

AN EVALUATION OF WOMEN EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN WOMEN DEVELOPMENT CENTRES: A CASE STUDY OF THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY

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Abstract

In recent times, the Nigerian Government has developed interest in the education of women. This was necessitated by considering the important roles women play in nation building and how the nation is being affected by its greater number of women as illiterates.

To remedy this situation, the government has taken some steps to educate women both in basic literacy and in the development of skills. For instance, the establishment of adult education programmes in all the states of the federation is aimed at the development of the individual for the good of her community.

This question that bothers interested observers is whether the programmes designed for these adults meet their needs in terms of the provision of the required manpower and other facilities. This paper therefore, looked into the adequacy of the major areas of which effective learning is based namely: staffing, equipment, accommodation, and funding in the four Women Development Centers of the Federal Capital Territory. It also made recommendations on how the programme could be improved for better results.

Introduction

Nigeria as a society is male-dominated. Women are seen as the less advantaged group as a result of the limitations placed on them by both traditional and cultural practices. This brings about discrimination and marginalization even in the education of the girl-child.

Osuman (1997) views women literacy as a means of increasing the well-being of women and of stepping up their contributions to the society.

Omololu (1972) spelt out the different purposes that should be fostered by women education in a democratic setting as follows:

- i. **Economic Development:** An educated woman competes with her male counterpart in the labour market. She is able to get a well paid job; ii. Performs well in business, contributes to the well-being of her family and so contributes to the development of the country.
- iii. **Cultural Value:** A woman who has got through the training provided by education is well behaved and cultured. They know the right steps to take in every situation and are gentle, polite and respectful.
Political Awareness: Education will give to the woman the consciousness of their political rights. They will know their political rights as citizens of the country and be able to vote and be voted for,
- v. **Social Status:** An educated woman has the confidence to express herself and put forward her views on any issue of national interest. She has free expression of her opinion and can contribute positively to the general development of her community and the nation at large.
- vi. **Importance of Child Care:** The responsibility a woman has towards her child is realized when she is educated. She encourages her children to be educated and be of good conduct.
- vii. **National Reconstruction:** Women who are educated form themselves into voluntary organizations that tackle different areas of life with the aim of proffering solutions to existing problems.
- viii. **National Unity:** Educated women know the importance of national unity and through women associations; they foster peace and unity in the country.

The government of Nigeria having realized the importance of women education has made some contributions in this regard.

Government Contributions Towards Women Education

The emphasis on the education of women recently came up as a result of the recognition that it would bring about self improvement of the women thereby improving the quality of family life, their immediate environment and the society at large.

The world over, gender issues have affected literacy as there are higher illiteracy rates for women than for men. As a result of this, the United Nations Charter has "equal access to education as one of its basic human rights drive. This is being accepted and implemented by some countries although the factor of sex of the individual still makes a great difference in developing countries like Nigeria.

Osuman (1997) reported the UNESCO publication summarizing differences between the sexes for 87 countries. The findings were:

- i) The difference between male and female illiteracy rates was over 20% in thirty six countries in Africa and Asia,
- ii) In Africa and Asia, twenty-six countries have the illiteracy rates of male and female between 10% and 20% in favour of men,
- iii) Twenty-five countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have the disparity of less than 10% in favour of men.

As a result of this revelation, most of the developing countries have taken positive steps to bridge this gap by considering women education as a priority area in the national plan. In Nigeria, the Federal Government developed programmes run by different ministries for women which would be of benefit to them. Examples of such programmes are:

- i. The Federal Ministry of Health - the ministry organizes programmes like the Primary Health Care, Family Planning, and Oral Rehydration Therapy Practice, Expanded Programme on Immunization and Campaign on Women Education,
- ii. The Ministry of Education in 1986, formulated the National Women Education Policy. This policy states that "with regard to women's education, special efforts will be made by ministries of education and local government authorities in conjunction with Ministries of Community Development and Social Welfare and of Information to encourage parents to send their daughters to school". As a result of the above, some States of the Federation enacted laws against parents withdrawing their children from school, mainly for marriage purposes, iii. The National Council of Education in 1987, adopted the National Women Education Programme with the following objectives:
 - (a) To foster the education of women and girls
 - (b) To provide functional education for women and girls in order to awaken their consciousness
 - (c) To create awareness in all citizens that equal opportunities should be maintained irrespective of gender, age, status, and locality.
 - (d) To educate parents and the general public to adopt a change of attitude towards the newwomen education programme
 - (e) To give re-orientation to all females on their attitude towards education.
- iv. The Federal Ministry of Education established the women education unit in 1989. Centres for women which serve as resource centres and also offer training to meet the needs of the women were also created. The mandate to establish women centres was given to the state governments who in turn established women centres where courses like cookery, typing, sewing, knitting, and health programmes are taught. Additionally, these Centres are to also identify and tackle the problems that women are faced with in the country.
- v. The effort of the Federal Government towards the education of women led to the establishment of a National Commission for Women. This Commission has the following objectives:
 - a) To promote the utilization of women in the development of human resources and ensure their acceptance as co-participants who have all (he rights to contribute to the development of the nation.
 - b) Promote esteemed motherhood and the maternal health of women.
 - c) To promote the general welfare of women.
 - d) To promote the welfare of the family and the development of children,
 - e) Coordinates the activities of the government and the women's organisation.

