



Teachers as the Political Torchbearers of the British Southern Cameroons

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Abstract

This paper is a means through which to understand the pivotal role which teachers as a professional group, played in shaping the political evolution of the British Southern Cameroons. The paper unveils the several ways by which teachers were able to exploit and digress from their functions and responsibilities as pedagogues to become role models, decision makers and political beacon bearers as the territory evolved politically. From the avalanche of primary and secondary sources consulted, the findings reveal that teachers championed the formation of associations, political pressure groups and political parties, participated in elections and were actively involved in parliamentary debates. In fact, teachers were at the firing line of political activism. From the findings, it is therefore, unconceivable to refute the fact that despite serving under colonial rule and thanks to their attachment and love for motherland especially against Nigerian domination, teachers were very courageous, polyvalent and instrumental as the political vanguards of the British Southern Cameroons. In fact, they constituted the most politically enlightened corp. This was not the case with the practitioners of other professions or colonial servants.

Keywords: Education; Identity; Nation; Politics; Teachers; Torchbearers; Southern cameroons.

1. Introduction

On July 12, 1884, the Germans signed a treaty of annexation with the Duala Chiefs at the coast of Cameroon in what became known as the Germano-Duala Treaty. After the annexation of the coast, the Germans embarked on a rapid expansion to consolidate and expand both their commercial and economic activities along the coastal areas and into the interiors [Che-Mfombong \(1982\)](#). The German administration in Cameroon lasted 32 years and was brought to an end by the outbreak of the First World War and her defeat to Anglo-French forces. Following the ousting of the Germans from Cameroon, the territory was partitioned between Britain and France. The British got one fifth and the French occupied the larger four fifth. Britain further divided her portion into; British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons. Both portions were respectively administered as integrals of the Northern and Eastern regions of the British colony of Nigeria for administrative convenience. This division became permanent and the British Southern Cameroons evolved as part of the Eastern region of Nigeria to a quasi-region in 1954 and was granted full autonomy in 1958. During the United Nations Organized plebiscites of February 11, 1961, the British Southern Cameroons voted massively to gain independence by joining the independent Republique du Cameroun. Thus on October 1, 1961, the British Southern Cameroons reunified with La Republique du Cameroun to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon which is the focus of the study.

The British upon taking over the administration of the Southern Cameroons had the daunting task of rebuilding schools and recruiting teachers. The few elementary schools had been shattered by the war and there were inadequate schools, no teachers, neither infrastructures [\(Nfi and Musah, 2019\)](#). Teachers were of absolute importance as they were needed for the effective implementation of the policy of Degermanisation to erase the memories of the German administration and create an image for Britain [\(Nkwi, 2013\)](#). Since the territory was administered from Nigeria, the educational system was revised and teachers brought in from Nigeria following the appointment of H. H. Davidson as Inspector of Education for the Cameroons in 1922. The first set of teachers recruited from Nigeria included; Essien Eniang Essien, Miss Diyo, Timothy Agbo, M. O and Jale Njang [\(Nfi, 2014\)](#). The Nigerian teachers in the British Southern Cameroon encountered numerous challenges like trying climate, nostalgia, impracticability in the granting of casual leave [\(File Ob/f/1941/3 African Staff Appointments Postings p. 2 NAB\)](#). The Igbo's were also accused of cannibalism, profiteering, counterfeiting, adultery, rape, violation of local customs and traditions and wine adulteration. This gave rise to Igbo-phobia [\(Amaaze, 1990\)](#). These challenges precipitated their departure from the territory. This thus necessitating the need for a local breed of teachers and also coupled to the nationalist desire for the Cameroonisation of schools [\(Nfi and Musah, 2019\)](#). As a means for the Cameroonisation of schools, the government started the training of Southern Cameroonian teachers in Victoria in 1926. The school was renamed and transferred in 1926 as the Buea Normal School [\(Christian, 2018\)](#). The Buea Normal School trained a total of 76 teachers between 1926 and 1930, 40 for government school, 13 for mission schools and 26 for Native Authority (NA) Schools [\(Colonial Reports 1926-1930 NAB\)](#). The Buea Normal School

