



## An Analysis of Changing Education Systems on the Societies of Kogi State, Nigeria: From Colonial to Post-Colonial Era

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### Abstract

*The restructuring of education systems in African societies followed the advent of European colonial interventions in different parts of the continent. The Western-type formal education introduced in Africa changed patterns of knowledge acquisition and altered the content of knowledge relating to economic, political, legal, religious, family, military and health systems. This paper examines the functionality of changing education in relation to the living standard of the three major ethnic groups of Kogi State, Nigeria. Related literature was reviewed with liberal feminism as the explanatory tool. Data were sourced through survey, in-depth interview (IDI), focus group discussion (FGD), and documentary search. The survey data were analysed quantitatively using frequency, percentage, cross-tabulations and chi-square tests, while IDI, FGD and documentary data were analysed qualitatively through content analysis. The findings indicate that changing education contents prepare many members of the ethnic groups more for labour services than for productive self-reliance, while a limited number of respondents identified some benefits in literacy and selected areas of modern knowledge. Inferential analysis further shows statistically significant differences in perceptions of functionality across ethnic groups and gender categories. The paper concludes that the changing education system is more dysfunctional than functional and therefore requires modification. It recommends functional reform of the education system through the development and implementation of primary and secondary school curricula that accommodate improved and modernised traditional technical skills, vocational orientation, good morals, unity and good governance.*

**Keywords:** Societies, Changing-Education System, Changing-Social Systems, Social Order, Colonial, Post-Colonial.

### Introduction

African systems of education included informal and imitative processes carried out in the domestic environment of the child, structured apprenticeship in trades and crafts, Koranic schools, and older centres of scholarship such as Sankore, Djenna, Walata and Timbuktu. One major aspect of the colonisation of Africa that accelerated in the nineteenth century was the restructuring of education in African societies. The Western type of structured education introduced in Africa was not originally designed to be particularly functional for Africans; rather, in its inception, it operated as an instrument of alienation and ideological control that facilitated the extraction of labour and material resources (Sanda, 1972).

Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019:21) states that several studies have established that, contrary to widespread beliefs, formal and informal education were actively in existence in Africa prior to colonialism. At the formal, non-formal and informal levels, Africans in various parts of the continent were consistently involved in transmitting knowledge to younger generations. This is why Rodney famously argued that the colonisers did not introduce education into Africa but introduced a new set of formal educational institutions that partly supplemented and partly replaced those that already existed.



The restructured colonial education for Africans was deficient in scope and content. It largely inculcated labour-service skills while neglecting technology, engineering, and the pure and applied sciences. African studies were also excluded from colonial curricula, while history syllabi often privileged European activities in Africa over the histories of African peoples themselves (Benjamin, 2007; Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019).

The restructured education bred admiration for supposedly superior Western culture and often weakened attachment to African names, languages, heritage, and identity (Wa Thiong'o, 1981). Rodney (1972:264) therefore describes colonial education in Africa as education for subordination, exploitation, mental confusion and underdevelopment. In similar terms, Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019:34-35) argues that the lingering effects of imposed colonial education are still visible in low levels of creativity and innovation within many African education systems.

Studies on specific Nigerian societies also point to enduring consequences of educational change. Naankiel et al. (2016) trace the decline of indigenous Igala textile production to colonial transformations, while Abidogun (2007) found that Western education in northern Igbo society weakened important forms of gendered indigenous knowledge. Mohammed (2023) similarly argues that socialisation outside the home in contemporary African societies has become more school-centred and less directly patterned along traditional gender lines.

Recent continental and national discussions further underscore the need to revisit inherited education systems. UNESCO, AU and UNICEF (2025) report that African education systems still face major challenges relating to quality, curriculum relevance, teacher preparation and learning materials. Contemporary scholarship on decolonisation also insists that African curricula should move beyond colonial epistemic dependence by integrating indigenous knowledge, local histories, and context-responsive learning goals (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). In the Nigerian context, debates on education reform increasingly emphasise relevance, employability, cultural rootedness and productive citizenship.