Work to eliminate the social and cultural practices that discriminate and dehumanize womanhood.

- f) However it has been observed that in some areas, the positive impact of women education has not been felt in the society. In the aspect of children upbringing for instance, it is evident that negative attitudes exhibited by the youths who are future leaders of the society are mainly caused by negligence from the home. Children are found indulging in cultism, examination malpractice, robbery, destructive demonstrations and other terrible vices. Likewise in the political arena, the impact of women is felt minimally. The game of politics is dominated by men while very low percentage of women holds public offices. Women are also not very active in the economic development of the country.
- g) With this as the situation, it becomes imperative to evaluate the programme of women Centres in the areas of staffing, equipment, accommodation/furniture and funding. The administration of questionnaires and also interview to heads, teachers and student of the four women centres in the Federal Capital Territory, on the present state of these provisions would elicit information for the study. If these requirements are found to be inadequate for the training of women, then the government will be in a position to know the causes of the problems being experienced in the society as a result of non-functional education of women. The government will therefore be geared towards making proper provision of these requirements in order to achieve the objectives of the women education programme.
- h) The different areas of weaknesses will be revealed with the evaluation, and this will help to propose possible strategies for further improvement of the existing requirements. With better use and coordination of these requirements therefore, women education centres will be staffed, equipped and funded properly to accomplish the various demands and expectations of their diverse clientele.
- i) The education of women is thus, aimed at helping them develop to a general extent their minds and potentials, and consequently, effectively carry out the family care functions, pursue and participate in making meaningful input into social, economic and political affairs of the nation.

j) **Women Education in Practice: The Federal Capital Territory Example**

- k) In line with the Federal Government directives that State Governments should establish Women Education Units within the states' ministry of education, the Federal Capital Territory established four of these Centres in four area councils of the territory.

The aims of these Centres as spelt out in their curriculum include:

- (i) To teach the women skills for self reliance.
- (ii) To enlighten them on health, social, economic and political issues.
- (iii) To ensure the participation of women in the development of the nation.
- (iv) To provide opportunities for the acquisition of basic literacy education.

The mission of these Centres is to make all women functional literate citizens armed with Language, numeracy and skills to enable them to perform more effectively in the development of their society.

In the Federal Capital Territory, there are four women Centres set up between 1991 and 1992 in four area councils of the territory. These Centres are: (i) Woman Education Centre, Wuse (ii) Woman Education Centre, Kuje (iii) Woman Education Centre, Kwali (iv) Woman Education Centre, Abaji

The curriculum of these Centres is grouped into three areas namely: Basic and Post Literacy, Home Economics and Business Studies.

- i. Basic and Post Literacy: This contains the teaching of Mathematics, English, Citizenship Education., Health Education.
- ii. Home Economics: it includes Dress making, Fashion and Designing, Catering, Knitting, English and Mathematics

- iii. Business Studies: Typing, Office Practice, Commerce, English, Maths, and Citizenship Education.

Learning Facilities

For the above objectives to be achieved, there should be proper staffing of the Centres and the required equipment should be in adequate supply and in good order, the accommodation should be suitable and sufficient funding made available.

Below is the representation of the findings in the four women Centres as regards staffing, equipment, accommodation and funding.

Staffing

Table 1: Staff disposition in the Women Centres by Qualification

S/N	Name of Centre	Graduate/ HND Staff	NCE Staff	OND/ CERT Staff	Total No of Staff	Student Population
1	Women Education Centre Wuse	8	6	5	19	124
2	Women Education Centre Kuje	2	3	2	7	50
3	Women Education Centre Kwali	1	2	5	\Y~	20
4	Women Education Centre Abaji	1	7	-	8	HT~

Source: The Women Centres

In Women Centre Wuse, two non teaching staff with National Diploma are used for teaching in Catering Laboratory. Kuje Women Centre has two of its staff as visiting teachers from the Agency for Mass Education and one on part-time.

