Bachelor of Education course at Makerere College. They completed the questionnaire during their last term at the university before becoming teachers.

Teacher Training This group is composed of finalists in the teacher training course at the National Teachers College. They have their School Certificates, and in some cases Higher School Certificates, and have been given three years of teacher training. This is a new program and will be the largest source of Ugandan teachers for the secondary schools during the next five to ten years.

Others (14%) This is a miscellaneous group containing a sprinkling of other nationalities not provided for above. It also includes the wives of British civil servants who are hired on local terms.

The responses of the teacher groups were analyzed by the construction of a number of scales based on the results of a factor analysis. In what follows several of these scales will be used as evidence in the discussion of the potential role of teachers in the decolonization process.

SECONDARY EDUCATION IN UGANDA: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The model of secondary education common in former British and French colonies is a boarding school in which the staff have a major role in determining the institutional press under which the pupils pursue their studies. While the ministry has administrative control over all schools, the relatively undeveloped communications systems and the lack of resources in the ministry usually result in a substantial amount of *de facto* autonomy within each school. Directives from national officials are carried out to an extent and with an effectiveness which strongly depends upon the feelings of the staff about those directives. Many of the schools closely approximate what Goffman has labeled "total institutions" which implies that they have considerable potential as socializing agencies.² Yet because of the characteristics just indicated the content and connotations of the message transmitted are substantially dependent on the teachers who staff the schools.

² See for instance, E. Goffman, "The Characteristics of Total Institutions," in A. Etzioni (ed.) *Complex Organizations* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1962), pp. 314 ff.

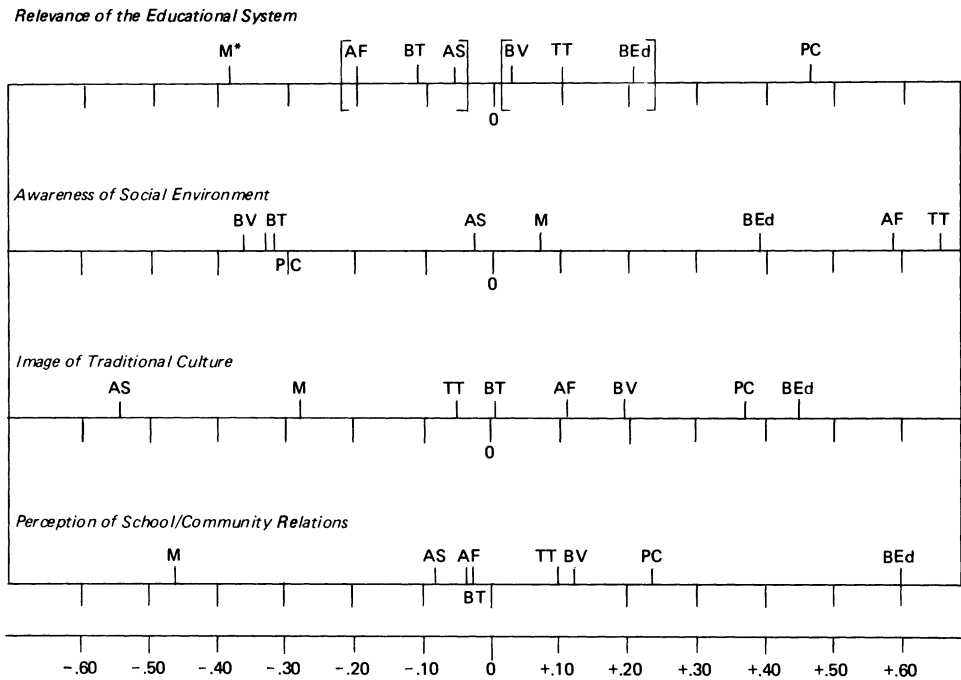
Although aware of these problems, leaders of developing countries, until very recently, have had little choice in the matter of who taught in the schools. The tapering off of expansion rates, the increase in diversity of aid programs, and the growing output of local training programs are increasingly providing educational leaders with some choice in the matter of staff for schools. As alternatives become possible the question of criteria and information needed to make choices between different sources of teachers becomes important. If the schools are to contribute to national efforts at decolonization (or perhaps more accurately, resocialization) then the teachers must have feelings and attitudes commensurate with that goal. What are these attitudes and what kinds of teachers tend to have them?