did not meet up with the supply of the required number of teachers. Thus in 1932, an Elementary Teachers Training College was opened in Kake Kumba. The first graduates included; Vincent Patrick Mancho, John Fru Ndze, John Takundo, Andrew Chi Akpan, Emmanuel Ayok Donatob and David Nde Zama ([File Sb \(1933\) 26 NA Teacher Training NAB](#)). The Kake School trained only Grade 3 teachers and was not able solve the shortage of teachers in the Southern Cameroons. As such some brilliant pupils were admitted into prestigious Nigerian teacher training colleges. These schools included; High School Yaba, Queens College Lagos, Umuahia and Ibadan Training Colleges, ogoja, Uyo and St Charles College Onitsha ([Aka, 2002](#)). Prominent Graduates of these schools were John Ngu Foncha, Augustine Ngom Jua, Solomon T Muna, William P Lebaga, Nerius Namaso Mbile, Emmanuel Tabi Egbe, A. D. Mengot ([Nfi and Musah, 2019](#)). They later on became prime nationalists and took active part in the nationalist struggles in the quest of liberating the British Southern Cameroons from the clutches of colonization.

The voluntary agencies were also actively involved in the educational sector in Southern Cameroons and in the training of teachers. The constant need of teachers prompted by the limited supply by the Kake School, risk encountered in acquiring training in distant colleges in Nigeria and the quest for the indigenization the education necessitated their participation in the training of local teachers. The Roman Catholic Mission opened a teacher training college in Njinikom in 1944. The school was later transferred to Bambui in 1947 ([File Sb/a/1939/2 Education Policy in Cameroons Province NAB](#)). They also started the St Francis Teacher Training College Kumba in 1949. The St Paul's Teachers Training Center Muyuka was also created by the Roman Catholic Mission in 1955. The school was moved to Bojongo in 1956. Likewise, the Basel Mission opened a Teacher Training College in Nyasoso in 1944 ([Gwanfogbe, 1995](#)). The Baptist Mission on her part launched a Teacher Training College in Great Soppo Buea in 1956. Agin, in 1957, the Catholics created the St Pius X teacher Training College Mankon and later moved it to Tatum ([Macojong and Tabot, 1980](#)). As a matter of fact, teacher training in the British Southern Cameroon became under the control of the Voluntary Agencies and by 1955, there were only 27 teachers receiving training in Nigeria ([Nfi, 2014](#)). The mission teacher training colleges had curriculums based on giving her students a holistic training. It generally constituted morals, religious studies, agriculture, rural science, book keeping and indigenous languages. This made teachers polyvalent and conscious of their identity. They distinguished themselves as upright, courageous and discipline. This was demonstrated in the numerous roles they played in shaping the political evolution of the territory. Becoming a teacher elevated one to the status of elite ([DeKone, 2012](#)). In fact, the British Southern Cameroons teachers were held in very high esteem and were respected by all. They occupied a very prestigious and dignified status in the society ([Nfi and Musah, 2019](#)) Teachers rise to political prominence as political pivots could also be explained by the policy of the missions or voluntary agencies especially the Basel Mission that developed a careful Africanisation Policy after the Second World War that prepared the Cameroonians to handle post of responsibilities. This was coupled to the fact that colonial civil servants were prohibited from participating in political activities ([Gwanfogbe, 2018](#)) This explains why most of the prominent political actors of the British Southern Cameroons were mission teachers who constituted the greater part of the intelligentsia or better still the politically enlightened class.

