

Non-Governmental Organisation and the Promotion of American Education in Nigeria, 1941 – 1953.

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Abstract

As the Second World War gradually drew to a close, a new form of relations began between Nigeria and the United States of America; a relation based on educational exchanges between the two countries. This paper explores the role of some non-governmental organisations in the promotion of American education in Nigeria. The excesses of these non-governmental organisations and the negative attitude of the colonial government in Nigeria towards America-trained Nigerians and American education in general also fall within the purview of this paper. The paper concludes that although marred with excesses, the efforts of these NGOs in popularising American education in Nigeria is worthy of commendation.

Introduction

The end of World War II signalled the beginning of a period of massive expansion of higher education in the United States. One important consequence of this was that Nigerians who had received their higher education in America agitated for the application of what they perceived to be the greater adaptability of American educational model to the needs of Nigeria. Against this background, this paper discusses the activities of some non-governmental organisation in propagating the American educational model, particularly in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Furthermore, these organisations came into existence towards the end and immediately after World War II. These organisations had a common aim of encouraging interactions between Nigerian youths who were hungry for higher education and American schools, colleges and universities. Many Nigerians and indeed Africans who were resident in the United States of America during and immediately after World War II took upon themselves the burden of performing the duties of “unaccredited cultural ambassadors.”¹ Many of these Africans expounded their views on politics, economy, culture and education among other issues, “to receptive audiences in churches, voluntary

¹ LaRay Denzer, "Black Cultural Nationalist Network in the United States and Nigeria after World War II: The Example of the African Academy of Arts and Research," *Nigerian Journal of American Studies*, vol. 3 (July 1993), 180. See also Philip S. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects: an African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 144.

organisation, newspapers, and journals of opinion, usually but not always run by African-Americans committed to cultural nationalism.”²

In line with their new titles as the ‘unaccredited cultural ambassadors of Nigeria,’ some Nigerians and other fellow Africans went ahead to establish organisations, such as the African Students Association of the United States and Canada (A.S.A) in 1941, the African Academy of Arts and Research (A.A.A.R.) in 1943, and the American Council on African Education (A.C.A.E.) in 1944.³ These organisations were established by their promoters mainly to promote and facilitate the admission of Nigerians and other Africans into American schools and colleges and to protect the welfare of their members. The contributions of these organisations to the acquisition of American diplomas and degrees mainly by Nigerians form the primary focus of our discussion. However, it is important to mention that of less significance to our study is the A.S.A. because this organization was a mere umbrella body for all African students in the United States and Canada. It was set up mainly by Nigerian students who were studying at Lincoln University in 1941.⁴ Though this organization was primarily interested in the welfare of its members, yet it succeeded to a large extent in creating awareness back home about the benefits inherent in the acquisition of American education.

The African Academy of Arts and Research (A.A.A.R.)

Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe, a Nigerian, had a strong conviction that there should be an organization to provide a meeting ground for mutual exchange of views between the peoples of America and Africa; out of this conviction was the A.A.A.R born in New York in November, 1943.⁵ The A.A.A.R. was founded primarily with the aim of positively projecting African culture and also to facilitate educational and cultural exchanges between Africa and America. Other objectives of the A.A.A.R. included the promotion of research, information, and news as a way to educate Americans about African culture and to promote African independence. What is more, “as part of its exchange programme, the A.A.A.R. aimed to

² Ibid. 181.

³ Ibid.

⁴ African Students Association, “History of A.S.A. and Table of Events,” *The African Interpreter*, vol. 1, no.1 (February 1943), 5. The Executive Officers of this Organization included Mbonu Ojike (President), Dr. Ernest B. Kalibala, a Ugandan (Vice-President), K. O. Mbadiwe (Executive Secretary), I. U. Akpabio (Treasurer) and Nwafor Orizu (Information Secretary).

⁵ K. O. Mbadiwe, “African Academy of Arts and Research,” *Africa: Today and Tomorrow*, (April, 1945), 9.

secure scholarship in American schools for African students and promote the exchange of teachers between Africa and America.”⁶

To fulfil some of its objectives, the academy embarked on the promotion of African culture in the United States through cultural shows for which it sponsored well acclaimed African Dance Festivals at Carnegie Hall in 1943, 1945 and 1946 to spark American interest in African culture. The academy also published two journals in 1945 titled *Africa Today and Tomorrow*, a collection of eighteen essays on African history, culture and politics, and *The African Eagle*, both under the editorship of H. A. B. Jones-Quartey.⁷ A newsletter called *The African News* was also published by the A.A.A.R. Furthermore, the organization also organised series of lectures which discussed issues mainly affecting Africans at the American Museum of Natural History, Washington DC. These lectures were collectively published as “So This Is Africa,” between November 1945 and April 1946.⁸