Considering the above, one may wonder if the staffing of these Centres is not adequate bearing in mind the student enrolment. However, a closer look at the situation revealed that some key subjects do not have teachers at all. For instance in Women Centre Kuje, there are no Mathematics and Business Studies teachers. This situation has affected the acquisition of the skills in typing and also in the knowledge of mathematics. There is also no teacher for the only computer available to the Centre.

In the Wuse Centre, two non academic staff with National Diploma are used for teaching practical Home Economics while one teacher for knitting is on part-time. There is also no teacher for the computer in the Centre. Kwali and Abaji Women Centres have only one graduate each being the heads of the Centres. They each have eight (8) teachers who take up other courses that are not their areas of specialization. This is done to ensure that the subjects in the curriculum are covered regardless of the quality of instruction. This practice as reported by the people concerned affects the achievement of the objectives as the teachers do not have adequate knowledge of the subject they handled. The teachers also complained about lack of materials to prepare their lessons. From the foregoing, it is evident that even the acquisition of skills to make the women self reliant is not being addressed properly.

Equipment

For the achievement of the objectives of the women- Centres, there should be adequate supply of equipment such as Computers, Knitting machines, Sewing machines, Cookers, Refrigerators, Washing machines.

The situation in the Centres as regards the provision of equipment is as shown below:

Table 2: Availability and Functionality of Equipment in the Women Centres

	Name of	Equipment													
		Computer		Cooker		Sewing Machine		Knitting Machine		Type		Refri-gerator		Washing Machine	
		Function	NOH Function	Function	Non Function	Function	Non Function	Function	Non Function	Function	Non Function	Function*	Non Function	Function	(Non Function)
1	Women Centre Wuse	1	-	2	-	7	7	3	2	5	6	2	2	-	1
2	Women Centre Kuje	1	-	1	3	3	3	-	-	3	5	1	2	-	-
3	Women Centre Kwali	1	-	-	2	-	2	2	-	4	6	1	2	-	-
4	Women Centre Abaji	1	-	3	-	8	8	1	2	5	-	2	-	1	-

Source : The women Centres

As shown above, there is inadequate provision of equipment in these Centres. Typewriters which are outdated and no more in use are what the Centres have for instructing the women that are being trained to be self reliant. Most of these typewriters are not in order and are packed away. Computers which should be in use as information and communication technology is the order of the day are in very limited supply. Each Centre has only one computer which is covered up in the head of Centre's office as there is no teacher for its instruction.

Other equipment like cooker, knitting machine, refrigerator and washing machine are also not enough for effective teaching/learning processes.

Accommodation/Furniture

Conducive and well located accommodation is required for the women Centres to attract the women for the actualization of their targets. The description of the accommodation situation in these Centres is as shown below:

(a) **Women Education Centre, Wuse:** The Centre is located in a public primary school in the municipal. A section of the school building is made available to the centre for instruction. Altogether there are two classrooms for use and due to lack of space, the corridors are also used as classroom by the Centre. The centre has no furniture for both the students and the teachers. The few available ones are in disrepair and they are shared by the teachers and students. The location of the Centre in a primary school is a distraction as the atmosphere is usually noisy and does not encourage effective learning for adults. The inadequacy of classroom and furniture also affect the attainment of the Centre's goals as different lessons cannot go on at the same time and students are not comfortably seated.

(b) **Women Education Centre, Kuje:** This Centre uses two dilapidated residential blocks belonging to the local government. The state of these buildings used as school block does not attract the women in the locality to embrace the programme which could be part of the reason for low enrolment. The classrooms are also not adequate as the spoilt equipment occupy the space that could have served as classrooms. Few desks were sighted for use by both staff and students.

(c) **Women Education Centre Kwali:** The Centre is housed in a building belonging to the local

Government with few rooms resulting to lack of classrooms. Owing to the cramped space,

lessons cannot be handled at the same time as this will be distinctive. The furniture situation is not different from the other Centres as the students share the few available desks also used by the teachers.

- (d) **Women Education Centre, Abaji:** The Local Government Authority provided a building for the Centre. This Centre unlike the others has enough classrooms for its students. The furniture for use by staff and students is the major problem. A few old and broken down furniture are used by the students.