2. Teachers and the Formation of Pioneer Political Pressure Groups and Associations

The administrative decision by the British to administer the Cameroons from Nigeria, led to the territories subjugation or dominance by Nigeria both administratively and legislatively. Consequently, constitutional developments, administrative and legislative dynamism in Nigeria directly affected the British Southern Cameroons ([Reymond, 2019](#)). Being a minority group within the federation of Nigeria, the Southern Cameroonians sometimes considered the administrative and political changes to be inequitable and geared towards outweighing them politically and to annihilate their identity as a distinct people. For example between in 1922 and 1942, the southern Cameroons was not or had no representatives in the legislative and executive councils in Lagos ([Reymond, 2019](#)). Consequently, the territory was greatly neglected especially in the domains of education, health, communication infrastructure and the economy. Thus, the total exclusion of the Southern Cameroonians from Nigerian politics and the neglect of the territory or its underdevelopment laid the basis for the formation of political pressure groups or associations in order to protect and preserve the Southern Cameroons identity. They were also platforms through which the people requested for political or constitutional, administrative, social and economic developments. In this regard the British Southern Cameroons teachers were either founders or co-founders of pioneer associations and political pressure groups in Nigeria and the Cameroons. These included; the Nigerian Youth Movement (N.Y.M) founded in 1933 in Nigeria, [Kale \(1967\)](#), the Cameroon Youth League (C.Y.L) founded on 27 March 1940 in Lagos by P.M. Kale, John Ngu Foncha, and Dr. E.M.L. Endeley (the first two as teachers), the National Council for the Nigeria and Cameroons (N.C.N.C) formed in 1944, the Cameroon Federal Union formed in 1947 led by E. M. L. Endeley and the Cameroon National Federation (CNF) formed in 1949. A number of Southern Cameroons teachers acquainted themselves with political and nationalistic ideals within these pressure groups which prepared them for the task or the struggle of independence for the Cameroons. A teacher like P.M. Kale while serving as a school master in Nigeria and as member of the NCNC, he addressed a petition to the Secretary of State for Colonies in August 1947, requesting the representation of the Southern Cameroons in the Legislative Council in Lagos. He further demanding the creation of a separate legislature for the Southern Cameroons ([Reymond, 2019](#)). Though these requests were not immediately granted, the petition however greatly impacted subsequent actions by the southern Cameroonians which led to the holding of the June 1948 Mamfe Conference that resulted to the March 1949 petition to the Governor, expressing desires for the creation of a separate region for the Southern Cameroons. Again, Kale was one of the first Cameroonians to be attracted by N.Y.M before the enlistment of other Cameroonians teachers

such as P.E.W.Malafa. As members of this movement, these young Cameroonians got carried away by two articles in the movement's charter which for the sake of this study interest, shall duel on the first only. The first article of the charter read:

The principle aim of the Nigerian Youth Movement is the development of a united nation out of the conglomeration of the peoples who inhabit Nigeria. It shall be our endeavour to encourage the fullest play of all as will serve to promote understanding and a sense of common nationality among the different elements in the country. We will combat vigorously all such tendencies as would jeopardize the unifying process (Kale, 1967).

This article caught the attention of the Cameroonians in the movement who started thinking on how such principles could be applied with all its advantages to the Cameroons which most Cameroonians by this time dreamed of a united Cameroon entity (Kale, 1967) The article nursed the momentum of forging the burning desire of a united Cameroon within these Cameroonian members of the movement who later on became pivots in the political affairs of the Cameroons.

With regard to the C.Y.L., it had as founding members, teachers in the likes P.M. Kale and John Ngu Foncha who was founder and branch Secretary General of the league in the Bamenda zone between 1942 to 1945 (Ngoh, 1987). These teachers became shrewd politicians as a consequence of the fact that they had been coached by the articulated feelings and wishes of British Cameroonians in the league. They league sort to put in order the economic, educational and social grievances and to ultimately seek the establishment of regional status or better still separate political status for the Southern Cameroons via the creation of a separate legislature (Chem-Langee, 2004), thereby arousing national identity and consciousness. In fact, Kale concludes that the "founding of C.Y.L was the genesis of Cameroons politics" (Kale, 1967). This explains why the pioneer Cameroons politicians included teachers as result of the fact that they had been groomed by the kind of affairs the league dealt with. These experiences were later manifested by these crème of teachers in the formation of political parties, other associations and unions within the Cameroons. Teachers also actively participated in the creation of the Cameroon National Federation (CNF). It had teachers in the likes of Augustin Ngom Jua, Solomon Tandeng Muna and John Ngu Foncha. Her creation did not only enhance the stimulation of political consciousness in the minds of the British Southern Cameroonians, but demanded the Nigerian government to reinvest some of the British Cameroons money in the form of actual and visible development in the British Southern Cameroons (Ngoh, 1979). It further requested for creation of an administratively separate Cameroons Region, with its House of Assembly headed by a commissioner answerable to the Trusteeship Council. The CNF also initiated the idea of the unification or reunification of the Cameroons (Chem-Langee, 2004). Thanks to the pressure mounted by the Cameroonians in the CYL and CNF and other associations, the Southern Cameroons was granted a quasi-regional status in 1954 and full autonomy in 1958 and the idea of reunification became one of the ideologies in the decolonisation politics of the Southern Cameroons. In fact, reunification with French Cameroon triumphed over association with Nigeria in the United Nations organised plebiscites of 11 February 1961.