RELEVANCE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Despite a number of changes since independence, the school systems in most former colonies continue to transmit behavior patterns, values, and goals which are virtually identical with those current in the metropole. At a very minimum, any effort at decolonization will require teachers to view the existing system as inappropriate in light of the needs of pupils who will spend their lives in a tropical, agricultural, and non-western country. A measure of dissatisfaction with the current system is available in the form of a scale which is constructed from five items which share a common theme of relevance to the educational system. The items focus on such things as the teachers' satisfaction with curriculum, syllabus, examinations, the appropriateness of the metropole model, and pupils being produced by their schools. The items are scored so that a high score indicated a high degree of dissatisfaction with the system as it now stands. Mean scores on this scale were computed for eight different groups of teachers. Figure 1 illustrates the relative position of the groups on this and the other scales discussed in the paper.

The results place the American Peace Corps volunteers at one end with a high degree of dissatisfaction (mean score = +.47), and the Missionaries at the other with the least amount of dissatisfaction (mean score = -.38). In between are two clusters: the more dissatisfied one consisting of the African students in teacher training courses and the British volunteers, the less dissatisfied one containing the Asians, the trained British teachers, and the African teachers. The high degree of concern evidenced by the Peace Corps teachers is in large part a reaction to a system of education which contrasts sharply to the one with which they are familiar. To them, the schools appear overly academic in nature, unnecessarily formal and hierarchical, and undesirably elitist in nature. These aspects conflict with the values of pragmatism, informality, and egalitarianism which they have been taught in their own school systems. Arriving with a high sense of idealism and dedicated to doing what Uganda needs, the volunteers react strongly to what they perceive as the irrelevance of the existing educational model.

FIGURE 1. POSITION OF TEACHER GROUPS ON FOUR SCALES



*Key: M = Missionaries, AF = African, BT = British Trained, AS = Asian, BV = British Volunteer, TT = Teacher Training, BEEd = Bachelor of Education, PC = Peace Corps

Note: Significant differences between groups depend on the number of groups by which they are separated. The approximate significant intervals at the .05 level are: adjacent groups, .26; groups separated by four others, .40; extreme groups, .45. These figures are based on the Newman-Keuls method and are, of course, different for each scale. The above figures are averages.

In contrast, the British teachers find a system which is similar in form and purpose to what they know at home. While they may have doubts about specific details of the system in Uganda, the familiarity of the system seems to override any serious doubts about its relevance for Uganda. Only in the case of the British volunteers does there appear to be any real doubt. Their concern is evidenced most clearly on the question which asks about the relevance of the English Public School model in Uganda. The mean score of the British volunteers is second only to that of the American volunteers and well ahead of the other British teachers.

The Africans' feelings about the relevance of the system are strongly dependent on their current role in the system. The two student groups who are in training to be teachers show fairly high levels of dissatisfaction, although well below those of the Peace Corps. However, the experienced African teachers have a very low level of concern—just above that of the Missionaries who are the least dissatisfied of all the groups. On this measure, the African teachers, the Asians, and the trained British teachers are essentially the same—all showing

low degrees of dissatisfaction with the educational system as it stands. Since these latter groups constitute the great majority of teachers now in the system, the prognosis for significant change does not appear good.

While the teachers' attitudes toward the relevance of the current system can be taken as a measure of predisposition toward the need for modified patterns of socialization in the schools, the direction of the changes which would satisfy different teachers remains an open question. Becoming effective agents of decolonization would require changes in certain directions and with certain types of content. If decolonization is viewed primarily as unlearning something, the task is even more difficult than if it is viewed as one of resocialization, that is replacing one set of values and perceptions with a different, more appropriate set. The creation and specification of this alternative is a significant problem, and the lack of solutions in most countries may be a major factor in the slow pace of decolonization to date. While the author would not presume to provide an alternative for Uganda, there are a number of general characteristics which writers have identified with the psychological impact of colonialism which would have to be dealt with effectively in any alternative.