Good accommodation and furniture are no doubt important factors in the achievement of the Centres' goals. The inadequacy of these will no doubt hinder the attainment of Centres' targets.

Funding

The National Policy on Education (1998) states that "Education is an expensive social service and requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government for successful implementation of the educational programmes".

For the women Centres in the Federal Capital Territory, the Federal Government pays the teachers and provides the equipment. The Local Government is expected to play a part in the maintenance and other recurrent expenditure of these Centres. These aspects are however not being addressed appropriately.

From the situation observed at the Centres, funding is a very major problem. All the equipment that are not in good order are dumped in a place as money is not made available for repair. These Centres hardly get impressed for the day to day running of the programmes. This affects the programme adversely because the materials needed by the women for their practical classes cannot be procured. On the other hand, requesting students to contribute money for their practical discourages them from attending the programmes owing to their economic status.

Recommendations

The findings made from the study of the Women Education Centres in the Federal Capital Territory showed that there is a serious problem in the implementation of the women education programmes.

The recommendations below are hoped to help to remedy these problems. They are:

- (i) **Provision of Good Accommodation:** The study showed that none of the four Centres had an accommodation built for its purpose. They are all using 'borrowed' buildings for their programmes. It is therefore suggested that the Federal Government should as a matter of urgency construct befitting structures for these Centres. The first impression one has of these Centres will help attract trainees who are currently not responding positively to the call of women education,
- (ii) **Adequate Provision of Required Equipment:** It was surprising to note that at this age of information and communication technology, the training with manual typewriters that have been long outdated is still being adopted at the women Centres. One of the aims of the programme is to train women in skills that will make them self reliant when the course is completed. With the training in manual typewriter, one wonders the kind of work that these women will be fitted for as no one types with this machine any longer. It is therefore recommended that these typewriters be replaced with adequate numbers of computers- A sound knowledge in computer will give the women an opportunity to be gainfully employed.
- fiii) **Adequate Funding of the Centres:** The issue of funding is a very crucial one as the success or failure of the programmes depends on how readily funds are made available for the procurement of the needed items. As a result of this, the three tiers of government should take seriously their roles in the provision of funds for this programme. This will enable the

practical materials **for** the training to be made available, the repairs of the spoilt equipment and furniture to be **carried** out among other needs.

- (iv) **Competent Teachers:** The right type of teachers should be employed for the programme. A situation where non teaching staff with very low qualification is made to teach the women is not a good development. The trainees are aware when qualified teachers are handling their courses and they are either attracted or discouraged by their experiences. The subject matter is well handled by a qualified and competent teacher and the women are in turn well trained and useful to the society. A situation of engaging many teachers for a particular area of study to the detriment of others should be avoided.
- (v) **Generation of Funds:** The Centres depend on the government solely for the provision of funds. In order to run their Centres effectively, they should explore avenues of raising funds such as knitting for sale, sale of baked products, sewing uniforms of the women at a minimal charge, etc. The money generated can be used for the daily expenditure of the Centre and also for minor repairs of equipment and furniture.
- (vi) **Enlightenment Programme:** It was observed that the women programme had not been embraced very well by the people concerned. The enrolment of women in most Centres is very low. To remedy this situation, there should be intensive enlightenment programme aimed at educating the people of the locality on the importance of women education. The local government council should take up the challenge and ensure that people know the skills to be acquired and how the training will help to improve the individual and the community.
- (vii) **Training in Useful Skills:** One of the factors that will help attract women to the programme is the awareness that skills to be acquired would improve their economic and social status. The training of women in this modern time in typewriting (using manual typewriters) does not give them the expected economic power. The Centres should be supplied with computers to replace the typewriters. This will serve as a force of attraction with the knowledge that a skill in computer operations will earn them a profitable job.

Conclusion

The initiation of the women education programme by the federal government no doubt is a very laudable venture. However, what is worth doing should be done well. Bearing in mind the importance of this programme for the well-being of the woman, the family and the nation at large, the gesture of educating women should be taken as a serious programme and be provided with all the required materials for its success.

The clear definition of the roles of the three tiers of government towards the programme should be spelt out and supervision and monitoring enforced. The government should be aware of the state of these Centres and that the objectives for which they were set up are not being achieved due to negligence. When the required facilities, staff and funds are put in place for the programme and a new orientation adopted, the target of the government in establishing the Centres would be achieved for the development of the nation.

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