FACTORS AFFECTING WOMEN EDUCATION IN MAIDUGURI, BORNO STATE

Grace O. Okafor

Abstract

Despite efforts made by the Government to provide equal educational opportunities for all citizens, the level of women participation in education is still low. This paper is an attempt to examine the issue of gender inequality in education with a view to finding out what can be done to redress the imbalance. Purposive sampling method was used to draw sample from the population, simple percentages was used to test the demographic and responses of the respondents. The paper proposes value re-orientation of Nigerian towards women education as a necessary step towards gender parity in education. The paper also identifies attitude of parents, traditional practices, socio-economic of parents and general illiteracy rate in Maiduguri Metropolis as some of the factors militating against women. Again, the paper made recommendation among other that there should be value re-orientation and government to mount severe campaign on education of women.

Background

Education is a way in which people learn skills, gain knowledge and understand about would and about themselves. Education is a systematic training especially of the young people both male and female. The importance of education cannot be overemphasized because education bring knowledge and development of the mental, character and emotional well-being of the people of a society. Education is therefore, life itself. Every day, everywhere we go or everywhere we are, our knowledge about ourselves and our environment increases.

The Chambers Dictionary defines education as the “bringing up or training a person mentally, so that the person becomes capable of thinking for himself or herself, the family and the community. This implies the process of equipping an individual irrespective of sex with a vital societal key with which to open or lock many doors of life. With education, not only will women be able to read and write; they will also contribute their quota to the national development.

According to Oshin, (1986) one half of the population is denied access to educating despite the Federal and state laws designed 70 promote equality in our society. Studies conducted on education and position of women in Northern Nigeria concluded that early marriages hindered the education of women in that area Hamalai (1986).

A recent study in the southern part of Adamawa state revealed that fathers are deliberately not allowing their daughters to go to school because they consider investment in female education as unprofitable, since the girls are likely to end up in another man’s home (Abubakar, 2003). From one Nigerian culture to another, there are several unedifying examples of these acts of discrimination and marginalization of women which are responsible for the high rate of illiteracy among them.

Religion can be seen as a contributing factor to the inequalities between men factor to the inequalities between men and women. Rhlich (1975), emphasized that the institution of Pudah, symbolized by the veil alienates Muslim women from the public eyes and reduces them to complete subordination.

Nigeria has been identified as a poor nation despite its abundant human and natural resources. The level of poverty is so high that so many people cannot afford to send their children to school. In such a situation of financial difficulty preference is always for the male child because education is very expensive. Badejo (1991) found out that poverty prevented parents from paying attention to the education of women.

This paper is an attempt to examine the issue of gender inequality in education in Maiduguri Metropolis in both historical and contemporary contexts, and some major obstacles militating against the education of women in the area.
Statement of Problem

In most traditional settings, women were regarded as the weaker sex who would never participate in decision-making own land or stand before their male counterparts even when they are older than those males. Women were accorded the role of home makers whose place is the kitchen. Consequently, all education given to women was geared towards becoming good house wives. This had far reaching effect on the preparedness of women to undertake certain responsibilities.

Ohiri (1998) strongly canvassed for education as the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women. He suggested that this basic tool should be given to women in order to fulfill their role as members of the society. Many seminars and conferences have been held at all levels to emphasize the need to prioritize the education of women in Nigeria as a leading developing countries.

Nigeria launched the Blue print on women education followed by the establishment of “women education units” in the Federal and State Ministries of Education. These units were meant to cater for both rural and urban women, drop outs at secondary schools etc. This phenomenon can be connected with the attitude of people in most situations. This situation therefore prompted this research work.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the issue of gender inequality in education in both historical and contemporary context, and some major obstacles militating against the education of women in Maiduguri.

Research Questions

The following research question were posed:

(1) Do you have the view that educating the female alongside the male is educating the society?
(2) Is it time that parents and society at large consider male children education more necessary than female child education?
(3) What are the obstacles militating against women education?
(4) Are harmful traditional practices like early marriages, street hawking etc contribute to parental backwardness toward women education?
(5) Do poverty contributes to the backwardness of women education?