The twin themes of dependence and inferiority run through much of the literature on the psychology of the colonized.³ What do schools currently do to reinforce these feelings, and what might they do to counteract them? At the root of both these themes seems to lie the use of the norms of the metropolitan culture as the yardstick against which all values, behaviors, and attitudes are measured. Acceptability and approval are directly proportional to the similarity with the metropolitan model. This basic premise sets in motion a series of complex behaviors and introduces systematic distortions into the judgements of both the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizer, who frequently represents less than the best his society has to offer, reinforces his tenuous position by debasing the colonized and refusing to recognize the humanity or the culture of the colonized. This message is transmitted to the colonized at his every contact with the colonial system, and most of all in the schools, churches, and other socializing institutions set up by the metropolitan authority. The message is clear and consistent across all the various agencies; that which is indigenous is inferior and uncivilized. Only by rejecting that which is indigenous and adopting the ways of the colonizer can one have access to the rewards and status of the modern sector.

In such a situation both sides have an incentive to distort and increase the gap between the values and norms of the two systems. Those familiar with the work of psychologists in the field of comparative judgement will recognize the situation immediately as one in which a contrast-assimilation effect is bound

³ See for instance, O. Manoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1956), pp. 39 ff, and A. Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965.)

to occur. That which is close to the colonizer's culture will be perceived as very similar and moved even closer in the mind of the individual, while that which is different from the dominant culture will be pushed to the opposite extreme and viewed as totally contrasting. The latter effect predominates as anything related to the indigenous culture is judged to be totally uncivilized and its distance from the colonial culture is exaggerated to maximize one's distance from the undesirable. This effect is particularly damaging to the colonized person who is attempting to take advantage of the education and technology offered by the metropolitan culture. In order to gain acceptance, and hence entrance to higher levels of training, he must at every step demonstrate that he has risen above his own culture.

The task of decolonialization is then the two-fold one of counteracting the massive set of reinforcing institutions which have for so long trained the colonized to reject their background, and of beginning the process of constructing a viable alternative. On this basis, one can suggest a number of qualities which would be necessary for teachers who are to facilitate the process of decolonization. High on the list would be a sympathetic awareness of the social and cultural environment which must form the basis of the new national culture. Closely supporting the necessary knowledge should be a positive attitude toward those aspects of the indigenous culture which are distinctive to it. Similarly a willingness to promote much closer interaction between the school and the community from which the pupils come would allow more effective use of the traditional environment as a source of strength and pride. Possession of these attitudes does not provide a fully developed alternative to the colonial message, but it would set up an environment in the school where the culture and traditions of the students could be positively viewed as sources from which an alternative could gradually develop.

AWARENESS OF SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

A scale to measure the teachers' awareness of the social and cultural environment was constructed from eight items. Six of the items ask the teachers to rate their level of knowledge about such things as agriculture, the legislative process, and the educational system on the national level, and on the local level, the government, the political structure, and the socio-cultural characteristics of the community. The remaining two questions relate to knowledge of local languages and the number of Africans whom the teachers know well. The relationship between these items lies in the assumption that teachers who are knowledgeable about the details of the surrounding culture and society are ones who have taken the effort to study and inform themselves.

The results show the three African groups scoring significantly higher than all other groups. In the middle of the scale are the Asians and the Missionaries—groups characterized by long term residence resulting in extended op-

portunities to learn about the environment. At the other end are the remaining groups—all expatriates with relatively short average periods of residence in the country. These results are not at all surprising since they coincide with the expected ranking of the groups. Those who expect the volunteer groups to do better should remember that they have the shortest average residency of any group and should also note that all expatriate groups show a high correlation between scores on this scale and length of residence in the country.

Several comments based on the responses to individual questions in this scale are worth making. The pattern of answers suggests that teachers are most confident of their knowledge about the cultural and social aspects of the nation, but less sure of their understanding of a number of aspects of the political system. The latter includes both national and local governments as well as traditional tribal structures. To the extent that the traditional structures will be important as alternative models to the colonial system the teachers are clearly unequipped to provide the necessary background. Another question deals with the extent to which teachers have visited various parts of the country. In general, the Africans have had noticeably less experience with different parts of the country than the expatriates. On the other hand, the Africans certainly have a better understanding of the areas which are known to them. On balance, one may wish to find ways for the Africans to gain a wider knowledge of the diversity of cultures which exist within the borders of Uganda.

