



Echoes of Queen Victoria: A Foucauldian Interrogation of Colonial Legacies in the Construction of the “Good Student” in Nigeria

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Abstract. Queen Victoria of 19th-century expansionist Britain may not have held sovereignty over an amalgamated Nigeria, yet the institutional echoes of her imperial era remain deeply embedded within the country's pedagogical system. The missionary and colonial schools that proliferated during her reign introduced a pedagogy of obedience, temporal regulation and physical decorum that survived the transition to state sovereignty. Rather than dismantling this foundation, contemporary educational governance has operationally metricised it. Through an archival-genealogical analysis of qualitative policy documents and secondary institutional indicators – specifically school codes of conduct and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) affective domain grading scales – this study examines how historical imperial imperatives are translated into modern administrative formats. Drawing on Michel Foucault's analysis of power, normalising judgement and subjectification alongside decolonial critique, the paper interrogates how these quantitative monitoring mechanisms construct the normative category of the "good student". The analysis suggests that by converting qualitative moral traits like obedience and neatness into calculable data points, modern schools function as panoptic apparatuses. This continuous tracking encourages learners to internalise inherited regimes of truth through active self-surveillance, ultimately constraining the critical independent agency required for sovereign citizenship. This study contributes to decolonial dialogues in the sociology of African education by demonstrating that disrupting colonial legacies requires a fundamental deconstruction of the administrative and statistical machinery that measures and validates student identity.

Keywords: Echoes of Queen Victoria; Good Student; Nigerian education; Subjectification; Queen Victoria

1. Introduction

Echoes of Queen Victoria of Britain's 19th-century colonial era reverberate through the school bell that rings across Nigerian primary and secondary schools each morning at precisely seven o'clock. The school bell is therefore not merely a logistical convenience. It signals punctuality, institutional submission and the subordination of the individual body to collective rhythmic discipline – values whose particular institutional expression emerged through colonial schooling rather than indigenous Yoruba, Igbo or Hausa educational systems that preceded British colonisation (Fafunwa, 1974; Taiwo, 1980). That this bell continues to ring, largely unquestioned, in the 21st-century Nigerian classroom is precisely the puzzle that animates this study. It raises a disquieting question that reaches far beyond timetables and uniforms: whose conception of the educated, disciplined and morally worthy student continues to govern Nigerian schools, and through what historical mechanisms did that conception become so thoroughly naturalised as to appear self-evident? The formal education of Nigerian children began not as an indigenous project of cultural reproduction but as an instrument of imperial governance. When British missionaries established the first Western-style schools in Badagry in 1843 and later at Abeokuta, their pedagogical ambitions were inseparable from a broader civilising mission rooted in Victorian moral philosophy (Ayandele, 1966; Bude, 1983). The ideal pupil envisioned by these early institutions was obedient, literate in English, punctual, neatly dressed, morally restrained and deferential to institutional authority – a figure drawn directly from the reformist educational ideals of Victorian England, where schooling was understood as a technology for producing governable, productive and morally legible subjects (Mangan, 1988). Queen Victoria's reign (1837–1901) coincided with the consolidation of British colonial authority in what would become Nigeria, and the educational infrastructure established

during this period – missionary schools, colonial ordinances, inspection regimes and examination systems – encoded Victorian ideals of discipline, morality and civilisation into the very architecture of Nigerian schooling (Ajayi, 1965).

The Colonial Education Ordinance of 1882, subsequently revised in 1887 and 1916, formalised these ideals into regulatory frameworks that defined, measured and rewarded particular forms of student conduct whilst pathologising others (Fajana, 1978; Omolewa, 1981). Missionary inspection reports from the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodist Mission constructed a normative subject called the good student whose goodness was measured against Victorian standards of intellectual docility, moral purity and cultural assimilation – categories of assessment that were simultaneously pedagogical and racial (Ayandele, 1966; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). Those who resisted, spoke indigenous languages or embodied alternative cultural epistemologies were rendered deficient, uncivilised or uneducable (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Willinsky, 1998). Nigeria's political independence in 1960 did not produce a commensurate educational independence. The National Policy on Education, first issued in 1977 and subsequently revised in 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2013, retained structural and curricular continuities with the colonial system it nominally replaced (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; Obanya, 2004). The West African Examinations Council, established in 1952 under British colonial administration, has continued to function as the primary arbiter of academic worth, whilst its marking schemes, subject hierarchies and assessment philosophies have largely preserved the epistemological priorities of colonial schooling (Okonkwo, 2012). Contemporary Nigerian students sit examinations whose intellectual genealogy extends directly to the Cambridge Local Examinations of the 19th century, are assessed against behavioural standards embedded in school disciplinary handbooks that echo Victorian codes of moral conduct, and are taught through curricula that continue to privilege English-language literacy, Western scientific rationalism and institutional conformity as the primary markers of educational achievement (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003; Obanya, 2004).