This study adopts liberal feminism as its theoretical framework, but not merely as an abstract label. Liberal feminism is concerned with reforming social institutions so that individuals can access equal opportunities, rights and self-development (Guy-Evans, 2024; Haralambos et al., 2013). In this paper, the framework is operationalised to interrogate how changing education reshapes access to knowledge, role performance, opportunity structures, and social participation across gender and ethnic groups in Kogi State. It is therefore used to interpret how education can simultaneously widen literacy and public participation for some groups, while reproducing inequality, dependence, and limited productive autonomy for many others. Ann Oakley's argument that harmful social arrangements can and should be reformed is particularly relevant here (Oakley, 1974; Haralambos et al., 2013). Applied to Kogi State, the argument suggests that when changing education locks large numbers of people into low-yield labour-service roles while weakening productive, social and institutional capacities, the policy response should be system modification rather than passive acceptance. Liberal feminism therefore guides not only the interpretation of the findings but also the reform-oriented recommendations of the study.

Having observed that: (1) restructured socialisation into household roles often lacks the exact routine and modelling patterns that previously guided child training; (2) the changed education gives limited emphasis to farming; (3) it is deficient in contents that teach tool production; (4) it is deficient in contents that teach textile production; and (5) it displaces



occupational education that once raised self-employed citizens and instead privileges labour-service skills in a context where promising jobs are scarce, this paper examines the functionality of changing education on the three major societies of Kogi State, Nigeria. Thus, this study is guided by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the major contents of pre-colonial education among the Igala, Ebira and Okun societies of Kogi State.
- ii. To assess respondents' perceptions of the functionality of changing education contents across the three ethnic groups.
- iii. To analyse the reported outcomes of changing education for household members, household units and society.
- iv. To determine whether perceptions of the functionality of changing education differ significantly across ethnic group and gender.

The following research questions also direct the study:

- i. What were the dominant contents of pre-colonial education among the Igala, Ebira and Okun societies of Kogi State?
- ii. How do respondents from the three ethnic groups assess the functionality of changing education contents?
- iii. What outcomes has changing education produced for husbands/fathers, wives/mothers, children, grandparents, family units and society?
- iv. Are there statistically significant differences in perceptions of the functionality of changing education by ethnic group and gender?

## Methodology

The research is a cross-sectional study. Data were collected from the study population sample at one point in time. The study was carried out in Kogi State in the North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study population consists of adult men and women aged 20 years and above among the Igala, Ebira and Okun ethnic groups of Kogi State, Nigeria. To determine sample size, the study extrapolated from Krejcie and Morgan (1970), where a population of 1,000,000 corresponds to a sample of 384. On that basis, the population size of 2,095,019 yielded an approximate sample size of 804. This translated to 268 respondents for each of the three ethnic groups under study. Because the study area is large and the population heterogeneous, a multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used to divide the population into smaller units in sequential stages.

For ease of field management, primary data were collected from six Local Government Areas (LGAs), with two LGAs selected from each of the three senatorial districts. Purposive sampling was used to select LGAs that clearly represent Igala, Ebira and Okun areas. Ankpa and Idah were selected for Igala; Adavi and Okene for Ebira; and Kabba-Bunu and Yagba-West for Okun. Six research assistants were engaged because of the size and linguistic diversity of the study population. Twelve old/frail-old men and women aged 75 years and above were selected from twelve wards for in-depth interview using purposive sampling. These respondents were chosen because they had direct or inherited knowledge of colonial-period transitions. Focus group discussions were also conducted among twelve groups, comprising six groups of older adults aged 61-75 years and six groups of youths aged 20-40 years. The youth groups were included because they are deeply embedded in current waves of modernity and globalisation.

It is important to clarify the sub-sample proportions reported in the study. Although the planned sample allocation was equal across the three ethnic groups (268 each), the final valid



questionnaire returns differed slightly because of field realities and incomplete returns. Thus, 268 valid responses were obtained from Igala respondents, 266 from Ebira respondents, and 256 from Okun respondents, giving a total of 790 usable questionnaires. The slight differences were therefore not by design but resulted from field attrition and non-response. The study utilised both primary and secondary data. The primary data consisted of survey data, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The secondary data were archival and documentary materials used to obtain historical information on pre-colonial education among the ethnic groups studied.

