



Western Education and Migrant Agency in Zaria Metropolis: The Yoruba People Experience, 1960-2014

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Abstract

Education, whether formal or informal, indigenous or foreign, remains a central instrument of social transformation, knowledge transmission, human-capital formation, and institutional development. In Nigeria, the historical development of education reflects uneven regional experiences shaped by colonial penetration, missionary enterprise, migration, commerce, and administrative expansion. While the coastal and south-western regions encountered Western education earlier through European and missionary contact, many northern and interior centers experienced its growth through colonial administration, labor mobility, and the activities of migrant communities. Zaria, a major urban, commercial, administrative, and intellectual center in Northern Nigeria, offers an important historical context for examining these dynamics. This paper historicizes and critically examines the role of Yoruba migrants in the development of Western education in Zaria. It argues that the early exposure of the Yoruba to European contact and Western education in the coastal and south-western regions positioned them as important carriers of literacy, bureaucratic skills, and modern occupational expertise into the northern hinterland. As clerks, interpreters, typists, teachers, artisans, civil servants, religious agents, and skilled intermediaries, Yoruba migrants contributed significantly to the spread of Western educational values and practices in Zaria. Using primary and secondary sources, including archival materials, oral evidence, and relevant historical literature, the study situates Yoruba agency within broader colonial and postcolonial transformations in education, migration, and intergroup relations. The paper demonstrates that the development of Western education in Zaria cannot be fully understood without recognizing the contributions of migrant communities, particularly the Yoruba, whose mobility, skills, and community networks helped connect coastal educational advancement with northern urban development. The study contributes to scholarship on migration, knowledge transfer, regional inequality, and educational change in Nigeria.

Keywords: Agency, Development, Education, Hausa, Migrant, Western Education, Yoruba

INTRODUCTION

Education, whether formal or informal, indigenous or foreign remains one of the most fundamental drivers of societal development, as it is intrinsically linked to the acquisition, transmission, and application of knowledge. The level, quality, and accessibility of education within any society largely determine its capacity for growth, innovation, and socio-economic transformation. Consequently, no society can attain sustainable development without a corresponding advancement in its educational system. Within the Nigerian context, the historical trajectory of educational development reveals significant regional disparities, particularly between the coastal and interior regions during the colonial period. The educational evolution of Zaria, a major urban and intellectual centre in Northern Nigeria, cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the crucial role played by migrant communities, most notably, the Yoruba people of South-Western Nigeria. Owing to their early contact with European missionaries and colonial administrators along the Atlantic coast, the Yoruba were among the first groups in Nigeria to access and embrace Western education (Osoba & Fajana, 2004). This early exposure positioned them advantageously as intermediaries, educators, clerks, and skilled personnel during the expansion of colonial administration into the hinterland.

As colonial influence penetrated Northern Nigeria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, educated Yoruba migrants moved into emerging administrative and commercial centres such as Zaria. In doing so, they became instrumental in the diffusion and institutionalization of Western education in the region. Their contributions were not limited to classroom instruction but extended to the establishment of schools, dissemination of literacy, and the bridging of cultural and administrative gaps between colonial authorities and indigenous populations. Against this backdrop, the central objective of this paper is to historicize and critically examine the trajectory, impact, and contributions of the Yoruba people to the development of Western education in Zaria. By situating Yoruba agency within broader colonial and postcolonial educational transformations, the study seeks to illuminate the interconnectedness of migration, knowledge transfer, and regional development in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Western Education

Western education refers to the system of formal, structured learning introduced into Africa, and particularly Nigeria, by European missionaries and colonial authorities during the mid-nineteenth century. Unlike indigenous African educational systems which were largely experiential, community-based, and oriented toward vocational skills, moral values, and social responsibilities. Western education was institutionalized, curriculum-driven, and certificated. This system emphasized literacy and numeracy, often encapsulated in the “Three Rs”, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic and was designed primarily to produce a class of Africans capable of serving colonial administrative and commercial interests. As such, it trained clerks, interpreters, teachers, and low- to mid-level functionaries who facilitated colonial governance (Osoba & Fajana, 2004). Missionary schools combined educational instruction with religious evangelism, producing catechists and teachers who further expanded missionary influence (Usuanlele, 2012).

