

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL**

A STUDY OF THE FORMAL EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN NIGERIA,  
AND THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES ARISING FROM THE INTRODUCTION  
OF WESTERN-TYPE EDUCATION, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE  
SECONDARY PHASE OF EDUCATION IN IMO STATE.

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## THE RATIONALE

The introduction of formal education in Nigeria can be traced back to 1842. It is hard to accept that since then no detailed research has been carried out, in order to monitor the progress of girls and women, because of the fact that Nigeria's social structure is deeply rooted in patriarchy. Moreover, the History of Education in Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1974), does indicate quite vividly that in the early years, girls and women were denied formal education; and even when they were allowed to go to school, obstacles (including child marriage and domestic chores), were deliberately placed in their way.

There is little doubt that in a male dominated society, the role of the female members can at best be subordinate and at worst invisible. This is because in such a society, male dominance is inevitable. This is partly why within the Nigerian educational context, girls' and women's progress in the various stages should be constantly checked and reappraised through educational studies and research. The early stages, (primary and secondary), are crucially important. The secondary sector for example does affect to a large extent what an individual can or cannot do in the future by way of career. The need for progress in the early phases cannot therefore be over emphasised.

The revelation, (especially in the History of Education in Nigeria), about the existence of obstacles to female education in the early years of school education should have prompted educational research, which would among other things show whether the barriers are still there and whether they affect all stages of education with equal gravity. Such studies can also reveal various types of obstacles and highlight regional variations within the Nigerian society. For instance, it will be possible to investigate whether:

- a. there are more female educational barriers among the Christian communities than the Islamic ones.
- b. whether rural girls and women face additional barriers compared with their counterparts in the urban areas.
- c. the studies can also show to some extent how Nigerian girls and women are faring in educational terms as opposed to their counterparts in the other developing nations and even in the developed countries - by comparing research findings. This is important because from the roles which girls and women are playing in various parts of the world, an assessment can be made, in order to establish whether or not their Nigerian counterparts are lagging behind, and if that is the case - then the best way of addressing the problem will need to be sought.

There are eight chapters in this study:

**Chapter One**; takes a global look at girls' and women's education over the years.

**Chapter Two**; explores more specifically the Nigerian situation by tracing the background to the educational development in Nigeria.

**Chapter Three**; assesses the ensuing socio-cultural changes following the introduction of western-type education in Nigeria.

**Chapter Four**; examines the History of the Igbo as a people with a view to scrutinising among other things their social institutions which are bound to have implications particularly for the female members of the Igbo society.

**Chapter Five**; draws attention to the hypothesis propounded mainly from the revelations of the preceding chapters, notably Chapter Four, and suggests that empirical study is inevitable. A pilot study puts this suggestion to the test.

**Chapter Six**; reveals the empirical study which was confined to the strategic secondary phase of education in Imo State, with a view to establishing the reality of the situation in terms of female education.

**Chapter Seven**; compares the findings arising from the empirical study with those of earlier researchers and highlights the need for further research.

**Chapter Eight**; makes crucial recommendations and sums up the study.

**Appendix 1**: Imo State Secondary School Education, Statistical Information;

**Appendix 2**; The Students' Questionnaires

**Appendix 3**; The Teachers' Questionnaires.

**Appendix 4**; Interview Questions.

**Appendix 5**; A Map of Nigeria.

**Appendix 6**; A Map of Imo State.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Action Group
CD	Community Development
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CSE	Certificate of Secondary Education
DO	District Officer
ETC	Elementary Training College
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GIST	Girls Into Science and Technology
HETC	Higher Elementary Training College
HND	Higher National Diploma
KM	Kilometre
MRS	Missus
NAWSTM	Nigerian Association of Women in Science Technology and Mathematics
NCE	Nigerian Certificate of Education
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon
NCWS	National Council of Women's Societies
NDP	National Development Plan
NUT	National Union of Teachers
P	Page
PP	Pages
SIM	Sudan Interior Mission
ST	Saint
SQ	Square
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organisation
UPE	Universal Primary Education

**Note:** The words 'Ibo' and 'Igbo' used in this Study mean the same thing. Ibo is generally used by European speaking people who find it difficult to pronounce the letters g and b together.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN**

In a study of this nature, it is important to take a global perspective of women's education over the years. This approach will, among other things, reveal what has been happening to the education of women in various countries of the world. It will be interesting to know what the main influencing factors are, and how they compare and contrast given the diversity of cultures. With this kind of procedure, the study will not be limited in outlook or scope, as otherwise would have been the case if it were to focus on the educational system of just one country. By looking at women's education in a global context at this stage, the writer will not only be more knowledgeable in terms of the research topic, but will also be in a more commanding position to assess, discuss and evaluate women's education in the sample country with greater objectivity. Of supreme importance will be the nature of social attitude towards the formal education of girls and women in the various cultures of the world.

It is therefore quite obvious that the significance of this chapter lies in its global appeal – and since this is the case, discussion should take into account several countries of the world. It is only in this way that the title 'A Global Perspective on the Education of Women,' can be justified. Besides, focusing on only a few nations will only provide very limited information in terms of women's formal education worldwide. So, apart from some of the countries in the West and in the developing world, the educational systems of a few other nations should be reappraised.

There is strong evidence to support the view that women's education has been deliberately undermined, in all the educational systems of the world. The consensus of opinion in the claim highlights the enormity of the problem. For instance, Akande (1987),

who has shown remarkable interest in women's education in general, and in Nigerian women's in particular, strongly suspects that over the years there might have been:

*"injustices to women in the educational systems of the world." p. 75*

A similar view has been expressed by Moore (1987). From her experience, following a detailed study relating to the education of women, particularly their access to and opportunity of higher education, she is in no doubt that women's education has suffered immeasurably, and hopes that the twenty-first century should mark the beginning of the redressing of the imbalance:

*"The nations of this world are tied to each other in a web of human connections, not least of which is education. One of the most striking things about the world's education in the previous centuries has been its systematic exclusion of women. Let us expect that the most exciting thing about the world's education in the twenty-first century will be the systematic inclusion of women at all levels and in all fields." p. 33.*

This shows that having examined women's education thoroughly at all levels, she is fully aware of the gravity of their problem especially in terms of access to and opportunity of higher education.

Even from the Islamic communities, there is a growing concern among some people that female education has not been given the attention it deserves in most countries of the world. Al-Hariri (1987), for example, has taken a detailed but critical look at women's education in the Islamic societies, especially in Saudi Arabia, because of the unique position it occupies in the moslem world (Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, is the place of pilgrimage for moslems all over the world). As a result, she has come to the inevitable conclusion that:

*"Traditionally women's education has suffered in most countries of the world including Europe. Socio-economic and cultural factors, whether at the conscious or sub-conscious level, have been generally responsible for this past neglect." p. 53-54.*

It is noteworthy that no educational research has, as yet, revealed views contrary to those indicated above in connection with female education. This inevitably raises the question - why it has taken so long for the world to awake to the reality of the fact, that the education of girls and women has been universally undermined and why, on the crucial issue that affects them personally, women themselves have remained incredibly silent. Obbo (1980), has attributed this to women's invisibility.

It has been claimed that the main problem for women has been their invisibility in any serious study of history and society. This has meant that women who make up nearly half the population of most societies have not been allowed to articulate their thoughts, fears and hopes on issues like labour, child-rearing, sexuality, etc.

It is important to note that researchers in female education, including Akande (1987), claim that:

*“Female education has been a major focus of attention lately. There has been an enormous surge of interest...It is being realised that the development of a society is determined to a great extent by the place which women occupy in it and the part they play in the life of a nation.”* p. 75.

Akande further argues that the emancipation of women is inseparable from economic, political and social changes, and that the status of women is a reflection of the level of civilisation reached by the society in which they live. On the other hand, it could be argued that the interest being recently shown with regard to women's education, might not have been possible without the realisation that their education is crucial in terms of social, political and economic development and progress of a nation. In other words, if it had been proven that women's education enhances only their own personality and does not have any positive bearing on the overall development of a nation, no one probably would have shown any interest in the education and training of girls and women. If this is so, it then shows that women generally, irrespective of culture or country, have not been given the recognition and the regard that they deserve.

The neglect which women's education has suffered over the years cannot be attributed to a single factor (Al-Hariri, 1987). Therefore, in this study some of those factors that have in one way or the other militated against the formal education of girls and women will be examined. Research has shown that for years social, religious, economic and political issues have adversely affected female education. Educational institutions and employers are known to have collaborated. Nomadic influences and lack of unity among women are also partly responsible for the setback. These factors vary in terms of gravity from culture to culture, and even within the same cultural setting, incredible differences exist.

### Social Factors

#### Attitudes and Expectations

Of all the factors that are known to affect the well being of people, arguably the social ones are among the most forceful and threatening. This is mainly because individuals cannot easily set themselves against their society, just as they cannot easily set themselves above the law, in legal terms. It is necessary to stress at this stage the fact that local bias, discrimination, class and gender system etc. do influence and worsen social issues. The society demands that people conform to its norms. Interestingly, the French sociologist, Durkheim (1964), thinks that conformity is important, and warns that without it, social life will be unbearable. In some societies, (Achebe 1964), an individual may pay a heavy price for any act of deviation, ranging from ostracism to death. Since this is the case, it is obvious that the society's perception of women is likely to have long term effect in terms of what girls and women should or should not do. This is because social attitudes are strongly linked with role expectations.

## Domestic Chores

To understand how social attitudes have affected the status of girls and women over the years with regard to formal education, one has to look at women's traditional roles within the society. It must be stressed that one of the most worrying aspects of women's roles is the fact that in some societies, it is taken for granted that women should do all domestic chores. For instance, speaking specifically about Kenyan women, Kenyatta (1956), explained:

*"The entire housework naturally falls within the sphere of women's activities. They cook, bring water from the rivers, wash utensils and fetch firewood from the forests or bush. They also perform the task of carrying the loads on their backs. According to the tribal customs which govern the division of labour, no man would dare to indulge in any of these activities except in a case of emergency, or otherwise he would scandalise the women and it would be difficult for such a man to get any girl to marry him. He would be given a nickname..."* p. 54.

But the sad reality is that every society regards its female members as inferior to their male counterparts. Unquestionably the inferiority stigma has adversely affected their school education.

Taking all the developing countries for example, (Haye and Stichter 1984; Wellesley 1977, Obbo 1980, Charlton 1984, Afshar 1985, Amechi 1979 etc.), to start with, there is strict division of labour. Women have to farm in order to feed their families. The responsibility of rearing and bringing-up children is solely theirs. In addition, they have to collect firewood for cooking and fetch water. In some cases, women have to travel great distances for water. They also have to go through arduous ritual preparation of food every day. It is very important to note that following a detailed research in gender issues regarding rural and urban areas in the developing countries, Brydon and Chant (1989), have claimed that rural women suffer many times more than their urban counterparts. According to them, 75% of the population of the developing world are rural based, so many

women are affected. Ironically, all the work that women do is not paid for, it is not even recognised socially - it is taken for granted.

Interestingly, Anker, Mayra, Youssef (1982), who conducted studies relating to women's roles and population trends in the developing world have pointed out that:

*"Women play an important economic role in all countries - in addition to their non-wage earning household and family activities. In most parts of the world this contribution to the family's well-being is non-monetized, and it frequently goes unrecognized and unrecorded by governments and social scientists. Thus, women often help gather sticks for firewood, help care for domestic animals, such as cows, goats and chickens, walk long distances for water and arduously prepare food - as well as work on the family farm." p. 32.*

They are convinced that women's tasks contribute immensely to the family's economic well-being - many of which would have been purchased or foregone if women did not provide them. Surprisingly, in spite of all the work that women do, in some places, they are treated as personal property. In Nigeria, for instance, Basden (1966), claimed that women were treated like household property and domestic servants in the traditional society. Significantly, Jibowu (1969), in her speech to delegates during the National Curriculum Conference in Nigeria, made it clear that the problems women face in the contemporary society are even more daunting than in the traditional society, because more is expected of them now. She emphasised the fact that as a wife, a woman:

*"is expected to look after her husband...and carry on an intelligent conversation with him if necessary about, for example, his work and current events. She is also expected to look after her figure and dress well. She is expected to know about balanced diets and be able to cook palatable dishes for the family." p. 131.*

Jibowu pointed out that as a housewife, a woman is expected to cope with intricate modern household appliances, and to keep the house clean. She claimed that in some cases the woman might be solely responsible, in financial terms, for the day to day running of the house including family feeding and general maintenance. She unequivocally stressed that



as a mother, a woman is expected to bring up her children to meet the challenges of the present day world.

Kelly (1987), has indicated that in some developing societies, girls and women work so hard and involve themselves in so many domestic chores, that they do not have time to go to school, especially in the rural areas. She claims that in Burkina Faso, research revealed that:

*“girls and women have no time to go to school, regardless of how school time is scheduled. Water purification, water hauling, wood gathering, and food preparation absorbed all girls’ and women’s waking time.”* p. 99.

It is obvious that in such a case the provision of more schools will make no difference. The first step towards any realistic solution of the problem, must be by way of reduction of the amount of domestic work done by girls and women. It should also be noted that Kelly’s claim that rural girls and women are worse affected, supports the research findings of Brydon and Chant (1989), that women in a rural environment suffer a lot more than their urban-based counterparts.

Within the Nigerian context, it has been claimed that girls and women were denied school education particularly at the early stages. Achebe (1958), for example, has indicated that when formal education was introduced in Nigeria (1842), only the slaves and those despised by the society were sent to school; but once it was realised that schooling brought power, influence and wealth, only boys went to school. Power, influence and wealth were considered masculine attributes and were therefore deemed inappropriate for girls. Young girls had to stay with their mothers, (Leith-Ross 1939), in order to learn how best to discharge their main responsibility in life, namely, motherhood.

Although today, many girls go to school in Nigeria, some people still hold this view. Research has consistently shown that, (Bray 1981), gender inequality within the Nigerian society is one of the reasons why women’s education has lagged behind that of

men. Significantly, recent research in Zimbabwe, (Gordon 1996), has revealed that Zimbabwean women's education suffered set backs as a result of gender inequality - which Gordon sees as a reflection of African attitudes and orientations. She holds the view that the emancipation of women in the Zimbabwean society, cannot be achieved as long as the system continues to be based on patriarchal privilege and neo-colonialism.

The situation of African women is not unique. In the traditional Chinese society, for example, the social norms were also directed against women. When a man died the wife had to commit suicide, usually by drowning, in order to accompany her husband in spite of her domestic role. Ironically, when a woman died, the husband lived on, he did not kill himself in order to accompany his wife. Koyuma (1967), and Narumiya (1986), reckon that girls and women fared no better in Japan. They worked very hard yet the society despised them. In India, (Boserup 1984), the woman was burnt alive, usually during the man's funeral, all her tireless efforts notwithstanding.

In Nigeria, slaves were killed or buried alive when a man of high social standing (like a chief) died, (Isichei 1964). The most beautiful wives could also be buried alive so that they and the slaves could continue to serve in the land of the dead. But there is no record of any one being killed whenever a woman died. This shows how little women were valued in various societies. It also helps to explain, at least to some extent, why women were not considered worthy of school education.

But the gender problem shows no sign of abating in many places including Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan etc.), where major problems are facing girls' education. The rate of female enrolment by Jayaweera in 1987, seems to confirm the fear and concern about the education of girls in the above countries:

Afghanistan	14%
Bangladesh	49%
Nepal	43%
Pakistan	33%

p. 457.

These figures show that even in the closing years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are still countries where more than half of school age girls do not go to school. Educational research and case studies have done a lot, in terms of making people aware of the enormity of the social problems facing girls' and women's education. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, issues such as local bias, discrimination, class and gender system etc. can exacerbate social matters, especially when they concern female members of the society.

### Local Bias

There is little doubt that in various cultures local attitudes have further undermined the educational opportunities and aspirations of girls and women. Wolf (1975), for instance, discovered during her research regarding the education of Chinese women, that compared with men few women were literate. She found that local bias hindered women's education in some parts of the country. Towards the South of the River Yangtze for example, many people were literate. Wolf thinks that contemporary reports offer clues regarding literacy in earlier centuries. She claims that according to a visiting Korean monk, Ch'oe Pú (1454 - 1504), literacy as early as the 1480s had penetrated the lower classes in the areas South of the River Yangtze:

*"People South of the river, moreover, read books. Even village children, ferrymen, and sailors can read. When I came to their region and wrote questions to ask them, they understood everything about the mountains, rivers, old ruins, places, and dynastic changes, and told me about it minutely. North of the river, the unschooled are many. That is why when I wanted to ask them something they would all say, "We do not understand the characters." They were illiterates." p. 18.*

This undoubtedly proves that even within the same society, the gravity of the problem, in terms of women's access and opportunity to education, will depend on local circumstances.

### Conservatism

In the old Japanese dynasty, women were kept under feudalistic bondage, (Koyuma 1967). Although, Japan has gone through a wide range of political, economic and social

changes, Koyuma reckons that the social status of the Japanese women has only changed very little, mainly because the process of change is painfully slow. This has been blamed on the conservative elements in the society that have always countered efforts to assert the rights of womanhood. Japanese girls now have full access to education, especially at the primary level, because of the existence of compulsory universal primary education. But it seems all is not well at the secondary phase and even beyond, according to Narumiya (1986):

*“At secondary level, however, education emphasising sex roles has been a controversial issue, and a low level of expectations by parents, teachers and society in general towards girls has had a grave effect on girls’ achievement and their choice of course. Since inequality at lower levels decides higher levels of educational opportunities, problems of women’s education become conspicuous in higher education.”* p. 47.

In Morocco, Belhachmi (1987), has studied the educational situation in great detail and thinks that the case of Moroccan women is pathetic.

*“Although they represent 50% of the available human resources, Moroccan women are generally excluded from the process of nation-building, and when they are included, their participation is marginal.”* p. 486.

Belhachmi believes that education has failed the Moroccan women, and claims that as a mechanism for promoting social equity, it has just done the opposite.

*“Instead of being a generating tool of change and reproduction of modern social structure, education has remained static and heavily marked by an ideology of domestication. Such ideology is reflected in the pervasive male paradigms and social norms as translated into developmental projects. The latter view ‘men’ as synonymous with ‘human’ and thus representing all people. In the process women became more and more alienated and excluded from the mainstream of development.”* p. 487.

Obviously, this is reminiscent of Victorian England, (Gomersall (1988), when girls were excluded from school activities, because the authorities in some educational institutions interpreted the word ‘children’ to mean only boys.

## Discrimination

Discrimination is a social ill that has seriously undermined female education notably in developing nations. Belhachmi (1987), reckons that it has reached an alarming proportion in Morocco, where women who happen to be urban dwellers discriminate against their rural counterparts. If rural Moroccan women are treated like second-class citizens, it will aggravate their own educational problems. For example, very little interest, if any, will be shown in terms of their education, bearing in mind that providers of education are urban dwellers. It is also in the big cities that educational decisions are made.

While reappraising women's education in Australia especially during the colonial era, Dow (1988), discovered that discrimination jeopardised female education. For example, boys and girls had to cope with their convict heritage, but girls fared much worse than boys did in terms of education because:

*"impediments were deliberately put in the way of girls' educational opportunities..."* p. 102.

It is clear that, like the rural Moroccan women, the Australian girls had to suffer the additional problem of discrimination, which must have worsened their own educational problems. Dow has also pointed out that, whereas boys had access to secondary education, the girls were denied post-primary education, but they struggled very hard in order to provide for themselves that which was denied them:

*"Through formal and informal agencies of many different kinds girls were finding even creating their way to a secondary education that the establishment refused to provide."* p. 103.

The denial of secondary education to the girls was a manifestation of the way the society regarded women. It could also be argued that, in some cases, social attitudes including discrimination did more harm to girls' and women's education, than people cared to know.

## The Class and Gender System

In Western Europe, taking England as an example, women's education also suffered because of the way that the society regarded women, especially the working class. In the early industrial English society, class-division made things much worse for the working-class girls and women. According to Charlton (1988), the obedience of wives and children was considered important. As in the developing countries, there was division of labour, based on gender:

*“Generalised statements about the ‘nature’ of women and injunctions about a mother’s (and father’s) duty, nevertheless had to be transformed into the practicalities of action in actual family situation.” p. 7.*

One implication of gender division of labour is that, in some cases (as in the case of Burkina Faso), it leaves girls and women exhausted at the end of each day, due to too much work. It is worth noting that Gomersall (1988) studied the education of working-class girls during the period 1800-1870. The study led her to believe that school education of girls in the above category suffered immeasurably. This was as a result of the class system, and the social attitudes that condoned the subjugation of working class people generally, and of women in particular. Significantly Horn (1988), did a special study, with regard to the education and employment of girls in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the outbreak of the First World War (1870-1914). She revealed that there was a deliberate attempt to hinder the education of working-class girls during the period in question.

*“any examination of the influence of education upon the lives of working-class girls during the period 1870 to 1914 must take account of the fact that for many of them, especially in the early years, schooling was subordinated to other activities. Often daughters were kept from school to help at home - especially on the weekly wash-day - or to act as surrogate mothers, with an inevitably adverse effect both upon their attendance and their academic achievements.” p. 71.*

Keeping the girls at home to act as surrogate mothers must have been an unfulfilling experience for them. They were defenceless and the society took advantage of their helplessness.

The Victorian era was marked by the gender system, which adversely affected all women, class notwithstanding. Horn has made it clear that the negative attitude towards the female gender, which seriously jeopardised girls' education during the period 1870-1914 was widespread.

*... "there was a widely held belief that the education of girls was less important than that of boys, and that girls' academic achievements-or lack of them-were immaterial, since they would spend their lives engaged in domestic duties." p. 72*

The idea that girls' education did not matter did incalculable harm to their educational opportunities, thus supporting Eliou's (1987) claim that boys enjoy:

*"...priority in all countries and at all levels of education. This is the reason why 60% of illiterates, world-wide, are women, why boys are still clearly in the majority in primary education in developing countries as they are in the majority in the prestigious courses of higher education in developed countries." p. 60.*

If there is any lingering doubt that the gender system severely affected women in the early years of education, Darwin's (1968) view about women dispel that doubt. To Darwin:

*"The female character should possess the mild and retiring virtues rather than the bold and dazzling ones; great eminence in almost anything is sometimes injurious to a young lady; whose temper and disposition should appear to be pliant rather than robust; to be ready to take impressions rather than to be decidedly mark'd; as great apparent strength of character, however excellent, is liable to alarm both her own and the other sex; and to create admiration rather than affection." p. 10*

Darwin's views about womanhood are a further manifestation of how the society perceives women. The mild and retiring female personality advocated by Darwin would be passive and helpless in the face of male domination. Ironically, this to some extent happened in the factories where women and young children were part of the labour force. They worked for

many hours each day, and some died of exhaustion, (Dickens 1969). The fact that many women and children worked full-time in the factories must have limited their access and opportunity to education.

It is clear that inherent social attitudes (notably class and gender divisions) posed serious threats to girls' and women's education in every society. It was mainly to end them and to ensure equal educational opportunities that the 1870 'Education Act' was passed in England and Wales. More than a century later, in 1975 another Act was passed to ensure that girls were not discriminated against - the 'Sex Discrimination Act'. It could be argued that the passing of the second Act was because little had changed in more than one hundred years, regarding female education.

Today, in Britain, as well as in several other countries in Europe, there is compulsory universal education up to the secondary level. This means that both boys and girls have equal access to education. Sutherland (1987), reckons that in countries like France, Finland, Greece, Wales and Scotland (judging from the findings of UNESCO), girls do better, given that fewer girls than boys leave school without certificates. But in higher education, women are under represented. Sutherland has also made it clear that the UNESCO findings indicate that in the developing countries, girls and women are in the minority in every educational sector, and that the disparity is much greater at the higher levels. It is noteworthy that during a case study regarding female education in Hungary, Szechy (1987), found out that at all levels of the educational system, male dominance is apparent, including traditional female areas such as Colleges for Nursery Teachers and Teacher Training Colleges. Szechy noted that this is because women have far less time for rest and for pursuing their academic aspirations and interests than men, since they have to cope with domestic chores as well as the rearing and upbringing of children.



It must be stressed at this stage that - no examination of the social factors which have militated against the formal education of girls and women over the years, can be complete without special reference to parents and school, since each is a unique part of the wider society.

Parental Attitudes

As the family is the most important place where a child spends the first crucial years of his or her life, the role of the family in terms of the child’s social and educational development and progress cannot be over emphasised. Musgrave (1965), identified the family as the first and the most important of the four agents that are crucial in the life cycle of a person. Consequently, the way parents behave towards their children is important, as it may have a lasting effect on them.

Unfortunately, in terms of education, some parents have negative attitudes towards their daughters. They see it as unnecessary, (Okonjo 1976, Al-Hariri 1987). This problem is more apparent in the developing countries, It accounts partly for why some girls are kept at home to attend to domestic duties instead of going to school, and why Africa has the highest illiteracy rate in the world as consistently shown in educational research. For instance Kelly (1987), and her team revealed the percentage of children in the primary and secondary schools in Africa and Asia in 1980:

6 - 11 year olds

Africa	Asia
Boys – 69% Girls – 56.5%%	Boys – 77.4% Girls – 59.3%

**Secondary level 12 - 17 years old**

Boys – 44.1%	Boys – 43%	
Girls – 30%	Girls - 29.7%	p 97

The above statistics not only support Kelly's findings, that the higher the educational level, the greater the disparity in terms of boys' and girls' educational opportunities, but also account for the fact that illiteracy is more widespread among the female members of African and Asian nations, as opposed to their male counterparts. In the course of her research, Kelly did notice that in Western Europe and North America, at the primary and secondary levels, there is hardly any difference owing to compulsory universal education, but there is disparity at the higher levels due to parental attitude. According to Kelly, parents in the above areas tend to favour higher education with regard to boys, especially if financial burden is involved. Moore's research (1987), has also revealed that in Australia the attitudes of parents weigh heavily against girls in terms of access and opportunity to higher education, even much more than economic constraints.

Negative parental attitudes towards female education in some parts of Nigeria are giving cause for concern, (Okonjo 1976, Csapo 1981). In the course of their research both Okonjo and Csapo met parents who are vehemently opposed to formal education of girls. They see it as useless because girls eventually get married. Not surprisingly, the parents feel that money spent on school education of girls is a waste. During her own research in parts of Nigeria, Csapo noticed that many parents regard their daughters' education as a great risk. Investment on their education is considered an economic waste. Fear of pregnancy is overwhelming and girls are even likened to forbidden goods:

*"Girls are like "contraband goods", they might become pregnant thus "useless" and all your money is lost." p. 315-316.*

There is little doubt that those parents have a narrow view of education. Csapo also discovered that many parents think that any financial investment on a girl's education is not wise because when she marries, she ceases to be a member of her original family. Consequently, she does not perpetuate the father's name like the boys. The above arguments show how strongly many parents feel about girls' education. They also help to explain why some think that economically, girls' education is a waste of resources. It is obvious that the main issue at stake here is culture, which means that some parents may be financially capable of educating their daughters, but may not do so because the girls will, after all marry and leave the family. Girls whose parents hold such strong views stand very little chance of going to school. Only compulsory education may change such a situation.

It must be mentioned that in the developed countries, the above issue hardly arises. Most parents neither see school education of girls as useless, nor consider married daughters as lost. Given the role of the family, especially in the early years of a child's life, parental attitudes are likely to have far-reaching effects on girls' education. Assuming for example, that a girl whose parents hold negative views about female education is still sent to school, she may not do well, because she is unlikely to get the type of parental support and encouragement which will see her through the early years of school, that crucial time, when strong educational foundation should be laid (Meadows and Cashdam 1988, Burgess 1973, Morrison 1980, Central Advisory Council for Education (England) 1967). This is important since a close link between home and school is seen - especially in recent years, to be indispensable with regard to children's good performance at school, (Craft, Raynor and Cohen 1967). It is noteworthy that one of the highlights regarding the findings of the Council for Education, was the high academic performance of those primary school children from homes, where a strong educational foundation was laid before they started

school. The Council expressed concern over the plight of their counterparts from homes where such opportunity was denied them.

### School Factors

As a crucial part of every society as well as an agent of socialisation, the school is extremely important, especially in terms of female education. Consequently no meaningful discussion of the school as an educational institution can take place without special reference to such issues as: The Curriculum; Lack of Confidence; Stereotyping; The Peer Group; The Teacher, Examination; Female Staff and Discrimination; Geographical Barriers and School Location; Policy Makers, etc.

After the family, the school is the second most important agent in the life of a child - especially when one considers the fact that a child spends a lot of time in the school - at about the most impressionable time of his or her life, (Gammage 1982). To some extent, the school could be justifiably regarded as a second home. Therefore, what goes on in school is likely to affect a child's future, (Bedak 1972), both socially and educationally. This view is supported by Musgrave (1965), who recognised the school as second in importance after the family, in the life cycle of a child. Unfortunately in the eyes of the world, schools have not lived up to this ideal. In fact, there are people who think that schools are encouraging gender inequality. In her address to a conference at Edinburgh University (14<sup>th</sup> May 1988), Gerner told the conference that schools have played an important role though not always deliberately:

*“in maintaining or even promoting inequalities which become firmly established when girls leave schools. Attitudes, expectations, course choice arrangements, lack of stimulus, failure to offer information, behaviour patterns, absence of role models, all play their part in depriving girls of access to the avenues which lead to later achievement.” p. 46*

This reflects the great expectations people have with regard to schools. The complacency as well as incompetence with which the school is often associated, is much more serious

than people realise and it also appears to be widespread. Belhachmi's (1987), research regarding the education of Moroccan women, has convinced her that:

*"The school, as an agent of socialization, further exacerbates this situation. In fact, it perpetuates and reproduces unequal gender relations as reflected in gender division of labour in the family, the employment market, and society at large." p. 488.*

Belhachmi claims that Kacin Amin was the first person to raise the issue in the Arab world in 1938, and pioneered indigenous scholarship and the integration of women's education in the society's development. For such integration to take place, the curriculum must have been reappraised.

### The Curriculum

The curriculum is very important, (Lawton 1975), because it is all about what children should or should not learn at school. Inevitably, it is connected with role expectations, (Musgrave 1965). In some parts of the developing world, the content in terms of what is taught is so crucial that it can determine whether or not a girl should go to school. In Tunisia for example, parents objected to their daughters going to school because their curriculum was inferior to the boys'. Kelly (1987), has pointed out that the girls only went back to school after the curriculum had been restructured. The Tunisian case is a reflection of some of the drawbacks inherent in school segregation. In several parts of the developing countries, especially in the Islamic sections, coeducation is prohibited, resulting in the provision of separate schools for girls. As this is an extra financial burden, the result is that, in most cases, the priority is to provide better quality education for boys which, in turn, leaves the girls educationally disadvantaged.

### The Curriculum in Rural and Urban Schools

In some places, the curriculum in rural schools is inferior to that in the urban areas, (Akande 1987, Al-Hariri 1987). For example, in Nigeria Akande discovered that in the villages, the quality of education was low. Consequently the rural girls had low academic

aspirations. Their counterparts in the urban schools performed much better academically. In Saudi Arabia, Al-Hariri found that due to low quality education the rural girls have the worst wastage rates - especially in terms of drop-outs and repeaters. Academically, they performed worse than the girls in the urban areas. Both Akande and Al-Hariri observed that generally, the tendency for girls is to go for traditionally recognised female areas, like nursing and teaching-related subjects.

This is worrying because what boys and girls learn at school will in turn determine to a large extent the type of job they will get when they leave school. Bearing this fact in mind, the need for good curriculum that will benefit both boys and girls equally cannot be over emphasised. For this purpose, the curriculum should be reappraised from time to time, notably in those societies where there is a tendency to use the curriculum to marginalise the abilities, hopes and aspirations of the female members, and by implication, their social status and contributions.

### Gender and the Curriculum

Arguably, in every part of the world, the curriculum has always been an important educational issue, particularly as far as male and female school education is concerned. Taking the curriculum in the early-industrial English society, for example, Gomersall has explained that:

*“The model curriculum for girls then, as far as the middle-class providers of education were concerned, was one which gave a priority to religious and domestic skills... It was in many of the workhouse and industrial schools, and some of the charity schools that this domestic curriculum reached full flower. In the Suffolk workhouse schools, for example, the girls’ activities were mainly directed towards learning housework and needlework...” p. 43.*

It is clear that the above curriculum must have left the girls at a disadvantage educationally. In Australia, Dow (1988) noticed that the colonial curriculum for girls consisted of model drawing, shorthand and dressmaking.

A National Curriculum was introduced in England and Wales (1988) in which English and Mathematics are the core subjects. Such a curriculum can prove educationally invaluable, notably in those societies where the curriculum poses a serious educational problem, especially in terms of female education.

### Science and Lack of Confidence in Women

Certain factors are known to be responsible for women's under achievement in science. Jones and her team, think that:

*"One aspect of the lack of women in science is that women lack self-confidence. Women feel they must be better than men to be considered equal in male dominated professions. When men have difficulties, they place the responsibility for the problems outside themselves, whereas women place the blame internally." p. 130.*

These findings are important. Self-confidence, for example, is an attribute without which an individual may not be able to achieve much in life. Pilcher and her team (1981), made a similar discovery during Women's Road Show Training in Cardiff. Research in America and Britain also suggests that people think that science is a man's field. Significantly, the Minerva Educational Trust - the non political organisation formed by women in Britain, whose aims include the monitoring of girls' progress in schools here in Britain, especially in science related subjects, so as to prepare girls for the highest roles in all areas of responsibility and decision making, found that girls have certain misconceptions about science such as:

Science is for boys.

Science is difficult.

I will not need science subjects later.

Science is too competitive.

This is where the role of the school becomes indispensable. A lot of effort should be made to dispel the girls' fears, worries and anxieties regarding science. But teachers

have been accused of complacency, and of even deliberately undermining girls' confidence in school.

### Stereotyping and Female Under Achievement

Stereotyping is partly responsible for female under achievement generally, and in schools in particular, notably in science (Pickersgill 1986). In questionnaires and interviews conducted in American educational institutions in 1981, Jones noted that both sexes indicated that science is a man's subject. Consequently male teachers taught all the advanced science courses. It is important to note that female students in coeducational institutions visited by Jones and her team (1988), unequivocally stated that science is a very masculine subject, whereas their counterparts in single sex schools thought that science was for everyone. This finding does seem to suggest that boys may intimidate girls in mixed schools. Stereotyping could have influenced their views - which simply gives the wrong academic impression about girls and women, especially in terms of what they can or cannot do. Jones even discovered that mathematics, which lays the foundation for science, especially physics, is usually dropped by some girls, (this is partly why it has been made a core subject in England and Wales).

Surprisingly, Jones has claimed that there is stereotyping in terms of the way parents bring up their children. According to her in a survey of 110 cultures it was discovered that:

*"during childhood there is a widespread pattern of pressure for girls to be nurturing, obedient, and responsible: Males are encouraged to be self-reliant and achieving."* p. 131.

Jones believes that the way girls are brought up does pave the way for eventual academic under achievement when they start school. Her findings are worth looking into. For example, self reliance, which she claims is missing in girls' upbringing is a very important attribute. An individual that cannot rely on himself or herself may be dependent



throughout life. In educational terms it is hard to see how such a person can achieve a great deal. This is why the role of the school is crucial and undoubtedly indispensable, because if one accepts Jones' claim that the way girls are brought up places them at a disadvantage, then it is quite obvious that the home has got it wrong. But the important question is - what can the school do? Once they start school many things can be done to help girls, including encouraging them and giving them some responsibility. In the developing countries where the tendency is to make boys school prefects and class monitors, in mixed schools, at times these duties should be assigned to girls. It is important that girls are seen to exercise authority, so that they do not always appear passive, retiring and dependent.

### The Peer Group

There is hardly any doubt that children are influenced by their fellow youngsters, (Chalfant 1981), the third agent identified by Musgrave (1965), as crucial in the development of a child. Musgrave (1965), has also argued that with the peer group, a child can acquire certain experiences which he cannot gain elsewhere. If Musgrave's claim is right, then the peer group is extremely important, considering that some of the experiences the child may share with his age-group may influence him or her, (Goodlad 1984), throughout life. Research has shown that their male peer group influences girls in their choice of subjects. In American schools for example, Jones noticed that:

*"Girls are afraid that if they show talent in Mathematics or Science they will be disliked by males or socially ostracised."* p. 131.

It is noteworthy that Byrne's own case study in Australia regarding gender in education has convinced her that:

*"...the vocational aspirations of girls in adolescence are strongly affected by the opinions and attitudes of their male peers. Sydney school boys in the middle years of schooling have already, before the age of thirteen, acquired set ideas that girls can't do maths, are weak and silly; won't make engineers, don't make good leaders, and that boys can't be good nurses."* p. 13.

Peer groups should be closely monitored. Truants for example, can have negative influence on their friends who like to attend school regularly. Educational institutions should not remain unconcerned or complacent with regard to the problem of peer pressure, as girls may be more at risk, especially in coeducational institutions.

### The Teacher

Good teacher-pupil relationship is extremely important, (Open University 1971). After parents, teachers are the next adults that can play an invaluable role in the life of a child. It is worth noting that, Musgrave (1965), thinks that the role of teachers is a unique one, and that parents come to know them through the children. It should also be noted that a teacher's responsibility does overlap with that of parents - thus, a teacher could find herself or himself playing a parental role in some situations. For instance, if a child is taken ill suddenly, or is injured in the classroom or in the playground, the child will need a teacher's love and understanding. It is also known that some children's parental circumstances may be such that they see more of their teacher than of their parents. A child whose parents have divorced may be going through a trauma. He or she will need a teacher's love and help. It is therefore obvious that a teacher is not just someone who stays in the class to instruct children. He or she should also guide, counsel, comfort and help a child if and when the need does arise, (Wood 1980). Undoubtedly, this helps to explain why teachers have such enormous influence over children.