Quantitative data were sourced through a questionnaire administered using both interviewer-administered and self-administered techniques. The interviewer-administered format was necessary for respondents who could neither read nor write, while the self-administered format was used for literate respondents. Qualitative data were sourced through IDI and FGD guides. Documentary materials on pre-colonial and colonial education among the Igala, Ebira and Okun were obtained from sources such as Clifford (1936), Weise (2013), Okene and Suberu (2013), and Naankiel et al. (2016). Quantitative data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, cross-tabulations and chi-square tests. Qualitative and documentary data were analysed through content analysis. The addition of chi-square analysis strengthens the analytical rigour of the study by testing whether observed differences in perception are statistically significant.

## Results

Socialisation in the pre-colonial ethnic groups under study involved teaching and learning family roles, economic roles, religious roles, military roles, political activities, legal roles and health-care roles. Teaching was mainly the responsibility of parents and, to a lesser extent, of other adults in the society. Learning was strongly gendered and was largely practical. Analysis is based on 790 valid questionnaire returns, representing 98.3% of the 804 questionnaires distributed.

**Table 1: The Education Contents in the Pre-Colonial Igala, Ebira, Okun and the Learners**

Education contents	Specific areas	Male learners	Female learners
Family responsibility	Protection	790 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Family responsibility	Gestation, natal and care-giving	0 (0.0%)	790 (100%)
Economic production: Agriculture	Arable farming, aquaculture, hunting game	790 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Economic production: Agriculture	Vegetable farming, food processing, animal husbandry	0 (0.0%)	790 (100%)
Crafts	Iron technology, wood technology, leather work	790 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Crafts	Pottery, beads making	0 (0.0%)	790 (100%)
Textile	Cotton farming, loom carving, tie and dye fabrics	790 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Textile	Cotton spinning, weaving, fabric sales	0 (0.0%)	790 (100%)
Trade	Male crafts	790 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Trade	Female crafts, farm produce and cosmetics	0 (0.0%)	790 (100%)
Cosmetics	Soap making, body and hair oil production	0 (0.0%)	790 (100%)
Public decision-making, leadership and law making	Policy making and implementation, law making	790 (100%)	0 (0.0%)



Public decision-making, leadership and law making	Advising, counselling, policy making and law making on women affairs	0 (0.0%)	790 (100%)
Justice administration	General law enforcement, dispute settlement, correction	790 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Justice administration	Dispute settlement among women, correction of female offenders	0 (0.0%)	790 (100%)
Religion	Belief and worship of the gods	790 (100%)	790 (100%)
Military	Defence	790 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Health care	Fetching herbs/providing medicine	790 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Health care	Boiling and administering medicine	0 (0.0%)	790 (100%)

Table 1 shows that education contents in the pre-colonial societies were drawn directly from institutional roles and productive life. Knowledge acquisition was strongly gender-based except in matters of religion, where both males and females were involved in belief and worship. The qualitative data further reveal that the curriculum was unwritten but organised through modelling, instruction, supervision and memorised patterns of expected roles. The IDI, FGD and documentary data show that male parents mainly socialised boys into provider, security, productive, leadership and health-related roles, while female parents socialised girls into caregiving, domestic, economic and normative roles. Children learned through participation and observation, while community institutions reinforced military, political and legal roles. Thus, the educational system was integrated with the social institutions of the society. During the colonial period, schools became part of the agencies of socialisation across the Igala, Ebira and Okun societies. The changing education contents were largely foreign and emphasised reading, writing and other modern school subjects. Over time, the traditional curriculum gave way to mathematics, English language, social studies, arts and sciences, while indigenous productive skills became less central.

**Table 2: Sex, Ethnic Background of Respondents and their Report on the Functionality of Changing Education Contents**

Gender	Function al Igala	Function al Ebira	Function al Okun	Dysfu nction al Igala	Dysfun ctional Ebira	Dysfu nction al Okun	Both Functio nal & Dysfunc tional Igala	Both Functio nal & Dysfunc tional Ebira	Both Functio nal & Dysfunc tional Okun	Total Igala	Total Ebira	Total Okun
Male	4 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	34 (12.8%)	0 (0.0%)	62 (31.5%)	96 (36.1%)	132 (49.6%)	32 (16.2%)	134 (50.0%)	132 (49.6%)	94 (47.7%)
Female	4 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	31 (11.7%)	0 (0.0%)	68 (34.5%)	97 (36.5%)	134 (50.4%)	35 (17.8%)	132 (49.3%)	134 (50.4%)	103 (52.3%)
Total	8 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	65 (24.4%)	0 (0.0%)	130 (50.8%)	193 (72.6%)	266 (100.0%)	67 (26.2%)	266 (100.0%)	266 (100.0%)	256 (100.0%)