The publication was meant to project the image of Africa in a better light. It could be argued that it was also a collective reaction to some widespread misconceptions about Africa by Americans and Afro-Americans. Perhaps one effect of this move was that American support for nationalist movements and activities in Africa increased. This inevitably led to the awakening of Pan-Africanism and black consciousness in the United States. Available records have shown that the A.A.A.R. did not initially focus on the implementation of its scholarship and educational exchange programme in spite of the fact that its earliest publicity brochure listed this as one of its goals.⁹ In 1946, the academy in its drive to raise fund to support its activities produced “Greater Tomorrow,” a newsreel highlighting A.A.A.R. activities, which became an important fund-raising tool.¹⁰

However, it is sad to note that the funds available through this means and the sponsorship of ‘Africa Days,’ fund-raising events in New York were not sufficient to drive Mbadiwe’s plan to bring Nigerian youths to American schools and colleges through scholarship and educational exchange programmes. Hence, in December 1947, in his attempt to further popularize American education in Nigeria, K. O. Mbadiwe, the founder of the A.A.A.R. embarked on a fund raising tour hoping “...to raise a total of £50,000, half through donations from West Africa, and the remaining half through an imperial grant under the

⁶ Ibid., 10

⁷ Ibid. 1. See also Denzer, “Black Cultural Nationalist Network, 181.

⁸ Ibid. See also Nina Mjagkij (ed.), *Organizing Black America: an Encyclopedia of African American Associations* (New York: Garland, 2000), 3.

⁹ Denzer, “Black Cultural Nationalist Network, 185.

¹⁰ Mjagkij, *Organizing Black America*, 3.

Colonial Development Fund.”¹¹ K. O. Mbadiwe had hoped to use this money “...to administer twenty tuition-only scholarships in American colleges and universities as well as forty tuition-free scholarships, valued at £16,000 given by the New York Board of Education for Vocational and Technical Training at the secondary school level.”¹² He opened A.A.A.R. branch offices in Sierra Leone, Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria and Liberia. Essentially, it was K. O. Mbadiwe’s plan to distribute these scholarships to students from the West Coast of Africa and some countries in East Africa. He argued that the “beneficiaries would prove their worth as instructors in the technical schools”¹³ of other countries.

It is pertinent to mention here that aside from the request for financial assistance made to the Secretary of State for the colonies, K. O. Mbadiwe also “called on the Colonial Office to assume responsibility for the transportation, general maintenance and insurance fee for the A.A.A.R. scholars for four years.”¹⁴ At this point, it is necessary to ask these questions: Was Mbadiwe not over ambitious in his requests to the Colonial Office? Was he oblivious of the fact that as at that time Nigeria was a contested terrain culturally and intellectually by the British and Americans, and that the British would therefore not grant his request? Certainly, taking into cognizance the events at that time, observers would readily agree that K. O. Mbadiwe was over ambitious and undiplomatic in his various requests to the Colonial Office in Britain, and this was manifested in the complete rejection of his requests by the Colonial Office and the subsequent denial of his organization the right to raise money publicly in Nigeria. This automatically led to the eventual withdrawal of sponsorship to its students by the A.A.A.R. Such was the nature of the contest for the minds of the Nigerian youth between Great Britain and the United States of America.¹⁵

Finally, it would not be wrong to conclude that the African Academy of Arts and Research could not achieve a resounding success in its bid to contribute positively to the popularization, growth, and development of educational exchanges between Nigeria and the United States because of inadequate funds, suspicion of its activities by the colonial government and British-educated Nigerians and, above all, the A.A.A.R. over-concentration on its cultural activities. This shortcoming notwithstanding, the academy and K. O. Mbadiwe should be praised for positively projecting Africa’s image and culture abroad and assisting

¹¹ Denzer, “Black Cultural Nationalist Network, 186.

¹² Lynch, Hollis. “K. O. Mbadiwe, 1939 – 1947: The American Years of a Nigerian Political Leader.” *Journal of African Studies* 7, 4 (Winter 1980–1981): 184 – 203.

¹³ Denzer, “Black Cultural Nationalist Network, 186; Mjagkij, *Organizing Black America*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See Ogbeidi, M. M. “Winning Their Minds: The United States Information Service and the Development of Nigeria – US Relations, 1958 – 1988,” in *LAWATI*, (Swaziland, 2009)

African students in the United States. This made Mary McLeod Bethune to comment in 1943 that "...the programme of the African Academy of Arts and Research...not only awakens interest in Africa, but...cause the thirteen million black people of America to have a greater appreciation of their background and their possibilities."¹⁶ At this point, we shall shift our attention to the activities of the American Council on African Education.

The American Council on African Education (A.C.A.E.)

Nwafor Orizu, a Nigerian who graduated from Ohio University in 1942 and obtained an M. A. Degree in Government and Public Law in 1944 from Columbia University¹⁷ founded the A.C.A.E. in 1943 and incorporated it in New York on April 12, 1944.¹⁸ The headquarters of the organization was at No. 172 McDonough Street, Brooklyn, New York.¹⁹ Apart from Nwafor Orizu, other prominent principal officers of the organization were Professor Alain Locke (American) who was the Vice-President, Frank T. Wilson was the Vice-Chairman, George Schulyer was the Secretary, and Michael Kaplan was the Treasurer. Others included Roy Wilkins, K. O. Mbadiwe (Nigerian), Mbonu Ojike (Nigerian), Mary McLeod Bethune, and Melville J. Herksovits. Eleanor Roosevelt, Henry Wallace and Paul Robeson²⁰ were other well placed Americans who gave moral and financial support to the American Council on African Education.