Not surprisingly, Jones' (1988), research has proved that teachers are partly responsible for girls' under achievement in schools. Jones also has highlighted the fact that teachers have been known to exhibit preference for the dependent female, rather than the aggressive females. They are also said to have encouraged boys to choose subjects that will ensure that they fulfil their bread winning role. Consequently, teachers have been accused of sex bias. Jones thinks that the:

*“Role of the teacher in perpetuating sex bias has yet to be fully explored. Teachers are a reflection of the values and expectations of society, and it is not surprising to find that teachers are perpetuating sex stereotypes in science.” p. 132.*

It is of supreme importance that, in a school situation, all children should see the teacher as a true friend, (Damon 1977).

The NUT (1988), in England and Wales has issued guidelines designed to help teachers to counter sexism in schools. It has also unequivocally stressed that the daily life of a school is strongly influenced by the attitudes, actions and expectations of its teachers.

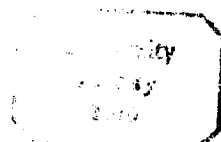
### Female Staff and Discrimination

Women teachers claim that their male counterparts discriminate against them. In some places, (like England and Wales), female teachers have formed their own union ‘National Union of Women Teachers’. Mignuolo and De Lyon (1988), have also indicated that there is male dominance in schools regarding senior managerial posts and that in some cases, women teachers do not receive the same pay as their male counterparts, with similar teaching qualifications.

From Bailey’s (1996) research, it is also clear that not only female pupils suffer discrimination within the school system, female teachers are also discriminated against. Bailey has highlighted four acts of discrimination experienced by female teachers in a boys’ school:

1. pupils’ negative reactions towards female teachers,
2. undermining by male colleagues,
3. exclusion from staff meetings,
4. sexual harassment.

Bailey has pointed out that since the pupils have learnt to identify discipline with physical intimidation and aggression, a woman who attempts a more cooperative approach will be seen as a weak disciplinarian.



Since lady teachers are often seen as role models by schoolgirls particularly in developing countries, if the women are seen to be in a position of weakness, it will further undermine the confidence of female pupils, notably in mixed schools.

### Examinations

Research has shown, (Charlton 1984), that some girls are scared of school examinations. Some may decide to avoid taking them by keeping away from school. But, school examinations help to ensure the acquisition of certificates, which in turn, are needed for jobs, particularly in the developing countries. Unger (1980), thinks that the desire for certificates is worse in the underdeveloped nations, where they are used to climb the social ladder. While, Dubey, Edem and Thakur (1979), were studying the sociology of Nigerian education they discovered that many parents send their children to school because they see it as the only way of climbing 'the social ladder'. Unger has referred to it as the 'Diploma disease', and claims that it has ruined education in China. He holds the view that in the third world countries, students are anxious for paper credentials in education which are good enough for jobs in the modern economic sector. He argues that schooling becomes primarily a competition to climb high enough on the school ladder to secure such credentials.

Since examinations understandably involve competition, children who do not like competition may be afraid of school. The less academically gifted may also be reluctant to face school examinations. This is why the coursework, which is now part of the GCSE examinations in England and Wales, is vital. To some extent, it enables the child to work at his or her own pace. It also tends to favour the less brilliant.

This is partly why the role of school examinations as the yardstick (Tattersall 1983), for measuring intelligence and knowledge should be reappraised. The fact that many factors can affect a child's performance in an examination makes the case for course work

more necessary. Besides, Tattersall has stressed that unless the school syllabus is covered, the children may not be able to answer all the questions, especially those relating to the sections of the syllabus that they have not been taught. In the developing countries many girls are unlikely to cover the syllabus due to heavy domestic chores and therefore cannot perform well at examinations.

### Policy Makers

No school discussion can be complete without reference to those responsible for educational policies. Research from various societies, including Africa, Asia and Latin America, (Kelly 1987), shows that providers of education are incompetent in terms of female educational policy.

*...Lack of a policy aimed at educating women has meant that women, productive in traditional economies as farmers and petty traders, have become less productive as modernization proceeds. They are driven from the workforce as the agricultural sector of the economy mechanizes and trade becomes further concentrated." p. 96.*

This finding is crucial because the mechanisation process is bound to affect the women's ability to feed their families given their displacement from their farms. The failure of the state governments to find them alternative means of livelihood supports Kelly's claim, that the authorities care less about the education of women, bearing in mind that in the developing countries, in some cases, the women pay their children's school fees, in addition to providing food for the household. Some of the women support their children's education financially by selling surplus farm produce. (Banning of women from their farms was worse during the colonial era). Kelly has argued that worldwide disparity can be bridged by state policies that focus on women's education. It is important to note that the working-class women in England suffered exactly the same fate during the Industrial Revolution, which disrupted their old way of life, (West 1975).

Evolving a new educational policy that will focus on women's education will help reverse the male-oriented policies in education. Adams (1987), who has done some case studies relating to women's education in the developing countries, has also highlighted the damage done to women's education by policy makers. Byrne's own study regarding gender in Education, has also convinced her that women's education has not been given the necessary attention it deserves, and feels that it is because:

*"...gender in education has been seen as a woman's issue, it has not commanded the continuing interest nor the resources of the (mainly male) leadership of education and of governments, nor has it resulted in changes in the education of boys and men..."* p. 11

Significantly, Gomersall (1988), who studied the education of girls in the early-industrial English society, claims that the then providers of education deliberately ignored the education of girls and women. Some schools were actually known to have deliberately excluded girls as they were not expected to achieve anything in educational terms. Consequently, incalculable damage was done to their education. This also reflects the fact that providers of education have, over the years, deliberately undermined female education. Gomersall has no doubt that:

*"There was undoubtedly a greater priority given to the schooling of boys' on the part of subscribers to, and providers of, the National and British schools. The lengthy and enthusiastic reports on the progress of boys' schools, with only the barest mention of the girls' schools found in the annual reports of the two societies, for example, indicates a greater interest in the schooling of boys by the great majority. The suggestion of the Ladies Committee of the British Society in 1833 that there was prejudice against the education of girls cannot be discounted here."* p. 40

This supports the view that the problem of female education has been long in existence, which is a reminder of how deeply rooted it is. Gomersall thinks that most of the damage done to the school education of girls and women stems from the aims of female education, as perceived by the providers of school education over the years, including the

early-industrial English Society, when the providers of girls' education in England and Wales, insisted that the aim of female education was not to make the girls:

*“little Newtons, little Captain Cooks, little Livingstones, little Mozarts and Handels, and little Sir Joshua Reynoldses...the object of teaching them to make and mend shirts, to make and mend pinafores, and darn stockings and socks, if it ‘doesn’t’ then from that day the society will go back.”* p. 43.

It is quite obvious that providers of education have a lot to answer as far as the formal education of girls and women is concerned. In the case of the developing countries, any solution that does not tackle among other things, heavy domestic chores, and geographical barriers, will be ineffective. It is noteworthy that the findings of the Equal Opportunity's Commission published on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1989 revealed that the major obstacle militating against women's education in the developed countries is lack of child care provisions, especially with regard to women who want to go back to educational studies after a break. It is a serious educational issue for policy makers.

### Geographical Barriers and Female Education

It has to be stressed that decisions regarding where to build a school, are among the most intriguing that education authorities are faced with from time to time. This is because where a school is geographically located, can be a very serious educational issue, notably in the developing parts of the world. It should be noted that the way it affects education in the developed countries is totally different from the developing nations.

In Britain for example, it used to affect boys and girls equally, since youngsters had to attend secondary schools within their own 'catchment area'. As a result, a child might find himself or herself in a secondary school different from that being attended by all those he or she had been in the primary school with. Sometimes this proved too traumatic for the child and in some cases led to serious arguments between parents and the education authorities. But now there is parental choice, which means that parents have a say regarding the educational institutions their children want to attend.

In the developing world, the geographical location of a school affects girls' education mainly. Enormous distance, trouble spots, rivers or streams with poor bridges etc, are seen as barriers, because they can prevent girls from going to school. Providers of education in the developing countries should consider the geographical barriers seriously, as research has shown that they are very important to parents. For instance, in many places, including India and Tunisia, parents will not send their daughters to school if the distance involved is considered great. Similarly, if the school is located in a place where a girl is likely to be harassed, or where it is thought she would be vulnerable, she will not be sent to school. From her vast experience regarding the problems facing female education in the developing world, Kelly (1987), has highlighted the constraints posed by geographical factors. She is convinced that girls' schooling can be affected by where schools are located,

*"...parents are less likely to send their daughters to school if schooling entails daily travels where girls are vulnerable to harassment. The location of schools as ... research project in Pune, India, has shown, becomes a real issue affecting female access to schooling." p. 98.*

It is worthy of note that Dr. Brock and Miss Cammish (1997), made similar findings when they visited some developing countries as part of an international education programme. The 1986, Workshop on-the Blueprint on Women's Education in Nigeria, also stressed that one of the constraints militating against the education of the female members of the Nigerian society, was geographical location of schools.

One way of dealing with this problem is to ensure that schools are within easy reach of children. The construction of good roads and the provision of free school buses in the developing countries can enhance girls' access to education. Such measures are very important because during the rainy season, rivers and streams become much larger and many footpaths and roads become water logged and inaccessible. If the problem of geographical barriers remains unsolved, it means that from year to year the educational



opportunities of some girls are irretrievably damaged. But the invaluable role women play as nation builders should be borne in mind. This is why Belhachmi (1987), has urged policy makers to:

*“...tackle education of women as an essential precondition for the solution of national and international socio-economic problems...” p 490*

### Political Factors

There is hardly any aspect of human endeavour that is not affected by politics. For instance, in every nation the government of the day more or less controls everything including education. In other words, Politicians have to make decisions on the crucial issues that effect people's life. But there are few women in politics, which means that women have little or no say regarding the issues that affect their life. In Britain, it led to the emergence of the organisation, 'Minerva Educational Trust' with the main aim of boosting female education, especially in science, and to have many female members in parliament by the year 2000. In the developing nations, women have not made any significant impact on the political scene. As a result, decisions concerning very serious issues like education, are more or less made by men. It is hardly surprising therefore that school education of girls and women, has never received the same attention as that of their male counterparts.

Wipper (1972), has attributed the inability of women in the under developed parts of the world to hold top political offices, to the role they are expected to play in their respective countries, especially in Africa.

*“The first vital duty of a woman is to be a good, humble, nursing mother, and as such a woman has no time for politics.” p. 344.*

Wipper has also highlighted the fact that women's search for new identities of their roles, and their invasion of areas traditionally men's, have evoked strong opposition from some men, who feel that their demands are causing them to neglect their families. But she has no doubt that African women are yearning to have their voices heard. Wipper has referred to the case of an East African woman who passionately wrote:

*"From time immemorial the girls and women in Africa were not taken as people of great importance; they were given only a subordinate place to the men. They were regarded as the workers for their menfolk, to cultivate for the family, to cook, to fetch water, to clean the house, to provide mats and baskets, and drinking utensils for the home, and to wash their husbands' feet. They hardly had any leisure for themselves. As such they had all responsibilities of the home and of the gardens or farms and so on, but no opportunities to speak. "* p. 344.

But Allen (1972), speaking specifically on the Igbo women's political situation, holds the view that colonialism had a negative effect on Igbo women's political aspirations.

*"The experience of Igbo women under British colonialism shows that Western influence can sometimes weaken or destroy women's traditional autonomy and power without providing modern forms of autonomy or power in exchange."* p. 165.

She also argues that Western influence brought about weakening of kinship bonds and free choice.

It is encouraging to note that during the conference organised by the Nigerian Association of University Women in Lagos University, (21<sup>st</sup> February, 1990), on 'Women and Leadership', Mrs. Babangida, the wife of the former Head of State, made it clear that the aim of the conference was to sensitise the nation's womenfolk towards full and effective participation in the democratic process and government of the Third Republic. Speaking unequivocally on the 'Challenge of Leadership' she indicated that the participation would usher in an era of maximum contribution to national development and greater integration, in the mainstream of the decision making process of the country. Mrs. Babangida pointed out that in many countries women do not get into government, mainly

because they are not put forward as candidates for political offices. She thinks that the reason for this is the fact that women are not well represented in the leadership of political parties. Speaking in the same conference, Kilanko highlighted the fact that the leadership issue might be enhanced, if Nigerian education were to be geared towards gender equality. She strongly stressed that from birth women are brainwashed to accept that they are semi human beings. She claims that women have come to accept that their value is in serving others, in satisfying the wishes of the male world.

The National Commission for women (established by government decree) and the Better Life Programme are working hard to ensure among other things that Nigerian women participate vigorously in politics. When they hold top political offices they will deal more effectively with issues such as female education, widowhood (Okolo 1993), child abuse (Ojelabi 1993) etc. It is worthy of note that the leadership of the Better Life Programme has launched many social welfare programmes designed to eradicate bad practices including early marriage for girls and drug trafficking in the country. The National Association of Nigerian Students is also concerned about girls' and women's issues especially those relating to education. Education is seen as crucial because it will enhance women's political aspirations.

Since power is inextricably linked with politics, men alone should not be heads of governments. Women must be seen to exercise power at national levels, especially in the developing countries. This will help to boost their image, increase their self-confidence and ultimately enhance their social status. But as long as they remain in the background of the political system, receiving directions from men, their role will always inevitably be seen as essentially servitude and subordinate. Educational systems should therefore be reappraised so that political education could be taught in schools. This would make it possible for children to learn early in life the art of democratic leadership, (Wringe 1984),

because in the world today, anyone could be the head of a nation, irrespective of gender or creed.

### Religious Factors

This section will focus on various religious denominations.

Traditionally, the church is regarded as a sanctuary, a place where people can go for comfort, shelter, help etc. when everything or everyone else has failed them. So it is important to see how the various creeds in the world have handled the issue of women's literacy over the years, given that in every culture there have been systematic, but deliberate attempts, to deny girls and women access and opportunity to education. In the course of her unique research about world religions and women's education, King (1957), found out that:

*“before the development of modern education, religious authorities and institutions were for many centuries responsible for the teaching of reading and writing, for the creation and transmission of sacred and secular knowledge....”* p. 35.

Given the above background of the world's creeds, it is clear that in terms of education, their position was enviable. In other words, they were in a strong position whereby they could enhance women's education. Paradoxically, King (1987), and Chalfant (1981), discovered that there was universal exclusion of women from education and centres of higher learning by various denominations. King argues that there is a close inter-relationship between the foundational knowledge contained in sacred scripture and the development of learning, writing and reading, and that access to the scripture means access to education. According to King, education and status of women depended much on norms laid down by sacred scripture, and women's education related directly to whether they were allowed to learn to read or write. According to King:

*“Wherever the ability to write was associated with power and influence, women were, as a rule, excluded. There were no professional female scribes in Egypt or Mesopotamia. In Judaism and Islam the position of*

*women was generally too low to allow them to tamper with the writing of the name of God....” p. 36.*

King holds the view that Christianity encouraged female literacy - though not always without ulterior motives. She claimed that Hinduism condemned women wholesale to illiteracy. It would be necessary at this stage to see exactly how each creed responded to women's educational needs in various cultures.

### Hinduism

This is closely associated with India. King observed that the education of women suffered, especially in the early years of Hinduism during which time Indian women suffered appalling discrimination.

*“Religious education and ritual were categorically denied women. No sacramental rite with sacred texts may be performed by women for they are weak, impure, and have no knowledge of Vedic literature...No sacrifice, no vow and no fast may be performed by a woman independently of her husband... or she will go to hell.” p. 38.*

It is important to note that during that period, the marriage age was lowered and child marriage became common practice. As a result the educational opportunities of Indian girls and women were jeopardised. King has also pointed out that the marriage of widows was a taboo, and that in the nineteenth century when Hindu reformers realised that reform was not possible as long as the status of women remained the same, they still did not educate women. Instead, they claimed that it was against the scriptures. It was also widely believed that if a girl was educated, after marriage, she would be a widow and drive away the family's good fortune. King has argued that, although today, many Indian women have access to education, it is mostly due to Ghandi, who helped the cause of Indian women. She also claims that in spite of the change, today, some Indians are still influenced by the early discrimination established by Hinduism, with regard to women.

## Buddhism

Unlike Hinduism, Buddhism is more widely spread. It has a strong link with the Orient. King has indicated that Buddha himself encouraged the education of women, but his followers behaved exactly like the Hinduists and denied women education. It is also known that everywhere women struggled on their own to learn and produce good work, especially literary work, like the Therigather (the early songs of the nuns); it was neither acknowledged nor published. King has explained that the Therigather shows clearly how clever the nuns were. In the songs, they tried to explain to the outside world why they became Buddhist nuns (Bhikkuni) - like inability to get a husband, or the desire to escape men's discrimination.

But, ironically, the Bhikkuni were discriminated against in the monasteries. Numerically, they had to obey more rules than the Buddhist monks (the Bhikku). For instance, they had to obey eight basic rules, the monks obeyed four. They observed 311 daily rules, the monks 227. Their own initial training was longer and more arduous. King also noted that the Bhikkuni were excluded from the institutions of highest learning, including the ones in Tibet, China and Japan. They were religiously regarded as inferior to the monks, so years of service in the sacred ministry notwithstanding - all nuns have to show reverence to the monks including those that have not spent up to a year in the monastery.

## Judaism

King has made it clear that women were excluded from reading the scrolls of the law - the Torah. They were also banned from the study and teaching of Torah which, in effect, meant that a woman would neither become a rabbi, nor have access to basic texts, from which the Jewish mysticism developed. There was even an injunction, which stated:

*"Let the words of the Torah rather be destroyed by fire than imparted to women...Whoever teaches his daughter Torah is as though he taught her obscenity." p. 42.*

The men were also known to have given thanks to God in the presence of their wives for not making them like women..

### Islam

Mohammed did not exclude anyone from education. Al-Hariri (1987), believes that people interpreted the Koran to suit their own intentions. She argues that Mohammed desired everyone to seek for knowledge, given that there is no place in the Koran where the segregation of men and women, purdah, child marriage etc. were mentioned or advocated. This supports the views of Barkow - who did a case study of the Hausa moslem women of Nigeria (1972), and came to the conclusion that the Koran is being interpreted wrongly. He thinks that the Islamic way of life that moslems are clinging to, is different from that laid down in the Koran.

*“A woman’s role in a traditional African society is usually quite different from that prescribed by Islam. This difference is noted in the familiar generalization that Islamization tends to lower the status of women. Such a statement is necessarily shallow.”* p. 317.

One of the reasons for the wrong interpretation of the Koran is to deny girls and women education.

### Christianity

The Christian religion affects the lives of millions of people in the world. In the course of her research, King discovered that Christianity like other religions is strongly marked by male dominance, and believes that women over the years have played far greater roles in the shaping of the Christian traditions, than they are given credit for by church authorities, and in the major works of male theologians. She thinks that the main factor responsible for the virtual absence of women in the creation of theological writings, is their institutionalised exclusion from ecclesiastical office.

*“The Church virtually held a monopoly in education all through the Middle Ages and most of the female education was given in convents, mainly to*

*girls and women from aristocratic backgrounds; from which nuns were largely recruited.” p. 45.*

It is noteworthy that Ward (1983) supports the above claim. As a woman of extraordinary foresight, she felt strongly that education should be brought within the reach of every female; hence she spent a lifetime providing school education for girls, whose crucial role in society her remarkable foresight enabled her to anticipate. Indignant at allegations of feminine intellectual inferiority, as an excuse for denying women education, she unequivocally stated:

*“There is no such difference between men and women that women may not do great things as we have seen by the example of many...And I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much...I would to God that all men understood this rarity...” p. 131.*

King claimed that when women produced good literary work, it would not be made public, like the earliest Western manual on education, which was produced by a learned lay woman of an aristocratic background. Others include the Mystical Writing of St. Teresa of Avila, and the Musical Inspirations of St. Cecilia.

Judging from the above account with regard to women’s education and the world’s religions, it is obvious that contrary to expectations, the creeds did not offer girls and women literacy sanctuary when all the avenues to education were denied them. It is worth noting that Thompson (1995), is of the opinion that the enormous problems which women all over the world face, stem from the fact that not all denominations follow the example of Jesus Christ. In expressing concern, she stresses:

*“...not all faiths, not even all Christians accept the example of Jesus. Because of sexism women are among the poorest of the poor in the world and they share their poverty with their children.” p. 2.*

Surprisingly, sexism which, Thompson has highlighted is not only prevalent in the different faiths in the world but also in various religious norms and beliefs.



## Religious Norms and Beliefs

Studies in education. (Al-Hariri 1987, Csapo 1981), have consistently shown that in some places, religious norms and beliefs can hinder the education of girls. During her case study regarding the education of Moroccan women, Al-Hariri noted that in Saudi Arabia, the educational policy has to reflect the aim of education in accordance with the Islamic tradition, which is:

*“the correct understanding of Islam and the inculcation and dissemination of the Islamic creed; the imbuing of the student with Islamic values, doctrines and ideals; the imparting of various types of knowledge and skills, the social, economic and cultural development of society; and the preparation of the individual to be a useful participant in the building of society.”* p. 53.

Al-Hariri noted that owing to strong negative views about female education, female illiteracy rate was as high as 99%. But the efforts by the King to reduce it by introducing formal education for girls, met with stiff opposition from the ‘Ulama’ (Islamic scholars). It was only in the 1960s that the first school for girls was opened on the condition that it would be controlled by a religious body, but the boys’ schools which have been in existence since the 1930s, are controlled by the Ministry of Education. The religious body that controls the education of girls has to dictate what is to be taught in girls’ schools. Al-Hariri has also noted that lack of female teachers is hindering the education of girls in Saudi Arabia because female teachers can only teach girls. But there are not enough of them, especially at the higher levels due to religious restrictions. In some cases, blind male teachers teach the girls, since they cannot see the girls and the latter on their part, cannot attract the men given their blindness. The fact that many girls stop at the primary school to prepare for marriage, adds to the shortage of female staff.

According to Al-Hariri, only few of the girls go to university as a result of religious inhibitions. For instance, if a girl wants to go to the university, she can only register in an

all women's department, or she can live in her home and attend lectures. Television sets are used so that female students will not come into contact with male teachers.

From her own studies about the Hausa moslems of northern Nigeria, Csapo (1981), noticed that most parents withdrew their children from school before the age of 9, at times as early as 5. It was in the course of her studies that Csapo realised that young girls of 5 were already married. Csapo found out that parents were afraid that their daughters might be corrupt if they stayed longer at school. She also discovered that at times, girls were withdrawn from school in order to help those women in seclusion, 'purdah'. She saw that in most cases, the girls are their only link with the outside world. It is worth noting that during Simmons' study of women in northern Nigeria (1976), she became aware of the fact that very young girls of school-age were kept at home in order to run errands for the women in seclusion. The girls sold the things, which their mothers made in 'purdah' - such as food, woven materials, ornaments etc. In this way, the women were able to earn some money, and kept off boredom that they would have experienced, if they had stayed without doing anything while in seclusion.

The findings of an agricultural economist from Sussex University, Longhurst (1982), seem to confirm the above claims. For example, during his case study, he lived among the Hausa of northern Nigeria, in a village, (50 miles west of Kano City). During that time Longhurst found out that women of childbearing age were in seclusion. He also noticed that girls were married at the age of 12 having been betrothed a few years earlier.

It is worthy of note that in parts of Kenya like Luo, there is a health threatening religious taboo, which forbids only women from eating protein foods. During her study about East African women, Huston (1979), noticed that the women did not eat fish, meat, eggs, drink milk etc. Huston found out that it was affecting the women's health. Educationally, a lot of damage must have been done as the brain has been starved of

nourishing food. In the case of children, their physical development could be affected owing to Vitamins A and B deficiency. Huston thinks that it is a conspiracy among men in order to manipulate women. One of the girls she interviewed told her:

*"...girls are left behind in education. It costs money, and parents think it is more important to educate boys. But I think that if people are intelligent, there is no difference. Girls and boys should be educated the same..."* p. 22-23.

Huston found out that all the women felt that the men were inconsiderate. She claimed that in most of the conversations and interviews with women, they tried in different ways to let her know about their predicament and how men were treating them:

*"Men don't consider us human beings...Men just leave us and take other women in the towns...We are left behind with our ignorance."* p. 23.

Coincidentally, during Obbo's case study, among the Luo women she also got the impression that the men were manipulating the women.

There is however, evidence that girls and women may ultimately have full access to education in every culture. For instance, one of the elderly women Huston interviewed told her that they would like the girls to go to school, so that one day they would have a good leader who would help their country. The woman explained to Huston:

*"It is better to educate a girl than a boy, although one should educate both. Girls are better. They help a lot. See this house? My daughters built it for me. If you don't have any daughters, who will build for you? The boys will marry and take care of their wives - that's all. They don't care about mothers."* p. 21.

Significantly, when Amechi (1979) interviewed an elderly man in Nigeria during her research about the legal status of Nigerian women, she was told by the man that, these days it is better to educate a girl than a boy - exactly for the same reasons given by the Luo woman in Kenya. But it remains to be seen whether economic considerations only, can sustain female education in the developing countries.

Surprisingly, there are few places where male dominance is not a serious issue. One of such places is Lesotho, (Were1985). There, most of the men have migrated from the villages to the urban centres, leaving the women in the majority in the rural areas. Consequently, the women to a large extent, direct their own affairs and have a lot of access to education at all levels. But Were reckons that the women have not made much impact in terms of national development. Another place is Russia, where women enjoy full access to educational opportunities, and are actually in the majority in the labour force. The government has called on couples to have large families. But Lockhart (1988), has indicated that the call for large families has been ignored by many, because of the heavy domestic duties that the Soviet women have to do. Those who want large families opt for the unskilled job, in spite of their high education. This shows that domestic chores do not only affect a woman's educational opportunities, but can also cost her a job, for which she has probably been trained for years.

What can be learnt from the Lesotho case is that even when women are in a commanding position to direct their own destiny, they may not fully utilise the opportunity. Arguably, this could reflect the conditioning in terms of the way women see themselves, which Pilcher thinks is partly responsible for the under-representation of women in both education and job market.

### Economic Factors

Since research has consistently shown that there is a close link between economy and school education, this section will focus mainly on economic constraints and employment as both have crucial educational implications, particularly for the developing countries, in terms of female education.

## Financial Constraints and Educational Provisions

In some places, lack of funds can prevent children from receiving formal education, (Simmons 1980). In the developing parts of the world, the financial situation of parents affects children's school education, and perhaps more seriously - the quality of education an individual child can receive. Akande (1987), believes that economic constraints are jeopardising school education in the under developed countries. In Nigeria as in most nations, rich parents tend to send their children to special schools. But the children of the poor, (the bulk of the population), go to state schools where both the material and the human resources can hardly compare with those in the private educational institutions.

The financial constraints and the burden of school fees in many families must never be under estimated. For instance, an Imo State woman was quoted, (Nzeribe 1985), as saying:

*“Parents in Imo State are paying their children's school fees with tears. Education in this state is now for the few privileged, mostly the big time business men and the top civil servants including the top army officers. No civil servant can boast of giving his children adequate education without sacrificing about 45% of his income on education.” p. 124*

At the time school fees were as follows:

Primary schools.....	90 naira a year
Secondary schools.....	400 naira a year
Boarding schools.....	1200 naira a year

One can therefore imagine the predicament of parents now, (more than a decade later), with the fees standing at 150 Naira a year in the primary school, 900 Naira in the secondary sector for day students, while those in the boarding schools pay 12,000 Naira. The fact that education is paid for at all levels, further limits the possibility of some children going to school, especially girls.

It is noteworthy that Moore (1987), believes strongly that there is a strong relationship between education and financial capability. Kelly's own research findings, especially in the developing countries, convinced her that in most cases parents are so hard pressed financially, that school education of their offspring becomes too burdensome for them to bear. The view that economic factors can drastically affect education especially female education in the developing nations, seems to be shared by Greene (1981).

Within the Nigerian Context, the Universal Primary Education of the 1970s, is a vivid example, because for the first time in Nigeria, most children of school age went to school. But some people including Greene think that it was an attempt by the then military government to achieve equalisation of educational opportunities throughout the federation. Greene claims it was particularly aimed at bringing the North rapidly to the standards of elementary educational provision already available in the South. However, Kelly thinks that in every country priority should be given to women's education, since it is a form of investment, as it activates a nation's economic development, as was the case in the Soviet Union:

*"...Women's education does have something to do with economic development. Soviet modernization, for example, was made possible by the unprecedented rise in women's educational levels and their entry in large numbers into the paid workforce." p. 96.*

Kelly has also emphasised the fact that education enhances a woman's chances of getting well paid jobs.

Ironically, in some parts of the world, women's education is not seen in this light. Csapo discovered in Nigeria that many parents are strongly opposed to the education of girls because they see it as a financial risk. She recalled a parent who indicated that if he sent his daughter to school, she would ultimately get married and felt it was not worth the trouble. However, research has shown that financial constraints affect the education of rural girls more than those in the urban areas. Obbo (1980), who did an extensive case

study of African women, especially those in East Africa, noticed also that rural poverty was making life difficult for girls and women, and had led to many women fleeing the villages and migrating to the urban centres.

Obviously, women trapped in rural poverty will not be able to help in the school education of their daughters, as girls' education is usually the first to be scrapped in times of financial hardship. Obbo asserts that the men are trying to stop the women from migrating to the towns and cities, claiming that African tradition demands that a woman should stay in the village. But according to Obbo the poverty stricken rural women now demand that:

*“Traditions that break women's backs, that take women's work for granted without any reward, that keeps women at home, that insist on morality for women only, must be forgotten.”* p. 28.

It should be noted that in some cases, financial problems may lead not to urban migration but to child marriage, which is even more serious than urban migration. This is because child marriage is one of the problems that have seriously affected girls' school education in many parts of the developing societies. As Csapo discovered in certain parts of Nigeria - if some parents do not have enough money to educate all their children, they may just decide to send the boys to school, while the girls stay at home to help in domestic chores, or marry so that their dowry can be used to keep their brothers in school.

Unfortunately, rural poverty is threatening the education of girls in many countries of the developing world. As Nalk (1989), found out during a case study connected with the education of rural girls in India, 75% of the population live in the rural areas, with an estimated 50% extremely poor. Nalk noticed that poverty has led to a high drop-out rate, especially among girls. The majority of the girls do not even have time to go to school as their working life begins at 7; at times younger. This partly accounts for why women are in the majority in terms of world illiteracy. Even in the traditional English society, Horn

(1988), noticed during her study of the working-class girls' education and employment (1870 – 1914), that because the girls were from poor background, they had no access to education as many of them started work at the farms while still very young. They constituted the largest population of illiterates in those days. Horn has revealed that:

*“...the greatest proportion of female illiterates was recorded...in parts of Wales and Monmouth, where the daughters of small farmers often began working in the family holding as soon as they were able. Distance from school, a lack of educational facilities, and ignorance of the English language, which was the normal medium of instruction, added to problems in the principality.”* p. 72.

This is a clear indication that all the problems now facing many developing countries, once posed a threat to female education in Britain, and in the other developed nations of the world.

Owing to an extensive research carried out in many African countries, including Botswana, Liberia, Niger, Somalia, etc., Adams and Kruppenbach (1987), have been able to establish firmly that economic constraints are affecting girls' education more than the boys'. The studies have led to the conclusion that:

*“...female enrolments are not expected to increase in the foreseeable future without a concomitant amelioration in the general economic performance of African states.”* p. 452.

The revival of the state and private economies through internal and outside help, will go a long way to alleviate abject poverty and promote female education.. Internally, governments can assist small farmers by giving them fertiliser (especially those that live in non-fertile areas), and seeds for planting. In parts of Nigeria, for example, some farmers are so poor that they cannot buy seeds for planting. Small business holders can also be given loans at low interest rates to sustain their business. Such help is necessary especially in the case of those parents who genuinely wish to educate all their children - girls and boys alike, but are financially unable to do so. It is important to bear in mind that in the



developing countries economic constraints pose relentless threats to female education and employment is inextricably linked with formal education.

### Employment

As already indicated, employment is a serious educational issue, in the developing countries. It affects girls' formal education more than boys'. For instance, if some parents feel that their daughters may not get jobs at the end of their school career, they may not even bother about sending them to school. Significantly, in the course of her research in the developing nations, Kelly (1987), discovered that in most cases:

*"The decision to go to school is often an economic one, based on the question whether girls can find jobs once they are educated. When employment is not open to women, girls' education tends to be depressed; when, however, employment opens up, the demand for women's education is much greater on the part of parents as well as of girls."* p. 99.

In Nigeria, female employment has always been regarded as extremely important, because when boys grow up and marry, they tend to desert their original family especially in terms of financial help, but girls always help their parents, marriage does not alter this situation. Unfortunately, employers are not encouraging female education since they prefer male employees to their female counterparts.

Research in education, (Czechy 1987; Pilcher 1989), has also revealed that women in every culture are discriminated against in the job market. They do most of the unskilled labour. In the part-time labour force, there are more women than men. In times of crisis, they suffer more, and are more likely to be made redundant than men. Employers discriminate against them in favour of men. It is also known that they get less pay in some cases - even when they have done exactly the same job as men. Consequently, Kelly has pointed out that women's educational outcome is not the same as men's, even when they have received exactly the same type of education. Czechy's case study about women's education in Hungary has convinced her that one of the major problems as far as women

and employment are concerned, is the fact that women often do not have good educational qualifications which, in turn will enable them to get good jobs..

It should be noted that as long as girls and women are not given equal access and opportunity to participate fully in the educational systems of the world, the problems will always be there. For instance, in the developing countries, some girls and women work so hard that they do not have time to go to school. However, Pilcher, Delamont, Powell and Rees (1989), think that girls and women are partly responsible for their employment problems. They claim that the way girls and women see themselves affects their job opportunity:

*“The views that women and girls hold about themselves contribute to the segregation of women in the labour market.” p. 59.*

It must however be stressed that social and parental attitudes are likely to affect the way individuals see themselves. Research has proved that pre-conditioning, in terms of social and parental attitudes does have lasting effects.

It is clear from Horn's findings that the problems facing girls and women in terms of social attitudes, school education, employment etc. date back a long time ago. For instance, she discovered that in the traditional English Society, social attitudes regarding female education reflected on the type of employment that girls and women were given and that some worked full-time in the factories and so had no access to education. Horn noted that in some cases, they worked part-time. Some part-time girls also attended school as part-timers, but Horn reckoned that it did their education no good.

*“the continuation of the ‘half-time’ system affected girls’ educational opportunities, for many children came to their lessons too tired after a factory or workshop stint to learn...At the end of the nineteenth century the highest proportion of illiterate females in England was found in areas like Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire, and Staffordshire...” p. 71.*

Horn has also indicated that out of the 36,000 children employed in the textile mills, over 54% were girls.

There is hardly any doubt that the girls' education suffered immeasurably. The part-timers arrived at school exhausted, suffering from physical and mental fatigue. Under such conditions, effective learning would almost be impossible and the prospect for good job - an illusion. It is noteworthy that, in some countries, employment is said to be very crucial as it determines whether or not a girl should go to school. In Malaysia for example, Kelly (1987), noted that there was a low enrolment rate with regard to girls, but once the government gave the guarantee of a programme which would ensure equal job opportunity for all Malaysians, girls' enrolment rate rocketed.

This supports the findings of Dubey, Edem and Thakar (1987) that, in most developing countries education is inextricably linked with job opportunity. Surprisingly, in spite of financial hardship, there are some places where men strongly feel that women should not have paid jobs, because they fear that financial independence would threaten their subjugation of women. For instance, while she was doing her research in East Africa, Obbo (1980), found out that the men did not want their women to have paid jobs. They felt that such jobs would enable the women to challenge their traditional roles as wives, child rearers, house-keepers etc.

This proves that, in some cultures, the men can go to any length to ensure that they have perpetual grip on women. But financial independence for women is important, especially with regard to girls' education. In the developing countries, some women are responsible for the education of their children. There are instances where fathers refused to pay for their daughters' education, and the girls' mothers had to bear the responsibility. Besides, if women are financially independent, it can help them to act and think independently. One market woman told Obbo:

*"Money enables one to implement decisions instead of sitting around wishing for luck!" p. 4.*

Most women would be resentful of economic strangulation. Among other things, it will weaken their position within the family system, and thus marginalise them socially in terms of the wider society.

### Female Education and Rural Employment

In Nigeria, Akande (1987), found out that in the rural areas, female job aspirations were low. The village girls saw nurses and female teachers as role models. They looked on nursing and teaching as the ultimate in female employment. Rural low job aspirations have been attributed to the fact that, in the rural areas, nursing and teaching are the only respectable jobs available. Another reason could be the fact that many rural girls usually perform badly academically, compared with those in the urban centres, and therefore do not have the right qualifications for jobs as lawyers, doctors, accountants etc. Their bad performance is partly due to the poor quality education that is often associated with village schools. Apart from nursing and to some extent teaching, most other jobs are male-dominated. This, to some degree, frustrates girls generally and rural girls in particular, because they know that they have to struggle much harder than the boys in order to get good jobs, as employers always think that men make better employees.

### Other Factors

Having examined some of the social, political, religious and economic issues that have adversely affected the formal education of girls and women over the years, it is appropriate at this stage to reflect on other factors that have also militated against female education. The most crucial constraints in this category include women's disunity and the nomadic problem.

### Lack of Unity Among Women

Although, research has consistently shown that outside forces are responsible for women's under-representation in the educational systems of the world, some people think

that women themselves are largely to blame. For instance, Davies' research, (1987), which is mainly about gender dilemmas and the management of education in the developing countries, has enabled her to come to the conclusion that the world's women lack unity. Referring to the Mexican World Conference in 1975, Davies claimed that women from developed and developing countries did not agree, as to where their main problems lay. She stressed that while the women from the developed countries insisted that the central issue was the:

*"inequality between the sexes, ...third world women argued that the primary problem was the widening inequality between their countries and the West which has resulted in the widespread poverty of their peoples." p. 86.*

If the women cannot agree among themselves regarding the main issue, solution will continue to prove elusive. Besides, any attempt in terms of lasting achievement, must be by united action on the part of the women, irrespective of culture. Arguably the best time to decide how to achieve their goal is obviously during a world meeting, such as the one held in Mexico in 1975. But if such meetings take place under the atmosphere of bitter argument, suspicion, accusations, claims and counter-claims, etc. little will be achieved.

