

Dickson Mungazi. *The Fall of the Mantle: The Educational Policy of the Rhodesian Front Government and Conflict in Zimbabwe.* New York: Peter Lang, 1993. Pp. i-xxii, 259.

Dickson Mungazi, in *The Fall of the Mantle*, argues that the educational policies of the Rhodesian Front (RF) government in Rhodesia (1964-1979), more than any other factor, inspired the liberation war that eventually led to majority rule in 1980. Certainly the dramatic gap between educational expenditure on blacks and whites in the settler colony had been a long-standing sore point between the races. In 1946, for example, the Rhodesian government spent \$0.40 on each black student while spending \$20.00 per white student (p. 29). During the post-war period, some small moves to close this gap only fuelled African expectations, making the RF determination to maintain a segregated, unequal education system even more unpalatable to Rhodesia's African population. As education was increasingly seen as one of the few avenues for African aspirations, the RF education policy became symbolic of settler determination to keep Africans out of power. While clearly not the sole factor fuelling the liberation struggle, RF educational policies certainly contributed to African dissatisfaction with the settler regime and their determination to win majority rule.

The description of educational policies and practices throughout the colonial period is one of the most useful aspects of this book. Mungazi describes the origins of western

education in Zimbabwe, its slow evolution over time, and the debates between those who saw education as a means of keeping Africans as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" and those who sought to use education for social transformation. While strongly critical of those many Europeans in Rhodesia who were determined to use education to reinforce racial discrimination, Mungazi does not tar all Europeans with the same brush. He avoids essentialism and acknowledges differences within the European community, particularly the contributions of the Methodist missionaries and some liberal politicians in the 1950s. Indeed, the Methodist Bishop, Ralph E. Dodge, who was expelled from the country for championing African education, is portrayed as a heroic figure in the African peoples' efforts to achieve educational equality. Mungazi also provides a sympathetic portrayal of the early African legislators who struggled to make African educational aspirations heard in a racist and unsympathetic parliament under RF rule. Their role has all too often been forgotten by historians preoccupied with the achievements of those who fought in the liberation war.

While Mungazi criticizes early western education, especially mission education, for trying "to replace African cultural values with those of Western culture" (p. 3), he is less critical of education in the later colonial period. The limitations of missionary education disappear from the analysis, explained as the result of a change of heart by the missionaries in the 1940s (p. 39). Indeed, the discussion of education during the RF period generally

centres on African access to education rather than the quality and character of the education system. European education becomes the goal Africans aspire to, the solution to African problems. The possibility that this education system could have grave limitations for African students is largely ignored. The flaws in the colonial education system and the uncritical acceptance of British "standards of excellence" are touched on in the last chapter, which raises some important questions about the nature of current

Zimbabwean educational policies. However, the book would have benefited from a fuller exploration of this issue in the RF period. Despite that limitation, *The Fall of the Mantle* raises important issues and contributes much to our understanding of a crucial aspect of Zimbabwe's past and its future.

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