While Western education introduced new forms of knowledge, literacy, and bureaucratic organization, it also carried ideological implications. It often positioned indigenous knowledge systems as inferior or “informal,” thereby undermining pre-existing African epistemologies and value systems (Gundu, 2012). This characterization reflects a broader colonial legacy in which African cultural and intellectual traditions were marginalized in favour of European models of development (Gundu, 2012). Nevertheless, Western education gradually became the dominant mode of knowledge acquisition in Nigeria, especially as colonial rule entrenched its structures and expanded its reach (Usuanlele, 2012). Its introduction among the Yoruba people in South-Western Nigeria through early missionary activities in areas such as Lagos, Oyo, and Ogun State laid the foundation for the emergence of an educated elite (Osoba and Fajana, 2004). This elite would later play a pivotal role in disseminating Western education to other parts of Nigeria, including Zaria.

The Yoruba People

The Yoruba people constitute one of the largest and most historically influential ethnic groups in West Africa, predominantly located in South-Western

Nigeria. They comprise several sub-groups including Ekiti, Ijesha, Ijebu, Egba, Oyo, Ogbomosho, and others united by a shared linguistic heritage, cultural practices, and socio-political traditions (Asiwaju, 2004; Jeje, 2018). Despite dialectical variations, these groups communicate through mutually intelligible forms of the Yoruba language and maintain interconnected systems of governance, religion, and social organization. Beyond Nigeria, Yoruba-speaking populations are also found in neighboring countries such as Benin (formerly Dahomey) and Togo, as well as in diaspora communities across Africa and the wider world (Asiwaju, 2004). Historically, the Yoruba have demonstrated significant mobility, driven by trade, economic opportunities, colonial labour demands, and later professional pursuits.

This migratory tradition facilitated the spread of Yoruba skills, culture, and knowledge systems into various regions, including Northern Nigeria. In Zaria, Yoruba migrants established themselves as traders, artisans, health workers, and most importantly educators. Their relatively early acquisition of Western education enabled them to fill critical gaps in the colonial educational system of the North, where formal education had developed at a slower pace due to differing historical and religious contexts. In this regard, the Yoruba presence in Zaria exemplifies the broader dynamics of internal migration and inter-regional exchange in Nigeria, highlighting how mobility can serve as a vehicle for knowledge transfer, institutional development, and socio-cultural integration.

Study Area

The Study area is Zaria metropolis composed of Zaria city, Sabongari, Tudunwada, Wusasa and Samaru although Zaria is not limited to these areas and other areas not mentioned also have migrant populations. It is paramount to focus on the areas listed above because they have a good number of migrant populations from different parts of the world of which the Yoruba people constitute one of the largest migrant groups (Dhliwayo, 2012). More so, concentration of schools, government agencies, commercial establishments, and related institutions in these areas created employment opportunities and attracted migrants from different parts of Nigeria. The period 1960-2014 was selected

because it witnessed sustained migrations into Zaria for social and economic purposes, while this study specifically examines the educational contributions of Yoruba migrants within the metropolis. As a matter of fact, the drive for and acquisition of education among the Yoruba people made them gained employment in both public and private sectors in Hausa land in Nigeria especially in Zaria because of the numerous vacancies available which the labour force of Hausa land could not fill up. This was evident right from the colonial period in agencies such as the Railway Station, Agriculture Station Samaru, Barewa College, Native Administration (NA), Patterson Zacchonis (PZ), Societe Commerciale Occidentale Africa (SCOA) (Dhliwayo, 2012), others include Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Nigeria College of Aviation Technology (NCAT), Nigeria Institute of Transport Technology (NITT) to mention a few (Jeje & Azaigba, 2017). Interestingly, the early contacts of the Yoruba with the Europeans created the platform that gave them an advantage in acquiring western education over other parts of Nigeria especially, Northern Nigeria. This enabled them to provide services in colonial agencies and also in other establishments after independence.

History of Western Education in Zaria

Western Education is one of the aspects of the society that the Yoruba people have played a significant role in its development in Nigeria, prior to this, European Christian Missions were the pioneers of Western education in Nigeria. The European Missions such as Christian Mission Society (CMS), Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), Sudan United Mission (SUM) to mention a few, established schools as one of the reasons to aid evangelism and also training as evangelists and interpreters (Mohammed, 2012). The first mission school was founded in 1843 in Abeokuta that is by the Anglican Missionary Society which pushed forward in the early 1850s to find a chain of missions and schools, and were followed quickly in the late 1850s by the Roman Catholics. Therefore, by 1887, the British colonial government in Nigeria, established the education department (Osoba and Fajana, 2004). With this development, colonial government controlled and began to formulate the curricula for the mission schools (Community Portal of Nigeria, accessed 2026) The Christian missions were no longer in charge of education, but they still established

schools most especially in non-Muslim communities (Mohammed, 2012).