Davies, for example, noticed that during the conference, a participant declared:

*"It is presumptuous for anyone to presume that women of the Third World are unable to articulate their own outrage at any issue that concerns them. As a member of the Third World, I repudiate this patronizing and particularly the underlying intellectual imperialism. Women in the Third World do not need any more champions. We are bored and tired of any more Great White Hopes." p. 86.*

An open disagreement can damage their struggle and attract the criticism of their opponents. It would also be seen as bias - each side seeing the problem from a different perspective. For instance, the women from the developing countries perhaps owing to their financial pressure, approached the problem from an economic viewpoint, whereas the Western women that are relatively better off, felt that the crucial issue was gender inequality.

It has been noticed that even within the same country, women may not appreciate the need for unity. During Belhachmi's (1987), case study regarding the education of Moroccan women, she found that rural women were discriminated against by urban dwellers, including their own fellow women. Consequently, life was made very difficult for them - especially in terms of access and opportunity to education. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing, China is a reminder that in global context women still lack unity. Thompson (1995), has stressed that the importance of the Beijing Conference would be dependent on:

*"whether women will be able to take steps towards uniting in order to take responsibility for themselves and their sisters all over the world."* p. 2.

Interestingly from Abuja, Nigeria's former first lady has called on women to unite. She reminded participants at a conference, (Orishawo 1993), jointly organised by the National Council of Nigerian Women's Societies and the National Commission for Women, that women faced common problems and challenges, and should therefore unite and address their problems. Mrs. Babangida said:

*"Women must learn to pull and push together. We must learn to pool our ideas and resources and we must resolve to settle our differences internally for higher results, for greater solidarity and for the speedier development of womanhood."* p. 1.

One of the most serious problems that has caused the National Council of Nigerian Women's Societies a great deal of concern over the years and now requires united response, is wife-battering. As the organisation has put it:

*"It is sad to note that "wife-battering" is still considered a normal way of life and of solving family-problems at all levels of our society - educated, uneducated, urban and rural dwellers alike. This unfortunate and unwanted situation has caused the poor state of both physical and mental health of untold number of women. Some wives have even been maimed."* p. 131.

It is important to bear in mind that when a woman is maimed the educational opportunity of the children is seriously jeopardised, notably girls', as they are likely to be kept at home

to attend to domestic chores. This is one of the main reasons why Nigerian women should respond positively to Mrs Babangida's call for unity.

It is noteworthy that in some places like Cuba (McCall 1986), women are united. Women's organisations have worked very hard to reduce female illiteracy in their country. According to McCall who has done a case study relating to the Cuban literacy experience, before the literacy campaign, illiteracy - especially female illiteracy was widespread. She did however observe that although male illiteracy rate was high, women generally were discriminated against in the Cuban society, McCall claimed that:

*"...women's systematic unemployment and the general attitude that they were of secondary importance relegated the majority of them to marginal status." p. 319.*

But after the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro declared that illiteracy must be eradicated within one year, 1959-60. Cuban women took up the challenge. They mobilised women's organisations (Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas (The Federation of Cuban Women)). McCall noted that they had a motto:

*"Those who don't know, learn, those that do know, teach." p. 319.*

The motto was economically motivated as there was not enough money to fund so expensive a programme. Bearing their primary objective in mind the women organised themselves into various groups. Some became teachers, while others looked after young children. The youth were mobilised and taught. Later, they left for the rural areas and the remote farms where they stayed with the peasants, assisting them in their farms by day and teaching them with lanterns at night. Of the 100,000 young people who became students, over 54% were girls. The Federation of Cuban Women opened night schools to teach domestic servants. Prostitutes were instructed by day and in 1962, the houses of prostitution were finally shut because the prostitutes got decent jobs. As McCall discovered, there were hardly any funds, but the women single-handedly spearheaded a

literacy campaign that was not only to rid them of illiteracy, but also opened up job opportunities that they had not thought possible. The Cuban campaign is an example worthy of emulation and Cuba's effort to eradicate illiteracy has been seen as:

*"one of the outstanding achievements of the Third World."* p. 324.

There are encouraging signs that one day Nigerian women may follow the example of their Cuban counterparts. For instance, reporting on the issue of, 'Women In Development', Aduloju (1993) has revealed that at the top of Nigerian women's agenda, is their commitment to campaign for mass literacy in the country.

In Nicaragua, (Charlton 1984), the women, presumably inspired by the Cuban experience, organised a similar literacy campaign, once the Sandanista government had given the go-ahead in 1979, Charlton, who did a study of Third World Development, claimed that in 1979, the illiteracy rate in Nicaragua had risen to 51%, and that most of the illiterates were women. But the women worked hard like those in Cuba, to ensure that the campaign was a success. If other countries especially African nations try in this manner, the illiteracy rate now standing at over 89% could drop. This is very important, because from the findings of UNESCO, in 200 countries, in Africa, Asia, North and Central America, Europe, Canada etc., Charlton is convinced that:

*"...inequality in male-female school enrolment begins at an early age, which condemns a large proportion of the female population to illiteracy."*  
p. 156.

It is obvious that unless women are united and drastic actions taken, perhaps by way of literacy campaigns, their problems may become insurmountable. The Cuban literacy campaign is a vivid example of what women can achieve if they were united, and work for a common purpose.

In Libya, Charlton noticed that the fight against illiteracy was much more informal than in Cuba, and women, though while united, were not involved in the organisation of



the courses. They were organised by the government. All trainees must be at least 9 years old; there were also married women. But all trainees must be either the daughters or wives of local farmers. The training took place in a Development Centre where the trainees were taught to read and write. In addition, they learnt economic skills and were paid while in training. At the end of their training, they were given gifts - ranging from television sets to sewing machines. As the trainees were paid while in training it encouraged many women and young girls, who otherwise would have remained illiterates, to join the programme. It is noteworthy that as a result of his interview with rural Nigerian girls, Akande (1987), is convinced that the payment of trainee nurses, is one of the main reasons why the majority of them opt for the nursing career. He believes they use part of the money to help their family thereby easing the financial burden on their parents.

It is interesting to note that Scotland (Bamford 1988), has adopted a style close to the Libyans'. Short courses are run, including those designed to help one-parent families and strippers. Bamford thinks that generally, women face many obstacles as opposed to men, and should be strongly united.. While referring to a seminar held in 1989, to discuss women's vocational education and training, she stressed that some of the issues discussed included:

*"the barriers that women face in participating in education and training and in pursuing opportunities in employment...the conditioning and attitudes that women have internalised about themselves and that men have internalised about women." p. 26.*

It is clear that where women are united, they can help one another as vindicated by the struggles in Cuba, Nicaragua, Libya and Scotland. If there was disunity, as in Morocco, the illiteracy rates of the female population in the above countries would have reached crisis proportions.

## The Nomadic Problem

Research findings, (Gorham 1980), Junaid (1988), have shown that nomads and gypsies often miss out on formal education because of the wandering nature of their existence. They fear that formal education will erode their nomadic way of life. By and large the female members of nomadic communities will find they have less access and opportunity to education than their male counterparts, when and if nomads including Nigeria's cattle Fulani decide to embrace school education.

It is important to bear in mind that Nomads are not alone in their opposition to western-type education. Critics of formal education for instance, feel that it is not the best way of educating people, (Illich 1971), because it condemns an individual to an institution for a great part of his life. Some people have even claimed that school education brings about - social inequality, (Wells 1979). They also feel that educational institutions reflect the social values of the society, and therefore do not necessarily initiate change.

Given all the formidable obstacles indicated above, bearing in mind the highly sensitive social, economic and religious issues involved - one wonders what the future holds for female education.

## Long Term Future

In the case of developing nations of the world, the long-term prospect of girls and women with regard to educational opportunities is bleak. One of the major problems is poverty. Judging from the survey and the assessment of the economy of the developing countries by the World Bank Dore (1980), has forecast that the future of formal education in the developing countries is in dilemma, because of serious economic constraints. It is noteworthy that Hodgkinson (1989), who has completed a detailed survey of the economy of Burkina Faso, has pointed out that her economic situation is so bad and stagnant that every year, 450,000 people flee the country to seek refuge in other countries, including

Ghana. Dore, for his part maintains that owing to poverty, wastage rates are high, especially in the developing nations. The following statistics support his claim:

<u>Continents</u>	<u>Drop-outs and Push-outs</u>	<u>Repeaters</u>	
Africa	54%	40.7	
Latin America	61%	5.3	
Asia	20%	10.3	
Europe	18%	3.6	p. 46

The above figures show that countries with an automatic system of school promotion, tend to have fewer children dropping out as is evident in the case of Europe. In the developing countries, girls and women are usually the educational casualties whenever the national economy deteriorates, or parents face harsh financial problems.

With regard to developed countries, although poverty is not as widespread as it is in the developing ones, it is feared that the continuous existence of public and private schools, may perpetuate gender and class inequalities, and thus delay the development of female education for the majority. Walford's, (1986), claim that the private sector was designed to help boys in their eventual positions in various elite groups, and girls to find their reward in marriage and motherhood, should not be ignored. It is equally important to remember that Walford has unequivocally stated that men currently hold most of the top jobs.

From all the issues highlighted above, one can easily see how various deeply entrenched factors have conspired to rob girls and women of opportunity and access to education; especially in the developing nations. They also show the negative roles played by various institutions and agencies, including the church and the school. The Church should now speak out in defence of the rights of girls and women to formal education, particularly in the developing nations, where child marriage has robbed many girls and women of the opportunity to education. It is, however, worrying to note that some people

including Chalfant, Beckley and Palmer believe that the Church is incapable of playing a positive role regarding female education since:

*“...the theological literature on the status of women indicates that the traditional, subservient or inferior role for women is reflected in the ideology of most Christian and Jewish groups...this ideology is reflected in the practice of various bodies. There exist practices which tend to exclude women from the fullest participation in the group and assign them to basically servant and nurturant roles.”* p. 160.

Chalfant and his school of thought have also claimed that there is a strong biblical bias for the traditional status of women which has engulfed all Protestant groups.

There are striking similarities between the views of Chalfant and his school, and King's findings. But the fact that The Women's Foreign Mission Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church did a lot of work, (Latourett 1966), with regard to Chinese women's education, does suggest that if women were to play more prominent roles in the Church they might defend the right of all girls and women in terms of access and opportunity to education more vigorously, especially in the developing nations of the world.

Defending the right of the female population in the above nations is of supreme importance, particularly in the light of the revelations by the UNESCO (1991), which shows that in 1990, 26.5% of the adult population of the world, (948.1 million), were illiterate. Out of that number, 346.5 million (19.4%), were men, while 601.6 million (33.6 % were women. The numbers for the developing countries are even more distressing, with women's illiteracy rate standing at 45%. UNESCO discovered that illiteracy contributes largely to women's marginalisation within the family, the workplace and in the society at large. It accounts for their inability to benefit from socio-economic and technological progress. UNESCO also strongly believes that illiterate women are invariably caught in a vicious circle of poverty, raising of large families, ill health and powerlessness. According to UNESCO, educated women do not marry very young. They have fewer children and brighter job prospects. On average, they tend to look after their health better than their

illiterate counterparts. Not surprisingly UNESCO has referred to illiteracy as “a life long cul-de-sac”.

There is, however, no doubt that if the school, the Church, the society, the government, women’s organisations, the family, the individual etc. work hand in hand, the long-term future of female education all over the world, will be brighter than it has ever been. But it is important to bear in mind that in every culture, women are seen in the light of Victorian womanhood - very vividly portrayed by Burstyn, (1980):

*“Home is clearly Woman’s intended place, and the duties which belong to home are Woman’s peculiar province...And it is in the sweet sanctities of domestic life, - in home duties - in whatever belongs to and makes the happiness of Home, that Woman is taught by the SPIRIT to find scope for her activity - to recognise her sphere of most appropriate service.”* p. 32.

This chapter has among other things provided an insight into the educational system of some countries in the world. The next chapter will focus on Nigeria by examining her indigenous education and tracing the background to the development of western-type education.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **A BACKGROUND TO EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

#### **PART A - THE INDIGENOUS NIGERIAN EDUCATION**

In a study of this nature, no amount of detailed account of western education can be fully appreciated without reference to the traditional Nigerian society, and the type of education that was going on before the advent of school education. This is vital since western-type education did not take place in a vacuum, far from it - education of a different kind was already in existence in Nigeria long before its introduction. This fact must not be ignored: after all throughout history, every society, whether simple or complex, has always evolved some means of training and educating the young. However, the goals, content and method of indigenous education may differ from people to people and from place to place, the underlying ideology is the same with regard to all societies.

#### **THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE**

It should be stressed that the Nigerian situation would be better understood if examined from the African point of view, given the fact that many African nations have a lot in common. In discussing the development of education in Nigeria, distinction must be made between formal or western-type education and indigenous or traditional education. The latter precedes the former, and even Islam, and as such, is as old as the society itself. It should however be mentioned that some people, including Africans, tend to associate the word 'education' exclusively with western-type education. Consequently, some Africans regard their own people who have not received school education as having no education at all. Presumably, this may be why Graham (1971) has pointed out that:

*"...education" is used in many parts of Africa to refer to formal instruction in European-type schools. Those Africans who have been to school are said to be "educated"; all others - whether they have learnt some trade or not - are regarded as uneducated. This is clearly a restricted use of the word..."*  
p. ix.

Graham argues that in the broader sense of the term, education has always been an important factor in the way of life of the African; hence parents and the wider circle of kinsmen consider it a sacred trust, to discharge their obligation regarding the child's socialisation. Significantly, Bown (1979), has remarked that many people think of education as what goes on in a school classroom - a series of lessons on set subjects, measured from time to time by examinations and ending in a qualification. She sees education as a lifelong programme which can be pursued at any age. Graham's own remark should be considered more deeply. In the old African society for example, the role of education was partly to ensure the induction of the individual into the society and his or her preparation for adult life. Not surprisingly, there was a lot of emphasis on social responsibility, physical and mental fitness, apprenticeship and political participation in the case of boys. Girls' own education centred mainly around domestic chores, moral values and preparation for marriage. Children learnt to live up to expectation, not only by being taught, but also by observation and play - notably by imitating adults.

Through occasional participation in ceremonies and rituals, children also learnt the way of life of the society of which they formed a vital part as future custodians. In other words, traditional African education was a process for transmitting culture and knowledge, especially in terms of continuity and growth. Arguably, the same could be said of any other traditional society. Interestingly, Graham (1966), has stressed that the education:

*"of African peoples is not a new, twentieth century development. From time immemorial, every social group has provided a system whereby children have been trained for their adult roles in its existence. In Africa, successive generations of boys and girls have learned in their homes, in the fields and the markets, and through age-groups and initiation rites, the knowledge which their elders wished to pass on in order that a certain continuity might be maintained in the community's life." p. 1.*

It is therefore obvious that education does not, and should not imply school learning only - after all, wherever a person (especially a young person, is learning that which ultimately

will help him or her earn a living, take his or her place as a useful member of the community, and make positive contributions with regard to family, society, and possibly the generality of mankind, their education is taking place.

Within the Nigerian context, it is worth noting at this stage that education of children in the traditional society was to a certain extent an informal and continuous process. For instance, children learnt the history of their respective communities through oral tradition based mainly on story-telling and folk-lore, which took place partly in the farms, or while relaxing with male adults in the evening in the case of boys. Girls, on the other hand, learnt from their mothers; especially during food preparation. They also learnt from other female adult relatives. In those days, it was considered impracticable that children could be taught everything they ought to know, so to a large extent, children learnt by observation. Gradually they were made more aware of the custom, tradition, culture etc. of their community, and with the passage of time they began to assume certain roles within their respective localities. Ultimately, it was the things they had learnt as children that would in the years that lay ahead, enable each of them to lead a responsible adult life.

It should be stressed that as a result of his studies with regard to the people of the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Graham (1971), has revealed some aspects of the unique indigenous education given to children before the advent of school education. Similar education was being received by their counterparts in various parts of Africa at the same time. Graham for instance, did observe that with the passage of time the child endeavoured to assume more and more the responsibilities and duties that fell to him:

*“Thus, before the coming of Europeans, the people of the Gold Coast “educated” themselves. In a sense, their traditional education was fully capable of supplying the necessary elements to maintain the levels attained by their society in the economic, social, technical and cultural areas.”* p. ix.



This does confirm the popular view that every society has its own way of educating the young. Besides, it also shows that in the traditional African society, there was striking similarity in the type of education that children received. However, given the diverse nature of the Nigerian society, particularly with regard to her geography, the people, the numerous languages, culture, custom etc., this chapter will focus mainly on the Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo. It is worth noting that Lewis (1965), has estimated that there are up to 250 different ethnic groups in Nigeria; and that they vary numerically from a few thousands to millions. Each region is dominated by a major ethnic group. For example, the Hausa and the Fulani are the dominant inhabitants of the North. The Yoruba are the major ethnic group in the West and in the East, the Igbo.

Linguistically, it is estimated that over 300 languages are spoken in Nigeria, Attah (1987), has claimed that some people believe that the correct estimate may be over 400. It should also be noted that even with the same linguistic group, incredible dialectical differences exist. Consequently, people from the same ethnic group may not understand one another, and may only communicate in English. This is true of the Eastern Igbo, (including Afikpo). An Igbo from Nsu for instance, may not understand what another Igbo from Afikpo is saying. The differences in the various languages have hampered, among other things, progress towards the evolution of a single language in Nigeria - a lingua franca. This partly explains why English serves not only as a lingua franca, but also as a unifying force. Without it, Nigerian citizens from various parts of the country will not be able to communicate with one another. Besides, in Nigeria, English is the language of instruction in the educational institutions, as well as in government circles, not to mention commerce and industry etc.

This is all the more reason why every effort should be made to ensure that all girls are sent to school. English language will undoubtedly enhance their communication skills

and improve their job prospects. Good jobs will make their future more secure, and thus raise their status in the society. The indigenous languages are spoken by Nigerians in their respective localities, Lewis (1965), has however examined deeply the linguistic problems which have bedevilled Nigeria over the years, and has concluded that:

*“The differences between the different languages are such that the evolution of a single Nigerian language as the national language was and is not possible. Neither is any one local language so widely used that it could become the lingua franca for the whole country...”* p. 16.

Naturally, any nation with citizens of different ethnic and linguistic origins is bound to find it difficult, as far as the evolution of a lingua franca is concerned. For example, any attempt to adopt one of the local languages as the lingua franca could be fraught with problems. One such problem is the fear of domination of the country by one ethnic group. In other words, all the other ethnic groups may feel that the people whose own language has become the lingua franca will dominate them. Consequently, they may try to resist the nationalisation of one local language in various ways, including armed resistance.

It is of crucial importance to note that Nigeria’s Professor of Psychology, Obeamata (1993), has examined in great detail, the role of language in the intellectual development of pupils. His findings have led him to this belief:

*“If a child is good in English, he will be good in his academic work; the child will be selected for secondary school education, he is the child who will be given appointment because he has a good command of the language. Similarly, if you now choose, say Yoruba language, Yoruba children will be better than other children. They will do better in common entrance examinations because it is their own language. Of course they will be better and more suitable for appointment.”* p. 13.

It is quite evident from Obeamata’s findings that any ethnic group whose own language is chosen as the national language, can also dominate the country in terms of educational achievement. Not surprisingly, many Nigerians, (Imo and Yusuf 1993), now demand that any successive Nigerian government should have a clear agenda for education. It must be borne in mind that any ethnic unit that achieves educational dominance can also strive for

political, economic, religious etc. domination. Obeamata's findings reinforce the need for all girls to receive formal education. It is worth noting that in the traditional Nigerian society, the various ethnic groups did not mix much. The northerners, for instance, did not have much in common with their southern neighbours. But this should not be attributed solely to linguistic differences; distance and lack of mobility might have played a major part.

Generally, the education of children in Nigeria begins at infancy, irrespective of ethnic group. It should also be noted that the child's own immediate environment played (and still plays) a large part regarding the child's education. For instance, in the traditional society, the type of training and education given to him or her was to a large extent determined by the geography of the child's immediate surroundings. This was not unique with Nigeria, it applied to many other traditional African societies. The anthropologist Mead (1963), for example, spent years in New Guinea during which time she discovered that because of the ever presence of water, the open sea, the lagoons, the small islands etc.:

*"As soon as the baby can toddle uncertainly, he is put down into the water at low tide when parts of the lagoon are high and others only a few inches under water. Here the baby sits and plays in the water or takes a few hesitating steps in the yielding spongy mud." p. 27.*

It is clear that a child in New Guinea, owing to his watery environment, has to make a great deal of effort; especially in terms of acquisition of physical dexterity in relation to water, very early in life. With the passage of time, he learns to swim, to row, and to dive, as his confidence grows. He is also taught safety measures, should the need arise. Understandably, this type of early education is indispensable for a child whose environment has a lot to do with water.

In some parts of Nigeria where the open seas, lakes, lagoons, creeks etc. are part of everyday life and, to a large extent, determine the nature of people's mobility and occupation, a child's familiarisation with water begins at birth. This is typical of those that

live near the Cross River and in the Niger Delta, including Opobo, Brass, Bonny, Degema etc. The presence of water is such that, in some cases, to get to one's next door neighbour, one has to use some form of bridge to cross parts of the sea.

Surprisingly, there are parts of Nigeria where the distance from the sea is well over a thousand miles, and drought is a major problem. These are mostly in the extreme North of the country - close to Nigeria's border with Niger and Chad. Obviously, the natural environment here would not necessitate the same type of education given to the children in the delta areas of the country. In other words, parents from the delta region may worry about the safety of their children given that the open seas, the lagoons, and creeks individually and collectively pose a threat to life, but far away in Sokoto parents may have a different worry altogether, like drought and the inevitable shortage of water for cattle, or even for domestic use.

It is interesting to note that Mead (1963), discovered that owing to the rigorous way of life in New Guinea, a child is expected to be self-sufficient as early in life as possible for, until a child has learnt to handle his or her own body, he or she would not be safe in the house, in a canoe, or on the small islands. This shows that people's environments or surroundings make special demands on them. How they respond to these demands, and their ability to cope as individuals, will determine to a large extent not only their survival, but also the role which they will ultimately play in the society. This partly explains why, in the traditional Nigerian society, education was, among other things, meant to toughen the children - particularly boys. It is, however important at this stage, to examine more specifically how this traditional education was imparted to children by certain ethnic groups.

(a) The Hausa: Their Indigenous Education

In Nigeria, written records started with the coming of Islam in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It should also be noted that Islam predated Christianity by over 300 years, (Fafunwa 1974), as far as Nigeria is concerned. Chronologically, Islamic and Christian education is fairly recent, but the indigenous Nigerian education has always been there. This fact is important because the mistake often made by writers (including some Nigerians) who have studied or written about certain aspects of Nigerian education, is to ignore the fact that indigenous education was in existence in Nigeria, long before the coming of the Islamic and western-type education. Speaking about Islam and Christianity in relation to the indigenous education in Nigeria, Fafunwa (1974) emphasised the fact that::

*“...these two important religions which have influenced Nigerian education in no small measure are of recent development compared with the indigenous system of education which is as old as Man himself in Africa.”*  
p. 15.

The recognition of this point is crucial, especially with regard to meaningful understanding and appreciation of this stage of the study. The origins of the Hausa for instance, could be traced to North Africa. The original groups intermingled with the nomadic Berber tribes, who made their way southwards in search of grass for their cattle. Subsequently, they began to crystallise into small groups in the area, now known as northern Nigeria. It is of great interest to note that, in linguistic terms, unlike other Nigerian languages, the Hausa language is a recognised lingua franca of trade. In the days of the great trans-Saharan trade, Hausa was spoken by millions of people all over the Sudan and the Hausa trader was, for many years, known to be ubiquitous.

Trade

It must be borne in mind that as far as the traditional Hausa society was concerned, trade was crucially important. Consequently, the children who were regarded as future traders had to learn the art of trading early in life especially boys. There is hardly any

doubt that the Sudan trade sustained the Hausa immeasurably. The renowned traveller, Leo Africanus, who twice visited the Sudan in 1509 and 1513 respectively, with a view to finding out about the people of Sudan and the flourishing trade, noted that all the Northern Emirates took part in it. Significantly, this could to a large extent explain why the Hausa were known to have maintained a Sudanic form of civilisation as aforementioned. This is more so when one considers the fact that behind the daily interaction of buying and selling, lies a great deal of intermingling, notably in terms of ideas, culture, custom, and the general way of life. It is noteworthy that Nigeria's Professor Dike (1956), who studied trade and politics of the delta region of Nigeria before the establishment of British rule, explained why this is the case:

*"The buying and selling of commodities is almost always accompanied by the contact of cultures, the exchange of ideas, the mingling of peoples, and has led not infrequently to political complications and wars."* p. 5.

#### Leatherwork Weaving and Metallurgy

Leatherwork and weaving were also popular among the Hausa in the precolonial era, notably around Gobir, (Hogben and Greene 1966). This popularity has not waned with regard to the contemporary society. But while weaving has always been associated with the female members of the Hausa society, in contrast, leatherwork is male dominated. Gibbs (1965), has claimed that Hausa leather reached Europe in the Renaissance period through Morocco. Any reference to the indigenous Hausa education should take into account the fact that the type of education given to the children was to some extent dependent on the events of the time. In other words their education was to a certain degree circumstantial. This is very true in terms of metallurgy which Hausa boys had to learn early in life. In those days metal work was highly valued, owing to its relevance to defence. As empires and kingdoms vie to establish supremacy or ascendancy over the other, wars became frequent and the northern emirates had to be equipped. Not

surprisingly, the constant wars and slave raids made leatherwork and metallurgy viable occupations. However, in spite of the fact that empires, kingdoms and states rose and fell and weapons were very much in demand, Tremearne (1970), has claimed that the Hausa were more inclined to peace than to war.

### Moral Education

Certain aspects of the indigenous Hausa education were brought about by social expectations, especially in the case of girls. Moral education for instance, featured strongly in girls' education, lessons in moral values were taken seriously by parents because of what would happen to their daughter if she lost her virginity before marriage. For instance, on the bridal night if the man found that his wife's chastity had been violated, the girl and her family would face dire consequences. He would immediately break a big water pot, tear the sleeping mat, break the drinking bowl, and cut off some of the strings of the blind in order to shame her. In addition, he would place a pot on a long pole and set it up so as to spread the news of his wife's unchastity to the whole town. For the girl, it was a harrowing experience. It could be argued that this was an unjustified humiliating treatment on the part of women; after all, men's own lack of chastity was neither announced to the town, nor were they subjected to untold suffering. Undoubtedly, mothers must have given a lot of consideration to morality, with regard to the traditional education of their daughters, fearful of the ordeal they could face on their bridal night.

However, when they became wives, women tried to humiliate the men by becoming very wayward. Tremearne (1970) noted that a man was considered exceedingly foolish if he thought his wife was not having an affair with other men. At times, a man could accept the reality of the situation, and sought to trade on his wife's adultery. It is important to note that in the traditional Hausa society, there was no limit to the number of wives a man could marry. Perhaps more importantly, twins were not killed unlike other parts of Nigeria

where twins were brutally murdered, because multiple birth was regarded as an abomination. In the traditional Hausa society young girls had to learn to care specially for twins, since they were believed to possess unique powers. So incredible was the power of twins, (Tremearne 1970), that they could pick up scorpions.

### Hospitality

Hospitality and kindness, especially to strangers were considered relevant with regard to the indigenous Hausa education. As long distance travellers, parents taught their children to be hospitable and nice to strangers so that they could expect the same treatment when they grew up and began to travel. By so doing, children were prepared early in life, with regard to their safety and comfort in their eventual travels. This unquestionably supports the views of people like Graham (1971), who have argued that school education should not be regarded as the only type of education, and that before the advent of western education, the indigenous education prepared the child fully to take up his or her place as a useful member of the society. But no discussion regarding the indigenous Hausa education can be complete without reference to the status of women prior to the advent of western-type education.

### The Status of Women in the Traditional Hausa Society

In the traditional Hausa society, women did a lot of work, including farming. A wife was seen as an asset, as well as an investment. It was believed that once married, a woman would earn more than enough to maintain herself, but she must produce sons and daughters. Tremearne (1970), reckoned that 'gworo' were exceptionally valued in the old Hausa society because they were sent to a girl when a suitor proposed marriage. It is widely believed (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966), (Azinge 1971), that in the traditional Hausa society, women were respected. Some were known to have played important roles including Queen Amina. She was powerful and competent. One of the northern emirates



was named after her younger sister Zaria. Hogben and Kirk-Greene, believe that the Hausa were originally matrilineal in social structure. They claim that the Queen Mother or 'Magira' had enormous powers and that the prefix 'Mai' in the name of some Hausa kings, means - son of a daughter. Hogben and Kirk-Greene, maintain that it was probably after their conversion to Islam that the Hausa started counting their descent through males.

Under the Islamic religion, (Azinge 1971) women underwent untold humiliation and their self esteem suffered considerably as a result. It is believed that the Jihad led by Usman Dun Fodio in 1804 was partly to improve the status of Hausa women. After noting carefully the detestable way Hausa men treated their female counterparts, Usman Dam Fodio was said to have burst out in a rage:

*"Men treat these beings like household implements which became broken after long use and which are then thrown out on the dung-heap. This is an abominable crime! Alas! How can they thus shut up their wives, their daughters, and their captives, in the darkness of ignorance, while daily they impart knowledge to their students."* p. 6

Obviously, if the same condition existed with regard to women in the traditional Hausa society, there might not have been queens, like queen Amina.

Having examined certain aspects of the indigenous education which Hausa children received in the traditional society, it is clear that preparing girls for marriage was given a lot of attention. This undoubtedly shows that as far as Nigeria is concerned, marriage has always been regarded as a duty every female owes to her family and the society at large.

#### (b) The Fulani: Their Indigenous Education

It should be noted that the original inhabitants of the North were the Hausa. Before the advent of the Fulani, the Hausa were pagans; they were said to have led a corrupt life. It was believed that Shehu Usman Dan Fodio led the Jihad of 1804, partly to root out corruption among the Habe rulers and to impose the Islamic laws, and ultimately, (Azinge 1971), improve the conditions under which women were kept. Since the Fulani are a

nomadic race, their arrival in Nigeria and subsequent settlement therein, has always been connected with their relentless search for pasture, with regard to their animals. But to settle, the Fulani had to subdue the original inhabitants, the Hausa, by waging a Jihad (holy war). It is however worth noting that in spite of the Jihad, the Fulani never achieved complete subjugation of the Hausa. Meek (1931), and Tremearne (1970), have both strongly indicated that today, groups of unsubjugated Hausa live in parts of northern Nigeria.

It is believed that unlike the Hausa, the Fulani have always led a simple life. Since they are essentially a nomadic race, the traditional education of their children understandably, centred around animal husbandry. In terms of the assumption often made about the poor mentality of the Fulani, Stenning (1959), has this to say:

*“Although their material equipment is rudimentary, their social groupings small, fluid, and isolated, the Wodaabe are not in the classical sense a primitive people...They trade and barter continuously with non-Fulani communities whose languages they speak.”* p. 24.

It is important to understand that some Fulani became overwhelmed with the strain and stresses of nomadic life and gave it up. These are known as ‘house Fulani’ while the nomadic ones are ‘cattle Fulani’. Douglas (1963), highlighted the untold distress and strain inherent in pastoral existence. . Stenning has however revealed that the House Fulani have to face the problem of staying in one place, given that it is not their natural way of life.

#### (c) The Yoruba: Their Indigenous Education

The quality of the indigenous education which Yoruba children received, was enviable. As early as possible, they were given training in toileting, (Akinde 1990), socialisation and good behaviour. It is worthy of note that among the Yoruba and the Igbo, the training of a child has always been regarded as a communal task involving not only the child’s parents and immediate relatives, but also his or her distant relatives and non-relatives within the entire community and, at times beyond, (Fafunwa 1974; Graham 1971).

This reflects the way children are regarded among the Yoruba. A child for example, is not seen as belonging just to his immediate family, but to the larger society.

The Yoruba, like people in most other parts of the country, placed a great deal of emphasis on physical, intellectual and vocational education, during the traditional era. Yoruba children for instance, had to be introduced to the poetic and prophetic aspects of the spoken arts like the 'Ijala' chant, which is one of the most important, and fascinating, forms of art developed by the Yoruba. The 'Ijala' is the oral poetry of the Yoruba hunters, and features various aspects of the Yoruba way of life.

### Yoruba and Nupe Mathematics

Children were also taught mathematics, including Nupe mathematics, which was very simple. For instance, in Nupe, the figure 400 ( $200 \times 2$ ) would be expressed as 'kpa guba', 6,000 ( $2,000 \times 3$ ) was 'gba guta' and 10,000 ( $2,000 \times 5$ ), 'gba gutsn'. The Yoruba have names for various fractions; for example  $\frac{1}{2}$  is 'ido meji' or 'abo',  $\frac{1}{4}$  is 'ida merin', and  $\frac{1}{10}$  is 'ida mewa' etc. It is noteworthy that no number is too large or too small for the Yoruba to decipher. It is believed that like all good mathematicians, the Yoruba seek ways and means of simplifying their numerals. For instance, 200 is igbi; 2,000 is egbaa or egbewa. Although the Yoruba numerical system is similar to that of the Nupe there are a few exceptions because it is believed that the Nupe system is elaborate, lucid, practical and unlimited in scope; . Consequently a large figure like 3,600,000 is expressed simply as 'gba kpotwani'.

However, in terms of space and volume, the Yoruba have a unique and fascinating method of expressing them; for example, mile is 'ibuso', which is the distance estimated that a man carrying an average load would walk before making a short stop to stretch his neck. 'Awe' is about two yards a full arm span, from the tip of the right hand to that of the left. The fact that in the traditional Yoruba society children were taught mathematics,

shows how knowledgeable the Yoruba are. Not surprisingly, Bascom (1969), spoke of Yoruba supremacy in education.

### Special Education for Girls

Yoruba girls received special training at home under the watchful eyes of their mothers. They were taught to take care of children, prepare food, make clothes, wash utensils, take care of the dwelling places etc. In addition, girls had to assist their mothers in their different trades. Girls were above all, given a code of conduct in preparation for their future role as wives. It is important to note that Muckenhirn (1966), has strongly indicated that this aspect of Yoruba culture, which in the traditional society ensured that girls stayed at home most of the time, in order to do the domestic chores, is still very much in existence, and that it is one of the factors that have seriously undermined the education of Yoruba girls in Nigeria today.

### Farming, Trading and Weaving

Farming was part of the indigenous education in the traditional Yoruba society. Unlike domestic chores, it was deemed necessary that both boys and girls should learn how to farm. (Atanda 1973), claims that in those days, farming was done on family basis, although communal farming was also practised. It should be stressed that at first, farming was simply a way of providing food for the family - subsistence agriculture. But later, the need to dispose of the surplus led to the springing up of local markets, where trade by barter developed rapidly in order to serve the needs of individuals.

Weaving featured very strongly in the indigenous education of Yoruba girls. They were taught how to weave various items, and in trading they had to learn among other things, the art of bargaining. Amechi (1970), thinks that in trading Yoruba women could be likened to their Igbo counterparts.

## Craft

Only boys were taught crafts. They learnt through the traditional system of apprenticeship, involving in most cases departure from home throughout the duration of the training. The length of time depended on the type of craft or trade, as some were more demanding than others. Boys who were slow learners, understandably spent more time as apprentices, as opposed to their more brilliant counterparts. There is however, no doubt that blacksmithing was the most sought after, in terms of male occupation.

## Blacksmithing

The most enviable job for men in those days was blacksmithing and it formed a very important part of the indigenous education with regard to boys. In an extensive interview carried out by Professor Fafunwa (1974), the overwhelming majority of those he interviewed indicated strongly that blacksmithing was exclusively men's occupation. Fafunwa has explained that the reason why blacksmithing was held in high esteem was because it involved working with iron, of which 'Ogun' was the God. It is noteworthy that Ogun is the Yoruba god of war, (Douglas and Kaberry 1969). Consequently, Ogun was one of the most revered gods in Yorubaland, in those days and possibly today. The unique importance attached to blacksmithing was discernible in the fact that the boys, to be apprenticed were never less than 7 years of age; whereas in other trades, they could be as young as 5. It should however, be noted that the awe which blacksmithing commanded in the traditional society, was not unique with regard to the Yoruba of Nigeria.

It seems that elsewhere in Africa, the situation was more or less the same. It was strongly believed in the old society, that blacksmithing involved supernatural forces. Laye (1954), recalls how, as a young boy, growing up in Guinea, he heard his father's magical incantations because his father was a blacksmith. The incantations involved the

evocation of the spirits of air, fire and gold. Laye did also see a little snake appear each time his father was about to start smelting the gold. The snake was believed to have special powers which helped his father, by making the smelting of gold possible. In a moving description of how the smelting of gold was actually done, Laye shows that it was a captivating operation:

*“When finally the gold began to melt, I used to feel like shouting, and perhaps we would all have shouted if we had not been forbidden to make a sound: I would be trembling, and certainly everyone else would be trembling as we sat watched my father stirring the mixture...the gold now had the fluidity of water...”* p. 26.

Laye’s experience, undoubtedly adds to the mystery in which blacksmithing was shrouded in the traditional African society, and not just in Nigeria. The mysticism, which surrounded it, also meant that only boys could learn it. In the case of the Yoruba of Nigeria, blacksmithing was exceptionally important given the numerous wars - just as metallurgy was to the Northern Emirates and to defend their realm, kings and emperors were often involved in expensive wars.