The material consequences of these enduring constructions are neither abstract nor merely historical. Nigeria's national examination statistics reveal persistent and structured patterns of differential achievement that correlate strongly with gender, geopolitical zone and socioeconomic positioning – patterns whose genealogy cannot be adequately understood without interrogating the colonial

discursive frameworks that originally sorted Nigerian students into hierarchies of educability (Unterhalter, 2007). Girls in northern Nigerian states continue to experience disproportionate exclusion from secondary schooling, a phenomenon partly rooted in colonial-era gender ideologies that constructed the ideal educated subject as implicitly male, Protestant and southern (Bray, 1981; Unterhalter, 2007). The language of contemporary Nigerian school disciplinary codes – emphasising neatness, punctuality, obedience to authority and moral uprightness – reproduces with remarkable fidelity the behavioural lexicon of Victorian missionary inspection reports (Fajana, 1978; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). Critically, the discursive construction of the good student is not only legible in these qualitative registers; it is also traceable and quantifiable in the statistical landscapes of Nigerian educational performance. National examination outcomes, enrolment figures and regional performance differentials reported by UNESCO (2023) and the World Bank (2024) are not neutral administrative records. They are the quantitative inscription of a colonial normative framework – statistical traces of the ongoing capacity of Victorian educational discourse to determine who counts as academically successful and who is rendered marginal, distributed along axes of gender, geography, language and class (Tikly & Barrett, 2011). In the daily lives of Nigerian students, the past is not past; it remains present, operational and largely invisible.

This invisibility is itself a function of power. As Michel Foucault argued, the most effective operations of power are those so thoroughly normalised as to require no explicit enforcement – those that become regimes of truth: frameworks so deeply embedded within institutional practice that they appear not as historical constructions but as natural, self-evident and universal facts (Foucault, 1977, 1980). The construction of the good student in Nigeria represents precisely such a regime of truth: a historically produced, politically invested and culturally particular conception of educational worth that presents itself as pedagogically neutral and educationally inevitable. To interrogate this construction is not an act of academic abstraction; it is a politically necessary intervention into the ongoing reproduction of colonial power within one of Africa's largest educational systems, serving over twelve million secondary school students across thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory (UNESCO, 2023). Scholars of postcolonial education have examined colonial continuities in Nigerian curriculum content (Obanya, 2004), language policy (Bamgbose, 2000) and gender dynamics (Unterhalter, 2007), yet none has conducted a systematic genealogical interrogation of the construction of the

good student as a discursive formation – one integrating qualitative documentary analysis with the Foucauldian reading of quantitative institutional data as co-equal sites of discursive struggle – linking Victorian colonial governance to the contemporary production of Nigerian student subjectivity (Ball, 2013; Tikly, 2004). This study addresses that gap by subjecting the echoes of Queen Victoria – persistent, mutating and institutionally reproduced ideals of the educated subject – to sustained Foucauldian scrutiny, producing an analysis that is simultaneously historical, institutional and decolonially committed.

1.1 Research Questions

To interrogate the potentially persistent echoes of Queen Victoria within the institutional construction of the “good student” in contemporary Nigerian schooling, the following research questions guide the study:

- How do contemporary institutional discourses of the “good student” in Nigerian education reproduce genealogical continuities that retain the echoes of Queen Victoria within post-colonial schooling?
- How do the qualitative regulations and quantitative metrics of contemporary Nigerian schools operate as Foucauldian technologies of disciplinary power that operationalise the echoes of Queen Victoria through the normalisation of student behaviour?
- How does the institutional construction of the “good student” function as a site of subjectification through which the echoes of Queen Victoria shape, regulate, and potentially constrain the identity and agency of contemporary Nigerian students?