Unlike the African Academy of Arts and Research, the A.C.A.E. had a student wing called the American Council on African Education Students Organization, with Eze Ogueri, a Nigerian, as its President, Ndukwe Obi, another Nigerian as its General-Secretary and William F. Lima as Treasurer.²¹ It must be mentioned that the prevalent belief among Africans and White liberal intellectuals following the period immediately after World War II was that colonialism in whatever form must be brought to an end and that the newly emerging nations need the appropriate training and support in all its ramifications to be able to develop in the right path politically, economically, socially and culturally. Hence, this

¹⁶ See the address given by Mary McLeod Bethune, titled "Hands across the Waters," *Africa: Today and Tomorrow* (April, 1945), 19. This address was made at the A.A.A.R. Cultural Festival that took place at the Carnegie Hall on December 13, 1943.

¹⁷ LaRay Denzer, "The Origins of the Popularization of American Education in Nigeria: A Case Study of the American Council on African Education," a paper presented at the American Studies Conference at the University of Jos, 24th – 25th May, 1990, 3.

¹⁸ Ibid. See also Phelps-Stokes Fund, *A Survey of African Students Studying in the United States* (New York: Phelps-Stokes Foundation, 1949), 46.

¹⁹ Denzer, "The Origins and the Popularization of American Education in Nigeria," 20.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See Phelps-Stokes Fund, *A Survey of African Students Studying in the United States*, 46.

group of Americans felt pleased participating actively in the Executive Committee of the A.C.A.E.

It may not be wrong to suggest that in establishing the A.C.A.E., Orizu believed (as it was the popular thinking then) that the American concept of mass education is the only remedy to the perpetual problem of African political, social and economic backwardness as well as lack of unity. perhaps, imbedded in the concept of mass education as advocated by the A.C.A.E. were changes in the structure of academic course, the establishment of public schools to cater for children of school age, and the introduction of adult education on nationwide basis as is found in the American system of education.

Also, the A.C.A.E. was established primarily “...to provide scholarships for promising and qualified African students and to facilitate their entrance to American universities and colleges.”²² Other objectives of the A.C.A.E. included: first, the conduct of educational and anthropological research as a means of promoting cultural understanding between the peoples of Africa and the United States. Second, the A.C.A.E. also hoped to establish and subsidize libraries and science laboratories in Nigeria for the promotion of general education and research. It is on record that between 1948 and 1949, the A.C.A.E. Board of Directors approved USD 25,000 for the purchase of a four storey building in New York which they christened the African Education Centre. The building served two main purposes: first, it served as a transit camp for A.C.A.E. grantees just arriving from Africa and, second, it accommodated the library of the A.C.A.E. This noble effort caught the attention and received commendation from the Phelps-Stoke Fund.²³

Response to the Initiatives of the American Council on African Education

The year 1945 marked a turning point in the A.C.A.E. efforts to popularize American system of education in Nigeria. In November of that year, Nwafor Orizu, the founder of the Organization, returned to Nigeria and established offices for the A.C.A.E. in June 1946 in Port-Harcourt, Calabar, Aba, Enugu, Jos, Onitsha, Lagos and Ijebu Ode.²⁴ With this, the stage was set for Nwafor Orizu to commence and accomplish his primary task in Nigeria – the facilitation of the admission of qualified Nigerians into American universities and colleges. It would be recalled that before 1946, Orizu had acquired enough popularity in the United States because of his association with many well placed Americans, and through his book

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²³ *Nigerian Spokesman*, 2 April 1949.

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Without Bitterness: Western Nations in Post-War Africa, as well as the fact that he was a constant guest at the White House. These factors made him a goal-getter while he was in the United States. Hence, before he returned to Nigeria he stated that his organization had obtained one hundred and fifty scholarships from first class colleges and universities in the United States for disbursement to African students who were willing to undertake higher studies in the United States.²⁵

A couple of factors aided Orizu in his efforts to popularize American education in Nigeria using the A.C.A.E. as his platform. First, it will be recalled that during World War II, the colonial government in Nigeria restricted the movement of people out of the country except for essential reasons; hence, travelling out of Nigeria for higher education was not allowed. And immediately after the war, only very few Nigerians were in a position to go to Britain for higher education. Aside from this, in 1946, only seventy Nigerians were provided with scholarships for higher education in Britain by the colonial government in Nigeria.²⁶ This situation fell short of the expectations of Nigerians who were ready and eager to seize any opportunity that will enable them travel abroad for higher studies. It was not surprising therefore that Nwafor Orizu was given an enthusiastic welcome by young Nigerians when he came with his American scholarships.