IMAGE OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE

While knowledge and awareness are important aspects of the teachers' potential as a decolonizing agent, perhaps the most important aspect is the attitude which the teachers have about the distinctive characteristics of African societies. The new nations of Africa want students to learn about the traditional way of life and to be proud of their heritage which is derived from a diversity of tribal traditions. Both theory and common sense suggest that the teacher in order to achieve these goals in the schools must share these attitudes if he is to foster them in pupils. An extensive study of the effects of interaction between European teachers and African pupils carried out by Jahoda indicates the ease with which "the attitudes of inferiority are passed on by teachers, even African ones who have been trained by Europeans."⁴

To measure this aspect of the teachers' attitudes a scale was constructed from questions which probed feelings toward four customs common to most African societies: polygamy, bride price, initiation ceremonies, and the extended family. For each question the respondent was provided with a set of five alternatives ranging from a strongly negative one which expressed moral indignation

⁴ G. Jahoda, *White Man: A Study of the Attitudes of Africans toward Europeans in Ghana during Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 100.

about a custom, to a neutral one indicating that there are many ways of doing things, to a positive one suggesting that the custom had desirable features and should be preserved.

The ranking of the groups on this scale shows some interesting differences from the ranking evident on previous scales. At the top of the scale with the most favorable attitudes are the African students in the bachelor of education course and the Peace Corps. A diverse middle group contains the remainder of the Africans and the two British groups. Well below that group, at the very bottom, come the Asian teachers. Particularly interesting is the difference between the two African student groups which have usually been quite similar to each other. Their separation on this scale is most likely related to the very different positions occupied by these two groups on the status ladder. The university students rightly regard themselves as having succeeded in entering the elite group at the top of the status hierarchy by virtue of gaining entrance to university. Having succeeded on Western terms they can afford the risk of showing interest in traditional customs and values. In contrast the other group of students have failed to gain entrance to sixth form and have been sidetracked into a teacher training institution. Their chances of entering the highest level of society are in jeopardy and they are reluctant to espouse traditional customs or values which might well hamper their already faltering progress through an education system based firmly on Western values.

The similarity between the African teachers and the British trained teachers also lends support to a hypothesis put forth by Jahoda. He feels that African teachers who were taught by expatriates internalize a set of "rather old-fashioned, British, middle class values which are directly at variance with some of the African values."⁵ Somewhat surprisingly, neither of these two groups shows a relationship between age and attitudes toward traditional customs. This seems to suggest that even those teachers who received their education in recent years have not acquired a more favorable stance toward the integrity of traditional values. The extreme position of the Missionaries and the Asians is not unexpected in view of the religious values which characterize each of those groups. The rejection of African customs by the Asians reinforces the comments of many observers on the clannish and inward-looking behavior of that group. The results imply serious problems in trying to use either the Missionaries or the Asians in schools which wish to foster a sense of pride in the traditional heritage.

The results from this scale suggest the considerable extent to which the norms of the metropolitan society have penetrated the minds of the colonized. Merely embarking on a policy of localizing the teaching force will not provide teachers who can contribute effectively to the process of decolonization. Both the African and the Asian teachers have attitudes toward traditional customs

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

which are as negative or more so than those of teachers from the colonial powers. Some hope is offered by the volunteers, but they are at best a temporary solution and have limited credibility as promoters of traditional culture about which they know little. The most promising responses come from the two groups of African students, but even for them the potential is not all positive. With the exception of these students, the use of the European culture as the comparative anchor thoroughly dominates the responses of all the major groups now teaching in the schools. There are of course differences in the responses of various groups to different customs, but the overall pattern is at best neutral and more often than not negative.

PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The final scale is designed to tap teachers' feelings about the pattern of relationships between schools and the surrounding communities. One of the distinctive features of the secondary schools in much of tropical Africa is their isolation from the surrounding society. An incisive analysis of the typical situation is presented by Julius Nyerere in *Education for Self-reliance*.