2. Literature Review

The literature review for this study is organised into two complementary sections. The first examines the

theoretical frameworks that inform the study's analytical lens, while the second synthesises empirical evidence in relation to echoes of Queen Elizabeth in Nigerian education, highlighting the gap that necessitates a genealogical interrogation of the contemporary construction of the “good student”.

2.1 Theoretical Review of Analytical Framework

This study integrates Michel Foucault's (1977, 1982) theories of power with decolonial frameworks to evaluate the endurance of Victorian educational rationalities within the contemporary Nigerian schooling system (Mignolo, 2007; Tikly, 2004). Through a genealogical lens, the construct of the “good student” is examined not as an objective measure of scholastic capability but as a historically situated, normative category that institutionalises 19th-century British imperatives of punctuality, physical decorum and moral compliance (Ball, 2013; Fajana, 1978). This underlying discourse is operationalised through disciplinary power, where formal administrative codes and quantitative monitoring frameworks – including performance metrics, attendance logs and behavioural records – act as instruments of normalising judgement to categorise and govern student conduct against inherited institutional benchmarks (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003). Ultimately, these pervasive institutional dynamics facilitate subjectification by encouraging learners to internalise these systemic expectations through continuous routines of self-surveillance and self-regulation. Collectively, genealogy, disciplinary power and subjectification offer a coherent analytical architecture to diagnose the precise administrative and empirical networks through which the contemporary construction of student identity in Nigeria continues to be shaped by the echoes of Queen Victoria. The integrated relationship between these three theoretical movements and their shared Victorian genealogical foundation is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Echoes of Queen Victoria: A Foucauldian–Decolonial Analytical Schema of the Construction of the "Good Student" in Nigeria



Adapted from Foucault (1977, 1982), Ball (2013), Mignolo (2007) and Tikly (2004).

Note: The schema maps three integrated analytical movements – genealogy, disciplinary power and subjectification – through which Victorian educational rationalities are transmitted, operationalised and internalised within the contemporary Nigerian schooling system. The foundation column represents 19th-century British imperial imperatives of punctuality, physical decorum and moral compliance institutionalised through colonial schooling. Move 1 traces the genealogical continuity of the "good student" construct from colonial ordinances through post-independence national policy. Move 2 illustrates how quantitative monitoring frameworks, affective domain grading and conduct registers function as Foucauldian technologies of normalising judgement. Move 3 demonstrates how these institutional dynamics produce subjectification through learner internalisation of colonial normative expectations. The synthesis column identifies the "good student" as a historically produced colonial subject position whose endurance reflects the structural embeddedness of Victorian educational rationalities within the contemporary Nigerian educational apparatus.

2.2 Empirical Review of Related Studies

Empirical literature on postcolonial Nigerian education has consistently documented the persistence of colonial structural arrangements within the national schooling system, though the mechanisms and implications of that persistence remain unevenly theorised. Obanya (2004) demonstrates that successive revisions of the National Policy on Education retained the curricular hierarchies, subject classifications and assessment orientations of the colonial system, privileging English-language literacy and Western scientific rationalism as the primary indices of educational achievement. This privileging, Obanya argues, was not incidental but reflected the enduring epistemological authority of a colonial knowledge order that post-independence policy reform addressed at the level of rhetoric without dismantling at the level of structure. Fajana (1978) corroborates this finding historically, showing that the Colonial Education Ordinances of 1882 and 1916 established examination and inspection regimes whose normative assumptions about student conduct and intellectual ability were absorbed, rather than contested, by post-independence Nigerian educational governance.

Studies focused on disciplinary practices in Nigerian schools have produced convergent findings regarding the reproduction of colonial behavioural norms. Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2003) document the extent to which contemporary Nigerian school disciplinary frameworks emphasise obedience, punctuality, uniform compliance and deference to teacher authority – a cluster of behavioural expectations whose genealogy, they observe, lies in missionary school culture rather than in indigenous Nigerian pedagogical traditions. Harber (2014), in a broader comparative study of schooling in Africa, identifies authoritarian pedagogy and punitive discipline as characteristic features of postcolonial African schooling systems that reflect colonial-era assumptions about the need to govern African student bodies through surveillance and correction. These findings align with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) foundational argument that colonial education in Africa operated primarily as a technology of cultural subordination, producing students whose cognitive and moral self-understanding was organised around the epistemological categories of the coloniser.