Objectives of Women Education

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1998 came up with the following, as the objectives of women education to:

1. enable women to improve their family health and diet
2. increase women’s productive ability, thus raising their family’s standard of living
3. give women access to appropriate technologies and management of cooperatives
4. improve women’s societal and cultural status
5. enable women discharge their responsibilities more effectively
6. help women to fight their own fears and feelings of inadequacy or inferiority
7. educate women in all round development that is mentally, socially, physically, psychologically, religiously and economically etc.

It is obvious that the above objectives can only be achieved by, first and foremost, ensuring that women acquire quality education. When this is done, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and other potentials that are required by women for full participation in national development will be developed.

Materials and Methods

The respondents involved in this study consisted of 60 men and 40 women, sampled using purposive and random sampling method. These are within the men and women age group (20-60 years). They are married, and majority of them were illiterates.

Information was obtained by using questionnaire items with semi- structured interview guide. Out of the hundred questions used, ninety-two was returned.
Factors Affecting Women Education in Maiduguri, Borno State

**Results**

Demographic Data

**Table 1: Occupational Distribution of the Respondent:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil Servant</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2010

The above table revealed that those working in the Civil Service are 36.95%, while those who are into business are 32.60%. Peasants constitute 21.73% of the respondent, while housewives constitute only 8.69%. This clarify that those working in the civil service have highest percentage of response, followed by business people, as well as peasants and lastly, housewives.

**Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>52.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-above</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2010

The mean ages for the male and female respondents were 52.17% with a range of (20-39), 28.26% with a range of (40-59), and 19.56% with a range of (60-above), thus, it clarifies that those whose age range from 20-39 are greater in number, followed by those whose age range from 40-59, then those who age range from 60 and above.

**Table 3: Sex Distribution of the Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2010

In the sex distribution, more males 48 than female 44 respondents were sampled. This is because the focus of the study is to examine the factors militating against women education. This is also to ensure male participation in identifying educational issues in women and how to solve the problem.

Educationally, a significant majority of the male and female respondents were illiterates. The highest level of education of the respondents is secondary school, 76.08% had attempted primary or Qua'ranic schools, majority of these were men. 23.91% never attempted any school at all.

Section Two (2) Table 4:

**Theme of the Research**

**Question 1:** Do you have the view that educating the female along side the male is educating the society?
Table 4: Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56.52%</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>78.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.22%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28.26%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>71.74%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2010

From the above table, 78.26% of the total respondents agreed that educating the female along side the male is like educating the whole society, though more women than men agreed to that. According to them, both female and male have desires, goals and wishes to fulfill. Hence, both of them need education to achieve these goals, desires and wishes. However, 21.74% of the respondents who disagree with the above view stated that educating the female is not educating the society as a whole. They said that 70-80% of the educated elite in Borno State as well as the entire country are male who are contributing to national development in the area of health, agriculture, political, education etc of the nation.

Table 5: Is it time that parents and society at large consider male child education more necessary than female child education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43.48%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.57%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56.52%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43.48%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2010

The above table also shows that out of the total respondents 67.39% agreed that parents and the society consider male child education more necessary than female child education. While 32.61% do not agree. From the foregoing, those who agreed believe that there is a clear discrimination between the two genders (male and female) when it comes to education. In fact, male child education has been given more priority than the female child education.

Table 6: Research Question 2: What are the obstacles militating against women education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67.39%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.57%</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>86.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.69%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>76.08%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23.92%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2010

It could be seen from this study that 80 respondents which constitute 86.96% agreed that the problem of parents showing neglect to women education should be attributed to ignorant/illiteracy. While 12 respondents which constitute 13.04% disagreed to the above claim. On the view of those who agreed, they assert that those parents who are illiterate or ignorant do not know the importance of women education and therefore could not see the need to send their children. On the contrary, those who disagree with the above factors conceived that even the ignorant and illiterate parents do enroll their female children to schools and they are performing better.
Table 7: Are harmful traditional practices like early marriages, street hawking etc contribute to parental backwardness toward women education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65.22%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>76.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.22%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.69%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>80.44%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.56%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2010

From the above table, the data indicates that 76.09% agreed that harmful traditional practices, such as early marriage, street hawking among others could be considered as factors/obstacles militating against female education.