3. Teachers and the Formation of Local Associations and Unions

The outbreak of WW II accelerated political inducements in Nigeria and by extension precipitated political developments in British Southern Cameroons. This fostered the rise of teachers to the political scenario as front benchers. The formation of pressure groups and associations in the Cameroons constituted one of the factors that prompted political developments. Through pressure groups and associations, the indigenes were able to press for constitutional amendments especially in the 1940s (Ngoh, 2001). Of the prominent pressure groups and associations that were formed included, the Bakweri Cultural Organisation (B.C.O), formed in 1939 in Victoria by G.J. Mbene a seasoned primary school teacher (Ebune, 1992). Although the membership was limited only to Bakweri indigenes, due to his relentless efforts, the organization established branches in places like Buea. Tiko and Kumba. The B.C.O by mid-1939 had expanded in popularity and jurisdiction. Its membership was opened to include other sympathizers and well-wishers like educated elites of different ethnic backgrounds. By extension, the organization was transformed into the Cameroon Welfare Union (C.W.U) which had among its objectives, to arouse political awareness among Cameroonians (Kale, 1967) and to cater for the interest of the Cameroonians and uphold to Cameroon identity (Chem-Langee, 2004). In fact, the question identity was very central in the minds of the Cameroonians all along the period of their administration from Nigeria. They were determined to protect, preserve and uphold their identity despite being a minority group. It was the Victoria branch of the CWU that petitioned the British administration in early 1940, against the lack of Cameroonian representation in the Legislative Council in Lagos (Kale, 1967). As a consequence of the pressure mounted by the CWU, THE Southern Cameroons was granted representation through the appointment of Chief Manga Williams in 1942. This was an indication that the Southern Cameroonians were becoming politically conscious and could challenge the administration in demanding for constitutional or political reforms (Reymond, 2019). Apart from these distinguished associations, there existed an avalanche of local associations for the promotion of political and social developments in the Cameroons, wherein teachers were key figures and which helped to elevate them to the political firing line.

Teachers were able to pull support as leaders of the various unions in which they were members. Throughout the post WW II era of political evolution in the Cameroons, the teachers who ascended to the firing line were or had either been members of N.A Councils, improvement unions or associations, or trade unions. Consequently, these bodies acted as veritable reservoirs from where teachers interested in politics pull a lot of support. A teacher like M.N. Foju who was among the pioneer Southern Cameroons deputies to be elected in the Eastern Regional House of Assembly in 1951, was a prominent member of Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and had been president of NUT branches at Buea, Kumba, Mamfe and Fontem. He was the first president of the Bangwa Improvement Union

(B.I.U). A person like P.M.Kale played a leading role in the formation of the Bakweri Improvement Union (B.I.U) and the Bamenda Improvement Association (B.I.A) (Njeuma) Another seasoned teacher in the person of John Ngu Foncha was the general secretary of the Bamenda Improvement Union (B.I.U) and Cabinet member of the Kamerun National Convention. Again, he was president of the Bamenda Catholic Teachers Union and the Bemenda branch of NUT. John T. Ndze on his part was vice president of the Cameroons- Bamenda Catholic Teachers Union and member of the local education committee and the Tabenken Village Church Council (File Va/b (1953) 5 Who's Who in the Eastern House of Assembly-Nigeria NAB).

Another teacher like Ernest Kolefe who was elected a deputy in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly in 1954, was president of Victoria Co-operative Banana Marketing Society and a board member of the Cameroon Development Corporation (C.D.C). Humphrey Njambe Mula Ngo, a teacher before his election as an honourable member in the Southern Cameroon House of Assembly in 1954 had been vice president of the defunct Cameroon National Federation (CNF) and chairman of the South Western Area N.A Kumba (File Va/c (1954) 17 Who's Who- Illustrated Biographies Southern Cameroons House of Assembly). These teachers had already been involved in one way or the other in several social activities, not just as members of the ranks and files of these social bodies but as leading or key figures exercising administrative responsibilities. Thus they were able to gain a wealth of leadership experiences and amass popularity as think tanks of these institutions. This laid out a solid path through which they were able to rise to the highest ranks of the political arena.