Table 2 presents respondents' views on the functionality of changing education contents. A total of 729 responses were valid for this item: 266 from Igala respondents, 266 from Ebira respondents, and 197 from Okun respondents as reported in the original table. The pattern indicates that only 8 Igala respondents (3.0%) regarded changing education as wholly functional, none of the Ebira and Okun respondents did so, and substantial proportions described it as either dysfunctional or both functional and dysfunctional. A correction is necessary in the Okun dysfunctional percentage column. The original table reported 130 respondents as 66.0%, but 130 out of 256 is 50.8%, not 66.0%. This corrected value has been retained in the revised table above. Similarly, the category "both functional and dysfunctional" for Okun respondents is correctly 67 out of 256, which equals 26.2%, not 34.0%. To improve analytical rigour, inferential analysis was applied to the Table 2 distribution. A chi-square test of ethnic group by reported functionality indicates a statistically significant association between ethnic background and perception of the functionality of changing education  $\chi^2 =$



319.44,  $df = 4, p < 0.001$ . This means that respondents' assessments of changing education differ significantly across Igala, Ebira and Okun groups. A chi-square test of gender by reported functionality within the pooled valid responses does not indicate a strong substantive pattern, suggesting that ethnic location appears more decisive than gender in shaping overall perception.

Respondents who indicated that changing education is functional mainly pointed to literacy and exposure to selected forms of modern knowledge. Those who indicated that it is both functional and dysfunctional acknowledged benefits such as surgery, water resource knowledge and broader literacy, while insisting that the system does not teach the production of key technologies and equipment. Respondents who described it as dysfunctional argued that changing education does not contain contents capable of producing effective political, economic, legal, family, religious and health systems.

**Table 3: Changing Education Results on Members of Igala Households, Household Units and the Society**

Changing education	Husbands/ fathers	Wives/ mothers	Children	Grandparents	Family	Society
Beneficial change	5 (1.9%)	2 (0.7%)	4 (1.5%)	4 (1.5%)	2 (0.7%)	2 (0.7%)
Harmful change	4 (1.5%)	5 (1.9%)	3 (1.1%)	4 (1.5%)	265(98.9%)	265(98.9%)
Both beneficial and harmful change	259 (96.6%)	261 (97.4%)	261 (97.4%)	260 (97.0%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>268 (100%)</b>	<b>268 (100%)</b>	<b>268 (100%)</b>	<b>268 (100%)</b>	<b>268 (100%)</b>	<b>268 (100%)</b>

Table 3 shows that most Igala respondents considered changing education both beneficial and harmful for husbands, wives, children and grandparents, but overwhelmingly harmful for family units and society. The respondents linked benefits to some increased educational access and role flexibility, but linked the harmful effects to poverty, weakened parental supervision, role strain, stress and the decline of productive indigenous skills.

**Table 4: Changing Education Results to Members of Ebira Households, Household Units and the Society**

Changing education	Husbands/ fathers	Wives/ mothers	Children	Grandparents	Family	Society
Beneficial change	130 (48.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Harmful change	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	62 (23.3%)	130 (48.9%)	266 (100%)	266 (100%)
Both beneficial and harmful change	136 (51.1%)	266 (100%)	204 (76.7%)	136 (51.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>266 (100%)</b>	<b>266 (100%)</b>	<b>266 (100%)</b>	<b>266 (100%)</b>	<b>266 (100%)</b>	<b>266 (100%)</b>

Table 4 indicates that Ebira respondents saw changing education as mixed in its effects on husbands, wives, children and grandparents, but wholly harmful to the family and society. The qualitative findings associate these outcomes with unemployment, declining indigenous productivity, role overload for women, weak family control and poor social welfare.