Research on student identity formation in Nigerian secondary schools has begun to illuminate the subjective dimensions of this process. Unterhalter (2007) demonstrates that gender inequalities in educational access and achievement in sub-Saharan Africa are not reducible to economic or logistical barriers but are mediated by normative constructions of the ideal educated subject that carry the traces of colonial gender ideologies. Bamgbose (2000) shows that language policy in Nigerian education has systematically marginalised indigenous-language speakers by constructing English proficiency as the definitive marker of educational seriousness – a construction whose colonial origins are explicit but whose contemporary institutional authority is treated as self-evident.

Taken together, these empirical studies paint a coherent picture of a Nigerian educational system in which colonial normative frameworks continue to shape curriculum, discipline and student identity in identifiable ways. What the empirical literature does not systematically examine, however, is the discursive architecture through which these continuities are produced and reproduced – the specific mechanisms of normalisation through which Victorian constructions of the good student are institutionally stabilised, rendered invisible as constructions and experienced by students, teachers and policymakers as natural educational common sense. Nor does existing scholarship adequately interrogate the processes of subject formation through which Nigerian students come to evaluate their own educational worth against a normative template whose historical conditions of production remain largely unexamined. It is precisely this analytical gap – between describing what persists and theorising how it persists and with what effects on subjectivity – that the theoretical framework addresses.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative-dominant, genealogical-archival research design situated within a post-structuralist critical paradigm to conduct a rigorous Foucauldian interrogation of the echoes of Queen Victoria in the construction of the good student in Nigeria. Rather than a passive review of literature, the design constitutes an active, theoretically driven excavation of a bifurcated secondary archive. This database comprises a qualitative corpus of colonial education ordinances, missionary reports, national policies and school codes of conduct alongside a quantitative corpus containing WAEC and NECO examination metrics, institutional disciplinary registers and national performance statistics. Consistent with Foucault's archival methods in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), these textual and statistical materials are treated not as neutral repositories but as discursive artefacts and monuments of power through which Victorian ideals of bodily docility, morality and civilisation were operationalised. The operational architecture of this pipeline is structured into three discrete, interrelated procedural columns in Figure 1, tracing the analytical trajectory from raw historical documentation to critical interpretation.

Figure 2

Methodological Framework: Echoes of Queen Victoria—A Historical-Cultural Approach to Leadership and Governance



Adapted from Foucault (1977), Mignolo (2007) and Tikly (2004).

Note: Figure 2 presents the study's methodological architecture across three columns: the bifurcated archival corpus (Corpus 1: primary historical sources; Corpus 2: secondary historical sources), the three analytical movements (Movement 1: Historical Reconstruction; Movement 2: Integrative Analysis; Movement 3: Contemporary Application) and the synthesised outputs oriented toward ethical leadership, responsible governance, societal well-being and enduring legacy.

4. Results

The archival-genealogical analysis of the qualitative policy corpus and secondary quantitative indicators reveals a structural and procedural continuity between colonial educational architectures and contemporary Nigerian schooling practices. This section presents the descriptive findings across three domains: discursive continuity in policy language, quantitative instruments of behavioural regulation and the institutional production of student subjectivity.

4.1 Discursive Continuity in Policy Language

A comparative reading of historical and contemporary policy texts reveals a systematic translation of institutional objectives across the colonial and post-colonial periods. The moral and imperial vocabulary inscribed within the Colonial Education Ordinances of 1882 and 1916 remains structurally legible within the modern directives of Nigerian educational governance, though its surface terminology has been substantially updated. Fajana (1978) documents that the foundational objective of colonial formal schooling in Nigeria was organised around explicitly moral and imperial criteria, with missionary inspection frameworks prioritising Christian conduct, bodily discipline and deference to institutional and imperial authority as the primary measures of educational worth. These expectations were not peripheral to the curriculum; they were its organising rationality. Omolewa (1981) corroborates this, demonstrating that colonial school inspection reports consistently evaluated Nigerian pupils against behavioural and moral criteria derived from Victorian Protestant norms, recording compliance and deviance in administrative registers that functioned simultaneously as educational assessments and instruments of racial governance.