The origin of western education in Zaria can be traced to the establishment of a mission school by the Christian Mission Society (CMS) in 1907 by Dr. Miller in Zaria City. This was known as St Barth's school, but this was later moved to Wusasa in 1909, a suburb of Zaria city. The reason for this movement by Lord Lugard was to avoid conversion to Christianity which could arouse unrest that will disrupt colonial rule in Zaria city which was a Muslim dominated area (Turaki, 1993; Smith, 1960). Subsequently, other Missions followed suit to open schools such as St George Anglican School and St Patrick RCM School in Sabongari both in 1911 (Turaki, 1993). The colonial government also established schools; however, in their early phase these institutions were designed primarily for the children of emirs, chiefs, and Islamic scholars (Malams) (Turaki, 1993; Mohammed, 2012). Consequently, access was limited and did not extend to the broader population in the manner characteristic of many missionary schools. Despite this restricted scope, the colonial government schools laid an important institutional foundation, evolving over time into the system of state-owned public schools that later expanded across Nigeria.

The Yoruba and Western Education in Zaria before 1960

The migration of the Yoruba to Zaria can be traced back to the 18th Century. The factor behind this movement was trade but by the 19th Century, after the Uthman Dan Fodio Jihad, search for Islamic scholarship became a cause. Before the Jihad there was no permanent settlement of the Yoruba in Zaria, nonetheless, the scenario began to change towards the end of the 19th Century as well as after the British conquest of Zaria in 1902. This opened the area for Yoruba immigration into the area especially due to the demand for manpower by the colonial government and the NA (Jeje, 2018). The services of the Yoruba were needed mostly as clerks, typists, teachers etc. in the NA because of the western education they have acquired due to their contact with the missionaries. The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorate in 1914 also increased the influx of the Yoruba into Zaria to provide services for the colonial administration; schools, companies and NA (Dhliwayo, 2012).

Although, in the early years of the 20th Century, the Europeans were initially used as teachers in schools, however, later Yoruba people were employed. The movement of the St Barth's School from Zaria city, discouraged the establishment of schools by the Christian missions in the city. Rather, the establishment of schools was restricted to the colonial government who did this with the excuse to protect Islam. Therefore, aside the school for the sons of malams, chiefs and Emir, established by the colonial government, there was none established in Zaria city, but schools became concentrated in Sabongari, Wusasa, and other areas around the city, which were settlements of mostly immigrants who were predominantly non-Muslims.

Most of the schools established in Zaria by the Missions and the colonial government had mostly British and Yoruba people as staff (See Table 3). For instance, in August 1939 the American Baptist Mission from Ogbomosho applied to open a school at Zaria Township which was approved by G.A.J. Bieneman who was the Assistant Director of Education Northern Province. The attraction of the Yoruba to Zaria was basically because of the opportunities available right from the colonial period. Consequently, by October that same year the school was opened (NAK, 1928) and it had its entire staff as Yoruba speaking people. See Table 1. These Yoruba teachers were readily employed as personnel for the western educational system in Zaria because employing British teachers would be highly expensive in terms of salary, accommodation, standard healthcare and other amenities must be provided to make them comfortable to discharge their services. Therefore, employing Yoruba teachers would be less cost implicative to achieve the educational re-orientation of the colony.

Table 1: Staff of American Baptist School, Zaria 1939

Staff	Language
M.A Adeniran	Yoruba
E.O Laniyan	Yoruba
G.A Adenuga	Yoruba
E.A Togun	Yoruba
I.O Adeleye	Yoruba