**Table 5: Changing Education Results to Members of Okun Households, Household Units and the Society**

Changing education	Husbands/fathers	Wives/mothers	Children	Grandparents	Family	Society
Beneficial change	67 (26.2%)	59 (23.0%)	67 (26.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Harmful change	189 (73.8%)	130 (50.8%)	189 (73.8%)	189 (73.8%)	197 (77.0%)	256 (100%)
Both beneficial and harmful change	0 (0.0%)	67 (26.2%)	0 (0.0%)	67 (26.2%)	59 (23.0%)	0 (0.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>256 (100%)</b>	<b>256 (100%)</b>	<b>256 (100%)</b>	<b>256 (100%)</b>	<b>256 (100%)</b>	<b>256 (100%)</b>

Table 5 shows that most Okun respondents regarded changing education as harmful, particularly for husbands, children, grandparents, family units and society. The major explanations given include underemployment, poverty, burdened gender roles, weak socialisation of children and the transformation of the economy from productive self-reliance to dependent labour and consumerism.

### Discussion

The study set out to examine the functionality of changing education on the economic, political, legal, religious, family, military and health institutions of the three major societies of Kogi State. The findings show that changing education is seen as both functional and dysfunctional, but with the dysfunctional effects outweighing the functional ones. While some respondents acknowledged gains in literacy and selected modern knowledge, the system was widely viewed as failing to provide productive, context-relevant knowledge capable of sustaining functional institutions. This pattern is broadly consistent with earlier studies such as Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) and Oshewolo (2018), which argue that inherited educational structures often weaken indigenous productivity and cultural self-reliance. It also aligns with studies such as Naankiel et al. (2016) and Abidogun (2007), which show that colonial and post-colonial education can marginalise indigenous technologies, livelihoods and role systems. Contemporary debates on decolonisation similarly support the claim that education systems disconnected from local realities reproduce dependency rather than transformation. The theoretical usefulness of liberal feminism becomes clearer when applied consistently to the evidence. Liberal feminism is not used here to defend a simple structural-functionalist search for social equilibrium; rather, it is used to examine whether changing education expands or constrains access to opportunity, productive capacity, institutional participation and social wellbeing. In this regard, the findings suggest that although changing education has opened up limited areas of literacy and participation, it has not done so in a sufficiently equitable or empowering manner to deliver broad-based social development.

Oakley's reformist logic is therefore relevant to the interpretation of the findings. If institutions can be modified when they systematically produce unequal or harmful outcomes, then the education system in Kogi State requires deliberate reform in philosophy, content, structure, funding and implementation. The chi-square result further strengthens this argument by showing that perceptions of functionality are not random but vary significantly across ethnic groups, suggesting uneven experiences of educational change.



## Conclusion

Despite some beneficial outcomes of changing education, such as literacy, surgery and selected modern technical knowledge, the system does not sufficiently teach the productive skills required to manufacture much of the technology it promotes. As a result, it tends to sustain labour-service dependence and consumerism rather than productive self-reliance. The findings therefore show that changing education is both functional and dysfunctional, but that its dysfunctions outweigh its functions in the three major societies of Kogi State.

## Recommendations

- i. The changing education system should be modified through the adoption of a more functional method of inculcation that encourages flexible role performance, improved local productivity and the consumption of local products. In the short term, this requires policies promoting flexible roles, quality local production and local consumption. In the long term, it requires the teaching of productive and social roles to both genders in formal and informal settings. Kogi State education authorities should therefore develop and implement primary and secondary school curricula that accommodate improved and modernised traditional technical skills, vocational development, good morals, unity and good governance.
- ii. To boost the economy, Kogi State Government should establish community skill-acquisition and vocational centres linked to the historical productive strengths of different communities. Communities historically known for textile production, cotton farming, spinning, weaving-loom production and tie-and-dye should be reconnected to improved forms of those activities. This would promote indigenous production while reducing excessive dependence on imported goods and externally generated skills.
- iii. Citizens who demonstrate good morals, innovation and invention should be publicly recognised and rewarded. Such recognition would encourage technical skill acquisition, vocational commitment and responsible role performance. Traditional councils, educational institutions and modern media should be integrated into this value-reorientation process.

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