In the contemporary policy corpus, these functional expectations are present but linguistically recoded. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) frames student development in terms of civic responsibility, character formation, national consciousness and moral uprightness – a cluster of normative categories whose structural function, the archival comparison suggests, maps directly onto the colonial demand for moral discipline and institutional compliance. The theological register of the colonial documents has been replaced by the secular civic language of the post-colonial developmental state, yet the underlying behavioural template – the student who is obedient, morally regulated, institutionally conformist and properly self-governing – remains substantively intact (Obanya, 2004). Similarly, the colonial emphasis on industrial habit and disciplined labour, which Fajana (1978) identifies as central to the economic rationale of colonial schooling, reappears in the contemporary policy archive as vocational competency and workforce readiness – categories that update the linguistic framework whilst preserving the instrumental orientation toward producing productive, governable subjects. This pattern of linguistic updating without substantive normative transformation constitutes the first descriptive finding: the contemporary language of Nigerian educational policy functions as a recoded continuation of colonial moral discourse rather than a departure from it.

4.2 Quantitative Instruments of Behavioural Regulation

Beyond policy rhetoric, the structural mechanics of contemporary Nigerian schooling translate behavioural expectations into calculable institutional data. Secondary institutional sources – school codes of conduct, institutional handbooks and the administrative parameters of West African Examinations Council (WAEC) assessment frameworks – suggest that schools function as systematic tracking networks in which everyday physical and behavioural habits are monitored, recorded and evaluated against normative standards. The evaluation architecture of contemporary Nigerian secondary schools divides the student profile into two interrelated domains: the cognitive domain, comprising standardised academic test scores, and the affective domain, comprising institutional ratings for personal behaviour structured around variables including punctuality, obedience, neatness, cooperation and reliability (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The genealogical relationship between these contemporary variables and the behavioural criteria of Victorian colonial inspection is visible in the archival record (Fajana, 1978; Omolewa, 1981). Table 1 maps these specific quantitative indicators against their historical antecedents and the Foucauldian mechanisms of power through which they operate.

Table 1: Operationalisation of Historical Disciplinary Focus through Modern Quantitative Proxies

Historical Disciplinary Focus (Victorian)	Modern Quantitative Proxy (Nigerian Schools)	Institutional Mechanism of Power
Bodily docility and physical restraint	Uniform and haircut compliance metrics	Hierarchical observation
Temporal regulation and punctuality	Lateness logs and attendance gating	Micro-penalty of time
Moral puritanism and spiritual obedience	Affective domain grading scales	Normalising judgement

Note: Source: Adapted from Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2003), Federal Ministry of Education (2024), and Fajana (1978).

The quantitative dimension of the disciplinary technology finding is further substantiated by national performance trends. Table 2 presents the national percentage of candidates achieving a minimum of five credits, including the core gateway subjects of English Language and Mathematics, over a ten-year period.

Table 2: WAEC WASSCE Nigeria: Percentage of Candidates Obtaining Credits and Above in Minimum Five Subjects Including English Language and Mathematics, 2014–2023

Year	% Candidates (5 Credits incl. English & Mathematics)
2014	31.28
2015	38.68
2016	52.97
2017	59.22
2018	49.98
2019	64.18
2020	65.24
2021	81.70
2022	76.36
2023	79.81

Note: Data compiled from annual WAEC WASSCE results press briefings, Nigeria National Office, 2014–2023. The metric reflects candidates achieving credit passes (grades A1–C6) in a minimum of five subjects, with English Language and Mathematics compulsorily included.

The figures in Table 2 reveal a broadly upward trajectory in overall WASSCE performance across the decade, rising from 31.28% in 2014 to a peak of 81.70% in 2021 before settling at 79.81% in 2023. Crucially, the metric against which all Nigerian secondary students are institutionally evaluated requires simultaneous competence in English Language and Mathematics – the two subjects whose genealogical privileging within Nigerian education is most directly traceable to the colonial academic hierarchy established under Victorian schooling (Fajana, 1978; Omolewa, 1981). The non-negotiable co-requirement of English Language in this benchmark is not educationally neutral; it structurally reproduces the colonial construction of English-language literacy as the definitive credential of the educated Nigerian subject, rendering students who may excel in other domains institutionally deficient if they cannot simultaneously demonstrate mastery of this colonial linguistic inheritance. The sustained institutional architecture of this assessment regime – unchanged in its fundamental structure since the WAEC's establishment under British colonial administration in 1952 – constitutes a quantitative instrument of normalising judgement whose disciplinary genealogy the foregoing analysis has traced.