Another strategy employed by Orizu to popularize American education in Nigeria was his adoption of personal contacts for effective results. With this strategy, he sought and got audience from prominent Nigerians across the country. For example, he met and discussed the matter with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who was then regarded in Nigeria as the symbol of American education and American success.²⁷ These contacts helped in convincing Nigerians that Orizu had genuine promises as regards his scholarship scheme. Nwafor Orizu also embarked on enlightenment campaigns through public lectures. In Lagos, for example, he gave a public lecture titled "Horizontal Education and African Irredentism" at the Glover Memorial Hall on 26 November, 1945. Also in March 1946 at Jos, he gave a lecture titled "Education and Freedom of Nigerians" and "The Influence of Horizontal Education on

²⁵ N. Orizu's Column, "Africa Speak," in *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 June 1945. Some of these institutions included Columbia, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Lincoln, Yale, Western Reserve, Ohio State, and Wilberforce Universities. Others were Morehouse College, Detroit and Boston Universities, etc.

²⁶ G. Padmore, "Orizu Scheme Now Causing Alarm in Tory Circles," *West African Pilot*, 17 July 1946, 3.

²⁷ See Kalu Ogba, *The Nigerian Americans* (United States of America: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2003), 23 – 24. Also Sofola, J. Adeyemi. *American-Processed Nigerians: A Study of the Adjustment and Attitudes of the Nigerian Students in the United States of America* (American University, 1967).

African Unity and Leadership”. It suffices to mention that Orizu also gave public lectures in other Nigerian cities and towns, such as Onitsha, Oguta, Calabar, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Kano, Sokoto and Zaria.²⁸

His lectures across the country produced two major results: first, he was able to raise the level of awareness among thousands of school leavers who wanted a feel of American education. Second, although the desire to form a militant nationalist organization had long existed among the early nationalists in Nigeria, it can be argued that Orizu’s lectures did not only spur the nationalists, it also provided a forum where most of the founders of the Zikist Movement usually met.²⁹ Thus, it will not be out of place to assert that Orizu’s tour of Nigeria to popularize American education also had a spillover effect on the development of nationalist consciousness in Nigeria.

On a general note, Nigerians not only embraced Nwafor Orizu and his organization, young Nigerians who were hungry for higher education in the United States over-subscribed to his scholarships.³⁰ Indeed, it was reported that a total of “4,500 students applied for his scholarships. Of these, 2,500 applications were selected for review by the scholarship committee and the number further reduced to 765 with sufficient qualifications for competing for scholarship awards.”³¹ This response most probably took Orizu unawares and it also became a source of embarrassment to the Board of Directors of A.C.A.E. in New York; who had been following Orizu activities in Nigeria with keen interest.³²

The A.C.A.E. Board of Directors knew that Orizu had gone beyond his mandate, which was only to recruit twenty five Nigerians and to raise funds for their travel and maintenance expenses and that he had also misled the generality of young Nigerians to believing that he had more scholarships at his disposal than actually existed. The one pound registration fee collected from all applicants also attracted the anger of the board members. Thus, the A.C.A.E. Board, at its meeting of 4 October, 1946 issued a stern warning to Orizu directing him to return all registration fees collected and to desist from further collection of

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The Zikist Movement was founded in 1945. It had a militant orientation. Among its founders were Anthony Enahoro, Nduka Eze, Abiodun Aloba, M. C. K. Ajuluchukwu, Kolawole Balogun, Fred Anyiam and several others. It has been established that most of, if not all, these men were regular faces at Nwafor Orizu's lectures. See N. Mba, "Preface" in Nwafor Orizu, *Without Bitterness*, 1980 edition, xi.

³⁰ For details of some of the reasons that informed the quest by Nigerian youths at this period for higher education in the United States see Ogba, *The Nigerian Americans*, 23 – 25.

³¹ Denzer, “The Origins of the Popularization of American Education in Nigeria,” 12.

³² Ibid. 13.

such monies. He was also directed to forward to New York, a monthly report of his income and expenditure, and all other activities relating to the A.C.A.E. in Nigeria.³³

The activities of Nwafor Orizu in Nigeria also attracted the attention and comments of well-positioned American officials, missionaries and educators. For instance, it is on record that the United States Vice-Consul in Nigeria kept an eye over the activities of Nwafor Orizu and the A.C.A.E. in Nigeria.³⁴ Also, Dr. Channing Tobias, an African-American Director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, and Dr. Emory Ross of the Baptist Foreign Mission Conference of North America visited Lagos in July 1946. During their stay in Lagos, both Americans had an uphill task explaining all they knew about the A.C.A.E. to the local press and other prominent Nigerians resident in Lagos. They however maintained that the number of scholarships available to the A.C.A.E. was far below the claims of Nwafor Orizu and also advised prospective students to be certain of their source of funding during their stay in the United States.³⁵ Nigerians were assured of the continued support of Americans for the promotion of African education in the United States.