4. Teachers in the Legislatures

The adoption of the 1951 Macpherson Constitution speeded up political developments in the Cameroons. With the establishment of the constitution, Nigeria was split into three regions and Southern Cameroons was placed under the Eastern Region. These regions according to the British administration were to pace up developments and strengthen unity within the regions of Nigeria (Ngoh, 2001). Thus fresh elections into the central legislature and regional assemblies were held in 1951. The Southern Cameroons was allocated four seats out of the thirty four seats in the central legislature and thirteen seats out of the thirty-four in the Eastern Regional assembly. In this respect, the Southern Cameroons was divided into six political components and each component provided two elected members with the exception of Bamenda that provided three members (Ngoh, 2002). The legislative elections registered six teachers out of the thirteen elected. These were Vincent T. Lainjo, Solomon Tandeng Muna and John Ngu Foncha for Bamenda, John T. Ndze for Nkambe. M.N Foju elected from the Mamfe area, and Augustine Ngom Jua represented Wum (Ngoh, 2001) Muna (a school master) was appointed minister of works in the Eastern Executive Council while V.T. Lainjo and J.T. Ndze (both school masters) were members of the Federal House of Representatives (Ngoh, 2001).

Teacher's participations in the debates of the House were wide and varied. They debated on pertinent issues, adopted legal principles that binned the state as a whole toward a sustainable evolution. Teacher's debates ranged from politics, economic, social, cultural and educational issues. The Hon. M.N. Foju (a teacher), from Mamfe area was more concerned on development issues especially in the field of roads. He pressed the government to make available, roads in the Cameroons making particular reference to his native Bangwa village. Thanks to his exertion, 45,000 pounds sterling, (part of the total income of the C.D.C) was provided by the government for the building of a health unit centre in Bangwa. Though the work was never realised because the Mamfe Administration complained that, there were no motorable roads through which the materials could be moved to Bangwa (George, 2006) Foju also found fault with the practice of "preferential and conditional sales" in Cameroon (George, 2006). These were practices put up by shops in the Cameroons especially in Victoria, Kumba, Mamfe and Bamenda. With preferential sales, some goods were sold only to persons of a particular class while with regards to conditional sales, one had to buy a good if he accepted to buy another one which was perhaps out of taste or out dated. He made strong appeals to the government, denouncing these mal practices by the trading firms.

The Hon. Muna who doubled as minister of works in the Eastern Regional Executive Council and member of the legislature advocated very strong motions for community development. He often encouraged the other members of the House to boast up the pace of development in the region through community development schemes. These schemes went a long way to arouse the spirit of communal work especially in the suburbs were most of their grass root developments were thanks to community development programmes enhanced by the government. He recommended that;

There is no doubt that if every member in the community, instead of sleeping two-thirds a day,...instead of having nothing to do, embarks on some form of activity, I think the whole Nigeria or this region shall be awake rather than sleep two-thirds a day.... This region will not achieve that speed of progress which we all want without practical work... progress depends so much on the people themselves and it is for the Region and the local Governments to help first those who help themselves (File Va/b (1952) 7 Eastern House of Assembly Debates. First Session- Volume II From 20th to 27thfebruary 1952 Nigeria NAB).

This call by Muna greatly encouraged other politicians and stakeholder to promote community development projects in their local communities. This was the case of Winkar and Clement Awasom both Head Masters. They highly encouraged community development projects in the local areas (Pius, 2017).

5. Teachers and the Formation of Political Parties

A twist of events broke out in the Eastern House of Assembly which led to constitutional and personal conflicts between the think tanks of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) a party formed in 1940 and in which Southern Cameroon militated. This became known as the Eastern Regional Crisis. The crisis led to the fall

of the Macpherson Constitution in 1953. This accelerated the formation of political parties in the British Southern Cameroons. These parties adopted different political ideologies and contributed in different ways to the political, the development of democratic and parliamentary principles in the Southern Cameroons. The Eastern Regional Crisis led to the holding of Mamfe Conference from May 22 to 25, 1953 instigated by the Cameroonian deputies out of the frustration that had ravaged the Cameroons politicians in the Eastern Regional House of Assembly. It should be noted that the only political party that had existed in the Cameroons before the creation of the first indigenous political party was the NCNC. The thirteen Southern Cameroonian deputies in the various Nigerian Legislators were militants under the auspices of the NCNC (Ngoh, 2001). The Eastern Regional crisis started in January 1953 in the Eastern House of Assembly, Enugu. It resulted as a conflict between Eyo-Ita, the vice president of the NCNC and leader of the NCNC government in the Eastern and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, its national president.