Source: Ministry of Education DEN 1928 NAK

By 1941 Mr. Adedokun A.O, Oguntunga Z.K and Miss Runsewe E.I. (NAK, 1928) joined as teachers. For the nursery class it had Mr. Adeleye as the teacher in-charge, who was the vernacular master, it was because the language of instruction was Yoruba. As a matter of fact, majority of the students were Yoruba with a few Hausa and no other ethnic group. This also applied to the infant section but with an inclusion of English language (NAK, 1928). The peculiarity of this signifies that most of the students if not all were Yoruba speakers and for easy teaching and learning the use of the Yoruba language for school beginners became paramount. More so, by 1943 the under-listed teachers joined the school Ogunbanwo, I.O., Arogbonlo, A.A., Awosanya, S.A., Bankole, A.O., Ogunuga, G.O., Olorunsola, T.B., Dada, E.A., Adeyemo, others were F.J., Adeshuyi, A.A., Ejeolu, S.A., Babalola, S.A., Miss C. Oketuga, and R. Ogunseitan. The nearest reason for this development was basically because there were no western educated migrants of other ethnic groups who had moved into Zaria. The record available shows that before 1949, it was strictly the Yoruba migrants and few British that provided services in the schools. However, by 1949 there was a mixture of both Yoruba and Igbo teachers in the school (NAK, 1949) the migration of the Igbo into Zaria before 1949 could largely be as a result of the connection of the eastern railway to the north precisely in 1927 (Jeje and Azaigba,

2017) but were not employed as teachers as majority of them came as railway workers and business men and women. Larger migration of other ethnic groups into Zaria other than the Yoruba could be attributed to the construction of the eastern railway and also the end of the Second World War.

Table 2: Ethnic Composition of Staff of American Baptist School 1949

Ethnic group	Population of Staff
Yoruba	10
Igbo	02

Source: Ministry of Education DEN 1928 NAK

The explanation for the predominance of Yoruba teachers in this school could be because the church had Yoruba people as its major adherents and moreover, the Church was established as an arm by the Superintendent of American Baptist Mission, Ogbomosho in Oyo state of South-western Nigeria. Hence most of the teachers and pupils were Yoruba.

Prior to 1939, the only available record of Yoruba teachers in the schools in Zaria was Ven. Archdeacon S.O. Odutola, the Manager of St George Anglican School Sabongari in 1911 and Mr. A.A. Isaacs in 1920 (see Table 3)

Table 3: List of Managers and Principals of schools in Zaria from 1911 to 1945

S/N	Names	School	Year	Language Affiliation
1	Ven. Archdeacon S.O. Odutola	St George Anglican School Sabongari, Zaria	1911	Yoruba
2	Miss F. Moyer	Anglican Training College Zaria	No date	English
3	Rt Rev. Bishop Ogunko	United Native African Church Mission	No date	Yoruba
4	Rev. T.D.S. Broadbent	St. Bartholomew's C.M.S School and CMS Training School Wusasa	1909	English
5	Rev. T.A. Taiwo	American Baptist School, Sabongari, Zaria	1939	Yoruba
6	Rev. Fr L.O. Collagham	St Patrick's RCM School Sabongari, Zaria	1911	English
7	Mr. A.A. Isaacs	Ebenezer U.N.A School, Sabongari, Zaria	1920	Yoruba
8	Rev. N.O. Salako	Methodist School, Sabongari Zaria	1947	Yoruba
9	Mr. M.A. Adesanya	Young Ansa-ud-Deen Society, Sabongari, Zaria	No date	Yoruba
10	Mallam Sanusi	Native Authority School, Zaria	1945	Yoruba
11	Supervised by Catholic Mission Zaria	Evening School for Adults	1944	Nil

Source: Ministry of Education file DEN 1114 Vol. II NAK

From the table 3 as shown above, it shows that seven (7) were Yoruba out of the Eleven (11) School Principals. Mallam Sanusi from Ilorin was the Native Authority Treasurer as well as Manager of the N.A school but by 1951 he was replaced with Mallam Alhassan because he was too busy to attend to the increasing details in the management of the school as the N.A treasurer (NAK, 1951).

The Trajectory of the Yoruba in the development of Western Education from 1960-2014

With the independence of Nigeria in 1960, the influx of the Yoruba into Zaria was not abated, the establishment of government agencies, schools, private companies and businesses attracted the Yoruba into Zaria. The increasing demand for personnel to occupy positions and as well render services prompted and attracted the movement of people especially from South-west Nigeria to Zaria.

