



Book review



Check for updates

Section: Literature, Linguistics & Criticism

Published in Nairobi, Kenya
by Royallite Global.

Volume 3, Issue 1, 2022

**Article Information**

Submitted: 2nd January 2022

Accepted: 21st April 2022

Published: 9th May 2022

Additional information is available at the end of the article

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>To read the paper online,
please scan this QR code**How to Cite:**

Duhoe, A. A. A., Addo, B. P., Tuffour, A. D., Gyampoh, F., & Afeku, B. P. (2022). Comparative analysis of educational perspectives in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing and World Literatures*, 3(1), 1-4. Retrieved from <https://royalliteglobal.com/world-literatures/article/view/746>

Comparative analysis of educational perspectives in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*

Alberta Aseye Ama Duhoe¹, Beauty Patience Addo², Adu David Tuffour³, Faustina Gyampoh⁴ & Benjamin Praise Afeku⁵


¹ Department of Literature, Languages and Linguistics Kenyatta University, Kenya

² Department of Ghanaian Languages, Mount Mary College of Education, Ghana

³ Department of Languages, Atebubu College Of Education, Ghana

⁴ Department of Languages, Abetifi Presbyterian College of Education, Ghana

⁵ Department of Languages, St. Francis College of Education, Ghana

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4776-0336>

Abstract

Informal education has fundamental ideas that allow children to fit in the society since the instruction is geared towards ensuring that responsibility and obedience are instilled. In the text, one was to follow *chik*, mothers had the task of coaching their children, which is why Akoko, the protagonist takes a stronger role in her children's instruction. She made sure they understood the value of hard work by putting them to work. "..... his mother's proverb that the sun should never dawn and find a man still sleeping." p. 52. "Stupidity in a woman was only somewhat worse than stupidity in a man." p. 65 The Missionary provided formal schooling. As children progressed through the educational system, the gender divide became more apparent. Many boys joined high school than girls. Girls had a higher rate of dropping out than boys. Awiti and Peter worked hard in order to pursue their dreams. They chose different paths: Peter studied to become a priest, while Awiti became a teacher. They had realized the value of education as long as resources were allocated in accordance with one's profession. Mark ensured that each of his children received a good education. Despite Becky's reluctance, he struggled to persuade her to finish her A- levels. The Aoro family also devotes their resources to educating their children. Wandia Mugo excels in school and plans to pursue a doctorate in medicine.

Keywords: education, hardwork, *The River and the Source*, mothers, children



© 2022 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY-NC-SA) license.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Summary of the text

The River and the Source is an epic tale of three generations of Kenyan women and their progeny, spanning over 100 years, takes the reader from a nineteenth century rural village in Western Kenya to the end of the twentieth century in modern-day Nairobi. Join the descendants of Akoko as they confront cultural upheavals, from the coming of Catholicism to AIDS, with the courage and reserve that they derive from the blood of their matriarch. The River and the Source is a capacious novel that will take you beyond the intimate life of a single family; it will take you into the heart of Kenyan women everywhere. The River and the Source has been on the KCSE syllabus as a set text for many years, and it won the 1995 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for best first book, Africa Region.

1.2 About the author

Margaret Atieno Ogola (12 June 1958 – 21 September 2011) was the Kenyan author of the book. Dr. Ogola, a paediatrician by profession was also the recipient of the Familias Award for Humanitarian Service of the World Congress of Families. She wrote 3 novels, a biography and a handbook for parents: These include: *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo*, *A Biography: A Gift of Grace*, *Educating in Human Love*, *Place of Destiny*. She worked on her final book titled "Mandate of the people" a book she completed before her death.

2.0 Review of educational perspectives

In many African societies, education has transformed and enlightened the lives of people since time immemorial. During the traditional times, informal education was the main form of education for various communities. Over time due to the arrival of the missionaries in African countries informal education has been replaced by formal education. Formal education as supported by most African novels is used as a powerful tool to enlighten individuals in a society. In the novel *The River and the Source* various instances of how education has transformed the lives of different individuals are brought out by the author.

From the onset of the novel *The River and the Source*, we are introduced to the informal education which guided the ways of the people in the Yimbo community and enabled the young people to live cohesively with the society. This informal education was referred by the Yimbo community as *chik*. Akoko while growing up had been taught to follow the rules of *chik*. She had been well groomed to obey her future husband with skills which could help her have a good marriage. Mothers had a great responsibility to train and educate their daughters while the boys were expected to walk in the ways of the great men of the land.

The informal education also included the rites of passages of the people of the society. For instance in Yimbo community there was a certain way in which the naming of a child at birth was done. Akoko at birth was given the name Adoyo since she was born during the season when farmers were busy weeding. They settled for the name Akoko because she was a very noisy child. The people in the community hence learned the way to name their new born babies. Marriage was also another important cultural event that the people of the community of Yimbo were expected to learn. There were certain rules to be followed before a girl could be officially married. Bride price negotiations played a major part in marriage and in *The River and the Source* the great Owuor Kembo had to pay thirty heads of cows before taking Akoko as her wife.