The refusal of Eyo-Ita to carry out constitutional changes and to reshuffle the cabinet of the Eastern Region led to antagonism between the president and his vice. This led to the carpet crossing of six of the nine ministers in the Executive Council of the NCNC. The six ministers merged with the opposition, the National Independence Party (N.I.P) and formed the United National Independence Party (U.N.I.P). The NCNC alongside the thirteen Southern Cameroonian deputies passed a vote of no confidence on the six ministers. The Southern Cameroonian deputies opted to stay clear and opted for Benevolent Neutrality Bloc nicknamed the "Cameroon Bloc." The situation was compounded by the refusal of the motion tabled by the six six ministers demanding for the reinstatement of Muna who was the only representative from the Southern Cameroons as minister of Works. He had earlier resigned from the NCNC. Following the refusal of their motion, the Southern Cameroon deputies called split from the Eastern House of Assembly. This was an indication that the interest of the Southern Cameroons could no longer be protected within the Eastern Region. Nerijs Mbele who had been expelled from the Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC), created the Kamerun People's Party (KPP). While Messrs John Ngu Foncha, Solomon T Muna, and Augustin N Jua (all teachers) and the other members of the KUNC and CNF withdrew from the NCNC and founded the Kamerun National Convention (KNC) in 1953 (Fanso, 2017). It was headed by E.M.L Endeley and Robert Kum Dibongue. Other prominent members of the KNC who were teachers included M.N. Foju and Joseph Ndong Nkwain, Francis Nyong Ajebe-Sone, Henry Daiga Tankoh (File (1959) 14 Members of the House of Assembly Biographical Notes NAB). It opted to shy away from any Nigerian party and adopted a policy of "benevolent neutrality" and to canvassed recognition of the Southern Cameroons as a separate identity with aims of and eventual reunification with French Cameroon (Ngoh, 1979).

The euphoria of unity and grandeur which the KNC enjoyed was short lived due to the fact that the party was a mish-mash of militants with different political aspirations for the territory (Ngoh, 2001) The KNC acquired a lot of popularity between 1953 and 1955 and registered successes in the 1953-1954 elections thanks to her campaign on a platform of separation from Nigeria and reunification with French Cameroon. A rift broke out within the KNC when Endeley changed his stance in favour of autonomy within Nigeria. This was as a result of his alliance with the Action Group of Nigeria. His alignment with the Action Group meant that he had abandoned the reunification objective. This antagonised some big wigs of the KNC like John Ngu Foncha and Augustine Ngom Jua. They were against the idea of association with Nigeria especially as it was not the wish of the masses (Ngoh, 1987). This was in the backdrop of Nigerian vices that had given rise to Igbophobia (Soh, 1999).

At the peak of the ideological conflicts within the ranks of the KNC, Foncha with the collaboration of some French Cameroonians and his colleagues such as A. Jua, William P. Lebaga, Isidore Diyen broke away and formed the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) in Kumba in May 1955 (Awasom, 2000) Jua occupied the post of vice president while Foncha was the party president. Within three years, the KNDP had amassed a lot of popularity and became the largest party in the territory. This was thanks to her proreunification ideology which was the dominant political policy in the territory by this time. It should be noted that Foncha though an honourable member of the Southern Cameroons legislature still reserved his job as Headmaster of Catholic School Mankon. It was only in 1956 that he stepped down out of his wish which was warmly welcomed by Rev. Father Mathew Nabben (Nfi, 2012). The teachers of the Catholic Teacher's College Bambui were very pivotal in the build-up of the formation of the KNDP. Ebune attempts an explanation to the teacher's role drawing inspiration from the 1954 Southern Cameroons Executive Council which coincidentally had of all four Executive members of Protestant denomination. This led to some adversaries to qualify Foncha's creation of the KNDP as a catholic centre affair or party (Ebune, 1992).

The KNDP stood for secession of the Cameroons from Nigeria and eventual reunification with French Cameroon (Kale, 1967) The KNDP also received support from other prominent teachers such as S T Muna who resigned from the KNC and joined the party in 1957, Ndep Orock Effiom, N.N Ndoke, John Henry Ngange, Patrick Mua, Johannes Mebu Bokwe, Humphrey Njambe Mulango, John Mondji Boja and David Yungwe Ngangan, all of whom grew to become barons of the party (File Va/c/1959/11 West Cameroon House of Assembly Elections Election Results NAB) J.N Nsame crossed the carpet from the KNDP under whose banner he was elected during the 1957 legislative elections (Nerijs, 2000) to the KNC where he was an elected member of the House for Nkambe South during the January 1959 general elections under the KNC (West Cameroon Press Release Southern Cameroons Series January –June 1959 p 185 NAB). The party campaigned massively for reunification with French Cameroon during the February 11, 1961 plebiscites. Again, it was the Foncha led government that oriented the Fouban Constitutional Talks, negotiating on behalf of the Southern Cameroons while President Amadou Ahidjo led the delegation of La Republique du Cameroun. These political parties contested several elections between 1953 to 1959 in which teachers participated actively.