### The Elders

In the traditional Yoruba society, respect for the elders was a serious issue and children were taught as early as possible to respect their elders. Even today, a lot of respect is accorded to the elders and chiefs. It is believed that wisdom, foresight, knowledge and experience etc. go with age. This could partly explain the elaborate and complex greeting patterns often associated with the Yoruba. For instance, verbal greetings are accompanied by physical gestures. A Yoruba man will prostrate to his elders and chief, even if the chief is younger. He rolls himself on the ground while greeting an Oba. The woman kneels. Male and female peers shake hands only.

### Boys and the Age-grade System

At a certain stage in the life of Yoruba boys, age-grading became inevitably important during the traditional era, unlike their Hausa counterparts, (Gibbs 1965). In agrarian terms, the age-grade system promoted the production of food, by making it possible for vast areas to be cultivated in a relatively short period of time, through collective work. A Yoruba boy had to be in the service of his father until he married. But, there are certain parts of Africa where a man's freedom is not assured, even by marriage. Among the Taita of southern Kenya, for example, Harris (in Meyer Fortes) (1962), has noted that a man still remains under his father's service after marriage. The father controls the property of the entire family, including the livestock earned by his son, or sons. It is a father's death, followed by the division of his estate, that finally makes a man free. Interestingly, the age-grade featured strongly in traditional Yoruba farming just as it did in Afikpo cooperative labour, (Forde 1964). But girls were not initiated in the age-grade system - a situation which left them vulnerable in the society. For instance, they could not unite and support one another like their male counterparts, especially in times of adversity.

### The Yoruba and Urban Life

As one of the largest ethnic groups South of the Sahara, the Yoruba have always had a tradition of urban life. This is believed, (Bascom 1969), to have given them a unique place, not only among African societies, but also among non-literate peoples, the world over. In economics, government and, in particular, art and religion, they rank among those other West African groups that have the highest level of cultural achievement in sub-Saharan Africa; including the 'Binis' of Nigeria. Although the origins of the Yoruba have not yet been firmly established, it is reckoned that their culture has influenced and enriched the culture of many places; including the Caribbean and South America; notably Brazil. Yoruba culture is also known to have hugely influenced Cuba's culture. Yoruba slaves and

their descendants are primarily credited with the spreading of Yoruba culture. Linguistically, Bascom (1969), claims that the Yoruba language belongs to the Kwa Branch from which most Nigerian languages originated. The Yoruba believe that their origins could be traced from their most important city, Ife, where, according to Yoruba legend, the earth and the first human beings were created. As early as possible Yoruba children were taught the history of their community.

### The Igbo: Their Indigenous Education

It should be stressed at this stage that unlike the Yoruba who have always been associated with urban life, (Bascom 1969), the Igbo are essentially rural dwellers. But there are striking similarities with regard to the indigenous education which Igbo and Yoruba children received in the traditional society. This does not conceal the fact that the Igbo are unique in their own way. Ottenberg (1971), holds the view that:

*“the Igbo, or Ibo are one of the most unusual peoples in Africa. They are known for their high achievement skills, their tendency to migrate from their home areas, and the major role that they played in the formation of Biafra and in the civil war in Nigeria. They are both hated and admired by other Africans.”* p. xi.

It is important to bear Ottenberg's view in mind when discussing any issue involving the Igbo. In terms of the indigenous Igbo education, it should be noted that it centred around superstition, taboos, good behaviour, land, history, trading, apprenticeship, marriage, circumcision, the age-grade and the initiation rites.

### Superstition

One must not lose sight of the fact that the traditional Igbo society was inhabited by pagans. It was a world of make belief and superstition, (Green 1964), (Uchendu 1965), (Ottenberg 1971). As superstition dominated the life of the people, children had to be taught about the gods and spirits, including the ancestral and the water spirits, (Talbot 1967), (Okigbo 1971). The Igbo belief in superstition inevitably led to rituals, head-



hunting and human sacrifice, (Murdock 1959). It is however worth noting that in the olden days, superstition was not confined to the Igbo. It was widespread (Hunter 1967), (Spencer 1980), and (Hardy 1985). Not surprisingly, for the Igbo children of the pre-colonial era, superstition was seen as a crucial aspect of their indigenous education. As they grew older, they began to realise that superstitious beliefs placed the female members of the society at a disadvantage in every aspect of human endeavour.

They resulted for instance, in twin murder, and untold suffering for the women, except in northern Nigeria where surprisingly superstitious beliefs led to the preservation of twins, because of the supernatural powers, twins were said to possess. Among the Efik speaking people of Nigeria, (Talbot 1967), superstitious beliefs brought about elaborate burial rites, as well as brutal twin murder. Susceptibility to minor ailments could result in the killing of infants, because it was believed that they would never survive, or if they did, they would only be weaklings in a society that looked down on the weak. Women for example, were expected to work relentlessly for the sustenance of their family. It seemed no part of the world escaped the scourge of superstition, although in the traditional Igbo society it made life almost unbearable for the female members of the society.

### Taboos

In the olden days, teaching Igbo children the taboos of society was not a simple task. Some of the taboos included what children should eat, when not to use the left hand, the breaking of kola nuts, women in menstruation, the ostracism of the OSU (outcasts), etc.

In the traditional Igbo society, children were not allowed to eat eggs. It was believed that if a child ate eggs, he or she would become a thief. It was also a taboo to shake hands with the left hand. Girls and women did not, (and still do not), break kola nuts. It was a taboo for boys and men to eat food prepared by women in menstruation, in some sections of Igboland. This was reminiscent of the Katab of northern Nigeria. As

close association or marriage with the 'OSU' was regarded as the worst calamity that could befall a family, parents had to teach their children about the Caste System.

### Good Behaviour

Unlike the contemporary Igbo Society where the 'anything goes' attitude, is discernible in the way many youngsters behave, children of the traditional Igbo society had to conform. This is hardly surprising given that deviation was not tolerated. Since deviation from the norm was frowned upon, parents therefore spared themselves no pain in teaching their offspring good behaviour, which included over and above all, good table manners, how to behave in public and respect for the elders. It was deemed necessary that girls should receive more rigorous lessons in good behaviour than boys, because in the traditional society any little thing could render a girl unmarriageable - a situation which for the girl and her parents could mean hell on earth.

### Land

In the traditional Igbo society, one of the most important aspects of the indigenous education concerned land. As early as possible, parents showed their children the family farm lands, especially boys, as they were the ones that would eventually inherit them. Owing to its relevance to food production land was (and still is) highly valued, an indispensable possession. Kenyatta (1956), referred to land as the soul of his people. It should also be noted that in the olden days land was crucial with regard to the most coveted men's titles in Igboland, 'Ezeji', (King of Yams), (Achebe 1958). During her study of Land Tenure in Igboland Green (1964), also became aware of the special value attached to land and ownership of land.

But as far as women are concerned land has always meant extra burden since they have to farm extensively in order to feed their family, heavy domestic chores notwithstanding. While at Umeke for instance, Green (1964), noticed that women were

involved in too much work and were emaciated. Commenting on the effect of excessive labour on the health of the women Green stressed the fact that:

*“...the women have much arduous work with their farming, cooking and palm oil making. It is small wonder that they are thin as rakes and often show signs of physical strain, and their frequent references to the amount of work they have to do are amply justified.”* p. 39.

Women in the contemporary Igbo society, face the same daily strain and stress. For example in families where both parents are well-educated and have jobs, when they come back from work, it is the women who will be expected to cook and do all the other domestic chores.

As farming was very important, young boys learnt from their fathers how to cultivate yam - regarded as a man's crop. They were given their own yam seedlings to grow, when they became adolescents. The boys were encouraged to work hard and to ensure that each year their harvest was bigger than the previous year. It was by so doing that they would ultimately become independent young men in economic terms.

### History

Parents and adult relatives were obliged to teach children in the household the history of their family tree, the locality and the Igbo society at large. Evening was the most cherished time of day, owing to the ease and comfort it provided, in terms of teaching youngsters. Story telling was the most popular method. Boys stayed close to their father and the older male adults. Stories and folklores were told, which included deeds of bravery designed to encourage boys. In addition, the youngsters were taught proverbs, riddles, the names of the market days etc. Although children were taught proverbs, they were not expected to use them in speech until later in life. This is because proverb is the language of the elders, it reflects wisdom, and among the Igbo wisdom goes with age.

Meanwhile, girls were busy preparing supper with their mother. It was also an ideal time for a mother to teach her daughters history, and not just food preparation and domestic

chores. Girls had to learn all aspects of the traditional way of life, which in time they had to pass on to their own offspring. This is why indigenous education placed a lot of emphasis on continuity. There is hardly any room for either innovations or change. In Nigeria women are seen as a symbol of continuity. This partly explains why marriage is regarded as indispensable and single women are frowned upon. If a girl was already engaged she was told as much as possible about the family history of her future husband, as well as that of his village, which would in due course replace the girl's own maternal village. This aspect of indigenous education was designed to help young girls to settle down with minimum discomfort in their new homes - so that the period of readjustment did not become too distressing for them. The fact that in most cases the girls were very young, made this type of education truly invaluable.

### Trading

In the olden days, trading was an essential part of the daily life of the Igbo. Consequently, children had to be taught as early as possible, the art of trading. Boys did not learn as much as girls. A boy for instance, learnt essentially about distant trading that was dominated by men. It involved mainly the buying and selling of domestic animals including goats and sheep. Unlike women, men did not bargain. A girl on the other hand had to accompany her mother to the local markets, to learn among other things, how to bargain and haggle. It was believed that until a woman had learnt to bargain and haggle she would not trade successfully. It was also felt that girls could only learn most effectively through observation.

Trading was so much relished by the Igbo, especially in the traditional era that Basden (1966), claimed that to deprive the Igbo of their trade, would mean cutting off their sources of pleasure. Basden's view, was supported by Green's (1964), personal experience following her daily interaction with 'Unueke' women which lasted for many years. That

close association, coupled with the rigorous manner in which women and girls were taught the various methods of trading, convinced Green that the Igbo might farm out of necessity, but they traded not just out of necessity but also out of pleasure.

In reappraising the importance attached to trading with regard to the indigenous education of children in the traditional Igbo society, it is important to remember that markets in those days were indispensable in terms of the dissemination of news. This is mainly because the sources of communication that are available today, notably, newspapers, radio, television etc. were non-existent before the advent of western education. Therefore any couple who did not attend the markets frequently might miss out on vital pieces of information, especially those relating to suspected invasions and the possible venue for temporary exile with regard to women and children.

### Apprenticeship

Unquestionably, apprenticeship was a very strong feature of the indigenous education of boys, prior to the introduction of western-type education. Just as it was deemed necessary that for a girl to understand the art of trading most effectively, she had to accompany her mother to the local markets so that she could learn by observation and personal experience, it was thought that the most beneficial way for a boy to learn a particular trade was through apprenticeship. As from the age of 5 a boy could become an apprentice. However, the required minimum age for blacksmith apprenticeship was 7 years. This could have something to do with the mysticism that surrounded Blacksmithing (Laye, 1959).

The length of time a boy served as an apprentice differed from one trade to another, depending on the nature of a particular trade, and how quickly an individual boy could learn. The master of a trade had the final say, since he had to indicate when a boy had learnt enough to rely completely on himself. Hence, a period of apprenticeship could last

from months to years. In some cases a boy could be his father's apprentice. For instance, if a man was a blacksmith and wanted his son to inherit his trade, he might not send him to another blacksmith. But if the man felt that his son would learn faster, if apprenticed to someone else, he could send him to a relative. As it was a highly skilled trade, only specially gifted families could do blacksmithing. As a result, it was not as common as other trades like village architecture, animal husbandry, basket and mat making, etc. It was also exclusive for boys and men.

In most cases, being an apprentice could mean a very young boy living far away from his parents for many months or even years. At the end of his apprenticeship, a boy had to work for some years for his master in order to earn enough money to start his own business. Some masters could deliberately prolong the period of apprenticeship, thereby taking advantage of the youngster's vulnerability, since his parents were not near to protect his interests. After waiting for some years a man could, out of frustration take his son away from his master. One of the problems was that the boy might not be able to start his own trade, which meant that all his years of hard work and apprenticeship came to nothing - a nightmare that might haunt him for the rest of his life.

### Circumcision

In the traditional society, circumcision in some African communities was not just a minor operation. Among the Igbo of Nigeria it was a sensitive trade - the prerogative of certain families. It was only done by women. They were so rare that in a village group, there might just be one family. For instance, in Nsu village group there was only one family and the women were known as 'ndi nka'. A child must be circumcised on the 8th day after birth. Owing to the delicate nature of the operation only middle aged women circumcised babies. Although they learnt in their youth how to do circumcision, they must wait until much later in life before they could put into practice what they learnt as young

women. The operation was fraught with enormous risks, because in pre-colonial Nigeria, there were no hospitals or health centres. consequently, some children bled to death, as 'ndi nka' could not arrest excessive bleeding.

Circumcision in the traditional society was a big ceremony, in some parts of Africa a ritual culminating in initiation, thus reflecting the rites of passage (rites de passage). Laye (1954), in a moving account of his own circumcision as a boy in his native Guinea, has disclosed that at the age of 14, all the young initiates were taken from their homes into the bush - away from the gaze of women. The ceremony symbolised physical, mental and spiritual growth or transformation from boyhood to manhood. It should however be noted that the individual, might not be ready at 14 to assume a man's responsibility, Laye for example, indicated after his operation, that to the society he was a man but inside him, he still felt like a child. Laye's experience is significant, because it raises the question as to what extent the society should be involved in a person's private life. In the case of Laye, how can a simple operation automatically transform a young boy of 14 into an adult man, with all the responsibilities that go with adulthood?

Surprisingly, among the Bantu speaking Gisu of Uganda, the operation was particularly more severe in the North than in the South. Douglas and Kaberry (1969), have attributed the severity to the tension between father and son, with regard to pressures relating to land ownership. It is worthy of note that the severity of the operation in the northern parts of Gisu (which is related to land tension) reflects both the importance as well as the indispensability of land to the African as already discussed. It should however be pointed out that in some African countries including Nigeria, although land is crucially important, it has no connection with circumcision. Besides, whereas in Nigeria people (ndi nku) can earn a living by circumcising babies, the same is not the case in most places including Uganda.

## Marriage

At the very heart of the indigenous education which girls received in the traditional Igbo society, was marriage. It was regarded as a woman's special duty - which she owed to her family, and to the society at large. Her innumerable responsibilities included looking after her husband, rearing and upbringing of children, domestic chores, providing for the family, etc. It is true to say that in the contemporary Igbo society hardly anything has changed. Owing to the extraordinary importance attached to marriage, young girls spent more or less their entire time learning about marriage and its implications in the traditional society. In some cases, young girls of five or even younger were involved (Leith - Ross 1939). Conscious of the fact that their daughter could be sent back to them after marriage by her husband if she was found wanting in any way, parents, especially mothers, tried hard to ensure that their girls were sufficiently informed with regard to marriage. Consequently, female indigenous education in terms of marriage fell into four discernible stages.

### Learning by Observation.

Since the Igbo believe that in every learning situation, a child might not be able to grasp all that is being taught, a lot of emphasis is placed on observation. Not surprisingly, before the advent of western influence, a young girl was always close to her mother - watching everything she did. Every evening for instance, while her brother was with their father, she accompanied her mother to the kitchen, taking note of how supper was being prepared and occasionally helping in any way she could. This was also an ideal time for a mother to teach her daughter the history of the family, the locality and that of the wider Igbo society as already indicated. After the meal, mother and daughter washed up while the male members of the family retired. Some male adults would stay much longer to drink palm wine that had been made deliberately strong. It was believed that the effect wore off during sleep.



In the morning the girl and her mother swept the compound - an arduous task given the size of an average compound in those days. Before long the girl would sweep the compound alone. In a household where there were no male children, she had to learn to feed the domestic animals in the morning. Later she followed her mother to the farm - noting among other things, how various crops were planted. As cassava was (and still is), the main staple food, learning the early stages of its preparation with regard to 'fufu' could be a daunting task, especially for a young girl. For example, she had to help in carrying the cassava to the village stream - where it was deposited in the shallowest part of the stream. It had to be visible so that it would not be trodden upon. She and her mother returned to the stream after four or five days, by which time the cassava had become very soft, ready to be boiled and pounded, and eaten as 'fufu', with soup. The soup was deliciously prepared with various fresh vegetables (Greene 1964). Until a girl had learnt to cook 'fufu' and soup, she was regarded as knowing nothing about food preparation generally, and therefore ineligible for marriage.

A young girl must also follow her mother to the local markets in order to learn the art of petty trading which was epitomised in haggling and bargaining. Like cassava preparation - until a girl could haggle and bargain, it was thought she could never make a successful trader (as already mentioned). In marital terms, she was also expected to be a failure. Her inability to haggle and bargain meant among other things, that she would not be able to purchase food items at reasonable prices, and if that be the case, the continued existence of her family particularly in terms of day to day sustenance was in doubt. Because she lived in Nigeria for many years, Green thinks that the extraordinary ability of

Igbo women to haggle and bargain set them apart from their counterparts in other parts of the country, in commercial terms.

### Playing a Mother's Role

Although Igbo women dominated the local markets in the olden days, once in a while they did venture out to the distant ones. Because of the enormous distance involved, the women who attended them did so under pressure, either they were abjectly poor or their children were constantly ill. The availability of rare items at affordable prices made the distant markets irresistible. In families where children were constantly ill, for instance, rare birds, turtles, tortoises, white eggs etc needed by witch doctors for healing youngsters could be easily purchased. Going to a distant market meant a mother staying away from her family more or less for a whole day - from very early in the morning till late in the night. On such occasions it became inevitable that a young girl should play the role of a mother; in order to alleviate the hardship caused by the vacuum created by her mother's absence. It is however important to note that in the traditional Igbo society, such a role was considered indispensable, because of all the stages of marriage preparation, it was regarded as the most practical. Owing to its significance, every young girl had to assume a mother's role once in a while within the family system including families where mothers were not involved in distant trading. In such homes, opportunities had to be created for girls from time to time so that they did not miss out on a unique experience believed to be one of the best ways of preparing a girl for marriage and motherhood.

The young girl usually began the day by waking up very early and sweeping the compound when others were still asleep. Compounds had to be swept before the elders woke up. She also had to fetch water and prepare breakfast. After the morning chores, she went to the farm and returned in the afternoon to prepare lunch for the family. She attended a local market soon after lunch. If there was no firewood in the house, she had to

fetch some when she came back from the market. In the rainy season wood gathering could be an arduous task because finding dry wood would not be easy.

The moment supper was ready, she set out to meet her mother - taking with her water, light snacks including tapioca (from cassava), coconut or palm kernel, for her mother, who would then be on her way back from the distant market. The above snacks were popular among the Igbo of 'Nsu' village group. The girl must walk as fast as possible in order to meet her mother while she was still many miles away from home, to relieve her of the heavy load on her head, and at the same time offer her the light refreshment. It was without doubt a moment eagerly awaited by every mother who attended a distant market. The distance in some cases could be more than twice a marathon. However exhausted mothers might be, boys never bothered to offer any form of relief, They only pursued their own individual interests which included playing with fellow boys and trapping lizards and bush rats. Arguably the distant markets provided the only occasion when a mother who had no female offspring might wish that she had at least one. This is hardly surprising because for a mother with only male children - not only that no one met her, to relieve her of her burden, and offer her snacks on the days she went to the distant markets, she had to cook and do all the domestic chores when she came back however late or exhausted she might be. Considering all that girls had to do, it is not surprising that domestic chores interfered with their school education, especially in the early years of formal education.

### Good Behaviour

Although in the contemporary society, some youngsters tend to behave anyhow, in the olden days, a girl's behaviour could determine whether or not she was worthy of marriage. Consequently, great care was taken by parents, notably mothers, to ensure that their daughters' behaviour was impeccable, so that their chances of marriage were not jeopardised. So, as early as possible, things that girls should or should not do, were spelt

out. For instance, among the Igbo of Nsu village group a lot of importance was (and still is) attached to greeting. A young girl had to learn to greet all her senior relatives every morning. When and wherever she encountered anyone chronologically older than herself, she must greet the person. If she failed to do so people would complain to her parents, referring to her as an ill mannered young lady. No one would recommend her for marriage to anyone. On the contrary, if it was known that she was getting marriage proposals, the interested young men and their relatives were told secretly about the girl's so called ill manners, and warned about dire consequences should they refuse to heed the warning. One of the main problems was that the elders might refuse to bless the girl's marriage.

### Early Rising

In the pre colonial era, getting up very early in the morning in Igboland was not only regarded as a sign of smartness - but also of enormous strength. It was a strong proof that a girl could be a wife and a mother, capable among other things, of providing for her husband and children. For example, she would be able to go to the farm at least by the third cock crow (approximately 5 am). Early rising also meant that she would sweep the compound and fetch water while others were still asleep. In some cases fetching water involved trekking enormous distances. As a woman's ability to sustain her family was of paramount importance, a girl who could not get up very early obviously stood little or no chance of marriage.

### 'Mgbede' (the fattening ceremony)

Without doubt, the most celebrated way of preparing a girl for marriage in the olden days in Igboland, was by helping her go through 'Mgbede' (Onochie 1979), (Talbot 1969). As the name implies, the main purpose of this aspect of the indigenous education was to ensure that a girl was as fat as possible before marriage. Excessive weight was regarded as a sign of beauty and good health, so, the fatter the girl, the happier her parents and her

future husband, and so the bigger her dowry. It is worthy of note that the anthropologist, Goody (1973), has indicated that in some parts of Africa including Ghana, the size of the bride price depended on a girl's beauty, which included her weight. In the traditional society the Igbo frowned upon slimness because it was strongly associated with infertility.

People believed that a slim woman could not bear children, or if she did, she would be incapable of having many children. In a society where the worth of a man was measured by the numerical strength of his wives, children and domestic animals, slimness was therefore a liability. For example, if a man had only a wife and few children, it meant that socially he was doomed, given the fact that he would never farm extensively in order to produce the number of yams that would enable him to take the most coveted title of the time, namely 'Ezeji', (king of yam). Title taking was very important in the traditional Igbo society, (Achebe 1964), because of the role of titled men and the great respect accorded them, as opposed to their non-titled counterparts, whose words were never heeded in gatherings, and were often looked down upon.

Not surprisingly, all over Igboland, young women yearned to be not just fat, but very fat, because they knew it would enhance their eligibility in terms of marriage. Partly to ensure that girls had a lot of weight before marriage, 'Mgbede' was introduced: However, not every girl had the privilege of experiencing it as it was very expensive. Only rich parents could finance the fattening ceremony. The duration of 'Mgbede' was dependent on the financial capability of parents. For instance, it could last a few months, or years. During that time, the girl did no work including domestic chores. She was kept in a special place and fed on very rich and delicious food. Under no circumstances did she leave the 'Mgbede' house. She only ate and slept. Apart from her mother and other very close relatives no one else was allowed to see her.

Interestingly, 'Mgbede' was also meant to prepare the young girls mentally, emotionally and even spiritually for marriage. It was believed that the ceremony offered them a lot of time to find out from their mother what marriage was all about especially in terms of commitment, expectations and reality. They had to focus their mind on what would be expected of them once they got married, notably by their immediate family, the extended family and the wider society. They were encouraged to ask questions and to express their fears and worries, if any, so that they could find out all the necessary information that would help to equip them for the task that lay ahead. Praying to the gods and to the spirits of the ancestors was a crucial aspect of 'Mgbede', since the gods had to provide many things including offspring. Young girls were not unaware of the devastating consequences of childlessness, in a society where a man's wealth was gauged by the numerical strength of his human and material possessions.

'Mgbede' provided the girl's family and that of her fiancé enough time to make secret enquiries. Usually, it was during that time that the real truth about the social status of the young lady and her would-be-husband, was ascertained. For example, if the girl was an 'Osu' (untouchable) she was dumped instantly by her fiancé. The same harsh treatment was meted out to prospective bridegrooms if they were found to be 'Osu'. During 'Mgbede', the elders of the two villages had to find out also if there was any trace of biological relationship between the two people who were engaged, and whether fortune tellers had said anything negative about the proposed marriage. If a gourd of wine broke while it was being taken by the prospective bridegroom and his relatives to their in-laws, that was the end of the impending marriage. It was regarded as a direct intervention by the gods, and a very serious warning from them, in terms of the calamity that would befall the two people should they marry.

All the pieces of information indicated above were revealed to the 'Mgbede' girls, so that when they became parents, they would educate their own daughters. This is why, in the traditional Igbo society, marriage preparation was regarded as an indispensable aspect of girls' indigenous education. It could therefore be argued that 'Mgbede' helped to perpetuate and reinforce the ideology of continuity, which was central to the indigenous education of the Igbo.

It should be noted that for some girls marriage preparation started very early in life, in some cases as early as the age of five, or even younger, Talbot (1967), Leith-Ross (1965). It is worthy of note that during Talbot's stay among the Efik of Calabar, he found out that the fattening ceremony was very popular and that it was during that time that uncircumcised girls underwent the operation. Talbot did also discover that Efik girls were betrothed between the age of two or three. As soon as the girl could walk, she moved to and fro between her parents' home and that of her future husband. Because she was very young, her own preparation had to take place in more than one home - involving two highly experienced women, namely her own mother and her future mother-in-law. Although the two women featured in the indigenous education of the little girl, in actual fact, the young girl was obliged to pay more attention to her future mother-in-law since she would sooner than later live with her son. She was therefore thought to be in a better position to teach among other things; the family history and traditions, and to reveal the enemies as well as the special friends of her family. The little girl also had to learn the location of the local markets and the family property including land and trees, especially palm trees. With the passage of time, the young girl was taught food preparation, the culture and the traditional ethos of the village, where she would live for the rest of her life, since she would cease to be a member of her original family after marriage. It should be noted that an older girl also

had to learn the way of life, regarding her future husband's people; but unlike her very young counterpart, some of the teaching was done by her fiancé.

### Igbo Taboos

Igbo children were taught the taboos of the time, especially those that applied to their immediate locality. Children for instance, were not supposed to stare at adults or gaze into their eyes; in either case it would go down as an act of disrespect. It was a taboo, (and still is), to give or accept something or shake hands with the left hand. Only widows ate with the left hand. In some sections, men did not eat food prepared by women in menstruation, very reminiscent of the Katab of northern Nigeria, (Meek 1931). Children were also given strict moral lessons, the need for chastity, honesty, truthfulness, consideration for others, hard work etc. was emphasised. Stealing was, (and still is), a serious crime and children were warned of dire consequences. Disrespect for the elders was a serious offence for old age was revered.

In the traditional Igbo society, the freeborn did not associate with the 'Osu' (the outcasts). In those days, the Osu were completely ostracised. They could only marry among themselves. It was regarded as a calamity of the worst kind for a freeborn to marry an 'Osu', (Achebe 1960; Green 1964). This is why in those days (and even today), parents and close relatives would make secret extensive enquiries about the social status of the person their son or daughter was intending to marry. The freeborn had therefore to teach their children to keep away from the children of the cursed, or the outcasts, as they were variously known. In the contemporary Igbo society, the Osu still exist, but they are no longer ostracised in the sense that they can use the local facilities like the streams, the markets, the church etc. at the same time as anyone else; but close association with the freeborn is still a taboo. For instance, there is still no inter-marriage.



## Boys and Age-Grade

Like his Yoruba counterpart, at a certain age in the life of the Igbo boy, age-grading became of paramount importance. Through various ceremonies in different localities, young boys were initiated into the adult world. Even in the present day society in parts of Okigwe, including Nsu in an expensive and elaborate ceremony, known as 'Iwa Akwa' (wearing cloth ceremony), young boys become men. Unless a male offspring undergoes this experience, he is not regarded as a man; however old he may be. The importance of this ceremony in the life of an 'Nsu' boy, cannot be over emphasised. This is because among other things, it validates his position as a man with all the rights that it entails, within his own immediate locality. Like the Yoruba, age-grading among the Igbo, was inextricably linked with agriculture. Men in the same age-grade, worked for each member of the age group. Consequently, food supplies increased as vast areas could be cultivated within a comparatively short period. In times of disaster, the victim received help from his age group. Similarly, in times of festivity like child-birth, naming ceremony, wedding etc., a man's peers gathered to rejoice with him.

Today, age-grading is still important among the Igbo, but it has to some extent, been affected by the modern way of life. For instance, in the traditional society, all the men in a given age-grade were illiterates and lived in the same village, and thus were able to meet regularly. Due to school education, in the contemporary society, many live and work far away from the villages. But they strive to keep in touch by communicating with those in the village. They send their monthly dues and attend their age-grade meetings when they can. The fact that age-grading does not play any political role in the Igbo society is to some extent, a worrying factor and has been criticised, (Green 1964), (Ottenberg 1971). In a bitter criticism, Green referred to the age-grade system in Nigeria as selfish and lacking in political and social significance.

The role attached to age-grading in parts of East Africa is unique. Kenyatta (1956) revealed how his Gikuyu upbringing, with its emphasis on age-grading, helped him to participate and play a leading role in the political affairs of his community and that of his country as a whole:

*“Following the tribal custom, I had to pass through the several stages of initiation along with my age-group, (Kehiomwere), and can therefore speak from personal experience of the rites and ceremonies...”* (preface) xix.

It is noteworthy that Kenyatta participated fully in the activities of his age-grade, and was ultimately chosen as its leader. The leadership position he held within his age-group enabled him to play a leading part in the progressive movement among the Gikuyu. From being the leader of his age grade, he went on to assume the leadership of the entire Kenyan people, until his death in 1978.

#### Igbo Cultural Complexity and Education

Owing to a lot of complexity in Igbo culture, informal education in the traditional society was not an easy task. For instance, in spite of the emphasis placed on seniority of age, women could not break kola nuts (they still cannot do so today), however old they might be. If a woman is the oldest in a gathering the breaking of the nut must be done by the oldest male present, be he a toddler. Ottenberg (1971), was so baffled by the complexity of culture in the Afikpo villages that he unequivocally stated:

*“One of the intriguing features of traditional Igbo society is its organisational complexity contrasted with the apparent diffuseness and general nature of its social roles...”* p. xiii.

Ottenberg claims that at Afikpo, one finds both patrilineal and matrilineal descent groups. He did not obviously expect to see matrilineal kinship, existing side by side in the same locality as patrilineal descent groups, given that Nigeria is arguably one of the strongest patrilineal societies in the world.

Cultural complexity is discernible in various parts of Africa. In Ghana, Goody (1973), noticed that although Lowil and Ashanti (both in Ghana), observe matrilineal kinship, pre-marital illegitimacy is accepted in the former, but forbidden in the latter. Goody has maintained that among the Lowil, girls are encouraged to have children before marriage. Such children are known as 'Yerbie' (house children) and are usually taken by the father of the girl's mother. In some cases, failure to bear children for their mother's father could prevent a girl from marrying.

Perhaps nowhere did the complexity of the traditional Nigerian society with its inherent cultural implications reach so enormous a scale, than in the way in which slaves were treated in various places. Dike (1956), who studied trade and politics in the Niger Delta between 1830 and 1885, has pointed out that a cruel master:

*"could, on occasion, take the life of his slave for very trifling offences."*  
p. 35

Ironically, in some other parts, slaves fared far much better. They were given the opportunity to use their talents and so, the cleverer or wiser a slave was, the greater his chances or opportunities for self-determination and freedom. They were accorded the same rights as their master's own children or, in certain circumstances, more. As children grew older they became aware of the complexities, including the inability of women to break kolanuts.

Not surprisingly, criticisms have been levelled against the traditional education. One of the commonest is that traditional African education was conservative and conforming, and consequently did not make any provisions for the child; either to effect a change or ultimately challenge those aspects of the society that were undesirable. The Ottenbergs (in Weiler 1964), for example, have argued that:

*"In a traditional society education prepares the individual to carry on more or less in the same ways in which his parents have lived. There is little emphasis on change or planning for new things, but a great deal of stress on the continuity of tradition."* P 27.

Another school of thought led by Fafunwa (1974), has stressed the fact that the assessment of any type of education should take into account the ability of that education to serve the needs of the individual at the material moment. It is important to bear in mind that in the traditional Nigerian society, in the absence of any other type of education, the traditional education filled the vacuum. The controversy surrounding the limited goals of traditional education, notwithstanding, one point is obvious; that is, traditional education laid emphasis on continuity and not on change. It is therefore this resistance to change that would prove crucial in the event of any external force or intervention, especially by way of alien institutions. It is important to remember that it was resistance to change that jeopardised the status of girls and women in the traditional society. With the introduction of school education that resistance was put to the test.

### **Part B - A Background to Educational Development in Nigeria**

Having examined in detail the indigenous Nigerian education in Part A, this section, will focus on the emergence of western-type or school education. One of the most important facts that should be borne in mind when discussing any type of education with regard to Nigeria is that - Nigeria is essentially a strong patrilineal society, the existence of a few matrilineal elements notwithstanding, like some parts of Old Bende division in the south-east, including Ohaffia. It is also important to note at this stage that in a patrilineal society, male dominance is inevitable.

#### **The Early European Incursions**

Although, there is some argument as to when school education reached Nigeria, Ogunsola (1974), thinks that modern educational development in Nigeria can be traced back to the early 16th century, when Portuguese missionaries visited the ancient Nigerian city of Benin and were granted permission by the Oba of Benin, to teach his sons and his

Chiefs' sons - the rudiments of Christianity. Fafunwa (1974), does also hold the view that the Portuguese were the first Europeans to set foot on what is today Nigeria, reaching the Gulf of Guinea in the later part of the 15th Century. He believes that a school was set up in the Oba's palace, solely for the education of his sons and the sons of his chiefs.

It should be noted that in Ghana (formerly Gold Coast), Portugal has also been acknowledged as the first European country to make an impact on the economy and school education of the people (Graham 1971). However, the main striking feature of the early European incursion, regarding school education in Nigeria, was the deliberate exclusion of the female offspring of the Oba and those of his Chiefs.

It is generally believed that the first English-speaking Christian missionaries arrived in what was to become Nigeria in the early 1840s, Turner (1967), Abernathy (1969), and Ogunsola (1974), have indicated that 1842, was the year that the first English missionaries landed in what later became, Nigeria. Fafunwa (1974), quotes the exact month as September. Significantly, Professor Biobaku (1957), has claimed that some Yoruba ex slaves sailed to Badagry from Freetown with European and Sierra Leonean squadrons. The first batch was said to have reached Badagry in 1839. Ironically, the ex slaves were to play an invaluable role with regard to formal education in Nigeria. It should be stressed at this stage that in this section, a great deal of effort will be made in terms of tracing the development of western-type education in Nigeria so that one can actually see how and when school education reached various parts of the country.

#### The Pioneer Missionaries and Early Education in the West

Paradoxically, early missionary interest in southern Nigeria was strongly linked with the ex slaves. In 1807, the slave trade was abolished in England, (Biobaku 1957), and all the slaves in British colonies were set free in 1833. Consequently, British ships began to suppress slave trade on the high seas, captured ships and set slaves free. This was

because when slave trade was made illegal, other European nations still carried on; especially, France, Portugal, Holland and Denmark. To resettle the freed slaves in 1787, the British colony of Sierra Leone was used to achieve this purpose. In the years that followed, slaves bound for the New World were rescued by the British squadron, and taken to the aptly named Sierra Leonean port of Freetown. While there, some of the ex slaves received Christian training and education, from philanthropic groups operating in the town.

It is worth noting that most of the African slaves, taken to Sierra Leone in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were Yoruba. By the late 1830s, they were ready to return to their home land. The impact of the ex slaves or 'Saros', as they were called, (Abernethy 1969), on education and social life, was tremendous and profound. This is because they had received training in religion, academic and technical matters that were not, at the time, available in their home land. As a result, they returned to the land of their birth in a position of strength, whereas they had left it in a position of utter helplessness and extreme weakness. They had had a taste of European life which set them apart from those who had never left home. Many of the returnees had been converted to Christianity while in Sierra Leone, not surprisingly they expressed a desire to have church ministers and teachers sent to them, so that they might renew their faith, and have their children instructed. Consequently, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1841 (Oguinsola 1974), James Fergusson, wrote:

*"So I humbly beseech you, by the name of Jehovah to send one of the messengers of God to teach us more about the way of salvation because I am now in a place of darkness where no light is...So I humbly beg of you that you...send us one of the servants of Christ to instruct us, by so doing, if we ourselves are well instructed, I will speak to them the same as I have been instructed."* p. 3.

It was in response to the above appeal that the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society arrived in September 1842, and began its work in the coastal town of Badagry, where it established a mission and built a school in 1842. In this way, the first missionary contact in modern times was made in Nigeria by the Wesleyans. Within three months, the

church Missionary Society also responded to the appeal for help by sending their agents, who arrived in Badagry first. It is worth noting that the Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman, son of a negro father and an English mother, and William de Craft, one of the earliest educated Ghanaians, led the Wesleyan Methodist Mission. While in Badagry, Freeman discovered that most of the ex slaves had gone to Abeokuta some 70 miles inland from Badagry, he decided to visit them at Abeokuta. He arrived there on Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> December 1842, and was well received by the Oba, Sodeke. Freeman built a second station and a small school. Meanwhile, the first school built in Badagry by Freeman and De Craft, named "Nursery of the Infant Church", (Fafunwa 1974), had enrolled 50 pupils. Most of them, understandably, were the children of the ex slaves, while the rest were the offspring of a few converts.

As already indicated, the Church Missionary Society responded to the appeal from the Sierra Leonean Saros, for help. Fafunwa (1974) holds the view that in spite of the fact that the Wesleyan Methodist were the first to start missionary activities in Nigeria, it was the Church Missionary Society (CMS) that made the greatest contribution with regard to early education in Nigeria. The CMS team was led by Townsend, Ajayi Crowther (an ex Yoruba slave), and Reverend Golmer. They landed first at Badagry in 1842. Their intention was to go straight to Abeokuta, but the death of Oba of Abeokuta - Sodeke, made it impossible, as they had to await the emergence of a new Oba who would grant them the permission to go to Abeokuta. While they were waiting at Badagry, the CMS party built a mission station and two schools. Finally, they reached Abeokuta in 1846, where they built a mission, a church, and a school. By 1849, the CMS had established four main stations at Badagry, Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan.

