

The FRELIMO School System

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As early as its first Party Congress of September 1962, Frelimo advocated the creation of schools wherever possible in order to train cadres and to promote general literacy.¹ Within the organizational structure of Frelimo, a Department of Education and National Culture (DEC) was created. At the outset, the DEC tried to arrange overseas courses for students who had fled from Mozambique. Soon, one of the chief responsibilities of this Department became the formal education of young people either in refugee camps, Frelimo Party camps in Tanzania, or within the northern two districts of Mozambique, Niassa and Cabo Delgado — where Frelimo operations have been concentrated.

Guerrilla warfare itself is educative, as is general participation in party activities. The late president of Frelimo, Eduardo Mondlane, described the educational role of the army:

"Militants learn more than just military science. As far as possible they are taught Portuguese and basic literacy, with those who have already had a little education frequently teaching their comrades. Political education is a very important part of their training. . . ."²

This formal military education is considered part of the total Frelimo school system. This article will examine the growth of that formal educational system, with emphasis on primary and post-primary schools, the production of textbooks, and the training of teachers.

The Mozambique Institute. The first educational structure to be established was a post-primary institution. Originally conceived as a boarding house in Dar es Salaam where young Mozambican refugees could live while they attended local secondary schools, the Mozambique Institute soon took on a different function. To have limited the Mozambique Institute to a boarding house would have forced Mozambican students to learn English well enough to compete with students of Tanganyika who had been educated for a longer period of time in that language. Furthermore, the Mozambican secondary school system begins after four years of primary education, whereas the Tanganyikan one begins after eight years. These and other factors led to a reinterpretation of Frelimo needs. Soon the Mozambique Institute became a full-fledged post-primary institution, with Portuguese as the language of instruction and English taught only as a foreign language.

With its inception in 1963, the Mozambique Institute became the apex institution of a projected Frelimo educational system. Most of the teachers were expatriates from such countries as Sweden, India, the United States, England,

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Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Mozambique itself. Besides teaching at the Institute, these teachers also wrote textbooks for the Institute and for the Frelimo primary schools and trained teachers for the latter schools. By 1968, there were 144 students in classes five through eight, but in the spring of that year, there began a series of incidents which led to the closing of the Mozambique Institute. In mid-1967, a young African priest who had worked in Mozambique, Mateus Gwenjere, arrived in Dar es Salaam. Young, militant, and impatient, Gwenjere felt that Mondlane was moving too slowly and seemed too eager for eventual compromise. His militancy became infectious among students at the Institute. As a result of political turbulence brought about by his activities, the Institute was closed in 1968. The loss sustained by the closing of the Institute was exacerbated by the fact that many of the 144 students at that time fled the immediate environs of Dar es Salaam and Frelimo was not able to account for their whereabouts. 4



The Production of Textbooks. Producing textbooks (*manuals*) for both secondary and primary levels became one of the three main functions of the secondary school teachers at the Mozambique Institute. The books for secondary level are produced on two mimeograph machines owned by the Party; as a result, the print is sometimes hard to read and the shortage of colorful illustrations makes reading even more difficult. As far as the content is concerned, some authors who were specialists in their disciplines had trouble communicating their knowledge. This is especially apparent in the history book, an 87-page study of Mozambique from its origins to the present time. Though commendable in its emphasis on the African side of Mozambican history, the book is very difficult and is really for advanced secondary school students rather than those who have been predominant at the Mozambique Institute. The book divides Mozambican history into five parts: origins to 1325, the foundation of the empire of Monomatapa; 1325 to 1700 and the end of the Monomatapa Empire; 1700 to 1880 period of Prazos to the end of slavery; from 1885 to September 1964; and from then to the future, a period "not to be studied, but lived." Unfortunately, some pages are omitted, some are out of numbered sequence, and others have been stapled, upside down.

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Several primary textbooks also were mimeographed — elementary reading books, basically animal stories and tales of simple life in a village milieu. One of the books, credited to the Mozambique Institute, *Quando os animais falavam*, is a direct copy of a book published in Lisbon, *Contos Macuas*, a book of stories and proverbs of the Macua people.

The geography text for the third class emphasizes that Mozambique is one country and that Frelimo helps to unite it. The book emphasizes places and distances within Mozambique as well as a discussion of the continent of Africa. It is well written and forces the use of maps and oral drill in the learning process. Some of the mimeographed maps are difficult to read.

There being a great desire for books, not just mimeographed material, the Secretary of the Department of Education and Culture chose the math text as first to be sent to the East Germany government for printing.

Wherever possible the Party's anti-colonial, anti-Portuguese role is present in the texts, but in a less doctrinaire and obvious way than those of Frelimo's brother liberation movement for Angola, the MPLA. Stressed is the need to forge a national consciousness and to undermine racial or tribal affiliation.

Primary Schools. Primary education became a major activity of Frelimo's educational scheme.⁵ The lack of educated refugees, the growth in absolute numbers of children as refugees, and the generally low degree of literacy among any Mozambicans who were within reach of Frelimo, all led to the expansion of the primary school system. Frelimo education soon took on the form of Portuguese education in Mozambique. Thus, there developed a rudimentary primary education with simple literacy and awareness as its goal and a senior primary system which aimed at more specific skills during the third and fourth years. By late 1966, a growing number of refugee children at Tunduru, in rural southern Tanzania, led to the adoption of that camp by Frelimo's Department of Education and Culture. Soon thereafter, primary school classes began, and Tunduru became a camp for the education of young children and war orphans. In its early days, Tunduru was made more livable thorough the assistance of students and teachers from the Mozambique Institute. The school at Tunduru expanded slowly and by 1969 offered the first three primary classes with about 350 students.