The activities and impact of the Yoruba in western education is not limited to their role in mission schools but also as pioneers in the establishment of private schools in Zaria. Malam Bamali admitted that Yoruba people have greatly impacted on Zaria as they have built schools in Sabongari, Samaru, Wusasa etc. which are either secular or Islamic (Jeje, 2018). On a general note, according to Alhaji Bin-Yamin A. Yusuf, the first private school established in Zaria was Zaria Children School in 1960 by a British woman, on leaving the country she transferred the management of the school to the board of the school (Jeje, 2018). It is now recognized as a community school (Ministry of Education, Zaria in Jeje, 2018). However, the first private school established by a Yoruba person was Therbow School which came on board in 1965 by Madam Theresa Boyer (Jeje, 2018) from Abeokuta, the school started off with a set of twins since then the school had continued to expand till date (Jeje, 2018). Meanwhile, Alhaji Abdulwahab Yusuf (2015) in an interview attest that the Commercial School which was supposed to be the first private school established in Zaria was set up by Chief Dawotola from Ilaro, possibly in the late 1950s and it was initially established as a commercial typing pool for training in typing and shorthand (secretarial skills). It did not begin as a standard school like others. It later became a college towards the closing decade of 1960 and subsequently the Kaduna State government took over in 1976 as a

government owned school. It was during this period that all mission schools, especially secondary schools, were taken over by the state government during the Muritala-Obasanjo military regime (Jeje, 2018).

Other private schools began to spring up such as Folake School in 1981, Toodle Toes in 1982, Aunty Grace School in 1982, Premier High School in 1983, Buks International School in 1986, United Nursery and Primary School in 1987 to mention a few (See Table 4 for selected list of Private schools owned by some Yoruba people culled from Jeje, E.S.A. 2018). The above schools were established by Yoruba people in Zaria except for Williams School in 1982 and Haske Schools in 1987 established by Elder Kalu A.S. and Mr. and Mrs. Shegu Aruna respectively. Meanwhile, from the 1990s other ethnic groups joined the trend to establish private schools as well as other Yoruba people. In a nutshell, from that year there was rapid expansion of private schools in Zaria, according to Alhaji Binyamin Yusuf, this was as a result of the expansion of Therbow School to include a secondary school, subsequently, a retired Major by name Adebayo came from Kaduna to establish Comprehensive Secondary School but after few years, teachers in the school moved out to establish their own schools during that period, since then schools began to spring up at different areas of Zaria (Jeje, 2018).

Similarly, there was also establishment of private schools by two predominant religious bodies (Christianity and Islam, as shown in Table 5). The Yoruba dominated churches were not left out in this development such as The Christ Apostolic Church, The Baptist Church etc., while the Islamic organizations or Mosques that were established by the Yoruba also had schools to their credit such as Ansarudeen, Ahbabudeen, Nurrudeen and Auwarudeen Islamic movements (Jeje, 2018). The major aim of these religious organizations in the establishment of schools was strictly the dissemination of knowledge that is western education while the Islamic organization combined this with Islamic education. Overall, there were 167 private schools established in Zaria metropolis during the period of study. It is important to note that these numbers do not capture all the private schools in Zaria, it is a summation of those registered with the Ministry of Education Zonal

Table 4: Selected and Approved List of Private Schools established by Yoruba people in Zaria by 2014