The novel then takes us to the birth of the formal education brought about by the missionaries. Nyabera in her quest to find a different life amidst the tragedies that had befallen her life, set her journey to Aluor in Gem. The catechist warmly welcomes her to her new life and she gets inducted into Christianity and the new ways of religion. Nyabera enrolls the children Awiti and Owuor in catechism and reading classes where they progress with keen determination. Nyabera's daughter Elizabeth gets enrolled in a newly established primary school. With her hard work and determination in education, she becomes top of her class and gets invited to join a teacher's training college. Elizabeth's education has changed her life and as a teacher she is ready to transform the lives of others too by imparting to them the skills.

Mark joins a correspondence school, works hard and becomes a manager. He becomes the beneficiary of the job vacancies left by the whites who flew away after the country gains its independence as the vacancies are only given to those who are educated. Through this new job that he acquires he is able to sustain his big family and even give the best education to his children.

Education gets more central among the Sigus'. The formal education roots deeply in the family of Mark and Elizabeth as their children strive in their studies and pass with flying colours. The children take different paths of careers in life. Vera who is the first born to Mark and Elizabeth and also a twin to Becky, is a brilliant and hardworking student hence she passes her Certificate of Primary Education and is called to join a national school which she declines to join her twin sister's district school. Vera joins the secondary and after completing the results come out and she has done very well in sciences and mathematics. She decides to join the university to do electrical engineering to further her education.

Becky on the other hand is the opposite of her twin Vera when it comes to education. She is not badly off in her studies since she manages to complete her primary education and earn a spot at a district school. Her performance is satisfactory. Her dad persuades her to go for A levels and she gets a principal pass in English Literature. The knowledge she acquires in school helps her train as an air hostess.

The other children of Mark and Elizabeth follow suit of Vera's path in education. It seems like Vera has set a good example for her other siblings who are yet to work harder in their education. Aoro who is the second born and the first son in the family also shows great determination and effort towards his education. He shows interest in being a doctor at a younger age after his brother Tony develops acute appendicitis and eventually gets operated on successfully. Aoro keenly observes Tony's stitches and successfully operates on a helpless frog a fortnight later. He performs well in his primary education and is called to join one of the best schools in the country. He again sits for his O Level exams and performed well getting six distinctions in sciences which lands him to a Medical school and he eventually becomes a doctor. He finally fulfils his dream to become a doctor to heal and save lives in the society. As a doctor he is obviously able to earn a good salary to provide for his family.

Tony gets his spirit of handwork from his brother Aoro. He is inspired to achieve good grades and join the best school just like his brother. He works hard and passes his C.P.E earning him a spot in Aoro's national school. He later on gets interested in priesthood like his uncle Peter and he takes the same path. He goes through the training and becomes a father.

Opiyo who is a twin to Odongo undergoes his primary education and sits for his Certificate of Primary Education getting marks to enable him to proceed for his secondary

education. He finishes his secondary education and becomes a manager. His twin Odongo on the other hand also sits for his CPE. Mary the last born to the Sigus' grows up to be her dad's favourite child. Her father loves her so much that he takes her to the best private school.

Wandia Mugo is a woman who stands out when it comes to the field of education in the novel. This can be shown by the various levels of education she undergoes to achieve her dreams. She balances between her education and marriage with Aoro. They meet with Aoro in the Medical school. During the last semester's results in Anatomy class, he defeats Aoro with one point making her the top student in the class. Later on she pursues her second degree and earns a position as lecturer in the University. Wandia continues to grow her career. She gets a scholarship to study haematology at John Hopkins Hospital, Maryland and after completing she becomes a Professor and holds a position as the chairperson in the Department of Pathology in the University of Nairobi hence becoming the first Kenyan woman to be awarded doctorate in medicine. She is now able to save lives and equip her students with knowledge on medicine. She also provides for her family needs.

Wandia's sister is also mentioned in the novel as a teacher. She must have also gone through the Teachers training college to acquire her skills to become a teacher. Her occupation helps her to survive with her little baby.

In conclusion, drawing from the various instances in the novel education truly transforms lives of individuals in a society and also provides a source of livelihood to the people. Those who strive in their education eventually end up having better lives. Women should also be given equal opportunities as men to pursue technical courses. Wandia Mugo should be an example to the women in the current generation. Education enlightens individuals in a society and should be embraced across all the communities.

References

- Chelule, J. C. (2020). Deconstruction of Literary History in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*. *Hybrid Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, 2(2), 60-67. Retrieved from <https://royalliteglobal.com/hybrid-literary/article/view/143>
- Ogola, M. (1994). *The River and the Source*. Nairobi: Focus Publishers.