In 1853, (Ogunsolu 1974), another group of missionaries, the American Southern Baptist, led by Thomas Bowen, began work at Oyo, also in the West. Thomas

Bowen and his party founded the Baptist Academy in Lagos and Abeokuta, and built a vocational and trade school. Most of the Baptist missionaries who joined Bowen at Oyo, died of ill health. In 1854, Bowen established a mission in Ogbomosho, and that same year an American negro, Harden, joined the Baptist Mission and opened a school in Lagos. The Baptist team later extended their influence to several other parts of the West, including Oyo and Ilorin.

Catholics, (Fafunwa 1974), (Abernethy 1969), (Onochie 1979), arrived on the educational scene in Nigeria relatively late. The Catholic missionaries came to Nigeria following a request by Brazilian ex slaves who had settled in Lagos, and established schools there. In 1872, four Reverend Sisters from France, organised education for girls. In 1876, a school - now known as St. Gregory's College was founded. In 1880, the Catholic Mission penetrated the hinterland and established a mission station at Abeokuta, and later extended its educational influence over the rest of Yorubland. But it has to be stressed that the process of educational expansion was painfully slow. This was mainly due to the inter tribal wars that engulfed Yorubaland at the time. Egba for instance, was locked in a bitter conflict with her neighbours, including Ibadan. In Freeman's report he did comment on the huge military build-up by the warring factions.

With meagre resources, the pioneer missionaries endured untold hardship. Their astonishing achievement at Abeokuta encouraged them to carry on. For instance, by 1880 about 3,000 Yorubo ex slaves had settled in Abeokuta thus giving the town a special prominence, to the delight of the evangelists. In a sense Abeokuta had become a centre of civilisation, and the ex slaves enlightened middle class. Not surprisingly, Abeokuta was the first place where a printing press was installed. It was also the place for early experiments with regard to the growing and ginning of cotton. Abeokuta became a strategic centre from which Christianity, commerce and civilisation would radiate and



spread out into the dark, but promising interior. The pioneer missionary, Townsend, summed up the strategic importance of Abeokuta, (Abernethy 1969), following the development there:

*“All the major denominations operating in what is now Western Nigeria established stations in this town and then branched out into surrounding Yoruba country. The presence of Saros in Abeokuta thus influenced the first strategies of mission advance and facilitated the drive into the interior.”* p. 30.

Isichei (1983), believes that slaves contributed to the development of west Africa.

### Early Education in the East

The foregoing account shows that the early missionaries confined their activities mainly to the coastal areas of the West; notably Lagos, Badagry and Abeokutu. Although they did ultimately visit other parts of the West, they were reluctant to venture into the interior. Their reluctance was attributed to a number of issues

- a. Uncertainties regarding what lay in the interior.
- b. Lack of resources, both human and material.
- c. Ill health.

The missionaries did not despair, having overcome some of their difficulties, they decided to explore the East, (mainly inhabited by the Igbo). It is worthy of note that the first missionaries to penetrate the East, were members of the United Free Church of Scotland Mission, (Ogunsola 1974), who, in 1847, set up a Mission at Calabar (Calabar, on the Cross River, is the traditional homeland of the Efik). They also established vernacular schools along the river and in 1895, opened the famous Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar. The institution made provisions for trade, vocational education, as well as training of teachers and pastors. As Calabar is close to the East Coast of Nigeria, the first move into the hinterland was done by Ajayi Crowther, an ex slave from Egba, rescued by the British warship from a Portuguese vessel, and taken to Sierra Leone in 1822. There, he showed

remarkable intelligence and industry. He was one of the first six boys to enter the Grammar School of the Church Missionary Society (Anglican) at Fourah Bay, Freetown, in 1827 - West Africa's first post-primary institution. The principal of the school noticed that Ajayi was a boy of extraordinary intelligence, (Beethan 1967).

Crowther was a member of the ill-fated Buxton Niger expedition in 1841. Between 1846 and 1850, he was in Abeokuta where he assisted Townsend. It is of interest to note that while in Abeokuta, Crowther made immense literary contributions. For instance, he translated the Bible into Yoruba, compiled a Yoruba grammar, as well as dictionary, which facilitated the task of subsequent Europeans who worked in Yorubaland. As already indicated, it was Ajayi Crowther who first ventured deep into the interior; notably East. From Abeokuta, he reached Onitsha on the Eastern bank of the River Niger. Onitsha thus became the first Igbo speaking community to receive western influence. Crowther opened the first school for girls in December 1858. The girls were aged between 6 and 10. Crowther noted that the boys were not interested in schooling. Ade-Ajayi (1965), who studied in great depth the early missionary activities in southern Nigeria, has revealed that Crowther had to write to his Mission because the boys were more interested in chasing after birds, rats, lizards etc.. In the letter, Crowther explained:

*"The boys...like to rove about in the plantations with their bows and bamboo pointed arrows in their hands to hunt for birds, rats and lizards all day long without success; but now and then, half a dozen or more of them would rush into the school house and proudly gaze at the alphabet board and with an air of disdain mimick the names of the letters as pronounced by the schoolmaster and repeated by the girls, as if it were a thing only fit for females and too much confining to them as free rovers of the fields. But upon a second thought, a few of them would return to the house and try to learn a letter or two." p. 135 - 136.*

Significantly, Abernethy (1969) has highlighted the risk to health of confining children who were used to the open air inside the schools. The missionaries did discover that confining of children was one of the several setbacks they had to deal with, because it

not only made the children ill, it also scared them away from school. In either case, it led to a low attendance rate. Crowther never despaired, he worked relentlessly. So outstanding was Crowther's performance that in 1864, he was consecrated a bishop. His jurisdiction covered a large area from Nupe in the North, down to the sea; including the coastal areas to the East.

While at Onitsha, Crowther did also find out that a few of the boys tried to settle down but farm work, particularly in the dry season, made their attendance very irregular. Fafunwa (1974), has pointed out that farm work was a difficulty which the early missionaries had to contend with everywhere. The same farm work is still preventing some children from receiving school education more than 150 years later. The following statistics showing the average attendance at Creek Town, Calabar where in 1854, there were 200 names on the roll, confirms the negative effects farm work had on school attendance; especially during the dry season which, in Nigeria, is mostly between November and April.

<u>Month</u>	<u>No. of Children Present</u>
July	68
August	78
September	81
October	75
November	54
December	47

Fafunwa, p. 83.

The above figures without doubt, show that school attendance was at its lowest during the driest months - November and December. In Nigeria, a lot of harvesting is done in December. In 1862, a missionary who visited Isaga, which was an out-station west of Abeokuta, saw that only 9 children were present. Seven were absent and among the absentees, were all the best boys in the school. The four most intelligent pupils present were girls. This shows that, in the early days of education in Nigeria, there were places

where parental opposition to education was not a serious issue; especially girls' education. It is also obvious that in those places, girls performed better than boys, as is evident in Onitsha and Isaga. This explains why for many years Onitsha province produced not only the first, but the largest number of female teachers in Igboland. They taught in schools all over the country. Since Onitsha people were the first Igbo to receive western education, it is hardly surprising that some of the early Igbo politicians came from there, like Nnandi Azikiwe, the man who led Nigeria to peaceful independence in 1960, and became its first president. He is also credited with the foundation of Nigeria's first university, namely the University of Nigeria Nsukka.

From Onitsha, Crowther went further East of the River Niger, visiting city states like Bonny, Nembe, Kalagbari, Opobo and Calabar where, already, missionary educational activities were taking place under Reverend Hope Waddell. The inhabitants of the above stations first served as middle men between the European traders and the hinterland, in the supply of slaves and later in the palm oil trade. However, trading was the main interest of the people; notably the chiefs who envisaged that their economic position would be threatened if the Europeans were to gain access directly to the sources of supply. Consequently, they refused any kind of intrusion. The chiefs of all the oil states made it clear to Crowther and his party, that they did not want religious education for their children, stressing that their children had enough in their homes because they did the teaching themselves.

Abernethy (1969), has explained that the chiefs, who wanted missionaries to teach their children English, had their own way of bringing up their children to fit into life in the family, the compounds and the states. The chiefs were said to impart moral and religious education with clear precepts, insisted on moral and religious education for children, reinforced by taboos. The chiefs also gave training in the etiquette and conventions of their

society. They trained the minds of the children as they taught them to count yams and ears of corn, or to repeat in their own words the fables of the family history. In the moon light the children played games and told stories, and learnt alternative verses. As they grew older, they were apprenticed to jobs or initiated into the mysteries of life. In all, it amounted to a little education, but the parents looked on it as adequate. Therefore, what they expected from the Europeans was not a substitute, but a supplement - a system of apprenticeship by which the children would acquire among other things the art of reading, writing and gauging palm oil, or manufacturing gun powder, sugar, or building boats, as well as other mercantile businesses. The Bonny chiefs were eager to see their children taught these quickly.

The chiefs must have realised that English was indispensable for the success of their business; hence their anxiety to ensure that their children should learn how to read and write. In 1876, one of the missionaries, Goldie, noted that the demand for English was so much that even though English was taught in the mission schools, the Bonny chiefs were eager to pay very high salaries to anyone who would teach their children only. The missionaries accepted the challenge because they knew it was the only reason why they were allowed to settle in the city states on the coast. The missionaries also knew that they could always manipulate the situation, and still achieve their primary purpose which was the evangelization of the people.

Crowther relied heavily on a few African slaves from Sierra Leone. The Africans could withstand the climatic conditions more bravely than their European counterparts. In spite of setbacks, by 1886, Crowther's mission had eleven stations, and over a thousand converts. It has been argued that given the climatic conditions - particularly around the delta, it was highly unlikely that European missionaries could have been as successful as Crowther and his team. It was also reckoned that Africans preaching to people of their own

destiny, was an added advantage. But Reverend Father Nwigwe (1984), looking at the position of the Igbo priests and their missionary activities among their own people, following the expulsion of expatriate priests at the end of the Nigerian Civil War (1970), thinks it is a disadvantage. Nwigwe implies that the saying “familiarity breeds contempt” better explains the situation of the Igbo priests now working in their own society among their own people.

With the passage of time, the Church of Scotland mission, under Hope Waddell, continued to make praiseworthy progress. Although before he embarked upon the evangelical work in Calabar, Hope Waddell had already collected a list of words in Efik, he was not particularly a literary man. It was his successor, Hugh Goldie, who in Creek Town, Calabar, became an authority in Efik. In 1862, for example, Goldie published his *Principles of Efik Grammar and Specimen of the language*. The following year 1863, he published his translations from the new testament into Efik *Dictionary, the Efik Grammar in Efik, and the Efik Grammar in English*. His work without doubt, dominated the works of other missionaries who nevertheless, produced primers, hymns and sermons. Ade-Ajayi (1965), holds the view that to this day, the missionaries’ literary works remain the standard works on the Efik language.

### The Emergence of Catholic Schools

In terms of Catholicism, the name most associated with the Catholic missionary activities was Bishop Shanahan, (Onochie 1979). In those early days, the bishop believed that it was through the village primary school that many people would be converted. Consequently, he concentrated on the establishment of primary schools to the negligence of post-primary institutions. For instance, by 1927, there were 60,000 pupils attending 1,000 Catholic primary schools. Many could not receive post-primary education without entering Protestant institutions. When the Catholics belatedly realised the situation, they tried to set

up post-primary schools and colleges. In 1929, Saint Charles' Training College Onitsha was established and in 1933, Christ the King College (secondary school for boys) was also opened. Critics of the pioneer Catholic missionaries claimed that in spite of the academic excellence of the above institutions, numerically at least, they were no match for the yearly output of Protestant ones, such as Hope Waddell, Uzuakoli, Dennis Memorial etc.. It was believed that politically, Catholics paid a huge price because the politicians who emerged as leaders in both the East and the West, had almost all been educated in Protestant secondary schools or training colleges, and therefore tended to view things or events from the Protestant or, at least, non-Catholic point of view. In the years ahead, they were to dominate not only the political but also educational, as well as the social life of the country. It should be noted that none of these prominent individuals was a woman.

#### Social Outcasts: Early Education in Igboland

Meanwhile, non-Catholic missionary activities continued to make progress. The Qua Ibo Mission - a Protestant society with headquarters in Northern Ireland, was founded in Aba. It is still in existence. In 1894, the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society, from its base in Fernando Po, went to Calabar and Owerri for evangelical work. In some places, they were either rejected outright or given evil forests to build on. Evil forests were burial grounds for people who died of very serious illnesses. In some areas, the missionaries and the new faith they brought were openly ridiculed. It was strongly believed that the new religion would not survive.

Achebe, (1958 1960) has revealed that in some parts of Igbo, it was only the 'Osu' and all those that the society considered worthless, that responded to the missionaries' call. They seemed to find solace in what was preached. But the very fact that the new religion was strongly associated with those rejected by the society, made people look more contemptuously on the new faith, its preachers as well as adherents. Achebe has pointed

out that owing particularly to the extreme low status of the followers of the new religion within the society, people were convinced that the new faith would disappear quickly. To the leaders of the clan, the religion was a big source of sorrow, but many of them believed that the strange faith and the white man's God would not last because:

*"None of his converts was a man whose word was heeded in the assembly of the people. None of them was a man of title. They were mostly the kind of people that were called "efulefu", worthless, empty men." p. 130.*

In the years that lay ahead, the clan heads would be proved wrong. In the course of time, the missionaries and the adherents of the new faith had to endure humiliation and in some cases, hostility at the hands of people. But undeterred, the pioneer missionaries accepted the challenge and strove to extend their evangelical influence to other parts of the country; including the North, among the Hausa.

#### Early Education in the North

What should be borne in mind with regard to the early educational development in northern Nigeria is that the method of approach differed immensely from that adopted in the South. Two factors were responsible:

- a. before the missionaries made any attempt to venture into the North, Lugard had already promised the natural rulers, the Emirs, that their way of life would not be interfered with, but respected. This was also essentially the condition under which the colonial administration was granted a foothold in the North.
- b. before the advent of the Christian missionaries, the North, unlike any other part of the country, was a strong Islamic community, and Islamic education was already flourishing. There was also law and order accruing from a sound political system, (Awa 1964). The Emirs were very much in control, and Lugard presumably felt that, (Azinge 1971), there was no need for change and that things should remain as they were.



It is worthy of note that in 1914, Lugard estimated that there were at least 25,000 Koranic schools scattered throughout northern Nigeria, with a total pupil population of 218,618. Fafunwa (1974), has also indicated that for over 300 years, Islam produced its own eminent scholars (the Ulama). The Ulama were believed to be staunch guardians of Islamic ideology, philosophy and jurisprudence. Perhaps more importantly, all the Northern Emirs were political and spiritual leaders of their people, and would not tolerate any local or foreign interference. Fafunwa thought:

*“It was not surprising, ...that the advent of Christianity in Nigeria in 1842 caused a head-on collision with Islam, especially in the north where it was more firmly established.”* p. 100.

One of the most important facts about Islam which most people tend to overlook is that it is not simply a religion, like any other religion; it is much more than that, in the sense that it is inextricably tied up with the way of life of the adherents. Ade-Ajayi (1965), has argued that some people see religion as a limited set of personal beliefs about God and worship, which can be isolated from a person's general culture, and can be changed without necessarily upsetting that person's way of life or his world view; whereas others see it as an affair of the community which is so intimately bound up with its way of life that a change of religion invariably involves a change of culture and the development of a new conscience. The Islamic religion falls within this category, therefore to dismantle a system so deeply entrenched as Islam would be a very difficult task.

Ogunsola (1974), has also made it clear that the activities of the Christian missionaries were greatly reduced and restricted by the fact that the Emirs of the North had previously secured pledges from the colonial government, which made it difficult to admit the missionaries into the Emirates without their consent. Ogunsola however thinks:

*"It is important to note at this juncture that when Europeans first came to Nigeria, especially Northern Nigeria, they did not find an educational vacuum. The Islamization of the Northern parts of Nigeria had resulted in centres of intensive learning and religious activities in places like Sokoto, Katsina and Kano. Before the establishment of the protectorate of Northern Nigeria, Muslim schools were already functioning on a fairly wide scale."*  
p. 5.

Ogunsola has estimated that in 1913, there were about 19,073 moslem schools, with a total attendance of 143,312 pupils. Considering the issues raised above, it would appear that the pioneer missionaries were in a much more vulnerable position at the start of their evangelical work in the northern part of Nigeria, than they were when they started in the West and East.

Bishop Crowther's CMS made the earliest attempts to start work in the northern territory. In 1865, Crowther moved his mission station to Lokoja. In September of the same year, he opened a school. The school still exists, 'Holy Trinity School'. Crowther was also given land to build missions at Gobe, Doctor Baike of the CMS also founded a mission at Lokoja. The Gobe and Lokoja stations were the only Christian missionary stations in Lokoja by 1900. The local population is not actually Hausa, mainly Tiv. Advancement into the Hausa heartland was not possible at the time because of the hostility of some of the Northern Emirs, especially the Emirs of Kano, Katsina and Sokoto. Although the proclamation of the Northern protectorate took effect from 1900, effective occupation of the Northern Emirates was not completed until 1903. Lugard had to launch a military campaign which brought the Emirates under the authority of the colonial government.

As already indicated, Crowther took part in the disastrous 1841 expeditions, in which many lost their lives. Missionaries, business men and colonial administrators, all took part in the ill-fated expedition. They represented various interest groups. The missionaries, for example, were resentful of the way they were refused entry into the

Northern Emirates for their missionary activities, and thought that the expedition might make northern penetration possible. The businessmen on their part, were solely concerned about trade. In other words material and not spiritual considerations prompted them to take part in the Niger Expedition. The colonial officers who masterminded the expedition were obviously politically motivated.

Surprisingly, after the uncompromising Emirates had been subjugated, Lugard warned the missionaries to direct their attention to the non-moslem areas in the North. He was anxious that the moslem leaders would regard both the missionaries and the government officials as fellow agents of administration. Besides, it would be recalled that he had already promised the Emirs that there would be no interference with regard to their way of life. But his warning angered the missionaries, who had hoped that Lugard's success in the North, if anything, would facilitate their own missionary activities in the Hausaland. Consequently, Lokojo where Crowther and his CMS party had established churches and schools became their temporary abode, as further penetration into the North was not immediately possible.

Bishop Tuqwell and his party who were granted permission by Lugard to go into the Hausaland were only able to establish a mission at Zaria. The Emir of Ilorin refused them entry and when they went to Kano, the Emir of Kano, who treated them as spies, ordered them out. The Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) also made an attempt to open up missions in the North, but failed due to the hostility of the leaders. The Roman Catholic Mission of the Holy Ghost Fathers made several unsuccessful attempts to open stations at Ibi and Bussa and in 1905, after numerous frustrating attempts finally withdrew from the North.

Some critics have described Lugard as haughty, overbearing and even racist. It was believed that Lugard was, to some extent to blame for the failure of the Sudan Interior

Mission. Ogunsola (1974) has stressed the fact that Lugard neither assisted nor encouraged them, because he disliked what they preached. He claimed Lugard once wrote:

*"I am informed that they (S.I.M) preach the equality of Europeans and natives, which, however true from a doctrinal point of view, is apt to be misapplied by people in a low stage of development, and interpreted as an abolition of class distinction." p. 10.*

This does to a large extent, explain why Lugard never got on well with the Lagosians and frequently found the presence of the educated natives, who were then mainly resident in Lagos, irritating. It is also worth noting that Abernethy (1969), thinks that the opposition to colonial rule in Nigeria marked the beginning of the nationalist movement as leading Nigerians became increasingly suspicious of the real motives of the imperialists and the missionaries, since they detected racist attitude in ecclesiastical, as well as political matters. This had far-reaching consequences, apart from political agitation, it led to the break up of some of the established churches as some members broke away to establish their own independent churches. For instance, in 1891, Crowther's son left the CMS and set up his own church, the Niger Delta Pastorate, as a protest following the appointment of a white man to lead the CMS on the death of his father.

Another attempt to extend evangelical activities in the North also ended in failure. For example, the Sudan United Mission founded in Edinburgh, unlike the Sudan Interior Mission, which had its origins in Canada, made brave attempts to teach non-moslems in the North, about agriculture and building in 1904, but failed.

### Mallams' Schools

At Bida, the CMS endeavoured to open a school exclusively for the Mallams. It was to be a secular school, in accordance with Lugard's instructions. One obvious implication of such a school was that Mallams were regarded as the learned class; if therefore they were to attend the CMS school for Mallams, it would in effect mean that Christian education was more worthwhile than Islamic education. Besides, the Mallams

feared the effect such education would have socially, particularly in terms of other moslems' attitude towards them. Not surprisingly, attendance was poor, and eventually the programme collapsed. The failure of the Mallam's school has been attributed to the fact that the curriculum included religious education, but more significantly, the Mallams suspected the motives of the Christian missionaries.

### Miller's Gamble in the North

The man who made the most ambitious educational plans with regard to the Christian education of the Mallams and their sons, and the sons of their chiefs, was Miller. His friendship with Lugard helped to launch the two schools in 1907 in Zaria. While Lugard insisted on secular education, Miller emphasised the need for Christian education. The schools for the sons of chiefs were to be boys' boarding schools - for boys' aged between 12 and 16. At a stage, Miller tried to use deception to persuade the Mallams to send their sons or sons of the chiefs, or boys from important families, by asking Lugard to tell the Mallams that he (Miller), was a white Mallam, highly educated, in whom the government had absolute confidence.

In spite of this, both schools did not last long. To start with, only a few Mallams from Zaria Emirate attended the Mallams' school, just for a while. The boys' school which began with 15 children, later dwindled to 6, and eventually collapsed. In 1910, it became a school for all children. Fafunwa (1974), has claimed that one of the reasons why the boys' school proved unsustainable was because the boys preferred their Koranic schools, while Miller's pre-occupation was the conversion of the northern moslems to Christianity. It is important to note at this juncture, that Fafunwa has strongly argued that it was the strenuous efforts made by the Christian missionaries to convert the moslems at the early stages of the educational development in Nigeria that created a deep-rooted dislike for western-type schools in general, and Christian schools in particular, among the moslems.

Fafunwa insists that it was the religious attitude of the Christian missionaries more than anything else, that was responsible for the slow educational progress in the North.

By holding this view, Fafunwa has challenged a long-standing and widely held view that the comparatively low educational achievement of the moslem North, was a direct result of their strict adherence to Islamic educational system. Even the widely acclaimed findings of the Phelps-Stokes Commission of Inquiry which scrutinised colonial education in the West, South and Equatorial Africa (1927), was critical of the northern system of education. While examining the nature of Islamic education, the Commission noticed that:

*“the reports of educational facilities in Northern Nigeria vary so radically as to defeat any effort to determine their accuracy. There is, however, complete unanimity in the statesmen that the facilities are quantitatively negligible when they are measured by the educational needs of a Mohammedan school population of at least one and a half million and a non-Mohammedan school population of over half a million. The most liberating estimate of the school facilities gives the number of government schools as 17 and the mission schools as 107. The so-called Mohammedan schools, estimated at 25,000, are of practically no educational significance...”* p. 169-170.

Fafunwa has none the less, argued that Miller and his CMS party lost valuable opportunities during which western education could have been firmly established in the North. Fafunwa seems to support his claims by the fact that on the whole, Miller and his party only succeeded in converting two Mallams - both in Zaria. One of them later trained at Saint Andrew's Training College at Oyo, but returned to Zaria to help in the education of boys. It was said that he was highly respected by the Emir for his increased knowledge and ability. The second Mallam, Mallam Fate, was a great help to Miller, especially with regard to his translation work. It is obvious from the attitude of the Emir of Zaria that perhaps not all the Emirs were opposed to western education. Some of them might have benefited a lot, if the educational activities of the Christian missionaries did not end in failure. It would have also had considerable impact regarding female education in the North.

## The Colonial Government's Intervention

It could be justifiably claimed that the early development of education in Nigeria was mainly the era of Christian missionaries, during which time the colonial government showed hardly any interest in the formal education of the colonised people. The missionaries largely relied on their own ability. It has however, been argued that the colonial government decided to intervene in the people's education not necessarily out of interest, but of necessity. Okeke (1964), for example, has remarked that:

*"...the British rulers did not want to educate Africans for positions which provided jobs for themselves. Many of them knew that if they intensified the education of Nigerians they would hasten the end of occupation. So they rationed education cautiously, hoping that it would be many centuries before the Nigerians would be able to govern themselves. They feared that educated Africans would agitate over many things." p. 4.*

Okeke further argues that it is purely within this context that the underlying claim of British education for Nigerians must be judged. He insists that it would be idle talk to maintain that only enlightened idealism prompted the British colonisers to venture across the seas into disease-ridden tropical Africa.

The production of native manpower was also said to have motivated the colonial administration because Lugard wanted to reduce the costs of employing overseas staff which at the time, was becoming increasingly unbearable. Ukeje (1966), thinks that even when eventually the British colonial government decided to get involved in the education of the people, the type of educational system evolved for the Nigerians was more of a liability than an asset:

*"...in view of the fact that under the system, education was entirely divorced from the life of the people: the schools imparted knowledge with little understanding; they taught the students what to think but not how to think; thus the pupils learnt to memorise but not to digest, to repeat but not to reflect, and to adopt rather than to adapt...pupils were taught to reject their own culture rather than to conserve the healthy elements and adapt them to the changing circumstances." p. 60.*

The method of education advocated by Ukeje which he stresses was lacking under the colonial education system has been highlighted by Rogers (1990), who has confirmed that in recent years, a trend towards enquiry and discovery has undoubtedly developed in education. Evidence that the colonial administration's involvement in the people's education was partly due to lack of qualified native clerks, has also come from Graham (1966), who noted that while in the North, Lugard desperately needed native trained clerks. Abernethy (1969), has also stressed that, initially the colonial government was indifferent, but the demand for educated natives to fill minor posts stimulated interest in education. It is noteworthy that Graham (1971), looking back at the development of education in Ghana, concedes that:

*"The point is often made that the sole purpose of British presence in the Gold Coast prior to 1800 was to Christianise the Africans." p. 2.*

Graham has also pointed out that some people take the view that it was commerce alone that sent the British and other European countries to the West Coast of Africa.

That the colonial government distanced itself from the education of the natives is discernible in the fact that the very first West African Board of Education was only created in 1882 for the territories of Lagos, the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Sierra Leone and Gambia, following the promulgation of the first Education Ordinance in 1882. The Ordinance was based on the 1844 Education Act. It established an inspectorate for schools in the Lagos colony, as well as the colonies of Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Gambia. Rules were laid down regarding the annual examination of pupils, the methods of granting teachers' certificates, and the system of grants in-aid. In 1886, Lagos was separated from the Gold Coast colony and became the Protectorate of Lagos. Prior to this period, it was still jointly administered with the colony of Gold Coast. This separation made it possible for the first time to enact a purely Nigerian education ordinance. Under the terms of this ordinance, scholarships worth £10 a year was granted to children whose parents were very



poor, to enable them to attend secondary schools. The appearance of the first Nigerian, Henry Carr, on the educational scene, as the Inspector of Schools for southern Nigeria, 1915 - 1918, quickened the pace of educational progress and more so when he became the President for Lagos colony, 1918 - 1924.

Meanwhile, the Christian missionaries continued to establish more schools. The numerical strength of their schools was such that the moslem community in Lagos, brought pressure to bear on the colonial government to build schools for their children. In 1906, the colony and protectorate of Lagos was merged with the protectorate of southern Nigeria, and both became one administrative unit. An Ordinance for the new unit was promulgated in 1908, resulting in the appointment of a Director of Education, four Superintendents of Schools, and some European school teachers. By the end of 1908, there were altogether 40 government schools, 6 in the West, 18 in the central, and 16 in the eastern provinces. Teachers included West Indians and Africans.

With the passage of time, the demand for post-primary institutions became critical. This led to the founding in 1859 of the CMS Grammar School by a Nigerian clergyman, Macaulay. The school was largely due to the contribution of the Lagosians, mainly saros, and not necessarily from the CMS, which Macaulay served. In 1909, the first government secondary school was founded in Lagos, 'King's College'. Interestingly this college still exists under the same name. Sons of prominent Nigerians received their secondary education in King's College. By 1912, the number of government owned primary schools had risen to 59 and mission schools aided by the government, stood at 91. It should however, be noted that the government schools were established and maintained, to a large extent, from public funds. By 1914, there were altogether 12 secondary schools in southern Nigeria, with 8 of them in Lagos, 3 in the western towns of Abeokuta, Ibadan and Ijebu

Ode. There was only one in the East, Hope Waddell, which was established by the Church of Scotland Mission.

### Vischer's Educational Policy

As already indicated, Lugard's policy was not to embark upon massive or expensive education of the natives, for this would threaten his own position. But by far the most radical change in education came with the appointment of Vischer, (Fafunwa 1974), first as an education officer, and later as the Director of Education for the moslem North.

Vischer outlined his own aims for Nigerian education, as follows:

- a. To develop the national and racial characteristics of the natives on such lines as will enable them to use their own moral and physical forces to good advantage.
- b. To widen their mental horizon without destroying their respect for race and parentage.
- c. To supply men for employment in the government.
- d. To produce men who will be able to carry on the native administration in the spirit of the government.
- e. To impart sufficient knowledge of western ideas to enable the native to meet the influx of traders from the coast, with the advent of the railway, on equal terms.
- f. To avoid creating a 'Babu' class.
- g. To avoid encouraging the idea recently formed by Africans that it is more honourable to sit in an office than to earn a living by manual labour.

It is important to note that over the years critics, including Fafunwa (1974), have questioned Vischer's policy on education. His last three aims have attracted more criticism on the grounds that they are unattainable.

In keeping with his educational reform, Vischer established the first government elementary school for boys in Kano, in 1909, and started training local teachers in Kano because he did not want to recruit the coastal negroes or West Indians as teachers. From Sokoto, Kano and Katsina, Vischer recruited 12 Mallams. Classes were held at Nassarawa on the outskirts of the city of Kano. He taught them the geography of northern Nigeria, Africa and the British Empire. The training school proved popular and by the end of that year, the Mallams had grown numerically in strength from 12 to 100. Between 1913 and 1914, the North had only 38 primary schools and 12 secondary schools, and altogether 19,073 Koranic schools.

Academically, the children did not gain much from Koranic education. The difficulty of obtaining western-type education in the North, threatened the Civil Service there. This is because most of the clerks in the North came from the South, and they had to send their children away from the North in search of modern education. To avoid a collapse of essential services in the North, the authorities had to build schools where the children of clerks and other government officials could obtain non-Islamic education.

### Lugard's Educational Policy

After Vischer's educational reform, the next noteworthy educational change was made by Lugard following the unification of Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria, with Lugard as its first governor in 1914. Perham (1960), is of the opinion that Lugard was passionately interested in education and wanted to be fully involved in its administration. It was however, believed that political unification of North and South did not result in a single educational administration for both sections because, in spite of the

amalgamation, the two were still separately administered in terms of education. It was only in 1929, that the two educational Boards were unified. By 1914, many unassisted schools had sprung up, and Lugard was deeply suspicious of their educational quality. His inability to tolerate what he saw as the proliferation of unassisted schools increased his desire to control education in Nigeria. Lugard's deep-seated suspicion for independent schools stemmed from the fact that he was convinced that they were only out to make profits. Secondly, Lugard feared that they were lacking in discipline and loyalty, and could therefore pose a threat to constituted authority.

It is noteworthy that Lugard was not the only colonial officer with deep-rooted hatred for private schools. Hugh Clifford was also vehemently against independent institutions, because he believed that they were only concerned with material gains. Clifford accused them of academic inferiority, claiming that they were ignorant. In those days, people could earn some money by writing letters for people whose relatives lived away from home. For illiterates, that was the only way by which they could maintain contact with such relatives, particularly parents whose sons lived in the towns. When their children wrote, they would also pay someone to read the letter and do all the necessary interpretations. Fafunwa (1974), has noted that Clifford poured contempt on those engaged in such activities, accusing them of preferring to:

*"...pick up a precarious and demoralising living by writing more or less unintelligible letters for persons whose ignorance is even deeper than their own."* p. 115.

But in spite of their outspoken criticism, Lugard followed a limited educational programme for Nigerians, which would produce citizens that were neither so poorly trained that they would not meet the educational standards required for minor posts and clerical jobs, nor so highly educated that they would threaten the colonial administration. Until the end of his term of office in 1919, Lugard rationed education and effectively controlled the

expansion of schools in order to ensure a steady, but limited supply of manpower. It is important to note that with the passage of time, more and more well-educated Nigerians including Lagosians, began to suspect and question the validity of Lugard's policy and educational activities. As Perham (1960), noted at a stage, Lugard could no longer bear the constant friction, as he himself conceded:

*"I am somewhat baffled how to get in touch with the educated Native. To start with I am not in sympathy with him. His loud and arrogant conceit are distasteful to me, his lack of natural dignity and of courtesy antagonize me."*  
p. 586.

There is little doubt that the type of education which Lugard was bent on providing for Nigerians, if left unchallenged, might have proved educationally disastrous for the nation - given the fact that at the time many people - particularly from the South had begun to yearn for good quality education. Obviously, Lugard's educational policy would have, at best, produced natives with mediocre ability, and for a developing country in a fast-changing world, political, educational, economic and even social changes and advancement would have been unattainable. Membership of the colonial administration and closeness to Lugard, enabled Perham to see that as time went on, the challenge to Lugard's authority and educational policies, notably from the southerners, mounted; so did Lugard's fear and distrust of southerners:

*"I fear and distrust for the welfare of Africa a large section of the educated natives of Southern Nigeria more than I do all the Stock Exchange financiers put together."* p. 587.

It is likely that financial constraints played a part in lowering educational quality at the time. Even before the end of his term of office in 1919, Lugard had to give some of the government schools to the missionaries because he realised that the missionaries could run educational institutions more economically. However, while the colonial government under Lugard was intent on providing low quality education, the natives yearned for education of sublime quality.

## Clifford's Educational Policy

When in 1919 Clifford succeeded Lugard, he inherited the problem of the unassisted schools indiscriminately opened by missionaries and private individuals. By 1923, there were 2,584 unassisted schools, with 162,000 pupils. But by 1920, the quality of education provided for the natives in the British colonies had become an international issue; hence the appointment of the Phelps-Stokes Commission of Enquiry, largely financed by the Phelps-Stokes fund of the United States of America. Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1960) leader of one of the two most active political parties in the country - the Action Group, accused the colonial officials of doing everything possible to ensure that northerners remain loyal and not to join the people in the South to criticise their educational policies, or challenge their colonial administration.

*"the powers-that-be appeared determined to administer the north in isolation from the south, and at all events to prevent Northerners from being "contaminated" politically by educated Southerners. Southerners who had made efforts to start a newspaper in the north were unsuccessful. Educated Northerners who had visited the south had done so under the close supervision of white officials. No Northerner was allowed to take part in politics, and Southerners resident in the north were obliged to confine their political activities to the areas set aside for the abode of strangers..."* p. 164.

This is presumably why the colonial administration is accused of initiating the tribal divisions in the Nigerian society. Among the well-educated Nigerians, especially those trained in universities abroad, the deteriorating state of education, (Ukeje 1966), was a matter of serious concern. This was the state of education in Nigeria and, indeed, in all the British colonies when the Phelps-Stokes in cooperation with the international Education Board set up two commissions - one was to report on the state of education in the West, South and Equatorial Africa (as already indicated).

The Report, which was published in 1922, was critical of the colonial government, and pointed out among other things, the government's inability to adapt itself to the

educational needs of the people. The Commission noted that much of the indifference or even opposition to education in Africa was due to the failure in adapting school work to meet African conditions, and that school methods which had been discarded in America and Europe were still in vogue in Africa. The British colonial government was urged by the Commission to review its entire educational policy and effect the appropriate changes. In sum, pressure was brought to bear on the colonial administration to demonstrate its interest in the education of the Africans.

The first step taken by the colonial office in London was to set up an Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical African Dependencies in 1923, with a view to advising the Secretary of State on matters relating to the education of the natives, and to assist him in advancing educational progress in the British colonies and protectorates. In 1925, the colonial administration issued a memorandum on education for British colonial territories, but there was no significant educational progress. With the passage of time, the educational gap between the North and South continued to widen. There was also intense rivalry between the different Christian missions. In the years ahead, this would become one of the main sources of unrest.

It is possible that the political tension generated by the colonial government in the North and South, the rivalry between the various denominations and his experiences with regard to colonial administration in India, prompted Clifford (1960) to cast doubts over the validity of colonial administration:

*“The future alone can decide whether the nations of Europe, England, France, Holland, and now also the United States - the white peoples who have assumed the responsibility for ordering the destinies of the East - will prove themselves equal to the task of making full amends for all the evil that was done...”* p. 346.

This applies to all colonised areas, not just to the East.

Clifford was able to recognise the fact that in the course of colonial administration, serious errors which could have dire consequences for the colonised people educationally, socially, politically etc..., had been made, and that the task of making atonement for those errors might not be an easy one. The inability or unwillingness on the part of the British colonial administrators to unify the educational machinery of the North and South, and to improve the quality of education continued to cause tension; especially among the educated elite in the South.

### Hussey's Educational Policy (Reform)

By the time Clifford came to the end of his term of office in 1929, no noteworthy positive educational change had taken place. It was under his successor, Hussey, that the Departments of Education for the North and the South were unified on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1929. Hussey sought to effect a reform based on the findings of the Phelps-Stokes Commission. Consequently, two types of teacher training institutions were introduced. The first phase of Hussey's reform programme was the introduction of training colleges for teachers - Elementary Training College (ETC) and Higher Elementary Training College (HETC). Later, he embarked upon educational cut-backs including reduction in teachers' salaries. Next, Hussey introduced measures calculated to lower both the quantity and the quality of education provided for Nigerians. Under these measures:

- a. The duration of primary education was reduced from 8 to 6 years.
- b. Vernacular was to become the medium of instruction.
- c. The curriculum was to be strongly oriented towards agriculture and handicraft.
- d. Pupils were no longer to sit for the Cambridge or Oxford School Certificate, but an inferior certificate which would not be recognised outside Nigeria.



e. The highest academic pursuit was to be the Yabu Higher College.