Secondary institutional archives suggest that individual behavioural non-conformity is similarly tracked through demerit logs and attendance registers, with reductions in affective domain scores formally embedded within the student's cumulative institutional evaluation – a structural configuration whose formal origins are traceable to the colonial conduct-register culture that Victorian missionary schooling established (Fajana, 1978; Omolewa, 1981).

4.3 The Institutional Production of Student Subjectivity

The third descriptive finding concerns not what the institutional archive prescribes but what it produces: a particular kind of student subject whose self-understanding, aspirational framework and sense of educational worth are organised around the normative template that the colonial and post-colonial archive has consistently reproduced. This finding emerges from the synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative corpus. The normative language of Nigerian school

codes of conduct, as evidenced across the secondary institutional archive, consistently describes the ideal student in terms of self-regulation, deference, diligence and moral propriety – a subject position that demands not merely outward compliance but the internalisation of institutional norms as expressions of personal virtue (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; Obanya, 2004). This demand for internalisation is structurally significant. Where punitive discipline requires only surface compliance, normalising judgement operates by making the norm the standard against which individuals evaluate themselves (Foucault, 1977). The affective domain grading system institutionalises this demand by rendering self-governance quantitatively legible and permanently recorded within the student's cumulative institutional file.

Secondary institutional sources suggest that students whose behavioural profiles deviate from the normative template – through linguistic non-conformity, resistance to uniform regulations or irregular attendance – accumulate institutional records of deficiency that bear upon their cumulative educational standing rather than being treated as isolated infractions. The student who speaks an indigenous language in a formally English-medium environment, who presents a hairstyle deemed non-regulation or whose attendance is disrupted by socioeconomic constraints is not merely penalised for a specific act; they are institutionally constituted as a deficient subject whose deviation from the norm becomes a traceable feature of their educational record (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Unterhalter, 2007). The convergence of the qualitative policy archive and the quantitative conduct data in producing this normative subject position constitutes the third descriptive finding: the contemporary Nigerian school functions as a site of subjectification in which the administrative machinery of assessment and discipline actively constitutes the good student – and its institutional opposite – in terms whose genealogical relationship to Victorian colonial governance the foregoing analysis has documented. The interpretive and theoretical implications of these three findings are addressed in the discussion that follows.

5. Discussion

The descriptive findings provide empirical support for an archival-genealogical reading of contemporary Nigerian education, demonstrating that 19th-century imperial rationalities remain embedded within the modern school apparatus. By separating the explicit text from its institutional function, the results illustrate how the administrative machinery of schooling

continues to organise student identity. The linguistic transitions documented between the colonial ordinances and contemporary frameworks clearly illustrate this process of genealogical translation. Rather than experiencing a structural break at political independence, the institutional definition of the "good student" has undergone a rhetorical shift. The transition from the explicit imperial vocabulary of the late 19th century to the modern civic terminology of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) indicates what Foucault (1977) describes as the adaptation of a discursive formation. By framing student worth through the lens of "character training" and "institutional compliance", contemporary policies preserve the passive behavioural profile originally valued by missionary and colonial administrations (Fajana, 1978; Omolewa, 1981). The preferred student remains one who does not disrupt the established institutional order. This continuity validates the contentions of decolonial theorists that the formal end of empire does not automatically dissolve the institutional structures of coloniality (Mignolo, 2007; Tikly, 2004). The discourse of national development has been overlaid onto an existing colonial foundation, ensuring that schools continue to prioritise obedience and conformity under the guise of civic virtue.

The operationalisation of these policy discourses is directly achieved through the quantitative regulatory mechanisms identified in the affective domain grading systems and the macro-level WAEC performance data. The results indicate that the modern Nigerian school functions as a classic Foucauldian disciplinary apparatus (Foucault, 1977). By translating qualitative moral virtues – such as neatness and obedience – into countable, recorded data points, the institution executes what Foucault terms "normalising judgement." Table 1 demonstrates that the micro-penalties of the 19th-century classroom have not vanished; rather, they have been metricised. This metricisation is mirrored at the macro-level by the totalising baseline established within national examination performance data (Table 2). The upward trajectory in candidate success rates – moving from 31.28% in 2014 to a peak of 81.70% in 2021 before settling at 79.81% in 2023 – is structurally governed by a dual-disciplinary requirement: the simultaneous achievement of credit passes in both English Language and Mathematics.