Furthermore, a section of the Nigerian press also expressed doubts as to the sincerity of Nwafor Orizu and the workability of the scholarships scheme. *The Nigerian Eastern Mail* and the *Daily Service* were the most vocal in the attacks against Nwafor Orizu and his organization in Nigeria. In one of its publications, the *Daily Service* referred to Nwafor Orizu as a “false patriot.”³⁶ Eventhough Orizu exceeded his mandate of operation in Nigeria, a re-interpretation of available records have shown that it can be argued that the vociferous attacks on him and the A.C.A.E. programmes in Nigeria (especially those that came from the *Daily Service*) were blown out of proportion and highly personalized. This stand is taken against the backdrop of the colonial government attitude towards the holders of American degrees in Nigeria.

Although the *Daily Service* was owned by the Nigerian Youth Movement – a political party in Nigeria, most of its founding fathers were Nigerians who had their higher education in Britain and it is only logical that their sympathy in matters relating to education in colonial

³³ *Daily Service*, 14 April 1947.

³⁴ “Robert C. Johnson, Jr. (US Vice Consul) to T. H. Baldwin (DE), 10 June, 1946,” NAI, MED (FED) 14 CDE 245.

³⁵ Dr. Channing Tobias was on his way to Liberia to inspect the Phelps-Stokes Funded Booker T. Washington College, while Dr. Emory Rose and his wife were in Nigeria to attend the annual Baptist Conference at Abeokuta. For details about their interview, see *West African Pilot*, 8 July, 1946.

³⁶ For details of commentaries, see *Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 20 and 27 April, 1946. Also, the *Daily Service*, 15 April 1947. The *Daily Service* was published by the Nigerian Youth Movement, one of the earliest political parties in Nigeria.

Nigeria will lean towards the colonial government because most of the British-trained Nigerians always and readily saw themselves as superior to their American-trained counterparts. To buttress this point is the fact that on his return to Nigeria in 1937, Nnamdi Azikiwe, an American-trained Nigerian, joined the Nigerian Youth Movement (N.Y.M.) but left the party no sooner than he joined to form his own party – the National Council of Nigerian and Cameroons (N.C.N.C.). It has been suggested that Azikiwe's exit from the N.Y.M. represented the climax of disagreements arising from differences in his orientation and ideologies and that of his British-trained party mates.

Also raising doubts about Nwafor Orizu and his programme in Nigeria were Christian missionaries, particularly those based in the Eastern provinces where Orizu had the highest patronage. Of special interest to us here was the concern shown by Rt. Reverend C. J. Patterson who was based in Onitsha. He had written complaining about the activities of Orizu and his organization to T. H. Baldwin, the Colonial Director of Education in Lagos, who replied that Orizu had been kept under surveillance and that he is ready to take the next step should any criminal case be reported against Nwafor Orizu.³⁷ The Rt. Reverend Patterson further showed his dislike for Nwafor Orizu's programmes when he bluntly turned down the latter's request urging him to preside over the official dedication ceremony of the opening of the A.C.A.E. headquarters in Port Harcourt in June 1946.³⁸ Against this background of hostilities towards Nwafor Orizu and the A.C.A.E., it becomes pertinent to examine how the A.C.A.E. scholarship programme was administered.

Nwafor Orizu and the Administration of the A.C.A.E. Scholarship Programme in Nigeria

Before discussing the administration of the A.C.A.E. scholarship scheme in Nigeria, it is important to mention that aside from raising the level of awareness among Nigerian youths on the need to undertake higher education in the United States, the A.C.A.E. scholarship scheme also came as a direct response to the various problems that afflicted the communal sponsorship system which was prevalent in Nigeria during the first half of the 20th century. Some of these problems included improper counselling of students before they departed the shores of Nigeria, inadequate funding and, in most cases, the sponsoring communities found

³⁷ For details of correspondence between the Rt. Reverend C. J. Patterson and Mr. T. H. Baldwin see "C. J. Patterson to T. H. Baldwin, 5 June 1946," NAI, MED (FED) 1/4 CDF 245, 5. Also "T. H. Baldwin (DE) to C. J. Patterson, 27 June 1946," NAI, MED (FED) 245, 10.

³⁸ "C. J. Patterson to N. Orizu, 26 June 1946," NAI, MED (FED) 1/4 CDF 245, 19.

it difficult to remit funds off-shore as and when needed. With these shortcomings, it was not surprising that Nwafor Orizu's scheme was well received by Nigerian youths who saw his scholarships as a ready alternative to that of the colonial government in Nigeria and the various community scholarship schemes.