Before long educated Nigerians, especially the southerners, saw the inferior certificates, the radical changes and the educational cut-backs as a deliberate act to consolidate British rule in Nigeria. The cut-backs came as a shock at a time when people were yearning for educational expansion.

### Post Independence

#### Richard's' Constitution and the Regional Divisions

The above era would probably go down in the history of Nigeria as the period that witnessed the greatest educational expansion. It is important to note that the factors which influenced the growth in education with regard to the period in question were largely political. After the Second World War, a new political constitution came into being in Nigeria, namely 'Richard's Constitution'. Richards split Nigeria into three regions: North, East and West. This political innovation was based on the three major ethnic groups: Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba. Some observers, including Fafunwa (1974), have asserted that the division of Nigeria into three regions by Richards marked the beginning of active tribal politics in the country. Following the division, the political agitation by nationalists intensified. The two major political parties in the South, the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC.), led by Doctor Nnandi Azikwe and Herbert Macaulay, and the Action Group, led by Awolowo, and the Northern People's Congress based in the North and led by Saduana of Sokoto, demanded a more democratic constitution and self-governing status for Nigeria.

#### The McPherson Constitution - Its Impact on Education

In 1951, came the McPherson Constitution, which provided for democratic elections to the Regional Houses of Assembly. Each was empowered to raise funds but more important than that, each region was to pass law on Education, Health, Agriculture

etc.. In effect, each region had become more or less autonomous and with this status, political rivalry between the three regions intensified. Each region tried to out-do the other, in terms of provision of social amenities for the area within its own jurisdiction. Western and eastern regional governments led by their political parties, Action Group and NCNC, respectively, placed highest priority in education. In 1952, With the first election in the Western House of Assembly, and in his first budget speech, Awolowo made it clear that his priorities were health, and education. Following this, the then Western Region Minister of Education, Chief Awokoya, submitted a proposal for free and compulsory primary education in the West by 1955, which stressed among other things the expansion of secondary education.

The amount of importance which Awokoya attached to education is discernible in his speech:

*“Educational development is imperative and urgent. It must be treated as a national emergency, second only to war. It must move with the momentum of a revolution.”* p. 168.

### The UPE in the West

Consequently, the most ambitious educational scheme in Africa was launched by an indigenous government as a meaningful demonstration of interest in the vital issue that concerned its people. On 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1955 the Universal Primary Education of Children in the West began, but it was not compulsory. Within only one year, a massive change was noticed - especially in the numerical strength of both pupils and teachers. For instance, in 1954, there were just 457,000 pupils; by 1955 a massive 61% increase was recorded and by 1958, it was reckoned that over one million children were attending school, within the age range of 5 - 14 years. The number of trained teachers rose from 17,000 in 1954 to 27,000 in 1955. The Western Region annual budget for education also reflected the massive educational transformation that was taking place. For example, in 1954, £2.2 million was

spent on education. In 1955, there was more than 100 per cent increase to bring the 1954 figure to £5.4 million. Nearly 90% of the total amount was spent on primary education. Significantly by 1960, the year of Nigeria's independence, over 90% school-age children in the West were attending school.

It is noteworthy that because moslems in the West refused to send their children to school for fear that they would be converted to Christianity, a legislation was passed in 1954 which guaranteed them a certain quota with regard to the establishment of new schools. The legislation stipulated that all new schools to be built in the region should be controlled as follows:

Local Education Authority (LEA)	50%
Voluntary Agencies	40%
Moslems	10%

### The UPE in the East

Meanwhile in the Eastern Region the NCNC were quick to notice how the UPE in the West had captured the love and admiration of the westerners and consequently boosted the political status of the Action Group. The NCNC decided to introduce the UPE in the East. Abernethy (1969) has claimed that the rivalry between the two political parties was the main reason why the programme was launched in the East. Akpabio the Minister of Education in the East saw how successfully his counterpart in the West had launched the programme and hoped to achieve the same effect in the East. It is important to note that Abernethy observed right from the onset, many constraints regarding the UPE in the East, which were not apparent in the case of the West. The constraints included complex financial, political, educational and religious factors. As a result of these factors, the UPE, which was launched two years after that of the West in January 1957, collapsed after barely one year.

It was reckoned that of all the factors (Abernethy 1969), that led to the collapse of the programme, the religious factors were the most turbulent. It was believed that most of the prominent politicians or NCNC members in the East were Protestants, owing to the educational policy adopted by Bishop Sharnahan in the early years of education in the East, as already indicated. As Protestants, it was claimed that they tended to see things from Protestant, or at least non-Catholic point of view. When therefore, the UPE programme was launched in the East, the Catholics who at that time controlled most of the schools in the East, especially primary schools, were suspicious of the Protestant dominated NCNC. Knowing fully well the religious implications of the same programme in the West, including the relaxation of religious education. It came to a stage where the Catholic population in the East saw the UPE programme as anti-Catholic, (Abernethy 1969), and one of the local politicians openly warned the government:

*"I must warn the government that it must be cautious against some of our people who try to assist these foreign people to keep us under bondage forever. We must be free not only from British rule but also from the Church rule too." p. 178.*

However, in spite of the fact that the UPE in the East was short-lived, it was acknowledged that it did make a remarkable impact on education in the East. Numerically, for instance, the school enrolment rose from 775,000 in 1957 to 1,209,000 in 1958, in the 5 - 14 age group, representing a percentage increase of 73. The number of schools also rose from 5,060 to 6,986 and teachers from 30,000 to 41,000. Expenditure in education also went up considerably from £3.6 to £6 million. Comparatively, the East spent more on education than the West before the programme was launched in either region (Eastern Region spent £3.06m and Western Region £2.2m), although the West was said to be financially much better off than the East at the time. The launching of the universal primary education in the West and the East between 1955 and 1957 was a landmark in the history of education in Nigeria, because it was the first time that all children of school-age,

including girls, were given the opportunity to go to school; no longer restricted by financial constraints.

By 1960, the year Nigeria became officially a Sovereign State, education had undergone a monumental transformation. The pace of educational expansion was breathtaking. Compared with the colonial era when education was rationed, the difference could not have been more glaring. The massive growth in education continued unabated in the subsequent years. In the last quarter of 1976 the Federal Government launched Universal Primary education. Most girls of school age went to school. But the rise in school population, especially in the southern part of the country was such that after only a few years, the UPE programme collapsed. The main problem was lack of resources - both human and material. For instance, well trained teachers could not be found in sufficient number coupled with acute shortage of school buildings. Because of the UPE there has been a lot of expansion especially at the secondary sector, in order to cope with the huge number of pupils from the primary schools. This is reflected in the statistics below which show the current numbers of various secondary schools in Imo State:

Number of secondary schools	304
Number of mixed schools	110
Number of girls' schools	42
Number of boys' schools	152
Number of registered commercial schools	245
Number of federal government schools	1

The number of teachers have also increased tremendously as these figures show:

Number of secondary teachers	7,182
Number of female teachers	3,100
Number of male teachers	4,082

Imo State Ministry of Education, Planning, Research and Statistics Department, (Owerri)

(See appendix 1)

To fully appreciate the enormous educational expansion that has taken place in the post independence era – especially at the secondary phase in Imo State, one has to take into account the numerical strength of secondary schools in the Eastern Region of Nigeria until 1960, the year of Nigeria’s independence. It is important to understand that the then Eastern Region comprised of 12 provinces. In those days secondary schools were grammar schools. There were also registered commercial schools.

The statistics below show that collectively the provinces had less than 100 secondary schools and just a handful of commercial institutions.

PROVINCE	NO OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS	NO OF COMMERCIAL SCHOOLS
Abakaliki	2	-
Annang	3	1
Calabar	5	-
Degema	2	1
Enugu	10	2
Ogoja	1	-
Onitsha	24	6
Owerri	21	3
Port Harcourt	10	1
Umuahia	10	2
Uyo	7	1
Yemagoa	1	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>17</b>

Ministry of Education Eastern Nigeria Annual Report 1960

Enugu, Onitsha, Owerri and Umuahia are the only Igbo speaking provinces. In 1967 the political map of Nigeria changed following the creation of States. Initially the four Igbo provinces were one State (East Central State). They were later split into two Anambra and Imo States (see chapter 2).

The fact that there are more than 300 secondary schools, 245 registered commercial schools and countless number of private unregistered commercial institutions in Imo State alone is an indication of the massive educational expansion in Nigeria generally and in Imo State in particular since Nigeria became a sovereign state.

It is noteworthy that Anambra and Imo - each has been split in order to create more states. The political changes that are going on, notably by way of creation of more states, are helping to ensure among other things economic and educational development and progress.

The statistics show that the registered commercial schools are nearly as many as all the secondary schools in Imo State. The non-registered commercial schools are countless. It is important to bear in mind that the quality of education in the commercial institutions generally and in the non-registered ones in particular, leaves much to be desired. A glance at the statistics for single sex schools reveals the fact that boys' schools outnumber the girls' by more than three times. This provides a clue regarding the gender that enjoys top priority in Imo state as far as school education is concerned. The same is obviously the case nationwide.

#### Financing of Secondary Education in Imo State

Many girls in Nigeria may continue to receive poor quality education unless the current national policy with regard to financing education changes. Taking the secondary sector for example, most of the financial burden is borne by the states. The federal government gives some subsidy. The local communities and the parents contribute money

from time to time. The latter are also responsible for their youngsters' school fees. But those who are desperately poor cannot pay for their children's secondary education, especially their female offspring. Consequently many girls end up in the commercial institutions, notably the non-registered ones, since the fees are considerably lower than in the secondary schools.

### The Curriculum

The curriculum accounts to a large extent for the low quality of education in the commercial schools. For instance, the students learn mainly typing and shorthand, English and mathematics may be taught in the registered ones. But in the secondary schools the following subjects are taught: English, Mathematics, Igbo, Government, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, English in Literature and three main Nigerian languages, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. The third subject Igbo is for the Igbo speaking states. Each state teaches its own local language, although all children irrespective of state of origin are obliged to learn the three main Nigerian languages. The post independence curriculum can hardly compare with that of the colonial administration given that the latter was deliberately designed to perpetuate British rule in Nigeria. Under Hussey for instance, the curriculum was craft oriented and even vernacular became the medium of instruction in schools.

With the passage of time, the yearnings and aspirations of most Nigerian parents were not just for primary and secondary education of their children, but also for higher education. Although higher education is outside the scope of this study it must however be noted that the early institutions of higher learning in Nigeria were despised and rejected by Nigerians. When the British left Nigeria in 1960 there were only two universities: the university of Ibadan in the west, was the only university built by the Colonial Government in 1948; the university of Nigeria Nsukka opened in 1960 in the East was the first indigenous university. The early graduates of these institutions suffered indescribable



humiliation as opposed to their counterparts trained abroad, especially in the United Kingdom. As the first university in Nigeria Ibadan University, bore the brunt of the discrimination, the graduates could not get jobs in Nigeria. Ike (1976) noted that the early graduates of Ibadan suffered untold discrimination in the job market. People used to ask them when they would go to England to finish up. He claimed that doubts were expressed as to whether a graduate from Ibadan University College should be accorded the same recognition and status in the Civil Service as a graduate from a British university. Ike attributed people's inability to accept the high academic standards of the University College Ibadan to what he called colonial mentality:

*"...As a result of years of contact with his colonial masters, the average Nigerian had developed an uncritical attitude towards anything coming from 'the white man's land' and a derogatory attitude to anything produced locally..." p. 7*

Ironically, the academic staff of Ibadan University at the time (mostly British expatriates) were so standard conscious that the Ibadan standards were said to be higher than those in British universities. Even the Ibadan curriculum was modelled on that of the British. This attracted controversy. Significantly, there are some Nigerians who believe that strict adherence to the western way of life was partly responsible for the Nigerian civil war. For example, Okpaku (1972) has argued that:

*"...as Nigeria strove desperately to aspire to the expectations of the western world, sacrificing everything Nigerian as it bulldozed along this path, she won the meaningless praise of the West and lost the confidence and respect of her own people. As she blindly sought to be "the good boys", as an American newspaper once referred to her, she set aside all sensitivity to the interests of Nigeria and her people..." p. 9.*

Okpaku claims that consequently Nigeria inevitably drifted to a civil conflict. It is interesting to note that Nigerians have changed their attitude with regard to their universities, and now accept that the nation's institutions of higher education do maintain

very high standards. Numerically the universities have grown in strength. At present there are 38, but given the population of the country more are needed.

However, the introduction of formal education in Nigeria and the progression from the primary to the university, is an academic feat. Significantly, in the early years, its subsequent impact on the status of the female members of the Nigerian society was hardly discernible. It should be noted that the development of western-type education in Nigeria will ring hollow and incomplete, if at least some of the setbacks and in some cases untold suffering endured by the pioneer missionaries were not indicated.

### The Introduction of Formal Education in Nigeria: The Setbacks

#### 1. Very Low Attendance.

In highlighting the difficulties of attracting people, notably children, to classes in the early years of formal education in Nigeria. Abernethy (1969), has stressed that school attendance was very low because:

*“attracting them to school proved a laborious work, since it meant interruption of more enjoyable pursuits like hunting and chasing after rats, birds, lizards.”* p. 59.

It was however discovered that low attendance was not always due to parental opposition to school, but due to the fact that confinement of young children, particularly boys used to open life affected their health, and they resented it.

#### 2. Total Breakdown of Communication.

Communication was a big problem. At Ijaw for example, Crowther could not teach his pupils as they did not understand a word of English and he could not speak Ijaw language. When he wrote some alphabets on the board and wanted the class to repeat each letter after him, there was dead silence. Consequently Crowther had to learn Ijaw and discovered that ‘repeat’ in Ijaw meant ‘a be-be hie’.

3. Huge Age Disparity.

Teaching pupils of relatively the same age can be difficult, but when the gap is too wide, it poses a threat to both teaching and learning. Abernethy (1969) has stressed that the missionaries were faced with immense academic difficulties:

*“At first, “standards”, or classes based on age, did not exist: pupils of widely varying ages were grouped together according to their ability to absorb the materials in certain readers, written in English or in the vernacular.” p. 34.*

4. Financial Constraints.

It is important to note that in the early years of school education the missionaries not only provided the pupils free education, they also gave them clothes, books, stationery etc. Parents were also paid so that they could allow their children to attend school. If they were not paid they kept their youngsters away from school. They argued that since their children worked on the farm and did domestic chores in the house, payment must be made in lieu of these activities.

5. Ill Health.

Most of the missionaries suffered terrible illnesses arising mainly from unsuitable climatic conditions as well as yellow fever and malaria. In some cases, the missionaries died within a few weeks of their arrival.

6. Hostility of Natives.

In some places the natives were openly hostile. One of such places was Uzuakoli, where in 1911 the Reverend Father Dodds of the Primitive Methodist Mission experienced a great deal of hostility at the hands of village elders and traditional rulers. The village authorities were angry and suspicious. They feared that the missionaries would expose their illegal trade, (slave trade), and interfere with their custom and general way of life.

## 7. Outright Rejection of School Education.

Although in certain places people were not aggressive or hostile as in the case of Uzuakoli but school education was not accepted. Abernethy (1969) for example noted that in Aba all the natives, (Ngwa people), refused to send their children to school, only some strangers called 'ndi ohuhu', (lazy people - by the Ngwa), volunteered to send their youngsters. But running a school for a handful of pupils was not seen as cost effective. In their bitter disappointment, the missionaries complained to their home mission and not surprisingly - the official report on the Abu District in 1911 stated:

*"The Aba School is not a success and never was. The Aba people do not want this school and do not make use of it. Practically all the pupils come from places not in the Aba jurisdiction. This school is merely a waste of money, and would be better abolished."* p. 58.

The total rejection by all the Ngwa, (Ngwa means people in a hurry), reflects their culture and beliefs. For instance, they believe that united they stand but divided they fall (Umu nua bu ike nkwa).

## 8. Culture Conflict.

The missionaries also had to endure the conflicts arising from the meeting of two cultures, the western culture and the indigenous African culture, (Fafunwa 1974). In Igboland for example, people did not like the idea of abandoning polygamy or the freeborn mixing with the outcasts, the 'Osu'. At times the conflict took the form of a rebellion as in the case of Babalola in Yorubaland in the early 1930s, (Abernethy 1969). But Mead (1963), the anthropologist is convinced that the Babalola movement is a culture conflict and not a rebellion. She accused western educators of setting a culture within a culture. She insists that western-type education is not just a question of transmitting education and catechism but a destruction of old values; a view shared with Atanda (1973). But to understand Babalola's attitude towards the missionaries and their religious activities, one has to reflect seriously on Turner's (1967) view about religious movements:

*“Religious movements, of course, never occur in a historical or social vacuum, and are always conditioned by cultural, economic, political, and other social factors at play in the total situation.”* p. xiii (Introduction).

It is obvious, that any attempt to unseat deep-rooted cultural and social values of a given society is likely to result in conflict. Speaking about custom and conflict in Africa, Gluckman (1955) thinks:

*“Conflicts are a part of social life and custom appears to exacerbate these conflicts: but in doing so custom also restrains the conflicts from destroying the wider social order.”* p. 2.

The conflicts set back the educational activities of the missionaries.

#### 9. Rivalry and Division Within the Churches.

Inter denominational rivalry especially between Catholics and Protestants hampered educational progress. Some Protestants like De Craft called for Christian unity but conceded that it might awaken in nations of the world fear of domination by the Pope because of the arrogance of the Catholic Church. De Craft once said: (Mobley 1970)

*“...there must be one comprehensive Church organisation that will embrace all. The Roman Catholic Church does not recognize the other mission societies as being within the Church. On the other hand no nation and no people will acknowledge the sovereignty of the Pope if by so doing they have to be dominated by Rome.”* p. 140.

The inter-denominational rivalry was not confined to Nigerian Christian missionaries only. In the Gold Coast (Ghana), Mobley (1970) noted that the rivalry between the different Christian missions raged almost like a war. Inevitably in 1929, the year that the Christian Council was born, de Craft was worried that the missionaries might transfer European prejudices to the Gold Coast. By 1944, a number of critics, emerged in the Gold Coast to challenge the divisions and frictions amongst the various Christian denominations. One of them, Adjei, called attention to the confusion created by the many denominations that worked in Africa. In an unequivocal and sustained argument, he stressed:

*"We do not understand the reason why there are so many divisions in the Christian Church, if all Christians really profess to be worshipping the same God. For example, there are Catholics on one side and Protestants on the other. Each group thinks that its forms and methods of worship are the best and most acceptable to the will of God...in the Protestant group, there is a long array of denominations...The idea does not make sense in the estimation of Africans. It means either that the Christians do not know what they are doing or that they are deliberately making fun of God."*

p. 140.

The above criticism is remarkable because as the different denominations vied for supremacy, they forgot that before the so-called pagans they came to convert, such behaviour would do little to win their admiration or confidence. Another critic, Dolvo, in deploring the rival denominations working in the Gold Coast, emphasised the fact that although the existence of many denominations might be relevant in the West, but in the Gold Coast what the people needed was one church. He pointed out that given so many ethnic divisions which already divide the country, the church would not be in a position to fulfil its duty unless it became a unifying force in Gold Coast. While calling on all Africans to face the realities of the situation, he insists:

*"I do not think the Church can effectively fulfil its duty to Africa with all its numerous warring denominations that are at work in our midst. To us in Africa the denominations rather confuse than help. We are already divided into many small tribal languages and dialect groups and the denominational divisions will just worsen the situation. We need a united front to tackle all our problems today as a Church of Him who prayed that 'they all might be one'..."* p. 141.

Paradoxically, what the Africans expected from the church was not what they saw. For instance, they wanted a united church which, to them, would be a symbol of unity, a unifying force around which the various African tribes could seek solace and eventual unification. But contrary to expectations, what the various Christian denominations did was to exacerbate the African situation by bitter inter-denominational rivalry. Ironically, it not only placed the validity of Christian faith in jeopardy, it also made the African societies

suspect the motives of the missionaries - a situation which seriously undermined even some of their genuine evangelical and educational activities, culminating in a serious setback.

10. Double Standard and Confusion.

When slave trade was abolished and made illegal by the British, other European nations including France and Portugal continued. But Dike (1956), noted that the natives of the Delta Region, where most of the human trade took place, could hardly believe the British, because Britain was one of the biggest buyers of slaves. They could not understand why Britain should suddenly tell them to stop bringing slaves and that the trade was wrong. At the same time other European nations told them to continue because the trade was good. Confused and bewildered one of the kings hit out at what he regarded as double standard and confusion being created in the region by white people. Unfortunately for the missionaries whenever the colonial administrators came under attack it always adversely affected their own activities because to the natives they were indistinguishable.

11. Missionaries Seen as Spies.

Whenever the missionaries were perceived as spies or were actually caught in espionage by the natives it always had disastrous consequences regarding their work. For example, Crowther openly took part in the 1841 Niger expedition designed to subjugate the Northern Emirs. The missionaries also volunteered to act as spies in the Delta Region when the British squadron stationed there came under heavy attack by the natives. But because they were hidden and sheltered by many creeks the foreign troops could not reach them. The loss of life from the sporadic attacks and the apparent helplessness of the British squadron made the missionaries to volunteer to spy at their own risk. The ferocity of the attacks resulted in the naval officer accusing the Delta natives of being the most warlike, treacherous and cruel people in Africa. Given the above problems, it is obvious that the

introduction of western-type education in Nigeria was fraught with immense difficulties and a great deal of personal sacrifice on the part of the pioneer missionaries.

### Education, Nationalism and Political Consciousness

No thorough examination or discussion of the development of education in Nigeria would be complete without reference to the awakening of political consciousness that stemmed directly from formal education. There is hardly any doubt that literacy helps one to reason and think not only more rationally, but also more positively. Besides, when a person is an illiterate, he or she is to a certain extent, handicapped in the sense that his or her views and opinions will not easily reach a large audience because of limited communication abilities. Most people, including Evans (1975) and Fafunwa (1974), believe that school education is the cornerstone of politics. In Nigeria, it has made invaluable contributions in political terms. In making the case for education, Fafunwa stresses the point:

*“One definite contribution made by education has been the political enlightenment of the people, particularly the educated elite.”* p. 156.

Arguably, without education, sovereign status would have been impossible for Nigerians to attain. Evans (1975), who has followed carefully the development of education in England, as well as its structure, is in no doubt that education played an invaluable role in English politics, particularly in the achievement of true political democracy - notably in terms of adult suffrage, as well as the supremacy of the elected House of Commons. While reviewing the role of English education in other institutions, often associated with politics, Evans (1975) has stressed the fact that:

*“The unenviable plight of the proletariat within Victorian society naturally gave rise to such developments as the co-operative movement, the trade union movement and the labour movement, all dedicated to improving the lot of the workers. These movements took a growing interest in education as one of the essential means of securing a better deal for the working class, pressing for State intervention and provision on a broadening and increasingly generous front.”* p. 7.



This confirms the view aforementioned that without school education, a person to a large extent is handicapped.

Abernethy (1969), for example, has pointed out that educational activities of the voluntary agencies aided and abetted the natives in their struggle for political independence, especially those from southern Nigeria, and claims that it was mission-educated Nigerians that had the capability of opposing European authority politically. It was believed that the existence of several secondary schools in Lagos by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ensured a steady and sustained emergence of the Lagos elite that was to give Lugard such a difficult time when he was governor-general. Abernethy has argued that:

*“The Christian missionaries introduced into Nigeria the ideas of nation-building of contemporary Europe. They also trained a group of Nigerians who accepted those ideas and hoped to see them carried out, and later began to use those ideas as a standard by which to judge the actions of the British administration. In doing this, the Christian movement sowed the seeds of Nigerian nationalism.”* p. 51.

It may be unfair to associate the missionaries so deeply with the political struggle for Nigerian independence, given that the primary objective of the pioneer missionaries was essentially to evangelise the society, (Boyd 1969). It was however, believed that for years it was the missionary-run secondary schools and teacher training colleges that produced most of southern Nigerian political leaders - men who by the 1950s, were able to assume the task of self-government.

In spite of all the criticisms levelled against the missionaries, one fact must always be borne in mind - that is, the fact that the pioneer missionaries underwent untold suffering in the course of their service to Nigeria, and indeed throughout most of Africa. This is evident in the address given by the late President of Ghana, Nkrumah, to the delegates of the International Missionary Council in 1957, the year of Ghana's independence. In a moving tribute to the pioneer missionaries, Nkrumah said:

*“Ghana is glad and proud to pay its tribute to the great work of missionaries in West Africa. If you have time to visit more widely in this*

*country, you will often find as you travel along the roads, little cemeteries lost in the bush where lie buried the brave men and women who, in bringing the Christian faith to this country, gave "the last full measure of their devotion." They knew that they faced the certainty of loneliness and imminent risk of death. Yellow fever decimated them and their families. But still they came. They belong to the martyrs of Christianity..."* p. 24.

In some cases, the pioneer missionaries were humiliated and insulted. In parts of Igboland in Nigeria, for example, (Achebe 1958), the followers of the new faith were called the excrement of the society and the new faith - a mad dog that has come to eat the excrement. Single-handedly, they waged war against the ills of the society, such as polygamy and human sacrifice. In Yorubaland, Atanda (1973) noted how the pioneer missionaries struggled to stop polygamous marriages, and people from eating the meat of animals that had been sacrificed to the gods. In Calabar, Mary Slessor of the Scotland Mission, battled to put an end to the brutal murder of twins in parts of Nigeria, especially among the Efik. The pioneer missionaries gave hope, comfort and love to those that the society rejected and regarded as nothing. Through the missionaries, some slaves gained their freedom. This is because when the chiefs and elders of the people hid their own sons, it was their slaves that they sent to school. Ironically, it was those slaves who were to emerge as leaders of the new economy and of the new society as clergymen, lawyers, politicians, teachers, doctors, now masters of those who once enslaved them.

To some extent, even the colonial administrators could be forgiven for their errors. Taking Lugard as an example, he was by profession a soldier, which raises the question as to whether a person trained for a specific role or trade can serve in a capacity which his initial training did not cover. In other words, should Lugard have served or played a political role in Nigeria which was precisely what he did when he served as a governor, even though he was by trade a soldier?

## CONCLUSIONS

However, it can be justifiably summed up that the development of education in Nigeria fell into three clear phases. The first phase marked the era of the missionaries. It was followed by the colonial government's intervention. The last phase which was greatly influenced by political ideology was the one that witnessed the greatest educational expansion in the history of education in Nigeria - the post independence.

The missionaries will always be associated with the great changes that have taken place in Africa, politically, socially, educationally etc. The mission trained boys, (BBC 24<sup>th</sup> February 1990), who were to form part of these changes include: Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Mandela of South Africa, Ghana's Nkrumah and Nigeria's Azikiwe - the first President of Nigeria.

Although many hold the view that both the missionaries and the colonial administrators failed in their respective mission to Nigeria, there are no clear criteria by which the extent of their failure can be determined or assessed. Even at the National Curriculum Conference in 1972, Obiogun (1972) reminded the delegates about the pioneer missionary who after reviewing the activities of both the missionaries and the colonial government, conceded:

*"Hitherto we have all failed. The pot cannot call the kettle black. Let us acknowledge our failure. For deepest down at the roots of all racial weakness and death is this very failure."* p. 156.

But any realistic assessment of the activities of the pioneer missionaries and the colonial government, especially in relation to educational development in Nigeria, must take into account some of the burning issues of the time and their impact on education.

### 'Osu' (Outcasts) and Early Education in Igboland

One of the most positive outcomes of the early missionary activities in Nigeria was the new hope which the 'Osu' derived from such endeavours. Because the 'Osu' were

rejected by the society - having been dedicated to the service of the gods, they and their generations that would follow in the course of time had been cursed by the gods. They were in a sense, under evil bondage and so to the freeborn, the 'Osu' was (and perhaps still is) like a leper, and association with him or her could be regarded as a calamity of the worst order. To fully appreciate the plight of the 'Osu' in the traditional Igbo society and why they ran to the missionaries, one has to contemplate on the advice, as well as the warning a catechist gave to his son when the latter wanted to marry an 'Osu' girl: (Achebe 1960)

*"Osu is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg of you, my son, not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children unto the third and fourth generations will curse your memory...You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? ...We are Christians, but we cannot marry our own daughters." p. 121.*

The young man thought that since his father was not just a Christian, but also a catechist, he would disregard the question of 'Osu'. His father's response reflects the enormity of the problem in Igboland, and how deeply rooted it is. It is therefore not surprising that the 'Osu' sought solace in what the missionaries preached and for the missionaries - the 'Osu', in most cases were not only their first converts, but also their first pupils, with regard to early education, particularly in those areas where influential people refused to send their children to school. By so doing, the outcasts averted the possible closure of schools which would have been the case if no one attended at all. In this way, the people rejected by the society and regarded as worthless, played an invaluable role in the development of early education in some parts of Igboland.

The introduction of formal education in Nigeria has been seen as a landmark in the history of the nation. In the next chapter the ensuing social and cultural changes will be examined.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES ARISING FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF FORMAL EDUCATION**

Although this section has educational implications, no attempt will be made to discuss the history of school education in Nigeria, as this has been elaborately dealt with in the preceding chapter. In this part of the study therefore, education will be essentially seen as a change agent, with special reference to the social and cultural changes that have taken place in Nigeria following the introduction of western-type education. Interestingly, Afonja and Pearce (1986), believe that the pace and the complexity of the changes would inevitably vary from one Nigerian society to another. It is however important at this stage to point out that often the term ‘culture’ is not seen in its broad sense. Culture is complex, its complexity can be likened to ideological complexity. Speaking about ideology in respect of control and decentralisation of education, McLean and Lauglo (1985), stress that of all the rationales involved, ideology could be the most complex especially if ideology:

*“is taken to mean a view (both descriptive and prescriptive) of the nature and development of the individual, society and knowledge. In other words, conceptions are held of the nature of individual needs, rights and psychology; of the character of social organization; and of the relationship of knowledge and its transmission to these individual and social characteristics.” p. 12.*

Similarly, culture does reflect a whole range of issues, both at individual and social levels. Nduka (1964), who has done a detailed study regarding Nigerian educational and cultural backgrounds, has defined culture from the point of view of renowned anthropologists, including Ruth Benedict (1956), and points out that in its widest sense, culture should:

*“embrace not only a people’s art, music and literature, but also their science and technology, commerce and political organization, philosophy*

*and religion, all the ideas and values, implicit and explicit, which permeate the society and bind its people into a recognizable unit.” p. 3.*

Nduka insists that viewed broadly from this standpoint, western culture is a unit as opposed to the culture or cultures of the indigenous people of Nigeria. Surprisingly, Nduka has not mentioned language specifically, because of all the factors that bind people together, and thus nurture and promote that innate sense of national identity, pride, and oneness; language, without doubt, is the most important. This may explain why Eluwa, Ukagwu, Nwachukwu and Nwaubani (1988), have language at the top of the list of what they think should constitute a nation’s culture, when they indicated that the word culture is used to:

*“describe a people’s way of life. Culture therefore includes the people’s language, their political and social organisation, their beliefs and religion, their literature and art. Culture also includes all the material things which the people produce and use, and their means of obtaining food and raw materials. These materials cover houses, weapons, tools, utensils, clothing, crafts and ornaments.” p. 1.*

Since culture includes among other things: a people’s language, political, social and religious institutions, their food, clothing, and all material possessions, it could therefore be argued that to identify with a particular culture, one ought to have been born in that very culture, and their parents as well as ancestors must have been indigenous citizens of the place where that very culture applies. But Brock and Tulasiewicz (1985), have explained that achievement of cultural identity is possible even if one by birth or parental origin does not belong to that particular culture.

*“Cultural identity is achieved by access to the elements of culture of a national or ethnic group.” p. 3.*

Brock and Tulasiewicz stress that while the American blacks identify with external links, they are arguably more indigenous than the majority of the white American population. They argue that this is because the American blacks, whose origin can be traced to Africa (descendants of the slaves), have lived in America for several generations, during which

time they have completely immersed themselves in the culture of their adopted country almost to the extinction of their own original culture, whereas among the white population are people who have just recently settled in America. It must however be pointed out that it is not always easy for people to relinquish their own cultural identity and replace it with another culture. This is why in multi-cultural societies, including Britain, culture can pose a serious problem in terms of educational policy, as various ethnic groups strive to maintain some form of their original culture within the educational system. In some cases, it could lead to decentralisation of education in order to ensure equality of educational opportunity, (Bray 1975), by making greater provisions for groups whose interests are not particularly taken adequate note of by ties to the centre.

It is worthy of note that in most societies, cultural attitude towards women's education can have far-reaching implications, notably in terms of educational opportunity and achievement. In the first chapter of this Study for example, it was discovered that the formal education of girls and women in every nation has suffered a serious setback. Akpan's (1989) study about male/female enrolment ratios with regard to Nigerian universities, has convinced him that the low female enrolment rate, is a reflection of the general pattern of social relationship between the sexes in the developing countries. It could therefore be argued that in every society, since the beginning of time, culture has been used as an instrument of oppression against girls and women. It is however interesting to note that in recent times, culture has been found to be capable of playing a more positive role in the course of day to day activities; especially in terms of explaining behavioural traits and educational performance. Buttonwood (1988), for example, in the course of his extensive study about culture, noted that:

*"The concept of 'culture' is increasingly appearing in educational research as a device for explaining behaviour in general, and school performance in*

*particular, especially among working class and ethnic minority children.”*  
p. 67.

Culture could probably play a more positive role if learning and understanding other people's culture became part of the curriculum of every society's educational system; bearing in mind that such knowledge could be invaluable when dealing with people from different ethnic backgrounds. However, at this stage of the study, discussion will focus on some of the most significant Nigerian cultural heritage, and the inevitable changes that have occurred as a result of formal education.

### Political Change

#### The Indigenous Political Institutions

Unquestionably, political change was one of the most profound changes brought about in Nigeria by western-type education. It is noteworthy that the development of the modern political system in Nigeria has been highlighted in the preceding chapter. It is however important to recall that the pre-colonial political institutions in Nigeria were efficient and served the people creditably. Many of them had been in existence for thousands of years. Some of the empires, kingdoms and emirates in the northern part of the country, for example, were as old as the society itself; including the Kanem/Borno empire, (Eluwa, Ukagwu, Nwachukwu and Nwaubuni, 1988), which could be traced back to 800 AD. The Kanuri were the founders of the first and second empires of Kanem/Borno. They were associated with divine kingship, walled towns, high artistic achievements, and elaborate burial rites. In the South-west were the Oba of Benin and the Olafin of the Yoruba who wielded enormous political influence over their people. The Oyo empire was also one of the oldest empires in the then western Sudan empire.

Although in the Southeast the traditional home of the Igbo, there were no powerful emirs as in the North, or strong rulers like the Oba of Benin or the Olafin of Oyo, there



were chiefs and natural leaders in various villages. Their roles included among other things: settlement of disputes - especially land disputes. The chiefs and natural leaders could collectively declare wars, as well as contain inter tribal hostilities. Nevertheless critics, especially the early colonial officers saw the absence of a single central political authority in the Southeast, as a state of anarchy. Although the Igbo could be said to have experimented with various types of political systems in the pre-colonial era, Eluwa, and his associates (1988), have claimed that only two could be easily identified; namely the presidential monarchy and the village republic.

### The Presidential Monarchy

The monarchical system, has always been associated with those Igbo communities that had early contact with non-Igbo states and empires like Benin and Igala. Prominent among these are the Igbo of Onitsha, Oguta, Asaba and Agbor, who borrowed many cultural features, including political ones, from their neighbours - the Bini, and integrated them into their indigenous systems. In order to justify their action, the Igbo communities in question have always claimed to have originated from Benin and Igala - a claim now proven to be unfounded. The 'Obi' or Igwe were leaders of 'Amala' (village assembly) in their respective domains, but owing mainly to trade and proximity to their non-Igbo neighbours, their political system underwent serious and fundamental modifications, as distinct from those practised by the rest of the Igbo.

### The Village Republic

It is noteworthy that Eluwa, and his school of thought (1988), have claimed that the second system, the Village Republic, was common and widespread in the whole of Igboland. It is believed that the distribution of power and authority, and the process of local administration, was the same in both the Presidential Monarchy and the Village

Republic. The only discernible differences were the King's regalia, court ceremonials and titles. Although the general political trend was the same, a closer examination of the traditional Igbo political system shows that minor differences existed from day to day. In the case of the central Igbo areas of Okigwe, Orlu and Owerri for instance, local administration solely depended on kinship - a system considered to be the original indigenous political system of the Igbo. Significantly, age-grades were not agencies of local government in these areas (see Chapter 2 Part A). Ngwa and Umuahia were much influenced by their Ibibio neighbours whose political organisations they adopted, including the Akang, Okonko, Ekpe and Ekpo. Secret societies played leading roles as far as local administration was concerned. But women were excluded from the secret societies and by implication from local administration.

Two types of democracies operated in the pre-colonial Igboland. The household, for example, was, and is still believed to be the mainstay of Igbo socio-political organisation. The sub-lineage and the lineage - or the extended family closely followed this. The sub-lineage was made up of the various households who could trace their descent to one common ancestor, while the lineage group consisted of various sub-lineages whose origin centred on the remote ancestor. The heads of the lineages often met and discussed the affairs of the unit. The meeting was organised and attended by men, usually the first male born (Okpara), of each household. Above the Village Assembly were the representatives of the village, which included 'Ofo' holders (symbol of authority), members of the secret societies, and senior titled men.