6. Teachers and Elections

Several elections were organised in the British Southern Cameroons between 1953 and 1959. Throughout the numerous elections, a good number of teachers participated or contested either as party representatives or as independent candidates and the elections were all free fair. This fostered the ideals of democracy as was envisaged by Kale as a reason for the creation of his KPP party. During the 1953 elections, only two political parties contested the elections, the KNC and the KPP. The KNC, Campaigned for a separate legislature for the Cameroons. The teachers who took part as candidates were either sympathisers of the KNC or KPP or as independent candidates. At the end of the electoral process, the KNC won 12 out of the 13 seats, with the following teachers emerging victorious in their constituencies; Ernest Kofele Martin for Victoria, S.T. Muna, J.N. Foncha and V.T. Lainjo for the Bamenda division. While J.N. Nkwain represented Wum Division thanks to the withdrawal of of Mr. L.A. Neng a school teacher of WE and a KNC sympathizer ([File Va/a \(1953\) Elections to the Legislative Assemblies 1953 NAB](#)). John Takinang Ndze and John Nsame emerged winners for the Nkambe division. The kumba division was represented by teachers in the person of F.N. Ajeba-Sone ([Nerius, 2000](#)), S.E. Ncha was the lone independent candidate who came out victorious in Mamfe. Ncha had registered as a KNC candidate but the party did not approve his candidacy in favour of Chief S.A. Arrey. Thus he contested as an independent candidate against Arrey and Martin Foju (a fellow teacher) who stood for the KPP ([Ewumbue, 2005](#)). The elections produced a total of nine teachers who emerged victorious. In fact the teachers who campaigned in their various constituencies were very popular and spoke with great authority that Nbile describes the Trio of Muna, Foncha and Lainjo as “lions” in the Bamenda division. He puts the picture in the following words;

The formidable trio of Muna, Foncha and Lainjo had made Bamenda Division impregnable.... We bearded the three lions of Bamenda in part of their den, but the lions were quietly combing their Meta/Moghamo/Ngie Ngwo strongholds, the plains of Ndop and the heights of Nso, keeping their folk there intact, and laughing at those daring lads from the south ([Nerius, 2000](#)).

Although these teachers victories in their respective constituencies were greatly due to the KNC campaign for separate legislature for the Cameroons and again thanks to the vast popularity which the party had ravaged, their personal status-quo cannot be undermined. These were a group of well-seasoned teachers who had taught in different places such that their candidacies were not strange to the people. They had worn the hearts of the electoral college especially through the exemplary lives they lived as teachers in their various communities and due to the fact that their campaign strategies were that of touring every corner of the constituencies. Other teachers like H.N. Mulango and A.N. Jua represented the N.As in the legislature.

Just as the dust of the 1953 elections was finding its place on the surface of the soils of the Southern Cameroons, the Lagos Conference of January 1954 aroused another heat with the call for fresh elections into the Federal House of Representatives in Lagos. Teachers contested once more for the allocated six seats (one for each division) either as KNC or KPP candidates. The Hon. L.N. Ning of Wum represented the Southern Cameroons in the Federal House in Lagos under the auspices of the KNC ([Nerius, 2000](#)). Four years later, during the 1957 elections, the teaching profession and the teacher's image proved that they could stand the test of time. Out of the thirteen elected members into the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, the teaching core supplied nine of the deputies. F.N. Ajebe-Sone was elected to represent Kumba East constituency under the KNC, Ambrose Fonge KNDP elected represented Mamfe South East while V.T. Lainjo and S.T. Muna both KNC elected were Bamenda East and West deputies respectively. The KNDP provided J.N. Foncha as deputy for Bamenda Central who had as opponent Charles Mfoben, a teacher in RCM Bafut. A.N. Jua and P.N.Mua were elected and represented Wum South and North constituencies. The KNDP elected J.N. Nsame for Nkambe South East ([Ewumbue, 2005](#)).