The adoption of various categories of scholarship was a cardinal programme of the A.C.A.E. The process of becoming an A.C.A.E. grantee started from an elaborate screening procedure. More often than not, announcements for the available scholarships were made through the press. An interested candidate was expected to submit four applications forms with three letters of reference from acceptable individuals in the society. The second step was that the prospective candidate must have passed the final examinations of the Cambridge School Examinations or the Teachers Certificate Examinations or any other acceptable academic examination. The third stage was that any candidate who got short-listed was expected to appear before a board of examiners of the A.C.A.E. for an oral interview after which the candidate is selected for any of the five categories of available scholarships.³⁹

The A.C.A.E. scholarship scheme was divided into five categories. Category A awarded free tuition and boarding fees for a maximum period of four years. Category B scholars received free tuition and a portion of their expenses for four years. Category C scholars were awarded tuition-free scholarship only. Awardees in Category B and C were required to supplement their awards annually by an amount dictated by the A.C.A.E. officials; also, aside from category 'A' scholars, all others must deposit the money for four years. Category D scholars bore all expenses, while the A.C.A.E. only acted as a guarantor and provided free counselling services. Scholars in Category E were mainly diploma students in vocational courses which did not exceed two years. Irrespective of the category of award, the A.C.A.E. made no contributions to the round-trip cost of the student.⁴⁰

What is more, all A.C.A.E. scholars were subjected to the observance of strict rules and regulations. For instance, no scholar was expected to stay in the United States for more than four years without the approval of the organization and all extended period of stay must be in writing signed by the parent or guardian of the student. This does not guarantee an automatic approval by the A.C.A.E. as it reserved the final right to reject such applications. It was also mandatory for all scholars to obey immigration laws and avoid political meetings

³⁹ E. E. Edunam, "African Nationalism Brewed in American Pot: Nigerian Students in the United States of America 1920 – 1950 (PhD Thesis, University of Calabar, Nigeria, 1984), 306.

⁴⁰ Phelps-Stokes Fund, *a Survey of African Students...*, 48. Also N. Orizu, "African Education Group Organized for West Coast," *Los Angeles News*, May 4, 1949.

during their stay in the United States, hence membership and attendance at meetings of cultural organisation, such as the Association of African Students (A.S.A.), was made compulsory.⁴¹

Perhaps the only aspect of the A.C.A.E. scholarship programme that did not attract criticisms was the fact that the scholars were not made to sign bonds which would have made it mandatory for them to serve the A.C.A.E. on their return home as was usually the case with government scholars. Also, the A.C.A.E. did not impose course of study on their scholars but only counselled them on the best course that could be studied based on applicants' academic background.

All that was expected by the A.C.A.E. was that their scholars must return to their home countries after their studies since the development of Africa was a compelling factor for establishing the scholarship scheme. More disturbing and incapacitating was the fact that no student who came to the United States under the auspices of the A.C.A.E. was allowed to solicit for funds, be it educational or otherwise, from any institution or organization in the United States either on behalf of friends, relatives or himself. Officials of the A.C.A.E. insisted on the submission of such requests to its office whose function they believed it was to legitimately solicit for public funds. Furthermore, any A.C.A.E. scholar who breached any of the rules and regulations governing his scholarship agreement stood to be penalized. The penalty included the down-grading of a scholar from a higher class of assistance, revocation of agreement and the refund of funds received thus far or, in extreme cases, the repatriation of such a scholar.⁴²

Like the personality of Nwafor Orizu, the administration of the A.C.A.E. scholarship schemes also came under heavy criticism. First, Nwafor Orizu was accused of presenting a programme to young Nigerians who invariably became exposed to the vagaries of an alien environment without being adequately taken care of. This criticism became more pronounced after the death of Joseph Anisoibi, an A.C.A.E. scholar who died in February 1948 in Washington D.C. as a result of ill-health and inadequate care. After this incident, many Nigerians including the press accused Orizu of playing on the ignorance, ambition, and desperation of young Nigerians who wanted to study in the United States.⁴³

Another criticism of the A.C.A.E. scholarship scheme was that the beneficiaries were highly incapacitated by the strict rules and regulations governing the scholarship agreement

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *The Daily Service*, May 1948. Also *Nigerian Spokesman*, June 24, 1948, 5.

and this deprived the students of their liberty in a country (U.S.A.) where freedom is so much cherished. The argument is that Orizu enjoyed unlimited freedom as a student in the United States; hence, it was improper for him to deny any other person of his or her freedom irrespective of the fact that such a person was an A.C.A.E. scholar. Ethnic favouritism was another criticism which the A.C.A.E. had to contend with in Nigeria. The organization was accused of flagrantly displaying ethnic bias in favour of the Igbo ethnic group in the award of its scholarships in Nigeria. Majority (thirteen out of fourteen) of the initial A.C.A.E. scholars in 1947 were Igbo. Orizu's explanation for this was that: first, the Yoruba elite had established a tradition of acquiring higher education in Britain hence they felt it was not relevant to send their children to the United States. Second, Orizu also argued that it was the Yoruba dominated press that has been the major source of newspaper opposition to his personality and programmes, thus he did not expect many applicants from this section of the country.

Orizu, still defending the dominance of the A.C.A.E. scholarship scheme by the Igbo, argued that the round-trip cost and the lack of maintenance funds discouraged some scholars from Northern Nigeria to take up their offers.⁴⁴ However, it is important to mention here that the period between 1940 and 1960 represented the heyday of ethnic politics in Nigeria. As a result of this, ethnic consciousness and ethnocentrism became a common feature of all ethnic groups in Nigeria prior to and after independence. By and large, it is only reasonable to expect that Orizu and the A.C.A.E. would only sponsor those applicants who had fully met the requirements set out by them. Furthermore, it could be argued that considering the magnitude of the A.C.A.E. programme and its ambitious nature, mistakes were inevitable. Perhaps, the only remedy that would have shielded the A.C.A.E. and Nwafor Orizu from some of the criticisms enumerated above would have been the display of transparent honesty on the part of the leaders of the A.C.A.E. on the actual number of scholarships available as this would have helped in reducing the mad rush for the A.C.A.E. scholarships that was witnessed initially.

