

ABSTRACT

The paper critically analyzed the contribution of the early missionaries to the expansion and management of education in colonial Kericho of Kenya. Arguably, it extensively utilized structural functionalism and dialectical materialism theories as organizing frameworks as well as guided the conceptualization of data analysis and interpretation. As aptly articulated in this paper, the close association of Christianity and education among the local Kipsigis of Kericho cannot be overemphasized, for it was through the innumerable schools established by both Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries that many Kipsigis came into contact with Christianity. In fact, school was the church in many parts of Kipsigis. The Christian missionaries therefore saw the school as a key institution, being the most reliable means for membership recruitment and for creating self-perpetuating congregations whose members would ensure the survival of Christianity. Education and evangelization were so closely linked that for many parts of Kipsigis, the pitching of the missionary tent was synonymous with the establishment of a school. Among the inhabitants of Kericho, as elsewhere in Kenya, the missionaries preceded the administrators and settlers. Education was the inevitable concomitant of Christian proselytisation, since the ability to read the Bible was fundamental. But from the onset, it had been recognized that the principal actor in conversion would have to be the locals themselves. The missionary education was thus intended to prepare the locals in Christian dogma and to ensure that the students observed proper Christian principles. The education also aimed at discouraging the extended family system, encouraging individualism, abolishing polygamy and more so female circumcision. The Christian missionaries had entered Kericho region with a purpose of preaching the Gospel of Christ, but when they realized that illiteracy among the local inhabitants www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php/wjssr