S/N	Name of School	Name of Proprietors	Location
1.	Harklan International School	Hajiya K.I Adebisi	Yankarfe Graceland
2.	Aunty Grace Schools	Mrs. Grace Modupe Sulle	Graceland
3.	Bethel School	Ademola Anasanwo	Graceland
4.	Royal College	Mrs. Bisi Johnson	Sabongari
5.	Goodwill International School, Zaria	Agheebe E. Taiwo	Sabongari
6.	Top Spring Nursery, Primary & Secondary School, Zaria	Mr. S.A Ma'aruf	Sabongari
7.	Victory Secondary School	Mr. Ade Adegoke	Sabongari
8.	United Nursery and Primary School	Mrs. Akinmade Fola	Sabongari
9.	Therbow School	Mrs. Frank Lawole	Sabongari
10.	Great Hallmark International	Mr. & Mrs. Alabi	Sabongari
11.	Adekola International School	Mr. Kolawole Afolajin	Tudunwada
12.	Abuhurrayah International College	Ustaz Binyamin A. Yusuf	GRA
13.	Larac Nursery and Primary School	Mrs. O.O Coker	Sabongari
14.	Ar-ryan Islamic Nursery and Primary School	Ustaz Binyamin A. Yusuf	Sabongari
15.	Buks International School	Mrs. Bukoye	Grace land
16.	Toddle Toes	Mt. T.A Ogunbiyi	Angwan Kaya
17.	Folake School	A.O. Daubs	Angwan Danic
18.	Nurrudeen Islamic Model	Abdullahi Abdul-Aziz	Gwargwaje
19.	Assabiqun Children School	Ma'aruf Mustapha	Banzauzzau
20.	Christ School	Mrs. Alonge	Kabama Area, Kwangila
21.	Cornerstone Nursery & Primary School	Mrs. Funsho Adekunle	Kwangila
22.	Falcom Kid Academy	Mr. Falade Femi	Hanwa
23.	Strong Tower	Mrs. Eunice Oladipo	Zango
24.	Majesty Heritage Academy	Rev. Dr. Fola Ajayi	Palladan
25.	Albarka School	Mrs. F.A Ogunlola	Samaru
26.	Rehoboth Academy	Olokoba Tunde	Bassawa
27.	Meridian international College	AbdulAziz Bello	Dogorawa
28.	Darul-ilm Academy	Nurudeen Yusuf	Zango
29.	New Capital Nursery & Primary School	Mrs J.D Oyediran	Zango
30.	City Light Nursery & Primary School	Oladiran O. Samson	Samaru
31.	Almujahid Muslim School	Isiaka Momoh	Samaru
32.	Unique Academy	Isaac Ogunyemi	Hayin Dogo
33.	Comprehensive College	Adebayo A.	Sabongari
34.	Advance International School	Mrs. Oyetunji	Sabongari
35.	Gilead Academy	Mrs. Shade Ade	Sabongari
36.	Heritage School	Shogo Adeyemo	Sabongari

Source: Ministry of Education Zaria and Giwa Zones.

Table 5: Schools Established by Religious Organisations that are predominantly Yoruba

S/N	Name of School	Name of Religious Organisation
1.	Christ Apostolic Church Nur., Pri. and Sec. School	Christ Apostolic Church, Sabongari
2.	Calvary Baptist Church Nur. & Pri. School	Calvary Baptist Church, Samaru
3.	Nasfat Nursery & Primary School	Nasfat, Zaria
4.	Ansar-Ud-Deen School	Ansar-Ud-Deen Muslim Society, Sabongari
5.	2 nd ECWA School	2 nd ECWA Church, Samaru
6.	1 st Baptist Nur. & Pri. School	1 st Baptist Church, Sabongari

Source: Ministry of Education Zonal Offices in Giwa and Zaria

offices in Zaria and Giwa as well as those that are members of the Private School Association. The increasing establishment of schools had in a long way expanded the dissemination of knowledge among people of Zaria, more so creating job opportunities and encouraging interrelationship among the people of Zaria. Meanwhile, the Zonal Ministry of Education in Zaria and Giwa embarked on a collation exercise of all private schools in Zaria as a whole. In addition, some of the schools were registered with the association because they do not want to be levied, hence, it was difficult to get the total number of private schools in Zaria. The Association is divided into two zones that is Zaria and Giwa zones, interestingly both zones have Yoruba people as Chairmen such as Alhaji Binyamin A Yusuf and Mr. Falade in charge of Zaria and Giwa Zone respectively up till 2017 (Jeje, 2018). In a nutshell, the role of the Yoruba in the development of education through the establishment of private schools leading to job creation in Zaria and contributing to the standard of education cannot be overemphasized (Jeje, 2018)

The concentration of Yoruba people in western education could be traced majorly to the fact that they were among the first set of people to have contact with the Europeans. In addition, the establishment of western education which cannot be divorced from missionary activities took root from the South-west (Mohammed, 2012). Therefore, this gave them an edge over other parts of the country in such that they could move from one place to the other to render educational services to the colonial government in places of shortage of personnel such as European companies and the colonial administration. Zaria was not exempted as personnel were needed to occupy clerical and technical positions etc. and therefore the Yoruba people were readily available. As a matter of fact, the rate of acquiring western education increased among the Yoruba people as education was and is of utmost priority because public and private jobs were available to employ them, however, this has since changed as there are more graduates than the public and private parastatals could absorb. Even after independence, the Yoruba people were still highly concentrated in public or government establishments.