The above criticisms notwithstanding, the A.C.A.E. must be commended for its efforts to popularize American education in Nigeria and its bold programme of educating Nigerians in the United States, a step which was remarkable in the history of Nigeria during the colonial era. The situation was such that by 1953 the A.C.A.E. announced that it had been able to sponsor seventy one Nigerians to undertake higher education in the United States

⁴⁴ *African Echo*, June 30, 1949, 4.

most of whom returned home to become the agitators for political independence and the economic emancipation of Nigeria.⁴⁵ The activities of the A.C.A.E. transcended the boundaries of colonial Nigeria because between 1947 and February 1949, the organization had awarded sixteen scholarships to students who were not of Nigerian origin. The breakdown of this number was as follows:

Table I: Showing the spread of A.C.A.E. Scholars from 1947 – 1949

NATIONALITY	NO. OF GRANTEES
Cameroon	1
Uganda	3
Gold Coast (Ghana)	5
Sierra Leone	7
Nigeria	50
Total	66

Source: Nigerian Spokesman, July 4, 1949, 7.

Table II: Showing the Number of Nigerians who received A.C.A.E. Scholarships from 1947 – 1953

YEAR	AWARDS
1947	10
1949	40
1953	71
Total	121

Sources: Collated from various files of the Phelps-Stokes Foundation, U.S.A., 1997

The tables above give a summary of the efforts of the A.C.A.E. to educate Nigerians and other Africans in the United States of America.

Meanwhile, the A.C.A.E. was in a way also instrumental to the floating of an organisation known as the Committee for African Students in North America (C.A.S.N.A) in 1947. Primarily, the C.A.S.N.A. was established for the purpose of highlighting the desires

⁴⁵ Professor Babatunde Aliyu Fafunwa – A one time Federal Minister of Education in Nigeria was an early recipient of the A.C.A.E. scholarship.

and needs of African students in the United States. According to a publication of the Committee, the body agreed to organize the following under its programme:

- a) The establishment of some suitable process in Africa with the active involvement of Africans, local educational institutions, missions and governments through local committees appropriately chosen to ensure that definite educational standards are met by students coming to North America to study.
- b) Facilitation and advice on contacts between aspiring students from Africa and educational institutions in North America.
- c) Advice on placement in colleges and universities and academic guidance in North America.
- d) Clearance of financial arrangement.
- e) Reception and personal counsel on vocation projects and other matters, particularly off-campus relationships during students stay in North America.⁴⁶

It is not unlikely that the apparent difficulties being encountered by African students in the United States necessitated the establishment of C.A.S.N.A. going by the programme objectives enumerated above. However, the greatest problem which the A.C.A.E. had to contend with aside from the ones discussed above was the attitude of the colonial government in Nigeria towards its scholarship scheme. First, not only did the colonial government downgraded the degrees obtained from American universities citing lower admission standards and lack of concentrated areas of study as the reason for this, the colonial government also discriminated against Nigerians who had obtained American degrees in its employment policy.⁴⁷ The table below shows the position of the colonial government in evaluating American degrees.

⁴⁶ C. Udokwu, *The Nigerian and American Education* (Lagos: Olugbadewa Press, 1974).

⁴⁷ Two former A.C.A.E. Scholars – V. O. Ikeotunonye and Reuben Chuba Ndowu were among the earliest victims of this policy as they were refused graduate status when they applied to the colonial civil service for employment. See *African Echo*, 11 February, 1949, 6. Also Ogba, *The Nigerian Americans*, 26.

Table III: Showing equivalents of United States Degrees to British Degrees.

U.S. DEGREES	BRITISH DEGREES
B.A. and B.Sc.	Intermediate
M.A.	General Degree
Ph.D.	Honours Degree (Second Class)

Source: "Evaluation Qualifications in U.S.A., paragraph 6, section 5, NAI, MED (FED) 1/4 CDE 504, vol. I, 33.

Thus, the colonial government in Nigeria in its attempt to discredit the A.C.A.E. and American education in Nigeria simply regarded American degrees as substandard and American-educated Nigerians as ill-equipped to assume the mantle of leadership either politically, economically or socially in Nigeria.⁴⁸ Students who needed higher education were encouraged to go to British institutions or to any other institutions of higher learning within the British Commonwealth. But the colonial government policy did not achieve its intended result, rather than discourage eager Nigerians from going to the United States for further studies, the zeal among Nigerians to acquire American degrees continued to be on the increase.⁴⁹ This is evident from the total figures made available by the Phelps-Stokes Foundation which showed that between 1927 and 1953, a total of one hundred and twenty-one Nigerians received A.C.A.E. scholarship to study in the United States.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the Nigerian press reported that a total of two hundred and forty-eight Nigerians and another one hundred and twenty Africans were undertaking higher education in American universities.⁵¹ However, as the number of American-trained Nigerians continued to increase and the agitation for independence became more vocal, the colonial government in Nigeria began to change its attitude towards American-trained Nigerians.