Table 8: Do poverty contributes to the backwardness of women education in Borno State?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>73.91%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.69%</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>82.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>86.95%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table shows that 82.61% agreed that poverty contributed to the backwardness of women education in Borno State. Those who agreed along this line said that most parents are subsistence farmers and petty traders who cannot be able to educate their children due to the financial involvement, and that government is not ready to make the responsibility of educating the children in the area. While 17.39% who disagree assert that it was not poverty that lead to the backwardness, but because some parents feel that educating female in western education schools is a waste.

Discussions

From the analysis, it is obvious that the attitude of some parents toward women education is negative. According to them, western education schools teach western culture and belief.

Similarly, Bakari (1983) applies that many conservative Muslims of today still believe that it is religiously and culturally a disgrace to send girls to school. Ozigi and Oche (1981) observed that western education is not valued by most parents in the north especially the Muslim parents because the areas are predominantly Muslim areas.

More children attend Quranic schools than state primary schools. This is because it is the type of school which majority of the parents themselves attended. Benbhage (1975) observed that the main reason why peasants and illiterate patients fail to send their children to school is because they need their service at home and on the farms. These needs make them overlook the need to give children the modern education.

Also, it is true that these parents engaged their children into traditional practices like hawking, early marriage etc which continue to hamper their future toward pursuance of education. It is widely believed that marriage and motherhood are the primary duties of the women. A woman who decides not to marry is regarded as deviant as most women aspire to get married. Badejo (1991) noted that a career is not perceived as an alternative to marriage. According to Mai Angwa (1998) most of the teenagers are given out for marriage with the hope of retaining their virginity. All these situations have resulted in a higher illiteracy rate among women than men.

Corollary to this is the problem of seclusion which keeps many married women in purdah in accordance with the Islamic way of life. Women in Purdah hardly came out in public places; therefore these women do not have any opportunity to go to school to acquire formal education.

Nigeria has been identified as a poor nation despite its human and natural resources. The level of poverty is so high that so many people cannot afford to send their children to school. In such a situation of financial difficulty preference is always for the male child because education is very expensive.
In conclusion, the need to educate women is very fundamental to Nigeria’s stability and growth.

Policies and Strategies for Cultural Re-orientation

It is clear so far in this paper that the major problems confronting women education in Borno State today are not so much in the domain of public and institutional arrangements but in the lingering culture, values and depressed economic status of the Nigerian peoples which tend to sustain gender discrimination in education. These are the factors that must be tackled in objective policies and strategies.

There is an urgent need to make a massive campaign to sensitize parents and the general public on the need for gender equality, especially in the educational sector of this country. Truly most people are simply not aware of gender issues and their impact on the education of the girls and women from the home through the organized school system. It is suggested that advocacy and mobilization programmes should be mounted to sensitize all concerned in the educational enterprise to gender issues. This would be consistent and complementary to the gender and media workshops organized by the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) at various times in the country.

Since the problems of cultural bias and negative perception of the value and role of women and societal abuse of the girl-child are more pervasive and deeply rooted in the rural areas where the majority of Nigerians live, enlightenment campaign advocated above should be particularly strengthened at the levels of local government and then state government. These levels of educational administration are closer to the people and could be more effective in getting the message across. But it is important to fund these bodies adequately and to supervise them sufficiently to ensure that the job is done.