Eluwu, and his associates (1988), have indicated that the existence of the Village Assembly is a clear manifestation of the representative democracy that prevailed in Igboland prior to the advent of western-type education. The Igbo society was known to

have maintained a high level of political stability. Wars were never on a scale comparable to the North where empires, kingdoms and emirates rose and fell - each fighting to gain supremacy or ascendancy over the others. But the claim by Eluwa (1988), and his associates that the existence of the Village Assembly was a demonstration of the representative democracy prevalent in the pre-colonial Igbo society, is questionable, because women were excluded from that assembly. Any political organisation anywhere in the world that does not have female members can hardly be described as representative democracy.

Igbo neighbours like the Ibibio and the Efik had their own political institutions, sustained mainly by secret societies especially the Ekpe. These organisations were strongly linked with high cultural achievement, notably the development of a peculiar type of writing known as 'Nsibidi', (a sign writing). It was a secret writing mostly used by the Ekpe society. The Ekpe was notorious for violence, brutality and ruthlessness. The Itsekiri in the Niger Delta exhibited strong Benin political influence with a powerful ruler the 'Olu', (King).

Given the above account, it does seem that there was political stability in the geographical entity later known as Nigeria before the advent of western influence. But Dada (1990), has claimed that the pre-colonial situation in Nigeria is not easy to describe in that it was an extensive area comprising of shifting, complex peoples, nations and kingdoms. Dada holds the view that although they were independent of each other, trade or commercial interests loosely linked them. Dada has identified two groups of kingdoms:

1. The Sudanese kingdoms, consisting of Ghana, Mali, Kanem/Borno, Songhai and the Hausa State;

2. The forest kingdoms, which included: the Yoruba, Benin and Igbo. Dada explains that the Sudanese kingdoms were along the fringe of the Sahara Desert in the Savannah region, and the forest kingdoms were in the dense belt of tropical forests, mangroves and other swamps.

If one accepts Dada's own version, one obvious implication is that there would be doubts, especially in terms of the strong and stable political institutions developed in Nigeria; particularly in the North and parts of the South in the pre-colonial era. However, the fact is obvious, before the advent of western influence, various parts of what was to become Nigeria, had developed efficient socio-political institutions. As already indicated, some had been in existence for thousands of years.

It is generally believed that the introduction of western-type education marked the beginning of the end of the indigenous political system. Nduka (1964), for example, has strongly stressed the fact that in Nigeria, western education was the main instrument in bringing about social changes. It must however be noted that the changes did not necessarily occur overnight. They were gradual, but systematic. Taking Igboland as an example, those early mission children who were taken from their homes by the missionaries were under pressure from time to time, to change their old ways of life, which included obedience to parents and elders, participation in village ceremonies, festivities and rituals, the age-grade system etc.. The mission children later became Christians and were among the early converts.

In the preceding chapter, it was disclosed that children were the prime targets of the missionaries for they saw in the young, growth and continuity of the Christian faith. The youngsters were therefore not allowed to take part in village rituals as they were considered evil practices. Adult converts were also banned from such practices, and the membership

of secret societies like the Ogboni (Free Masonry), as these were inconsistent with Christianity. Under the circumstances, the continued existence of the old political system came under severe threat because certain political institutions, like kingship and chieftaincy, were hereditary offices. Those male children whose fathers held big traditional, hereditary responsibilities could no longer inherit their father's posts. For kings, chiefs, titled men, 'Ofo' holders etc., western education was a source of constant worry; especially in terms of continuity of the old traditional way of life which, by their very position in the society, they epitomised.

With the passage of time and with more and more children going to school, the village system, which was at the heart of Igbo political organisation started to disintegrate. Parents began to lose control of their children. Some of the pupils, notably those tucked away in the mission premises, were in a position where they could challenge parental authority. Understandably, as the old political institutions crumbled, it was the older generation that felt more bewildered. The situation was comprehensively summed up by a village elder who complained, (Achebe 1964), that the white man had put a knife into the things that held them together; hence they had fallen apart. It is worth noting that some of the influential men only sent their sons to school when they realised that western-type education was a new source of power and progress, socially, economically and politically. But their daughters were considered unworthy of such attributes.

It is quite clear from the above account that women were excluded from the indigenous political system. In a sense, they were silenced. Not surprisingly, when formal education was introduced and they were ignored, they could not speak in defence of their rights.

## Lord Lugard and the New Political System

### Indirect Rule

The introduction in Nigeria of a political system, historically known as Indirect Rule, (Gailey 1971), by Lord Lugard, marked a major political change in Nigeria. He was appointed the Commissioner of Northern Nigeria in 1900, and in 1901, the system of Indirect Rule was introduced. It is important to note that when Lugard arrived in northern Nigeria, he found that the northerners had an efficient political machinery. The emirs were in full control of the emirates, with a well-organised method of taxation. Lugard was surprised and impressed by what he saw, and felt it would be pointless changing the system. Consequently, instead of ruling the people directly, Lugard decided to do so through the emirs who were the natural leaders of the people; hence the political title - 'Indirect Rule'. The emirs became accountable to the colonial administration. The fact that traditionally the emir was the sole native authority, was an added advantage to the new political officials. It is important to note that all the emirs were men.

Under the new system, the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was divided into provinces, and the provinces in turn were sub-divided into divisions. A division was under a District Officer (DO) and a province under a Resident. The District Officer who supervised the emir was responsible to the Resident, while the Resident was accountable to the High Commissioner, who was in overall command of the entire Protectorate. In a sense, the colonial administration took over the old traditional system of government, and made use of it. In doing so, however, Lugard did make some basic modifications. For instance, the District Officers who were under the emirs, instead of residing in the capital with their emir, had to stay in the Districts they administered. The emir, on his part, became the native authority, the Chief Executive, as well as the supreme judicial authority

of his emirate or district. The Political Officer in the area interfered as little as possible with his administration. As already indicated, the fact that an efficient and well-organised system of government was already in existence in the North, helped enormously in terms of the successful - and obviously trouble-free introduction of Indirect Rule by Lugard.

In the South, the introduction of the new system did not go down well with the people. Lugard presumably hoped that the success he had in the North could be repeated in the South. But this was not to be the case; he miscalculated, (Gailey 1971). To start with, the traditional political institutions that were prevalent in the northern part of Nigeria were more or less non-existent in the South - especially Southeast. Taking Yorubaland, for example, Indirect Rule was introduced there in 1914 - the year in which the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria took place. Although Yoruba rulers, like the Alafin, wielded enormous power and influence over their people, their power was limited.

The Oba for instance, was not the sole native authority as in the case of his counterpart in the North, the emir. Besides in Yorubaland, the well organised system of taxation that helped in the smooth-running of the political machinery in the North did not exist. Despite warnings that his new system of government would not work, Lugard went ahead with the introduction of Indirect Rule, first in Oyo. Because the new system was over-centralised, it worked against the traditional democratic system of the people. It also excluded the new elite who were embittered by the fact that they had been snubbed. Consequently, there was a general out cry followed by revolts against the new system in several places, including Ibadan. But by far the most serious uprising was in Egba in 1918. The revolts were eventually contained by Nigerian troops who had just returned from the East African sector of the First World War.

In eastern Nigeria, indirect Rule was also a failure. Lugard confronted conditions that were even more unfavourable than in Yorubaland. In the traditional Igbo society for example, there was no discernible central authority, Lugard therefore resorted to the creation of Warrant Chiefs. He did not consult the Village Assembly or the natural leaders of the land. By so doing, the colonial administration further weakened the old traditional system of government. Since the new leaders and the warrant chiefs were Lugard's own creation, they were not representative and were not recognised as such by the people. Besides those he chose were not regarded as respectable individuals in the society. Their words were not heeded in the assembly of elders, villages or clans. They were mainly those regarded as the dregs of the society, (Achebe 1958).

It was therefore fairly obvious right from the onset that indirect Rule would never work in Igboland; after all, the Warrant Chiefs were unlikely to get the people's recognition or support. As in Yorubaland, the imposition of direct taxation on the people led to widespread riots - culminating in the Aba riots of 1929, often referred to as 'Women's War', because it was entirely master-minded by women. The riots caused untold suffering and destruction. To contain them, the colonial government used force. Critics, including Gailey (1971), have blamed Lugard because he did not try to understand the people's way of life, including their socio-political institutions - knowledge which would have been invaluable in his decision to impose the new system on the people.

### The Rise of the Nationalists

But with more and more Nigerians receiving western education, both within and outside Nigeria, a new nationalist movement began to gather pace. As a result of the high education they had received, the nationalists were in a position whereby they could challenge the colonial administration effectively. The role of formal education, with regard



to the attainment of political independence in 1960, was highlighted in Chapter Two. Ironically, western-type education, which was introduced in Nigeria by the missionaries and later supported by the colonial government, was used to end British rule in Nigeria. This is why Abernethy (1969), has indicated that some critics have blamed the missionaries personally for collaborating with the natives to end colonial government in Nigeria. It is worth noting that, although formal education enhanced and ultimately facilitated the transition from colonial rule to independence, the new political status in turn was responsible for the massive educational expansion, progress and achievements that ensued, following political freedom. Nduka (1964), has also made it clear that:

*“the western influence of the political situation on the development of western education in Nigeria can hardly be overemphasised.”* p. 8.

It should however be stressed that the contribution made by western education with regard to political progress in Nigeria, was more apparent in the South than in the North. Although, in political terms, Indirect Rule appeared to be successful in the North, educationally it was a disaster. In a bitter attack on the system of Indirect Rule in the North, Miller (1948), a member of the colonial team, had this to say:

*“...I have never ceased to protest against the travesty of Indirect Rule, and have often talked to the late Lord Lugard about it. It is hard to believe that that great and noble statesman made a mistake of this sort; there has been foisted upon a whole people a rule which has kept them in mental and, virtually, physical slavery: backward, static, dark and superstitious, and utterly uneducated. No hope can exist for this Hausa people until either our government deposes this alien rule, or there become enough educated ones among them too strong for such a rule to be perpetuated.”* p. 76.

It could therefore be argued that had Indirect Rule succeeded in the South in the manner in which it did in the North, the emergence of the nationalists, their political movements, and other subsequent events - particularly with regard to education, might not have taken place

or, if they did, they might not have been on the same scale. The new political leaders for instance, were all determined to give education the highest priority.

But questions have been asked as to why at that particular point in time did the nation need a new set of leaders, and not the old traditional leaders. Hugh and Mabel Smythe (1960), have however explained that the approaching independence, the Nigerialisation of the Civil Service, and the growth of nationalism were factors in the changing political climate which called for new leaders. The Smythes stress that the old leaders could not serve because:

*“tradition kept each tribal group to itself, with its own loyalties, language, and ways. The paramount chieftain of one group could not be considered as leader for another, since his loyalties were clearly to his own group and normally he did not even speak the language of any indigenous group other than his own. Yet with the development of a nation which considered all persons within its boundaries as citizens, there had to be at the top level a new kind of intertribal, nonlocal, truly national leadership, and at the lower level willingness to accept the natural leaders as their own.”* p. 71-72.

The Smythes claim that all of the above necessities dictated by circumstances rather than reasoning, point to the western educated person with experience in non-traditional positions.

It is obvious that the political change that hastened the demise of the old system made it impossible for the traditional leaders to serve efficiently in the new system. This is more so when one considers the fact that each traditional leader served essentially a limited area, usually people of the same culture - especially in terms of language. But with western education, there emerged a unifying language - English. Since the old traditional rulers could not speak it; obviously it is hard to see how they could rule a big nation with diverse mother tongues. Although the indigenous political system discriminated against women, the colonial administration under Lugard also ignored women.

## Women and Political Institutions

Women were discriminated against, both in the old and the new political institutions. For instance, in the traditional system, women did not feature in the Village Assembly in Igboland. Even in those areas where kingship was the system, the wives of the kings did not necessarily become queens. Among the Efik, only men were members of the Ekpe, the secret society which was a strong political instrument. In the North, no woman became an emir or ruled an emirate. In some places like Calabar and Ibibio, women formed their own secret societies since men excluded them from theirs. In recent times, the modern political institutions have not given women any real opportunity. For instance, no woman has ever been a president. Women need to be at the top decision making level, so that they can participate in effecting changes, especially in educational terms.

## Economic Change: Its Implication for Women

Some hold the view that the prime motive for British colonial enterprises in Nigeria, (Nduka 1964), was economic, just as the main objective for the introduction of formal education in Nigeria by the missionaries was said to be primarily evangelistic. But no one can deny the fact that the economic changes have been overwhelming. To appreciate the enormity of the changes, one has to look back in terms of the indigenous economy before the advent of western-type education. Some scholars who have examined thoroughly and critically the impact of the indigenous culture on the traditional economy, strongly feel that there were economic setbacks because of the unfavourable cultural situations at the time. Nduka (1964), for example, has claimed that:

*“Among the indigenous cultures, the rigidities of tribalism have militated against rapid economic growth. Communal ownership of land, for instance, is a barrier, probably not an insurmountable one, but a barrier none the less...”* p. 97.

In criticising the communal system of land ownership, Nduka emphasised the fact that such a system did not facilitate the scientific development of agriculture. It must be pointed out that all lands were not communally owned in the pre-colonial era, given that individuals could, and did possess land within the existing land tenure system, (Green 1964), although in the traditional Nigerian society, only men could own land. Wives farmed on their husbands' land. Nduka is not alone with regard to his criticism of land tenure; Jackson (1956), for example, has consistently maintained that as far as the traditional economy was concerned:

*“Much of the difficulty is caused by the system of land tenure. Most land is held in common, and its use is controlled by the elders on behalf of the whole community. Even where an individual has acquired rights in land, he is still subject to a great deal of moral pressure from the elders. It follows therefore that the amount which can be done through individual farmers is strictly limited. Agricultural improvement depends on persuading the entire community.” p. 54.*

Like Nduka (1964), Jackson holds the view that economic progress - especially in terms of scientific agriculture, is jeopardised by communal ownership of land. Jackson has argued that in the final analysis, economic advancement must depend on the individual, but insists that social obstacles hamper the energetic and enterprising individual. He stresses that a young man trained in scientific farming cannot put his training into practice because of the community's out-moded form of land tenure. Jackson has also partly blamed traditional economic setbacks on another aspect of indigenous culture; namely high bride price. Jackson emphasises the fact that a young man, for example, with a sound idea for developing a village industry could not execute his plan because of financial constraints, arising mainly from soaring and unaffordable bride price.

The above criticisms notwithstanding, the pre-colonial Nigerian economy, sustained the people, and farming was exceptionally important. Surprisingly Jackson (1956), has

pointed out that the African soil is inherently poor, and has condemned bush-burning, which is a method some farmers still use for preparing the ground for hoeing. But there are vast areas of fertile soil, that is why the land was and still is the most valued and reliable possession of most Africans, especially the ordinary people who form the bulk of the population. In the traditional society, for example, women sustained their families through farming; (they are still doing so in the contemporary Nigerian society). In those days trade by barter was popular (Fafunwa 1984).

### Crop Rotation and Shifting Cultivation

The only methods of farming, both in the traditional and contemporary Nigerian societies are crop rotation and shifting cultivation. In crop rotation, the land is cultivated every year, but different crops are planted each year. A woman, for example, could plant cocoyam on a piece of land one year; the following year instead of planting the same crop, on the same land she might decide to plant cassava. This method is thought to enrich the soil. It is popular among those with little land. With shifting cultivation, a piece of land is allowed to lie fallow, up to two or three years, after it has been farmed on. The soil is expected to regain the fertility it lost during the farming process. Shifting cultivation favours those with a lot of land.

Livestock was also important in the traditional economy. Among the Igbo for example, goats, sheep, cows, dogs, as well as chickens, were reared. It should however, be noted that wealthy individuals, like chiefs usually owned cows. Ordinary citizens could only afford smaller animals. Amazingly, meat from the animals and the chickens did not necessarily constitute part of the daily meal of the people. The rearing was mainly for commercial purposes. As a result, in terms of nutrition, they served no useful purpose.

It has been argued that in the traditional period, because a man's wealth and social status depended on what he owned both in human and material terms, polygamy became widespread. Consequently, men with many wives and numerous children could farm much more extensively, and boast of larger harvests than those with relatively smaller families. Servants and slaves also played a leading role in the traditional economy by farming and by rearing their master's domestic animals. Men who could fill an estimated number of barns with yams (usually between 2,400 and 3,200 yams), could qualify for the enviable title of 'Ezeji', (King of Yams). It is therefore clear that in the pre-colonial era, farming played a crucial role in the people's economic life and in some cases, boosted men's social status.

In spite of the fact that agriculture was the main stay of the economy in the traditional society, many people were also involved in trading, hunting, fishing, pottery and manufacturing, though not on a big scale. Some Nigerians, including Eluwa and his associates (1988), hold the view that any meaningful study of the pre-colonial economy in Nigeria must take into account the indigenous industries that formed an important sector of its economy. They also claim that, in most cases, the raw materials, the tools and the technologies were locally available. The items produced included tools, weapons, utensils etc., needed by the people in their every-day life.

Generally it is believed that the introduction of western-type education in Nigeria marked the beginning of the decline of the traditional economy, (Miller 1947; Fafunwa 1984; Nduka 1964). The children at school for instance, began to see farming as unprofitable, uninteresting, and above all - very hard work - which would lead to an unexciting and isolated life. The fact that with the introduction of formal education, youngsters no longer found farming exciting placed the traditional economy inevitably in

jeopardy. Nduka (1964), has criticised the quality of education given to the Nigerian children with regard to the negative attitude towards farming.

*“It is with regard to agriculture that we get the full measure of the sort of education Nigerians have been receiving during the past hundred years or so. One of the aims of primary education, indeed, of every type of education, is to enable the student to come to terms with his environment. Another aim, ..., is to enable the pupils to acquire some skill of hand, and a right appreciation of the value of the work of the hands...”* p. 138-139.

Nduka emphasises the fact that even long after the introduction of western education schools continued to ignore the fact that agriculture was the backbone of the country's economy. Nduka has also blamed parents and other relatives of school pupils, because they failed to understand the real aim of school education and consequently, did not expect the children to return to the village, and labour. Nduka has stressed that this is because working with one's hands was held in contempt. He claims that because farming declined when western-type education was introduced, one of the strongest criticisms often levelled against the early mission and government schools was that they turned out pupils who were too conceited to do anything with their hands. Nduka is also convinced that the Europeans who lived in Nigeria, especially in the early years of colonialism, were partly responsible for the contempt with which farming was held, since they were never seen farming or doing any manual labour. They had Nigerian servants who did all the work for them. In other words, the Europeans did not, by their own personal example (a very important method of teaching in Nigeria), show that working with one's hands was not demeaning.

It is noteworthy that Dada (1990), has also highlighted the importance of farming in the Nigerian economy. In a study of the economy of northern Nigeria, especially Kwara State, Dada has made it very clear that Kwara State depends on farming for its existence, and has called on the entire community including schools, to ensure that farming is given top priority. A vigorous campaign should be launched, not only in Kwara State but in all

the States in Nigeria. Certain food items, for example vegetables, could be a lot cheaper if people could grow them in their gardens especially Okro, Egusi, Okazi and pumpkin that are very delicious..

### Women's Economic Status

In the traditional society, women were economically strong in that they sustained their families mainly by farming (see Chapter 2 Part A), The colonial administration did not however enhance their economic status, in the new money based economy. On the contrary, the colonial officers discouraged women from farming and taught men better methods of cultivation. Only men were allowed to grow cash crops, including cotton, which the Europeans desperately needed for their textile industries in Europe. This meant that only men could earn the much needed cash. The result was that women began to depend on men economically, whereas in the traditional society, the contrary was more or less the case. The loss of their economic influence affected their social and political status. Consequently it reduced their ability to look after their own interests, and to take quick decisions in times of emergency like the Aba Women's Riots. Obbo (1980), has also highlighted the importance of women's economic independence. In a study of East African women she noted that the women were eager to achieve financial independence because it would help them to take decisions on their own, instead of waiting for their husbands' approval. The women also felt that being economically independent would help them counter the ever present male dominance. The loss of women's economic status, under the colonial regime, has been attributed to the fact that the colonial officers who administered Nigeria were essentially men of Victorian England, with Victorian values, which discriminated against women.



The action of the colonial administration affected the school education of many youngsters, especially girls because most parents relied on the sale of surplus farm produce for the payment of their children's school fees. It was also from the same source that they were able to provide various school items including books and stationery. As women were strong farmers, when the colonial officials discouraged them, many families inevitably suffered untold economic setback.

However, the need to regenerate the nation's economy cannot be overemphasised. As a developing country, Nigeria cannot afford to ignore any aspect of her economy because the stronger the economy, the richer the quality of education, and even the greater the educational opportunity available to both male and female citizens. An ailing economy, on the other hand, can hardly sustain an expanding and elaborate educational system. Adesina (1990), has also stressed the fact that the economy of a nation can influence its educational system in several ways.

*“Depending on whether the economy is poor or healthy, it can necessitate adjustments in the nation's educational programmes. A highly productive and stable economy would ensure the education of the people. By contrast, a nation with an unstable economy would normally hesitate to expand the educational system or introduce expensive innovations into it. The economy of a nation can also influence the type of educational programmes that are stressed in the nation's educational system.” p. 42.*

Adesina has also advised that emphasis should be placed on vocational and technical education, or an education that would enhance agriculture.

In terms of the crucial issue namely the formal education of Nigerian girls and women, a healthy economy on the scale advocated by Adesina would not only ensure high quality education, but would also enhance female educational opportunity in Nigeria.. One way of achieving this is by increasing export commodities. At the moment this is mainly oil. It should be noted that in economic terms, oil is a recent development in Nigeria.

Before oil was discovered in the 1970s, cocoa, rubber, palm produce, cotton, groundnuts etc. were the main export goods. They went into decline following the discovery of oil, but now to build a strong economy which would take into account the provision of educational opportunities for all Nigerian citizens, these declining sources of revenue must be regenerated. Women should also be allowed to own land so that they could help more in the school education of children, especially girls, bearing in mind that in times of financial crisis girls' education is the first to be scrapped.

### Social Change

Perhaps there is no aspect of life in Nigeria where cultural changes have been most ostentatiously manifested than in the area of social life. The pace and the intensity with which these changes have occurred are incredible. Jackson (1956), has pointed out that the very first thing that strikes one is the bewildering speed of the changes within the region.

*“The African who looks back to fifty years ago looks back over a yawning gulf. He looks back to a world where no man expected to travel more than a dozen miles beyond the confines of his village; to a world where every man was a subsistence farmer and brass rods were the only currency; to a world where no man was literate and all wisdom and knowledge came from the lips of the elders; to a world which was no bigger than the village...In fifty years he has seen his world change from the age-old pattern of village life and leap into the twentieth century.” p. 26 - 27.*

Jackson's observation is an indication of the incredible changes that have taken place since the introduction of western education in Nigeria. There is hardly any aspect of life that has not been profoundly touched by the sweeping changes that are still taking place. Arguably, the social changes might not have occurred on the scale that they did, within a relatively short period of time, if the people themselves did not welcome those changes. But the bitter struggle, the eagerness and the burning desire to accomplish the changes could be interpreted to mean that the Nigerians could not wait to discard their own indigenous social values.

Not surprisingly, it was the children in the mission schools who first wanted to do away with every aspect of the indigenous culture. Some scholars believe that the children on their own could not have advocated the changes. In other words, they were encouraged to do so by the missionaries (Fafunwa 1984). The mission children looked down on their counterparts that lived in the village and, from time to time, taunted them. They felt that they were far too superior to the village dwellers. Understandably the mission pupils began to yearn for European goods and way of life. Jackson maintains that the establishment between 1885 and 1900, of British protectorates reinforced the social developments over northern and southern Nigeria.

Although no aspect of social life escaped the changes, clothing, housing, and mobility were the most affected. Before the advent of Europeans and the introduction of western-type education, the geographical unit, later known as Nigeria, was inhabited by people who led a relatively simple life. They were not pre-occupied with the acquisition of money or material wealth as is the case today, neither were they fashion conscious. If there were any pre-occupations, they presumably had to do with food and shelter, given that these were the things that, to a large extent, ensured their continued existence (particularly food), in an age when people lived more or less on what they could produce with their own hands. There were no imported food items, building materials, or sophisticated clothes.

### Clothing

In terms of clothing, the earliest inhabitants - like the stone-age people - did not wear clothes. With the passage of time, people began to wear leaves. But with the dawn of the Iron Age, about 500 BC, people became a bit more adventurous in their attire. It is noteworthy that historians, including Eluwa and his associates (1988), claim that the first evidence of iron smelting in Nigeria was in 500 BC in the Nok area (near the new federal

capital of Abuja). The iron tools, without doubt, helped the people in hunting animals, whose skins provided clothing outfits for people. With the passage of time, and as more and more indigenous industries sprang up, like weaving, some began to wear tiny pieces of cloth - mainly adult men and women. Men wore very narrow strips of cloth in between their legs, while women tied theirs' around the waist. In some communities, people including adult men and women, wore nothing. Elsewhere traditional dress evolved.

The most radical changes in clothing occurred in the mission schools. The evangelists provided the pupils with clothes, and they no longer walked about naked. This helped them to change their attitude towards their old way of life, and ultimately culminated in the jeering and taunting of their fellow children in the villages, who obviously could not afford such luxury. Meanwhile, those who had acquired even minimum education and had jobs as clerks, began to buy and wear European dress. The natives who served the expatriates received gifts of clothes from their masters. Relatives and dependants of those with paid jobs who could afford imported dresses, began to dress in European styles.

The relentless scramble for the imported goods must have far exceeded the expectations of the Europeans. This shows not only the pace of social change, but also how hard the natives struggled and aspired to look like Europeans. This eventually led to change of personal identity given that clothing is one of the outward ways of expressing such change. For example, a native who used to wear a narrow piece of cloth in between his legs could, within a matter of days, change his appearance by wearing a pair of shorts or trousers and a shirt, and even a tie. With the passage of time, people began to have more dress sense and consequently became more selective in what they bought. The desire was no longer to wear just anything, but to look smart and attractive.

But the hunt for beautiful clothes had disastrous consequences in educational terms. For instance, some men began to think less about their children's education especially girls' but more about clothes and consequently began to spend more money on them. Some became so pre occupied with their appearance that they strove to look smarter than the Europeans. There were also some that allowed their families to suffer and languish in the villages while they spent money on prostitutes in the big cities, and dressed to impress them. Some thought that their wives were too old fashioned

### Ladies' Fashion and School Education

Not surprisingly, as time went by people became even more adventurous in their style of dressing. Men who could afford the money bought two or three piece suits. Since the 1970's the range in fashion is overwhelming as people compete against one another in their struggle to look as fashionable as possible. Dresses are now imported into Nigeria from all over Europe, and also from countries like India, China, the United States of America etc. Dresses are also made locally, but they do not sell as well as the imported ones which, to some extent, shows that people have little or no confidence in things produced locally (see Ike Chapter 2). It is worthy of note that some of the tailors and seamstresses in Nigeria today were trained in Europe and America, and some of them do exhibit sheer ingenuity. Interestingly, some seamstresses are making a lot of profit by specialising in ladies' fashions. Some have been able to train their children, especially their daughters in schools and universities. Understandably the seamstresses based in big towns like Aba Owerri, Emgu etc earn a lot more money than their rural counterparts. Girls and women dress in both foreign and traditional styles, (the latter consisting mainly of wrappers, blouses and head scarves).

It is worth pointing out that the radical changes in clothing affected mainly the southern part of the country. In the North for instance, people still wear the traditional Hausa attire which, for men and boys are the long robes (often white) and matching pairs of trousers and round caps. Girls and women wear knee-length wrappers and very loose blouses (buba), and head scarves. Some Yoruba women and girls dress like their counterparts in the North. Smythe (1960), has strongly indicated that western clothing is judged by the Nigerians to be more convenient for every day wear. This view is confirmed by the fact that, in Nigeria, the wearing of indigenous women's clothes to school by female teachers has long been banned because they are clumsy, and thus impede movement.

The ban must have been most appropriate with regard to the Igbo women since they wear long wrappers - often two at the same time, with one of the wrappers touching the heels; and the second coming as far down as the knee. A lady teacher cannot run in this type of attire. She cannot also walk smartly without falling. In a subject like Physical Education, it is difficult to teach the children all the necessary skills. But most European dresses are light and smart so that in times of extreme heat, a lady teacher is not likely to feel as hot and as uncomfortable as will be the case, if she is in a national costume. So in educational terms, European fashion helps school education.

#### European Fashion and Nigerian Women's Status

As far as Nigerian women's status is concerned, European fashions (dresses, hats, wigs, cosmetics, shoes etc.) have done a great deal to boost it. The above items have helped to enhance the women's natural beauty. With the wigs for example, they can attempt any hair-style for any occasion. Some women feel good and confident when they dress well. It is important to note that suggestions and opinions from the viewers of a regular BBC programme, entitled 'The Clothes Show' strongly indicate that many women

are very interested in fashion because it helps their image and self-confidence. It is also generally believed that another strong factor behind Nigerian women's special care of their appearance, is that the modern Nigerian man, unlike his ancestors, wants his wife to look smart and attractive. This is because the role of a Nigerian woman is expanding all the time. Gone are the days, for example, when a woman was just a mother and a housewife, immersed in endless domestic chores.

A Nigerian woman today is not only a mother and housewife; she is also her husband's companion, and has to be beside him in various places, including parties. In some cases, she may have her own career, in addition. In marital terms, it is said that a woman's beauty helps to stabilise marriage. For instance, a man who finds his wife nice and charming is less likely to run after other women. But the desire to look attractive has put more pressure on Nigerian women, particularly married ones. This is because the struggle to look good for their husbands becomes increasingly difficult with each successive birth. Economically, it is also expensive and so the poorer the couple, the harder it is for the woman to buy those accessories that will enable her to look strikingly attractive and glamorous. It is worth recalling that Jibowu (1969) highlighted some of the pressures on present day Nigerian women in Chapter 1. But if girls receive good education, they may get well paid jobs, which will enable them to look after themselves, especially when they become married women.

### Housing, Huts and Formal Education

Like clothing, Nigeria went through a number of transitional stages. The earliest inhabitants did not obviously have anything that could be regarded as house. They were essentially cave dwellers like their counterparts in other parts of Africa, especially East Africa. People also did a lot of wandering but with the discovery of farming, a more stable

existence became necessary and people felt they needed shelter over their heads. They experimented with leaves and sticks. As societies became more stable, people saw the need for stronger shelter; hence they started to build huts with mud and bamboo. Some of the early Europeans lived in such huts, including Green (1964), who spent many years in the remote village of 'Umueke'. Surprisingly by 1935, Umueke did not have a school. The women had to petition Green to help them campaign for a school. It is noteworthy that the early schools, including mission schools and churches, were all huts. Some Nigerians still live in such accommodation, particularly rural people. The poor cannot afford modern buildings. But Nigerians are not alone in this problem. In India for instance, many people are poor and live in huts. The huts often cannot withstand the strong monsoon winds and rain, (Tunney 1984). In Nigeria, the absence of natural phenomena, including floods and earthquakes, makes it possible for the huts to last long. Huts were badly needed in the early years of formal education because they were the only type of accommodation available. Without them formal education would have been unsustainable.

But with school education, came European-type buildings. Schools, hospitals, churches etc., are reminiscent of western architecture. Electric lights and other electrical appliances are the highlights of present day buildings. Those who can afford the money adorn their houses with television sets, videos, computers etc. Because of the heat, the refrigerator is very much in demand in homes; although not everyone can afford it. The sewage and the refuse disposal systems have played an invaluable role in raising the people's standard of hygiene, especially in the urban centres where they have become permanent features in homes. This is one of the major differences between life in the rural areas and life in the urban centres. Those who are very wealthy live in air-conditioned houses. Modern houses in Nigeria are strong and beautiful.



In big cities like Lagos, some buildings are so tall that they look like the American skyscrapers. Hugh and Mabel Smythe (1966), who have been to many parts of Nigeria have seen some of the most beautiful buildings including the modern Onitsha market in the East, it is worth recalling that Onitsha was the first place in Igboland to receive western type education (see chapter 2). The University of Ibadan in the West and its hospital, and the towered mosque in the North, are also among the wonders, in terms of the present day Nigerian architecture. In praising Onitsha market, the Smythes' described it as the best organised and most modern in Nigeria. The market has provided jobs for countless numbers of women.

It is noteworthy that in Nigeria, particularly among the Igbo, building a house is the priority of every man. In some cases, it may have far-reaching social implications in that it can determine a man's place in his community, as well as the amount of respect that should be accorded him. Consequently, the more modern and big his house is, the greater his respect in the society. Women do not own houses in Nigeria. A single woman stays in her parents' house until she marries. When a woman marries, she leaves her parents and her village, and goes to live with her husband; whose responsibility it is to provide shelter for her and the offspring they may have. The children stay with their parents until they are fully grown and ready to build their own houses in the case of male children and for girls, until they marry.

It has to be stressed that the emergence of modern architecture in Nigeria had negative educational implications. Like clothing, men began to associate big expensive houses with affluence. Consequently, some men found it more desirable to own a big house than to pay for their children's school fees, particularly men from illiterate background. In some cases girls were forced to marry so that their dowry could be used to

build a house. On the other hand, modern buildings provided safer and larger accommodation for school children. Their durability is also an educational asset.

### Mobility

A lot has changed in terms of how people in Nigeria travelled in the traditional society. Understandably, before the advent of western influence, people moved about mostly on foot. They did not travel far for they lived in a relatively small world. As already stated, Jackson (1956), who witnessed the changes, has stressed that the pre-colonial Nigerians lived in a small world where no one expected to travel more than a few miles beyond the confines of his immediate environment. In the traditional society, people were self-sufficient, producing more or less whatever they needed by way of food, shelter and tools, and so did not travel a lot. The environment (Chapter 1), played an important part in terms of how people travelled in the olden days. For example, those who lived in places where water was a prominent feature in their environment, had to learn to swim very early in life, as their overall mobility was inextricably linked with water. With the passage of time, they constructed canoes which helped them to explore their watery environment more extensively and effectively. Men became more and more adventurous. Women were more or less home bound. Social norms and traditional ethos prevented women (and still prevent them) from being adventurous. In educational terms it can be retarding because one tends to be narrow minded.

In some places, people constructed bridges out of wood and ropes to help them cross deep and fast-flowing streams and rivers. In Okigwe for example, people used such a bridge to cross the big Imo River in order to get to the famous market in the district, namely 'Eke Okigwe', where women could buy almost anything at a very cheap price. 'Eke Okigwe' was famous for many items, especially mud pots, fish, snails, tortoises,

birds, plantain, cocoyam, crabs, cassava, etc. But the bridge across Imo River was unsafe because it hung perilously across the river. In the rainy season when some rivers in Nigeria tend to swell and cause the bridges to give way, travelling across such rivers becomes extremely hazardous. Some people drowned from time to time while crossing rivers because the bridges collapsed.

It was not until the advent of western influence that strong and durable bridges were built in Nigeria. Some of the bridges reflect engineering feat, like the bridge across the River Niger at Onitsha. The Niger Bridge is one of the longest bridges in the world, and the River Niger itself is the second longest river in Africa after the River Nile in Egypt, which is the longest river in the world. The Niger bridge is a link between the eastern part of Nigeria and the western section. In Lagos, the Carter Bridge is also a striking feature, which, like the Niger has enormously enhanced mobility, as it links Lagos Island to the mainland. The bridge helps school children in terms of access to various educational institutions. It helps traders especially those who are struggling to pay children's school fees.

The early European missionaries and colonial officers experienced a lot of difficulty regarding mobility. There were no roads. With the building of mission schools and churches, little paths were constructed. On long journeys colonial officers had to be carried from place to place on improvised stretchers by strong natives, a method believed to be the origin of the phrase - 'the white man's burden'. With the passage of time and usually through community development programmes, roads were constructed to facilitate the work of the colonial administration. Following the building of roads and bridges, vehicles - including bicycles and cars - were imported, and so began the modern transport system in Nigeria. It is worth noting that Onokerhoraye (1984), has indicated that the railways made

the greatest contributions with regard to the modern transport system in Nigeria. He also claims that the railway network was the first modern transport system, and that the principal line was begun in Lagos in 1896 and reached Kano in the North in 1912. The second line, which joined Port Harcourt in Eastern Nigeria to Kaduna in the North, and Enugu in the East, and finally Jos in the North, was completed in 1926. Onokerhoraye has also pointed out that the railway system was designed primarily for the export economy.

Interestingly cars, bicycles and aeroplanes, which must have appeared to the early natives like the wonders of the ancient world, are now common. Traffic jams have become a serious problem due to too many cars, particularly in big cities. Some wealthy Nigerian citizens even own jets, helicopters and steamboats. Unlike the pre-colonial days when people hardly travelled beyond the confines of their immediate surroundings, the present day Nigerians travel to various parts of the world. It is hard to imagine that as recently as seventy years ago, the Nigerians who travelled to Europe and America did so mainly on educational grounds, they were usually men. To the village elders, such people had been to the land of the spirits, (Achebe 1958). Welcoming back a Nigerian who had been abroad, was a big occasion in those days. It was a unique event during which many would gather, to catch a glimpse of the person who had returned from the spiritual land. The female members of the family cooked and served.

It is important to bear in mind that the change in mobility in some cases had adverse educational effects. For instance, with the importation of cars some men found it irresistible to own a car. They became reluctant to spend money on their children's school education. In those days people who had cars were given a lot of respect. Where ever a car was parked huge crowds would gather to look at it. With the passage of time imported cars became more expensive and luxurious and some men would not mind being in debt in

order to buy Mercedes Benz or Rolls Royce. Their families might not feed well. They might also be living in badly maintained houses. But for them, to be seen driving huge expensive cars, is the very ultimate in life. This is mainly because, in most developing countries a man's worth is assessed by his material wealth. So a man with a big luxurious car will be given a lot of respect as opposed to another man who has a small car or a bicycle.