The examination, as Foucault (1977) notes, is a normalising gaze that establishes over individuals a visibility through which they are differentiated, classified and judged. Within the contemporary Nigerian context, this compulsory benchmark is far

from educationally neutral. By positioning English proficiency as an absolute prerequisite for institutional validity, the modern state directly re-operationalises the colonial construction of literacy, where mastery of the imperial tongue was the definitive passport to administrative legitimacy (Omolewa, 1981). The structural retention of this assessment framework – unbroken in its foundational logic since the Council's establishment under British colonial authority in 1952 – demonstrates how a quantitative apparatus can obscure an ideological filter under the guise of an objective, developmental standard. The reliance on statistical tracking mechanisms re-inscribes an imported Eurocentric baseline, treating student performance as a measurable commodity that must be continuously corrected to fit the institutional norm.

The ultimate consequence of this interlocking grid of policy language and metric monitoring is the regulation of student subjectivity. The analytical shift from external discipline to internalised self-regulation marks the completion of Foucauldian subjectification (Foucault, 1982). The findings indicate that the continuous pressure of affective domain tracking and behavioural codes encourages students to construct their academic identities around institutional compliance. When learners equate absolute deference with intelligence and silence with virtue, they are actively participating in their own subjectification. As Ball (2013) observes, the power of educational metrics lies in their capacity to make individuals remodel themselves to fit the criteria of evaluation. The quantitative distribution of affective and academic scores formalises this reality: the student who resists uniform regulations or exhibits linguistic non-conformity by using indigenous languages is institutionally constituted as a deficient subject (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986).

This self-regulation produces an institutional paradox. While modern educational frameworks explicitly claim to foster innovation, critical thinking and sovereign democratic citizenship, the underlying disciplinary machinery systematically penalises divergence. By forcing students to continuously police their own conduct to align with inherited colonial standards, the administrative and statistical structures of schooling recreate the compliant, non-disruptive subject originally designed to serve the bureaucratic needs of the colonial state (Obanya, 2004). This internalised docility remains a major, unaddressed structural barrier to true decolonial educational reform.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that 19th-century Victorian educational rationalities persist within contemporary Nigerian schooling, structurally preserved through modern administrative and metricised frameworks. By tracing the genealogical trajectory from colonial ordinances to modern policy texts, the analysis reveals that the institutional definition of the "good student" has not been dismantled, but rather linguistically updated and operationally metricised. The transition from explicit imperial demands for obedience to technocratic terms like "character training" and "institutional compliance" illustrates how durable discursive formations adapt to survive major political transitions. Ultimately, the affective domain grading system functions as a core technology of normalising judgement, converting qualitative expectations of bodily docility and deference into calculable data points. This continuous tracking drives a process of subjectification that encourages students to internalise these inherited regimes of truth through active self-surveillance, ultimately constraining the critical, independent agency required for true national sovereignty. Achieving meaningful decolonial educational reform therefore requires moving beyond surface-level curricular revisions to fundamentally disrupt this underlying panoptic machinery. First, the Federal Ministry of Education and regional examination bodies, such as WAEC, must systematically restructure the affective domain grading matrix. Evaluation metrics that reward passivity, quietude, and absolute obedience should be replaced with indicators that validate critical inquiry, collaborative problem-solving, and active democratic participation. Altering the mathematical weight of these institutional records shifts the focus of evaluation from behavioural docility to critical agency, transforming student tracking into a tool that supports decolonial subject formation.

Simultaneously, national and state-level teacher training programmes must integrate critical policy sociology and decolonial pedagogies into their core frameworks. Educating teachers to recognise the historical roots of contemporary school disciplinary technologies will allow them to replace rigid, imported regulatory mechanisms with relational accountability models drawn from indigenous African educational philosophies. Finally, national civic education directives must be revised to decouple "character training" from institutional submissiveness. Policy language should explicitly frame the ideal graduate as an active, analytical citizen capable of structural critique. Decoupling these administrative and statistical mechanisms from their historically inherited

baselines is an essential prerequisite to fostering genuine intellectual sovereignty within the contemporary Nigerian classroom by dismantling the echoes of Queen Victoria.

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