To complement the enlightenment campaign, there is the need to strengthen new and existing legislations and protocols which are designed to unshakable girl-child and guarantees her equal access to qualitative functional education. Some of these strategies here may appear undemocratic but they are essential given the turban nature of the problem and our people. After all, we are doing so many other things that are undemocratic, even under apparent democratic regimes. We have in mind here that education of women should be made universal, free and compulsory. There should be stiff penalty specific and applied on parents who for one excuse or another would deny their female children the opportunity of early education, not even on the excuse of marriage. Abubakar (2003), pointed out in her study of Southern Adamawa State that parents there could withhold their female children from school with impunity simply because there are no sanctions for doing so. in the more advanced countries today, sanctions are imposed on parents who do so.

Massive training of gender-sensitized teachers, especially women, who would serve as role models, is required so that the successful execution of the various educational programmes for women may be achieved. This strategy is important because such gender sensitized teachers are better placed to challenge the cultural and traditional practices of their communities which militate against women education.

Perhaps the most important and decisive measure that could he taken to permanently achieve cultural and value re-orientation in our educational system, in terms of attitudinal and behavioral change, is to create a completely new enabling environment, creating an enabling environment in the sense touches on issues of economic and social development. In Europe and America because the economy is developed and social and welfare infrastructure are put in place, parents do not need to send their little girls to engage in any income yielding activities at the expense of their schooling. They do not have to discriminate between male and female children in accordance with the ones that are more likely to take care of them at old age or carry on with the family tradition when they die; in short, children to them are not an asset but a burden.

If our economy is developed and both parents are gainfully employed, if our society is developed to the extent that the basic needs of society, such as water, energy, food and other social infrastructures are in place, then we would begin to lose the strength of cultural attachment to the value of children as assets in times of need. This will work in favour of the women who are presently at the receiving end of our underdeveloped status.
Conclusion and Recommendation

The problems girls and women face in their attempt to achieve parity with their male counterparts in educational opportunities are quite real and daunting. The central theme of all conferences, seminars and workshops on women education has been the need to raise the status of women and bring them into the development process as equal partners with men. The conferences have also raised consciousness about age-old injustices and inequalities which women suffer in virtually all societies in the world. From these efforts, the awareness has grown that women’s woes have as their cause, the question of gender.

The fact that the present developed nations of the world have to a very large extent overcome these problems so that their women now enjoy equality of opportunities tells us that the problem is a developmental one. The less developed countries, which include of old culture and value orientations which denigrate the worth and integrity of women. Our expectation is that an economic and social transition would have to take place for the women of this country to enjoy the full benefits of the human rights struggle which has liberated their counterparts in the developed world from the strange hold of culture and misconceived, male dominated, value orientations.

Some of the beliefs about educated women being arrogant and bossy and that they do not make good wives can be eliminated, by women themselves. Instead of remaining a tool in the hands of men, women should think seriously and work towards positive achievements in the society.

Information services and reading groups should be organized all over the country to familiarize both men and women with the marginal position of women in the society. Formal and non-formal educational programmes should be launched in rural areas to make the general public aware of the need to provide women with solid education. There should be total emancipation of women; this is very important because we need to change the thinking of women who believe themselves to be incapable. Government should appoint women who are capable into high positions and not those that get there through “bottom power.” The government should enlist the aid of religions (Islamic) teachers in an effort to reach parents in rural areas to emphasize the importance of girl’s education.

In conclusion, it is crucial to note that the attitude of people towards women’s education will go a long way in explaining the extent to which the people want their nation to develop. Like the saying goes that to educate a woman is to educate the society as whole, the women should be given the chance to prove their worth.

As women, the author feels that women should not try to prove equality with men but instead, they should work hand in hand with them and if possible, take over from them. We should avoid making unnecessary noise but instead try to match words with action. All these can be achieved if we change our attitude.

It is true that our women are increasingly seen in government but most of these appointments are made in areas traditionally reserved for us in fields such as women’s affairs, social welfare, health, youth and do not always reflect a desire on the part of administration to see woman play a truly full role in the society. There is the need for women to leave these stereotype jobs and take on more challenging ones that have so far been reserved for man or labeled ‘Masculine Fields.’

Reference


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