George Padmore, a leading advocate of Pan-Africanism, once argued that "since the return of Nnamdi Azikiwe, an American-trained Nigerian, to his country the colonial government became apprehensive about "the dynamic political leadership by American-

⁴⁸ See Ogba, *The Nigerian Americans*, 26.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 23.

⁵⁰ These figures were collated from the various publications of Phelps-Stokes Foundation.

⁵¹ *African Echo*, 11 February, 1949, 5.

trained Africans...”⁵² This perhaps provided the basis upon which Orizu’s scholarship in Nigeria became a subject of discussion in the British House of Commons.⁵³ The aim apparently was to checkmate Orizu’s activities in Nigeria and the United States, In fact, Okechukwu Ikejiani had commented thus: “The protectorate government works through diplomatic channels to have American colleges turn down Nigeria students and through currency control which makes it difficult for Nigerians studying in America to receive funds.”⁵⁴

An outcome of the discussion of the activities of the A.C.A.E. in the British House of Commons was the appointment by the Colonial Office and posting to the United States in 1951 of a West African Student Liaison Officer to look after the welfare of students from British African colonies.⁵⁵ This official took it upon himself to invite complaints from students; he particularly showed interest in complaints from A.C.A.E. scholars which he investigated. The result of his investigation indicted the A.C.A.E. for failing to honour its obligations to its scholars; hence, the colonial government in Nigeria announced that it was withdrawing all logistic supports given to the A.C.A.E. in Nigeria.⁵⁶ This was the beginning of the end for the A.C.A.E. in Nigeria.

Perhaps, the last straw that broke the camel's back in the situation of the A.C.A.E. was the fact that the account books of the organization were not made readily available to government auditors by Orizu after several calls on him to release the books. The government called on members of the public, who had paid but did not receive scholarships from the A.C.A.E. to send their petitions to the Civil Service Commissioner in Lagos. With the evidence at its disposal, Orizu was arrested, tried and sent to jail for seven years in September 1953 after he was found guilty of fraud.⁵⁷ Thus, the colonial government succeeded in nailing the coffin of the A.C.A.E. in Nigeria as no attempt was made to keep the A.C.A.E. afloat while Orizu was in jail; neither was there any attempt made to resuscitate the A.C.A.E. when he was eventually released three years before the completion of his jail term.

⁵² Padmore, “Orizu Scheme Now Causing Alarm in Tory Circles,”

⁵³ George Padmore, “Tories Scared at Moves of African Trained in US,” *West African Pilot*, July 2, 1946, 8.

⁵⁴ O. Ikejiani, "Nigeria's Made in America Revolution," *Negro Digest*, Vol. iv, No.1, (February, 1944), 45

⁵⁵ An Extract from an informal meeting on education question held at Accra, December 18, 1951, NAI, MED (FED) 1/4 CDE 504, Vol. 1, 43 – 44.

⁵⁶ *West African Pilot*, December 17, 1951, 7.

⁵⁷ *Daily Service*, March 24 & July 16, 1953 and September 2 & 11, 1953, 8.

Though short-lived, the A.C.A.E. represented a major pioneering effort to popularize American education in Nigeria. It also served as an instrument of encouraging educational exchanges between Nigeria and the United States. However, it is a matter of regret that Orizu used the A.C.A.E. and its scholarship schemes to defraud poor and education-hungry Nigerians who wanted to study in the United States. Orizu capitalized on the ignorance of many Nigerians to collect money from them and never offered any scholarship in return. Again, in spite of his exposure in the United States, Orizu did not hide his ethnic bias towards his Igbo country in disbursing his scholarships thereby giving the impression that the A.C.A.E. was established to take care of Igbo interest.

Conclusion

The efforts of some Non-Governmental Organisations at promoting the American system of education in Nigeria have been the focus of this paper. It is only appropriate to recall at this point that these Non-Governmental Organisations were operating in Nigeria at a time when the country was still a colony of the British Empire. This meant that that the contest between the British and the Americans for the intellectual space of Nigeria was very keen. Available records have shown that not only did the British Colonial Government in Nigeria brought the activities of these bodies, especially the A.C.A.E. under strict surveillance and monitoring, the colonial government also derided American degrees and detested American-trained Nigerians. Although, the activities of some of the Non-Government Organisations, especially the A.C.A.E. were considered to be excessive, exploitative and non-transparent by the colonial government and some British and American trained Nigerians, yet it can be argued and safely concluded that virtually all the Non-Governmental Organisations examined in this article succeeded to a reasonable extent in promoting American education among Nigerians. They also served as the unaccredited cultural ambassadors and instruments of culture contact between the peoples of Nigeria and the United States of America.