Tanzania's education is such as to divorce its participants from the society it is supposed to be preparing them for. . . . The school is always separate; it is not part of society. . . . The few who go to secondary schools are taken many miles away from their homes; they live in an enclave, having permission to go into the town for recreation, but not relating the work of either town or country to their real life—which is lived in the school compound.⁶

Like the English Public Schools which served as a model for much of secondary education in Africa, the African school sets up its own system based on values and behaviors derived from a higher strata of society. Because the surrounding community does not share these norms, the school undertakes to protect the students from its undesirable influence. While such a model is very effective in training Africans to be civil servants in a colonial government, it is highly inappropriate for the task of decolonizing the attitudes of the pupils.

The three questions in the scale all relate directly to the theme of the desirability of more interaction between the school and the surrounding society. The ranking of the groups on this scale is similar to the rankings on attitudes toward traditional customs. Ranking most highly, and therefore expressing the greatest dissatisfaction with the existing pattern, are the African university students. They are followed after a small gap by the two volunteer groups and the other group of African students. A second cluster contains the trained British teachers, the experienced Africans, and the Asians. Ranking last, well below all others are the Missionaries.

The ranking of the three African groups reinforces the interpretation given

⁶ J. K. Nyerere, *Education for Self-reliance* (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Government Printer, 1967), p. 11.

for their similar ranking on the previous scale. Again it is evident that the experienced African teachers react in the same way as the other experienced teachers, regardless of their background. The comments of these teachers suggest that they are concerned about two kinds of difficulties which arise with more direct interaction with the community: practical problems like transport, communications, and supervision of projects; and the alleged corrupting influence of customs prevalent in the community concerning alcohol and sexual relations. While some of these problems are very real, particularly for boarding school pupils who are away from the supervision of extended family members, the society nevertheless represents the one in which they will live and the one into which they are released unsupervised during each school vacation.

All too frequently the effect of pupil contact with the community is unresolved value conflicts in the pupils as they are forced to adopt two incompatible standards of behavior—one for school and one for society. Notable for its absence is any attempt on the schools' part to deal with these conflicts and to begin the process of resolution which is so necessary as pupils attempt to reach a meaningful amalgam of old and new ways. The standard response to such comments points out that the extremely scarce resources of the school are insufficient even to meet minimal academic demands. Underlying this dilemma is, of course, the implicit priority decision that the academic aspects of school life take precedence over issues of social or cultural development.

SUMMARY

The pattern of results on these four scales suggest that the task of making the schools into effective agents of decolonization and resocialization is going to be difficult. The teachers who make up the great majority in the schools, namely the trained British teachers, the experienced Africans, the Missionaries, and the Asians, are all relatively satisfied with the current content and methods in the schools. These teachers are also the ones who tend to have neutral or negative orientations toward many traditional customs and who are not willing to push for closer patterns of interaction between the school and the community.

The groups of teachers who are more positive toward traditional customs and who show considerable dissatisfaction with the current system consist of two types of people—the volunteers, British and American, and the Africans, who are in training to become teachers. The volunteers are handicapped as effective agents for long-term change by two factors: the relative brevity of their service, and their low levels of knowledge about the country and its peoples. The African student groups show the greatest promise, ranking fairly high on all of the scales. The Bachelor of Education students in the university show the most willingness to view the traditional customs favorably. As degree holders the university students have the greatest potential for influencing the policies

in the schools. The other African students will be in lower status positions which may well combine with their insecurity to neutralize their impact on the schools. A final issue with both groups is the powerful socialization which they will undergo when they join a school staff. There is good reason to believe that significant accommodation will take place in the direction of the norms already present in the schools. This will be particularly true where new African teachers form a small minority on a staff composed primarily of experienced teachers from the other groups.

One can only conclude that the outlook in the immediate future is for the schools to continue transmitting essentially the same values and attitudes to the pupils. While a number of minor modifications have already been instituted in terms of Africanization of the content of the syllabus, the accompanying attitudinal and value components remain essentially colonial in nature. The prospects for the schools acting as effective agents of decolonization must wait until significant staffing changes can be accomplished, not only in the schools but also in the institutions which train teachers. The evidence suggests that teacher training institutions have begun to produce students whose views are noticeably different. It is uncertain to what extent those institutions can take credit for that change, but nevertheless it does represent a ray of hope. If this beginning can be consolidated and strengthened, for instance by giving these students insights into the processes of institutional change and development, then the seeds of change could be planted in the schools in the next few years. In the meantime these countries must look to other agencies of socialization for the impetus in decolonization.