As pointed out earlier, over the years out of the public service agencies, about 25 in number are

situated in Zaria alone and were dominated by the Yoruba people because of their educational skill and knowledge. The employment of Yoruba as teachers and their establishment of schools influenced the development of the educational sector in Zaria as well as led to the emergence of western educated Hausa ethnic group who in turn began to offer their services and gradually became employed as teachers and personnel in other agencies within and outside Zaria. For instance, in NARICT about 30 years ago, its staff composition were mainly Yoruba people. However, from 1989, the trend began to change as there was massive employment in the Institute which cuts across all ethnic line but with the Hausa people as the dominant employees till date (Jeje, 2018). The same applies to all other Federal government agencies in Zaria such as IAR, ABU, NCAT, Federal College of Education (FCE) which is now Federal University of Education Zaria etc.

Significance of the Yoruba People in the Educational Development of Zaria Metropolis

The contribution of the Yoruba people to the educational development of Zaria is both substantial and historically significant. From the colonial period onward, Yoruba migrants played a pivotal role in advancing Western education within the metropolis. Gradually, they became prominent as teachers, civil servants, company employees, and school proprietors, thereby facilitating the diffusion of literacy and formal learning. Through these roles, they created pathways for the emergence of Western-educated Hausa populations and members of other ethnic groups in the region.

Beyond their direct involvement in teaching and administration, the presence and activities of the Yoruba contributed to the broader socio-economic transformation of Zaria. Their establishment of schools and participation in formal institutions stimulated urban growth and expansion, attracting complementary services and businesses. The rise of printing presses, bookshops, clinics, artisan workshops, and petty trade including masons, auto-mechanics, and food vendors illustrates how educational development generated multiplier effects across the local economy. Evidence from this study suggests that, within the period under review, the Yoruba exercised considerable influence in the educational sector of Zaria. Their dominance rooted largely in their earlier exposure

to Western education helped lay the intellectual and institutional foundations for a new class of educated individuals across ethnic divides. In this regard, Zaria increasingly emerged as an educational hub in Northern Nigeria.

Moreover, the concentration of educated Yoruba elites many of whom were civil servants, professionals, or students helped stimulate the establishment and expansion of key government institutions and agencies within the metropolis. Notable among these are Ahmadu Bello University, Federal University of Education, Zaria, Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Nigerian College of Aviation Technology, National Animal Production Research Institute, National Research Institute for Chemical Technology, and College of Agriculture, Samaru, among others. These institutions, alongside numerous private organizations and enterprises, reinforced Zaria's status as a centre of learning and innovation. In sum, the role of the Yoruba in Zaria extended beyond education in a narrow sense. Their contributions encompassed human capital development, institutional growth, and urbanization. By transferring knowledge, skills, and professional expertise, they not only shaped the educational landscape of Zaria but also significantly influenced its broader historical trajectory as a dynamic and cosmopolitan urban centre.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that any meaningful account of the educational history of Zaria remains incomplete without a careful consideration of the role played by the Yoruba people. The foregoing analysis has demonstrated that the Yoruba were central to the emergence and consolidation of Western education in the metropolis, particularly from the colonial period onward. Their early access to Western education, acquired through sustained contact with European missionaries and colonial institutions in Southern Nigeria, positioned them as key agents in the transmission of formal education to Northern Nigeria. In Zaria, the Yoruba contributed across multiple levels of the educational system. They served as teachers, administrators, civil servants, and employees in both public and private institutions, while also establishing and managing schools as proprietors and proprietresses. Equally important was their role as students and

beneficiaries of the system, thereby reinforcing a cycle of knowledge production and dissemination. Through these varied engagements, they not only expanded access to education but also helped nurture a generation of Western-educated individuals among the indigenous population and other migrant communities.

Beyond the classroom, the impact of the Yoruba people extended into the socio-economic fabric of Zaria. Their presence and activities stimulated the growth of complementary services and enterprises such as bookshops, printing presses, artisan services, and commercial ventures which supported the expanding educational landscape. This, in turn, attracted further migration, investment, and institutional development, accelerating the transformation of Zaria into a vibrant urban and intellectual centre. Thus, the educational development of Zaria cannot be viewed in isolation from broader processes of migration, cultural exchange, and economic expansion. The contributions of the Yoruba exemplify how mobile populations can act as conduits of knowledge, skills, and institutional practices across regions. In this regard, their legacy is not only educational but also developmental, having significantly influenced the urbanization and modernization of Zaria metropolis.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

Ethics Approval

This article is based on historical and documentary sources and did not involve human participants, animal subjects, or materials requiring formal ethical approval. Archival documents from the National Archives Kaduna (NAK) were accessed with official approval. All sources used in the preparation of this manuscript have been duly acknowledged.

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