These young children were maintained away from their parents, thus increasing the cost of their education. Nevertheless, Frelimo perceived the establishment of an educational center such as Tunduru as preliminary to the movement of the school program into liberated Mozambique where Frelimo claims to have up to 20,000 children in 125 schools.

The last year of the Frelimo primary system, like that of the Portuguese, is the fourth class. This class was first offered at Bagamoyo near Dar es Salaam. From February to December 1968, there were about 40 students in that class. By 1969, there were 65, although 95 had been expected. (Thirty were to have come from inside Mozambique but did not arrive in time.) In 1970, the fourth class was transferred from Bagamoyo to Tunduru. There are already 100 in the fourth class at Tunduru and an estimated 50 in the fourth class within Mozambique.

In 1968 a ten-month teacher-training course was organized at Bagamoyo. Because the instructors at that course were teachers at the Mozambique Institute, however, the course was not repeated in 1969.

Inside Mozambique

Frelimo claims to have organized schools within the two northern districts of Mozambique, Niassa and Cabo Delgado, and more recently in the Tete district where the Portuguese, with South African assistance, are building the mammoth Cabora Bassa Dam. In the course of their activities in these three districts, Frelimo claims to have achieved great success at the primary school level. For most of the schools within Mozambique, security problems sometimes cause the cancellation of classes for months on end. The system has been most highly developed in Cabo Delgado where guerrilla successes have been the most pronounced.

The Party conducts seminars of one- to three-month durations for between 15 to 20 people. Since the Frelimo textbooks do not start from the basis of assumed illiteracy, as do those of the MPLA of Angola, it is likely that much of the education in these seminars is oral and is directed more to political awareness and military collaboration than to literacy itself.

The statistics used by Frelimo and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of traveling either to the liberated areas of Mozambique, or into any part of southern Tanzania to see the schools in operation induce some skepticism about the extent of Frelimo's educational activities. Those statistics would indicate a student-teacher ratio of 160 to 1. Given the rural nature of the area in which Frelimo is operating and the manner in which the Portuguese use aerial reconnaissance as part of their defense techniques, it is questionable whether groups as large as 160, or even of half that number, could meet with any frequency in a school surrounding. Teachers may have to move around serving several smaller groups. For large numbers of children to have in their possession Frelimo-produced textbooks would help government forces to identify Frelimo sympathizers. Finally, it is obvious that, even if the statistics are correct, the quality of the schools cannot be very high. If it were high, there would be greater demands for entry into both the third and the fourth year of primary school at Tunduru than have been apparent to this time.

It is unclear why Frelimo feels the need to exaggerate the statistics of its primary school attendance. An admirable production of textbooks, the growth of some, if not many, schools, and a growing experience in education of many Frelimo sympathizers has been a meaningful accomplishment. Clearly, the Party would wish that more had been accomplished, but Frelimo does not operate in a vacuum. Portuguese military successes in the past year and a half as well as the Portuguese awareness that their defense must involve more than just military campaigns, have presented a serious challenge to Frelimo. But, in the same manner, Frelimo provided a serious challenge to the Portuguese. In 1969, Portuguese military officials in Mozambique spoke of the need for the Portuguese to expand their school system so that children in northern Mozambique would speak Portuguese taught to them in Portuguese schools, not in Frelimo schools. FRELIMO education had clearly begun to undermine the Portuguese hold on the area.

Portuguese educational expansion in northern Mozambique may reduce Frelimo educational statistics. At the same time, however, Frelimo may be able to better use its small number of qualified literates to improve the quality of its own education and expand the number of those educated at a higher primary level, the third and fourth classes, where political indoctrination is more likely to be effective. Furthermore, expanded literacy, regardless of who provides the schools, offers both a challenge to the Portuguese system to retain African allegiance and an opportunity to Frelimo to attract a more potentially aware group.

Without doubt, Frelimo education suffered a serious setback with the decline of the Mozambique Institute. It is still too early to determine whether any secondary school will replace it, or whether Tunduru will expand its educational role. Much depends on the guerrilla war itself.



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1. Eduardo Mondlane, *The Struggle for Mozambique* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1969) p. 122.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
3. An eighteen-page mimeographed information brochure on the Mozambique Institute, emphasizing that "the Institute provides a channel through which assistance can be given to the development programmes of the Liberation Front with (sic.) the secure knowledge that funds intended for such uses are not diverted to the military field," provides useful background information. "Mozambique and the Mozambique Institute," (1969?)
4. Some of the information in this article has derived from conversations with Mr. Eduardo Coloma, Secretary of the Frelimo Department of Education and Culture, in Dar es Salaam, May 1970.
5. According to official Portuguese educational statistics, in 1964-65 primary school enrollment in Niassa and Cabo Delgado Districts was 39,000, 10.9 per cent of the Mozambique enrollment of 358,000. This enrollment represented 4.9 per cent of the districts' total population of 819,000 according to the 1960 census. Portugal, Provincia de Mocambique. Direcção Provincial dos Servicos de Estatística. *Estatística da educação: ano lectivo 1964-1965*. (Lourenco Marques, 1967), p. 8.



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