Elections into the Southern Cameroons House were again held in January 1959. The 1959 General Elections was accompanied by new provisions. The House of Assembly was enlarged to 26 seats and a ministerial government to be headed by a Premier. It was yet another arena for teachers and the teaching profession to prove how powerful they were in the political milieu. They contested for the parliamentary seats alongside other stakeholders from other professions either as party opponents or as independent candidates. The victorious teachers fell under the KNDP, KNC, KPP or as independents. The list of the Candidacy showed that out of the sixty five contestants who stood for the elections, twenty eight of them were teachers. Some prominent teachers and their parties included; Moses N. Ndoke, J.M. Bokwe, H.N. Mulango, W.N.O. Effiom, J.N. Nganje, J.N. Foncha, S.T. Muna, Patrick Mua, A.N. Jua and John Mondi Boja for the KNDP, F.N. Ajebe-Sone, V.T. Lainjo, John Fru Mancho, Moses Anyi Etambo, Peter Ben Geh, Isidore Irvine Diyen, Joseph Esoh Kum and John Nsame stood for the KNC. The KPP had teachers in the likes of Sylvester Joachim Nambile, J.N. Nasako and S.E. Ncha. While other teachers who stood as independent candidates included; Ambrose Fonge, Stephen Fundong Ndi, John Tabod, Fombi Peter Akoro, Isaac Fumbang Neako, Henry Daiga Tanko and Lucas Gwai Chendah ([West Cameroon Press Release Southern Cameroons Series January –June 1959 p 182-185 NAB](#)). At the end of the elections, nine out of the twenty eight teachers were elected into the SCHA. They included J.N. Foncha who became Premier, A.N. Jua, W.N.O. Effiom, H.N. Nganje, S.T. Muna, J.M. Boja for the KNDP, while F.N. Ajebe-Sone and J. Nsame were KNC deputies and J.N. Nasako and S.E. Ncha were KPP elected members. The women special member in the SCHA was a teacher in the person of Mrs. Josepha Mua ([File Va/c \(1959\) 14 Members of the House of Assembly Biographical Notes NAB](#)).

The gradual increase of teachers in the political arena with the passage of time could be explained from the background that most partisan politicians at the time were professional teachers and as such, other teachers developed admiration in them. Thus they decided in trying their luck not only as partisans but also as independent candidates. This was more so especially as most of their colleagues, some of whom were less talented in public affairs were emerging as reputable politicians. More still, some teachers were being nominated especially as

independent candidates. This was the case of Charles Mfoben a teacher of Roman Catholic School Bafut who was nominated as an independent candidate during the March 1957 elections by Nfobin Dominic a Postal Agent and Nimang Martin, farmer. Again, in the January 1959 elections, Stephen Fundong Ndi, a teacher in Ndop was nominated by Yessi, a fellow teacher and Kejem Ngong a farmer. John Tabod was also nominated by two farmers, Paul Ndong and Lucas Ngang. Lucas Fumbong Neako of Basel Mission School Mbengwi was nominated as an independent candidate by E. Tenjoh a farmer and Messack Takere a clerk (Ewumbue, 2005). These sequences of teacher nominations especially as independent candidates was perhaps due to their outright admiration in the society by folks from other works of life and from their peers owing to the exemplary lives they lived. This fostered and intensified democratic principles. The participation of teachers as a professional group and their evolution to becoming the political beacon bearers of the southern Cameroons was unique as it was not the case with other professionals or colonial servants. In fact “...the teacher training colleges remained the nurseries of political leaders, and the teaching profession as a whole the reservoir of the most enlightened political personnel from the beginning of the nationalist movements...” (Aka, 2002).

7. Conclusion

The British Southern Cameroons teachers as a professional corp distinguished themselves as the educated elites of the territory by assuming posts of responsibilities and actively participating in the political evolution of the nation. They demonstrated their love and attachment to motherland. This was reflected in their readiness at all times to fight and protect the interest and integrity of the Southern Cameroons especially against Nigerian domination. The rigorous and holistic training they received in the numerous mission teacher training centres and the Africanisation policy of the mission agencies produced polyvalent, courageous and serviceable servants for the motherland. This was manifested in the frontline roles they played in the formation of political pressure groups, associations, political parties and their participation in various elections and legislatures. Their actions fostered the advancement of democratic principles. Thus it will be inadmissible to refute the fact that teachers were the political beacon bearers of the British Southern Cameroons in the nationalist struggles for the liberation of the territory from the clutches of colonialism.

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