### Bicycles and Girls' Formal Education

Unlike motor cars, the importation of bicycles had incredible positive effects with regard to school education. It boosted the trading capabilities of small business men, especially in the early years of the socio-cultural changes, and so enabled them to send all their children to school and not just boys. This is because prior to the importation of bicycles small business men could not go to the very distant markets where desperately needed items including food stuffs were available at very low prices, due to lack of mobility. But with bicycles, many men travelled to places where the various items were produced. Men from Nsu village group for example, went to 'Asa' where the most important staple food 'Guri' and Maize were bought directly from the natives at wholesale prices, and sold at retail prices in Nsu. They also went to other places like Aba for fish, rice, onions etc. The men made a lot of profit and could finance their children's school education.

### Sports

It is interesting to note that sports can initiate social change. Bray (1988), claims that in a strong patriarchal system there is a tendency for women to be solely responsible for reproductive labour, which includes unpaid mothering and housework. Bray argues that although the number of women in sports and labour is increasing, the lower levels of

support and pay indicate devaluing by capitalist, patriarchal societies. The participation of women in sports is seen as significant in that it facilitates the integration of men and women in the society. Within the Nigerian context, sporting events as we know them today, did not exist in the pre-colonial era. Among the Igbo of Nsu village group for instance, there was only one type of sport, wrestling. Women were excluded from it. It was organised in villages and the main purpose was to entertain people during village festivals. Nonetheless, it was highly competitive, and because people used to laugh at those that were defeated, the ferocity with which the participants competed was reminiscent of the ancient Roman gladiators.

The introduction of western-type education led to the emergence of various types of sports including field and track events. Sports are a very important part of school education and although boys and girls participate in them at various educational levels in Nigeria, boys tend to do better generally. Girls should be encouraged especially at the primary and secondary phases of education to take part in sports. Those girls labelled as academic failures might be good at one sport or another. This is what teachers should endeavour to discover given that not everyone is academically gifted. Girls who do well in sports can attract other girls to school, particularly those who feel that they cannot study or pass examinations. They can reach their potentials in sports and earn a good living. Girls from those parts of Nigeria that are surrounded by rivers and the Atlantic Ocean, and who swim like fish, should be trained and helped to compete at national and international levels. Schools should therefore be well equipped in terms of sporting facilities.

Bray (1988), has noted that the very fact that in America both blacks and whites collectively participate and compete in sports, is enhancing racial relationships. He believes that this is because in times of international sports competitions both races

unitedly represent their country as a team. If this is the case, sports can also achieve similar results in Nigeria by healing the wounds and divisions caused by ethnic tension which is inherent in multi-ethnic societies. For instance, when Nigerians compete at international levels, they do so in the name of one Nigeria and not as Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba etc. It will be a delight if girls were to feature prominently in that healing process. More and more girls should therefore be encouraged to participate vigorously in sports.

### Food

Prior to the introduction of school education Nigerians ate mainly what they could produce which included yams, vegetables and cassava. From cassava 'gari', a very important staple food is extracted. The average diet was very rich in carbohydrate but contained little or no protein. Milk, which is a very important source of calcium was not available, especially in the South. The nomadic Fulani in the North have always had milk from their cattle. Although domestic animals were reared including goats and sheep, they were essentially for commercial purposes and so meat from them was rarely eaten. Besides children and in some cases women were not allowed to eat meat and eggs. Understandably there was high infant mortality to which malnutrition was a contributory factor.

Read (1966), has pointed out that in the 1959 South Indian survey in connection with nutrition, 82% of families had cases of marasmus (protein, calorie deficiency) with regard to their children. The children's health further deteriorated by the fact that 90% of the milk which would have supplemented the poor and inadequate food, was sold for much needed cash. Read (1956), discovered that the nomadic tribesmen of Somalia live essentially on milk from their camels. The table below does provide a clue as to why the Somalian nomads are able to survive mainly on milk. In other words it shows how

important milk is in terms of nutrition, and why lack of it can cause severe malnourishment, which in some cases may result in death especially in the very young.

### Chemical Analysis of Milk

Animal	Water	Protein	Fat
Cow	87.2	3.4	9.6
Human	87.6	1.2	3.8
Camel	87.6	3.4	3.0
Llama	86.5	3.9	9.1
Goat	87.8	9.5	3.8

Egam, Kirk, Sawyer (1981), p.432.

### Imported Food and Female Education

But with the introduction of western education and the eventual colonisation of the country, western food items were (and are still) imported to Nigeria. Meat and milk are among the most important. The latter that arrives in various forms, including baby milk has saved the life of many children. There is hardly any doubt that in Nigeria, especially in the South, milk has made a lot of difference in terms of people's diet. It is very nourishing for school children and has helped to reduce infant mortality. It should be made freely available to school children, given that it may be the only opportunity for many children to drink milk, especially those from very poor backgrounds. It is important to remember that for various reasons some mothers are unable to provide sufficient breast milk for their infants, so baby milk is an indispensable alternative. The importation of foreign foods has boosted local supplies. In the case of meat it helped to reduce truancy notably among girls, as those who used to hunt for snails, grasshoppers etc. began to pay more attention to their school work. Among the Igbo of Okigwe and Mbano for example, hunting of insects could keep some girls away from school for days.



It is thought that the importation of foreign goods is partly responsible for the decline of agriculture. It is also feared that Nigerians are now relying heavily on imported food stuffs, including fruits. Observers including the Smythes (1960), believe that Nigerians are becoming very westernised in their day to day diet. But some foreign food items are very expensive and more often than not, can only be purchased from big shops like Leventis and Kingsway. A breakfast of bacon and sausage for instance can cost a lot of money. Those who have money to spare instead of squandering it on expensive foreign foods, should think in terms of helping the less privileged like thousands of orphans who have no one to send them to school especially girls, since they will find it more difficult than boys to find something to do.

### Health Care

Before the advent of western influence, there were no clinics, health centres or hospitals in Nigeria. People in time of ill health, relied on herbalists, diviners, fortune tellers, and unscientific medicine or witch doctors. In Igboland for example, a lot of effort was made in order to ascertain the cause of the illness. In some cases, the relatives of the sick person would consult a fortune teller in order to find out what caused the illness. It was believed that an illness or poor health could be a warning or punishment from the gods or ancestral spirits. In either case, a sacrifice of atonement must have to be made to pacify the god or spirit. Depending on the nature of the illness, close relatives would try to cure the sick person according to the traditional way of treating that particular illness. If their efforts failed, they would then invite a witch doctor. All the witch doctors were (and still are) men.

There are striking similarities in terms of traditional treatment regarding the Igbo of Nigeria and the Ngoni of Nyasaland. Read (1959), who has studied the role of the kinfolk

in illness with regard to the Ngoni, has explained that the Ngoni relied on traditional treatment of diseases evolved over many years, which among other things, involved finding the cause of the illness and making the patient feel as comfortable as possible. It should, be noted that traditional medicine is still existing side by side with scientific or modern medicine, not only in Nigeria but all over the world. It is also referred to as an 'alternative medicine'. People in rural areas, rely more on traditional treatment, partly because of poverty and partly because of non-availability of medical centres or hospitals in their own district.

### The Witch Doctors and Girls' Education

It must be pointed out that witch doctors ruined the lives of many girls. In Igboland for instance, a girl that was perfectly normal and healthy could be said by a witch doctor to be possessed by a very wicked spirit, known as 'Ogbanje'. It was believed that unless the 'Ogbanje' was driven out of the victim, she would ultimately die. The parents would spend a fortune to ensure that the evil spirit was driven away, money that could have been spent on the girl's school education. It was a painful experience because after the healing, parents became impoverished. With many people becoming Christians, the practice has almost disappeared. Schools also helped enormously to reduce the activities of witch doctors through religious education. In this way western type-education helped to save young girls from unscrupulous witch doctors. This is very important because once a girl was associated with 'Ogbanje' her whole world collapsed around her.

### Maternity Care

Without doubt, one of the highlights of social changes in terms of medical care is the emergence of hospitals in Nigeria. Now, women prefer to have their babies in the hospital. This is because they have more confidence in the scientific method of health care,

and feel that child birth is safer in the hospital than at home. This is crucial because in the case of an unexpected complication, like breech, Caesarean operation can be performed. But in the traditional society, no woman survived a breech presentation. Presumably this may be why some scholars now believe that education is the surest way of achieving positive social changes. Edem (1987), for example, has emphasised the fact that education is an instrument of social change., and has observed that:

*“the increasing faith in education as an agent of change in many developing countries has led to a heavy investment in it, and thus the delegation of manpower development to the schools. Consequently teaching and learning constitute the major duties that schools should perform in society, and if schools are to satisfy the aspirations of West African societies, school leaders and their teachers must have a clear vision of what is required of them. These requirements can only be ascertained through the study of the societies.”* p. 54-56.

The fact that schools have realised that education is a change agent is significant given that such a realisation among other things, will help educational institutions to organise their work more competently and diligently. It is therefore quite obvious that formal education has played an invaluable role with regard to modern health care in Nigeria. It is a delight to see Nigerian doctors and nurses working in the hospitals, clinics and health centres all over the country. Gone are the days when the only medical personnel in Nigerian hospitals were expatriates. More and more Nigerian girls should study science at school because male doctors far out number women doctors, whereas almost all the nurses are women.

### Religious Change

Of all the changes that have taken place in Nigeria since the introduction of western-type education, religious changes are seen as the most crucial. This is because religion was (and still is) inextricably linked with the people's view of the universe, their place in it, especially in relation to their own immediate environment, the mystery of life and death, the gods and spirits; notably the ancestral spirits (see Chapter 2). In some

sections of Nigeria, religion is so closely tied up with the life of the people, that it governs the way of life of the individual from day to day. Significantly, Dada (1986), who has studied the education and religion of the people in northern Nigeria, has stressed that:

*“The life of the people is permeated by through religion; the geographical and physical environment have strong relationships with the traditional religion; the religion of the people involves socio-political organisation, material culture, law and custom.”* p. 101.

In other words, religion is the centre of their everyday life. Consequently, some scholars - including Nduka (1964) - have always maintained this claim:

*“Of all the agents of imperialism it was the missionary who made the most revolutionary demands of the Nigerians. He did not want the wealth from the Nigerian soil, nor the fruits of her forests, nor any portion of her soil. He desired instead the conquest of Nigerian souls...”* p. 10.

Although traditional religion has been discussed in Chapter 2, it would be appropriate at this stage to take a deeper look at the nature of the traditional religion that prevailed in Nigeria before the coming of western influence. Following an extensive research regarding the religion of the people of Nigeria before, during and after colonialism, Nduka (1964, has noted that before the coming of the white man, the indigenous people of Nigeria had certain cosmological ideas, which formed the basis of their system of values. Nduka claims that central to the Nigerians' view of the world, is the strong belief that the universe was peopled by good and bad spirits. Some were malevolent; and capable of swift and often vindictive anger. There was a supreme being, variously known as Allah of the moslems, Chineke of the Igbo, Olorun of the Yoruba etc. There were also other numerous deities and spirits which inhabited the seas, the air, and guarded everything in them.

Arguably, this might be partly the reason why some people in the olden days, including the ancient Egyptians, worshipped geographical features, like rivers, seas, lakes, etc., which confirms the belief that the environment played a crucial part in the people's

religion and activities. Dada (1990), has pointed out (perhaps inaccurately) that the people of northern Nigeria worshipped, rivers, lagoons, and the sea. He claims that in the olden days, human sacrifices were made to the spirits that inhabited them, particularly after any incident involving drowning, in order to pacify the water spirits. Dada has, indicated that in the contemporary society instead of human beings, animals like goats, cows and chickens are used as sacrifices to the spirits that guard the seas, rivers, lakes and lagoons - after drowning incidents. The sacrifices are also meant to ward off future death by drowning.

It must be mentioned that the indigenous Religion did not enhance the status of women. All over the country, the most dreaded deities and spirits were all males. Taking the South for example, arguably the most revered god in Yorubaland in the traditional society was 'Oguri', the Yoruba god of war. Among the Igbo the long juju of Arochukwa was portrayed as the most fierce god on earth who had the power of life and death over everyone. The gods' shrines were kept by men and only men could offer sacrifice to them. Consequently the male members of the society modelled themselves on the supreme deities and women were inevitably seen as weak and subordinate. This was the background against which girls and women were denied formal education especially in the early years of school education because once it was realised that schooling brought power and influence, girls and women were not considered worthy of school education. They were only seen as domestic hands.

The new Christian Religion touched the hearts of many people notably the most vulnerable. In Igboland for example, women and the outcasts (Osu) were deeply moved by the missionaries' message which includes belief in one God, all people being equal, God's love for all His children, forgiveness of sin etc. As might be expected, the 'Osu' were

among the early converts. Unlike the indigenous Religion, the alien faith gave them hope. With the passage of time, men began to join the new faith. But eminent scholars, including Achebe (1958), Nduka (1964), have tried to look more critically at the reasons behind the abandonment of the old faith. Achebe is of the opinion that the existing social norms at the time were contributory factors, including the treatment of the outcasts like the 'Osu' (see Chapter 2), and the plight of girls and women.

Nduka (1964), on the other hand believes that those who embraced the new faith were materially motivated. He claims that the burning desire to acquire material wealth and imitate the white man's way of life proved irresistible to some Nigerians. He insists that it was not so much the yearning for the gospel message, but rather a yearning to enter the charmed and glamorous circle of the white man's culture and possibly his social circle; and ultimately gain knowledge of the secrets of his greatness. It is also reckoned that the destruction of the Long Juju of Arochukunu by the British colonial agents in 1902 must have been seen by the natives, not only as a military feat, but also as a supernatural act, given the awe with which the Long Juju was held. The complete destruction of the Oracle must have inevitably, boosted the power of the white man's god in the eyes of the natives.

It must be noted that not every one accepted the new religion, the village elders in particular rejected it. Their opposition to the new faith was strengthened by the activities of some of its adherents, which included disregard for custom and social values, like the desecration of shrines, disrespect for elders and the killing of sacred pythons etc. The acceptance of the Christian Religion by the village elders would have resulted in among other things, respect for women in the society, which obviously they would not like to see. They were even bewildered by the fact that with the coming of the new religion, a man could curse the gods and the spirits of his ancestors. In some places, the converts were

likened to the little bird, 'Nza', (Achebe 1958), who ate and drank and then challenged his personal god to a physical combat.

Significantly, some of the critics of the new faith, including Nduka (1964), have not blamed the converts for showing disregard for authority and traditional values, but the Europeans themselves. They accused them of not living by what they preached to the natives. For instance, the Europeans were said to lack humility. The colonial officers, especially the young ones, were bitterly criticised for their rough treatment of the elders, traditional leaders and chiefs. From time to time, the young officers treated the chiefs and the elders disrespectfully and contemptuously before the villagers. There is little doubt that the behaviour of the colonial administrators encouraged the radical elements in the new religion, and ultimately helped to undermine the power and authority of the village elders, chiefs and traditional rulers. The young officers' behaviour also jeopardised the converts' new found faith especially girls and women, given that they were expected to obey the laws of the land, even more than boys and men.

The villagers also noted that while the missionaries preached decency in dressing and the need to cover the body fully, the Europeans - especially women - went about almost half naked in skimpy dresses. Some of the white men also made passes at native women. Not surprisingly, the natives felt that there were two rules, one for the natives and the other for the Europeans. Jackson (1960), has emphasised the fact that the natives were further disillusioned by the new religion because of the way the Europeans treated them. They inevitably concluded that the expatriates regarded them as inferior. Jackson claimed that with the passage of time, the natives came to realise that the Europeans judged the worth of a man by the extent of his material wealth.

In spite of the criticisms levelled against the new faith, it did not disappear. However, it could be argued that on balance, the advantages of the new faith far outweigh the negative aspects. For instance, the Christian religion played a crucial role in the demise of those aspects of the traditional way of life that were undesirable, including human sacrifice, and idolatry. But without doubt, one of the most praise-worthy achievements associated with Christianity in Nigeria was the ending of twin murder, which brought peace to the heart of every woman.

### The Growth of Cities

Unlike western education and Christianity, urbanisation in Nigeria is not a recent development. It is also important to note that its existence cannot be attributed to the introduction of western-type education in Nigeria. The view that urbanisation in Nigeria was not influenced by an external force has also been strongly expressed by Onokerhoraye (1984), following his study of urban centres, particularly in Nigeria. As a result, he has indicated that:

*“Nigeria is one of the few countries in tropical Africa where urbanism is not a recent phenomenon. Some Nigerian towns are as old as some of the ancient cities in Europe. In the Northern part of the country, for example, cities such as Kano, Katsina and Sokoto, participated vigorously in the world-wide commercial activities that characterized the medieval period. Similarly, large settlements emerged in the South-western part of the country where pre-colonial towns such as Ibadan, Oyo, Iwo, Ogbomosho, Ado-Ekiti and Benin are located.” p. 250.*

It must be pointed out that while the Yoruba are by nature, city-dwellers, most of the cities are not big, but Ibadan - one of the oldest cities in Yorubaland, is arguably the largest city in West Africa. By contrast, the Igbo were not originally urban dwellers. It is interesting to note that Onokerhoraye has identified two patterns of urbanisation, namely: pre-colonial and colonial. With regard to the pre-colonial pattern, Onokerhoraye thinks that there is no



conclusive evidence as regards the factors which influenced the growth of towns in some parts of Nigeria. He has however, made the following suggestions:

1. Some areas were more conducive at a time when the rate of mortality was quite high.
2. Some areas were more fertile and so, with greater soil fertility, agricultural produce in those areas was higher.
3. The emergence of various kingdoms contributed to the evolution of pre-colonial towns in Nigeria. This is seen as a major factor influencing the growth of towns in the country during the pre-colonial era.

In assessing the role of colonialism with regard to the development of urban centres in Nigeria, Onokerhoraye has remarked that in recent years, there has been a remarkable increase in the proportion of Nigerians living in urban areas. He has also claimed that due to the rapid growth of the urban population during the last eighty years, planning for the urban environment has become a major challenge. He also holds the view that factors which led to the growth of cities during the colonial period were mainly commercial.

It is worthy of note that before the late 1950s, the market was dominated by a number of large firms who opposed the establishment of home industries in order to maintain monopoly of trade. In this way, they sought to make the natives poorer, and themselves richer. These firms included: United African Company (UAC) and John Holt. Their action jeopardised the school education of many youngsters because the home industries they opposed would have helped many families in financial terms. They firmly rejected industrialisation in Nigeria in order to protect their own commercial interests, and were supported by the British colonial government.

## Post-Colonial Urbanisation

Although Onokerhoraye (1984), identified two patterns of urbanisation, the pre-colonial and colonial, there is undoubtedly a third pattern, namely the post-colonial pattern. This is important because since Nigerian independence in 1960, many towns and cities have sprung up, including the new federal capital of Abuja. Besides, the pre-colonial and the colonial urban centres have grown much larger including: Aba, Port Harcourt and Enugu. It is also worth noting that although the pre-colonial towns had no connection with western-type education in Nigeria, the same cannot be said about the other two patterns - the colonial and post-colonial. This view is also shared by Hugh and Mabel Smythe (1960), who have described the social change in Nigeria as rapid and sweeping in every aspect of human endeavour including particularly urbanisation and politics.

The Smythes also think that the increasing population concentration in Nigeria shows a number of characteristics inherent in urbanisation, with regard to all the other nations of the world. Significantly, the characteristics the Smythes have identified include:

1. **Complexity:** Hugh and Mabel Smythe claim that urban life is complex and inevitably so, because it draws to it people from many ethnic and geographical backgrounds.
2. **Dynamic:** The Smythes argue that city life is dynamic since the growth process in itself creates changes to which people and social patterns must adjust.
3. **Socio-economic Advancement:** The Smythes are convinced that urban environment enhances social and economic growth. They maintain that this is because urban life makes possible new combinations of social

and economic components, as well as commercial and industrial enterprises on a scale impossible to achieve in villages.

4. **New Social Lines:** Hugh and Mabel Smythe feel that life in urban areas calls for redrawing of social lines. They emphasise that this is inevitable since the heterogeneous populations - physically removed from village roots, form the pattern of urbanisation.

Many are likely to agree with the characteristics of urban life identified by the Smythes. The redrawing of social lines, for instance, is crucial because once people, for whatever reason leave their village for a new place, their survival will inevitably depend on their ability to cope, with regard to all the uncertainties inherent or attendant upon the new habitat. This in turn will partly depend on how quickly and effectively they build up new relationships which, at least to some extent, will fill the vacuum created by the absence of those who have always been part of their life. It is true to say that urban centres helped the outcasts because they were not easily noticed given the metropolitan nature of cities. Single women also sought solace in the urban areas.

### Migration

Migration is often regarded as a by-product of urbanisation since individuals find life in big cities irresistible, often ignorant of the hard realities hidden behind the glitter. Jackson (1956) has identified two types of Africans with regard to places of abode:

1. Those who live within the framework of tribal life, and
2. Those who live within the rapidly growing towns - the town dwellers.

Jackson, who claims that town dwellers are in the minority, is one of those who believe that of all the ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Igbo have the greatest urge to migrate to other places from their homeland. Jackson thinks that one person out of every 20 persons in

Eastern Nigeria (which includes the Igbo) lives in a town, and stresses that the ratio supports his claim that less people live in the urban centres than in the rural areas. Interestingly, Jackson spent many years in Nigeria, especially among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria. He observed that although the Igbo may live in a town away from home, yet they continue to take great interest in the affairs of their village and wield enormous influence. Jackson maintains that an Igbo who lives in a city for example, continues to own land in his village and every year, he makes arrangements for the land to be cultivated. He reckons that only a negligible per cent of the Igbo can be regarded as absolutely detribalised in the sense of losing all contact with their village.

It is important to note that the continued interest and contact with regard to the village is reflected in the membership of a union. In every town, there are unions consisting of people from a particular village. Every man, as a matter of necessity, joins the union of his own area. The unions show interest in the affairs of the village. There are those who oppose the endless link between the urban centres and the rural areas, arguing that the continued interest and allegiance to the village prevent the growth of citizenship in the towns. They accuse the unions of being backward-looking, instead of forward-looking associations. Although Jackson (1956), thinks that there is a certain element of common sense with regard to the views of those who advocate complete break with the village, he warns:

*"...a country that turns its back on its past does so as at its peril. The pace of events is forcing people to change their ideas quickly enough, and the past of Africa lies in the life of the villages...In any case there is already a gulf widening between the educated townsman and his country brother, and the unions and the sentiments they embody form a useful bridge."* p. 40-41.

It is however worth remembering that the process of migration itself is fraught with social problems, both at the national and individual levels. Molohan (1957), who once was

commissioned to study the problems arising from detribalisation in Kenya, Uganda, the then North and South Rhodesia and Nyasaland, noted that the worst migration problems relate to the youth; notably young school leavers of post-primary school age who rush to the towns in search of jobs and when they fail to find jobs, roam the streets and ultimately become delinquents or potential delinquents. Molohan regrets the absence of middle schools in the school system of the countries involved because such educational institutions would have absorbed the primary school leavers, and thus reduce the temptation of going to the urban centres to look for employment, with all the problems involved. The post primary school phase is a time of uncertainty for girls in the developing countries including Nigeria. This is because many may not go to secondary school because their parents are very poor.

The Italian system of education is undoubtedly what some countries need. Ferraris and Persico (1990), who have studied the Italian system, have indicated briefly how it works:

AGE	INSTITUTION
3 - 6	Kindergarten
6 - 11	Primary School
11 - 14	Middle School
14 - 19	High School
19 - 25	University

World Yearbook of Education, Assessment and Evaluation, 1990, p. 162.

The above table shows that between 11 and 14, Italian children must be in the middle school, because from 6 to 14 education is compulsory, but some of their counterparts, (notably within the age range of 12 and 14), in some parts of the world including Nigeria are roaming the streets in search of white collar jobs which may ultimately prove elusive. Countries with such problems should give the establishment of middle schools a serious consideration because children within that age range will benefit

more if they were in educational institutions. The existence of such schools is likely to reduce the number of children that find their way every year to the towns.

It is noteworthy that Skinner (1974), through his study of urbanisation in Africa, has also revealed that:

*“urbanization is producing drastic and perhaps revolutionary changes in contemporary Africa. All over the continent people are moving from their rural villages into the burgeoning towns intent on achieving a better life and, by implication, a modern life. Yet, most of the African cities do not have either the facilities or the resources to accommodate their mushrooming populations. Many city planners, politicians, and social scientists lament the plight of the migrants in the cities and consider them to be “displaced persons”.”* p. 3.

This shows the scale of the problem which developing nations face with regard to urbanisation and because in most cases, they neither have the technological facilities nor the economic resources, as in the case of the developed world, they find the urbanisation problems too overwhelming. Onokerhoraye (1984), speaking specifically about Nigeria, has made it clear that:

*“controlling and directing the forces of urbanization in a developing country such as Nigeria requires massive public investment in land, public utilities, services and amenities. The financing of these urban expenditures is one of the main problems facing urban planners.”* p. 293-294.

This finding by Onokerhoraye's supports Skinner's (1974), claim that the main problem of urbanisation in the developing nations of the world is lack of resources. In the case of Nigeria, the problem can only be speedily solved if the town planners could receive massive financial help from the States or federal government, or both.

As already indicated, the problems associated with urbanisation are not confined to governments. At the individual level, problems still exist. Hugh and Mabel Smythe (1960), have claimed that in Africa, urbanisation and westernization are closely linked.

They assert that the individual, who is not content to remain in his rural village, may seek the city but, when he reaches it:

*“he learns that many of the traditional bonds are no longer available to him. He is no longer in a close-knit, tightly organized community in which his every action is subject to scrutiny; he can now lose himself to some extent in an undifferentiated pool of mingled humanity. The sudden release from old ways and values leaves a vacuum....”* p. 47-48.

The Smythes explain that in such a circumstance, the individual is eager to make new acquaintances and is receptive of the values of his new community. He does this in order to be accepted in his new environment. The Smythes also maintain that population density, combined with diverse backgrounds, interests, occupations and customs, tend to encourage impersonality in human relationship. If one accepts this view, it then follows that the vacuum created by the individual's departure from his village may never be meaningfully filled, in spite of the fact that the individual may form new relationships in his new urban environment.

This supports the view held by some people, for example, Grieco (1982), who thinks that urbanisation leads to the break-up of family ties. The Smythes strongly believe that urban life in addition, forces the individual to reappraise their old lives and beliefs and in religious terms, the individual discovers that the old beliefs in gods and ancestral spirits which influence village life enormously, are more or less non-existent in the town. This is because in urban areas, reliance on spirits and other non-rational forces is weakened as techniques of social action and self-determination become more familiar. The Smythes point out that as the city dweller meets people who are not bound by the same inhibitions and who challenge beliefs and customs, the pressure for him to reappraise his values and aspirations becomes greater.

The attributes of urban centres outlined by the Smythes above were mainly what encouraged the 'Osu' to flee from the rural areas to the cities. There they found the peace that was denied them in the villages where everyone knows about their social predicament. Above all in the urban centres, their children could attend school more or less like other children without being embarrassed. Urban experience was particularly good for Osu girls' formal education, given that generally girls tend to be more emotional than boys. Besides, in Nigeria the social structure is such that the female members are always in the background shy and timid, and so if a girl or a woman is an 'Osu' her own social problems become almost unbearable and more so if she lives in the village.

It is noteworthy that Molohan (1957), believes that urban population, is made up of three main groups:

1. Those who have already received considerable amount of education.
2. Those that are not very well-educated, but are eager to acquire education or training of various kinds.
3. Illiterate persons, including many women and juveniles.

The fact that illiterate women are in the majority, further supports one of the major concerns of this study - that girls and women have not been given the same opportunity in education as their male counterparts.

Without doubt, the last group - the illiterate urban dwellers - are the most vulnerable, especially in terms of job discrimination. They also pose the greatest social threats, notably the juveniles who roam the streets - potential victims of drug pushers. There is, in addition, the problem of prostitution - particularly among the female juveniles. Not surprisingly, while in Ouagadougou (capital of Upper Volta), Molohan (1957), noticed many problems including prostitution. In Nigeria, apart from the outcasts fleeing from life



of humiliation in the rural areas, divorced and childless women do also seek refuge in the towns and cities. In the case of a childless woman, Denga (1982), has pointed out that if her husband has got children by a second wife, the barren woman could be mercilessly taunted by the junior wife, until she leaves the house. Some people leave the villages purely on economic grounds

Hugh and Mabel Smythe (1960), have confirmed that people can migrate from rural to urban environments for economic and non-economic reasons. They maintain that, economically, there are employment opportunities in the factories, shops, markets and government offices, and that there will always be special markets for one's crafts, skills or produce. The Smythes stress that:

*"There are noneconomic factors as well. The city offers an escape value for those whose village life is disagreeable or limited - those who feel unwanted, unsuccessful, in disgrace, or out of favour with local authority or even with sorcerers; those who hunger for more education or new horizons to explore; those who aspire to achievement beyond that possible in the village."* p. 51.

The Smythes, in addition, have pointed out that an aged mother may move to the city to live with an urban son, while a bush girl may marry a city man, and that a servant may move into an urban centre with his employer.

It is important to note that in some parts of Nigeria, people could migrate from rural to urban areas in search of high quality education. Dada (1990), in the course of his research on religion and education in northern Nigeria in general, and Kwara State in particular, noted that parents migrate from rural areas to urban centres because they are concerned about the quality of education their children are receiving in the village. This supports the findings of earlier researchers (see Chapter 1) that in Nigeria, children in the urban areas perform better in schools than their counterparts in the villages. Dada, also found out that in the North, teachers do not like to live and teach in the villages. He claims

that, at a stage, the problem of staff shortage in the rural areas reached a critical point, to the extent that the government decided to give village teachers a number of incentives, including free accommodation, vehicle allowance and fringe benefits.

It should be noted that in some places, migration is seen as a change agent. In an extensive study involving the small islands of the Eastern Caribbean, Marshall (1982), discovered that the opportunities and possibilities for development, both individually and nationally, are extremely limited owing to the geographical constraints, as well as national hazards - notably floods and hurricanes. Migration became an inevitable option. The emigrants are said to have enriched the culture of their adopted countries including the United Kingdom. Boski (1988), thinks that such circumstances stimulate cultural studies. Interestingly Aina (1987), has revealed that cultural affiliations affect the way academic authorities manage conflicts in Nigerian universities. He claims an academic staff is likely to show greater consideration if the person involved in the conflict comes from his own cultural unit or tribe. Mackenzie (1988), while examining standards and requirements in Commonwealth African universities, noted that there is a strong feeling that for an African university to live up to expectations, the curriculum must reflect the cultural needs of a changing society. Significantly, Noibi (1982), has pointed out that in Nigeria, at the junior secondary level, environmental themes are emphasised. This is all the more reason why Nigerian girls should be sent to secondary schools so that they can be part of this changing process.

### Urbanisation and Politics

Politically, it is known that urban centres enhance political activities and the latter, in turn, can increase both the population as well as the prestige of the city, given that big

cities are usually the seats of governments.. Demographically, there are clear indications that urban life in Nigeria has been quite fast, as the tables below show:

**Total Urban Population (in thousands)**

	<b>1921</b>	<b>1931</b>	<b>1952</b>	<b>1963</b>
	18,631	19,928	30,403	55,670
<b>Urban (as percentage of Total population)</b>	7.2	7.2	10.6	19.1
<b>No. of urban centres</b>	29	27	56	180

Onokerhoraye p. 262 & 263.

	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Urban Population</b>
<b>1965</b>	48,676 m	9,830 m
<b>1970</b>	55,074 m	12,535 m

The demographic situation of various towns in 1952 also confirms the ever increasing population of urban areas.

**Population (in thousands)**

<b>Lagos (337,600)</b>					
<b>West</b>		<b>East</b>		<b>North</b>	
Ibadan	459,196	Onitsha	76,921	Kano	130,173
Ife	110,790	Port Harcourt	71,634	Zaria	53,974
Oyo	72,133	Enugu	62,764	Katsina	52,672
Benin	53,753	Aba	57,787	Jos	38,527
Uromi	22,339	Calabar	46,705	Sokoto	47,643

p. 54 (Smythe & Smythe)

It is noteworthy that in 1952, there were 32 towns in the West, 10 in the East, and 12 in the northern region. This further supports the fact that the Yoruba are, by nature, urban dwellers. It is also known that urban dwellers mostly tend to be young because the time of migration is usually in one's youth. It is believed that the youth of urban dwellers helps them to grow and change in outlook. In addition, African cities are said to be increasing rapidly because of high birth rate. But it is very important that the Nigerian youngsters

receive good education especially girls, so that they do not become a liability in the urban centres.

### Law and Order in the Traditional Society

As already stated, urbanisation leads to migration; the latter in turn leads to population concentration which, in itself, is fraught with many social problems - including the difficulty relating to the maintenance of law and order. In pre-colonial Nigeria, various ethnic groups had different ways of maintaining peace; contrary to the view held by some people, notably the Europeans that Igboland was chaotic. There is little doubt that they mistook the absence of over-centralised government as chaos. In northern Nigeria, following the Islamisation of the Hausa, people were tried in the Islamic courts. In the South, the maintenance of law and order was strictly based on native law and custom. Among the Igbo, for example, there were specific penalties for various offences. For serious crimes like murder or stealing, the offender could be ostracised or banished. A person who committed suicide was not buried, (Achebe 1958). In cases like land disputes, the chiefs could intervene to avert bloodshed. In very serious cases, diviners or fortune-tellers could be consulted in order to expose the offenders and severe penalty was exerted on them. One point that should be borne in mind is that in the traditional society all the laws were made by men, even though they affected the lives of girls and women more.

### Law and Order in the Colonial Era

There was a big change politically, following the advent of colonial administration. The colonial government did not approve of the natives' way regarding the maintenance of law and order. Consequently, the long-standing system of dispensing justice was abolished. The western-type that relied heavily on events was established. The Islamic courts in the North were criticised. They were accused of misinterpretation of cases, as

well as corruption, (Miller 1948). In Igboland, the colonial government created warrant chiefs and appointed court messengers. None of these was a woman. By so doing, the colonial administration discriminated against women. Ganny (1990), who has studied the Criminal Justice system in Nigeria, and particularly northern Nigeria, discovered that women were excluded from the Criminal Justice Section, despite the fact that it is a system which dispenses justice to each and every member of the society. Since the court messengers and the warrant chiefs were Lugard's own creation and not necessarily people that commanded respect in the villages they were rejected. It was also discovered that the court messengers were corrupt, they could easily be bribed to lie or misinterpret statements in the courts.

The natives therefore lost confidence in the colonial way of administering justice. Critics of the new system, including Nduka (1964), have stressed that the colonial system hastened the demise of the efficient, traditional way, in terms of dispensation of justice, because when people saw they could lie their way through the magistrates' courts, they abandoned their traditional beliefs and customs. Nduka also believes that the Christian religion is partly to blame since the missionaries preached forgiveness of sin and so when people realised that no matter how many times they committed sins they would receive pardon, they abandoned their traditional way of life. Many fled to urban centres where no one bothers about how anyone is leading their life. The very fact that the colonial administration excluded women from the new justice system further jeopardised the status of women in the society. It was not therefore surprising that in educational terms, girls and women were discriminated against particularly in the early stages.

## Village Life and Women

As far as women are concerned, they have not fared well in the villages. Jackson (1956), reckons that:

*“women...form an under-privileged half of the Nigerian population. A village woman lives a hard life, for she is quite literally a hewer of wood and a drawer of water; and drawing a pot of water can mean in some villages a walk of eight miles...”* p. 42.

Jackson has also pointed out that owing to the system of exogamy - the system that a woman must marry outside her quarter - all married women are strangers and that to counterbalance the blood ties that unite their menfolk, women have to form strong organisations. But the organisation obviously did little to dismantle male dominance.

## Urban Life and Women

In the town, life is not necessarily better for women. Married ones, in particular find town life very stressful. The plight of married women who follow their husbands to live in the town has been highlighted by Hugh and Mabel Smythe (1960). They emphasise the fact that the wife coming with her husband for the first time to live in a large town is probably more lost than he is. They explain that whereas in the village the woman was fully occupied all the time, with farming and household chores, in the town she finds herself living in only one room with a considerable period of leisure time to which she is not accustomed. The Smythes stress that if her husband is in employment, she will most certainly spend most of the time on her own, and that being a stranger the woman will be reluctant to contact members of her own tribe. She is also bemused by the town way of life.

Until very recently, women and young girls were expected to live in the towns and cities with their husbands, fathers, brothers or uncles, those who lived on their own were regarded as prostitutes, (Leith-Ross 1939), and therefore ineligible for marriage, unlike

their village counterparts. This attitude is gradually changing as more and more people receive western education. Significantly, in a detailed study of African women, especially East African women, Obbo (1980) noted that an increasing number is breaking away from the traditional norms that ban them from the urban centres. However, the individual who migrates from a rural area to an urban centre is confused and disillusioned by the fact that he has to buy virtually everything in order to sustain himself, whereas in the village if he cannot support himself, he can be fed for as long as it takes by his own family, his extended family, close relatives, or even friends. He could pick fruits and vegetables and eat them without paying for them but in the city, he cannot because everything is owned by someone and to have them, one has to pay. Hugh and Mabel Smythe (1960), once quoted a city dweller in Nigeria, as saying:

*“When I was small and living in the village you could pick up breadfruit, a plantain, a coconut or anything, and no one would care. It was provided by the earth for all. But not today in the city. Those things we once took for granted as available to all are now claimed by individuals, and if we want them we have to pay.”* p. 50.

This, in a sense, sums up the type of human relationship that exists in the urban centres, and which makes village life more appealing to some people.

But there is hardly any doubt that in economic terms urbanisation promotes school education. Many adult men who migrate to the cities get jobs as day labourers, junior clerks, porters, traders, servants of very rich people etc. With their salaries they educate all their children. But they could not do so when they were residing in the villages.

#### The Elite Group

When colonial rule ended in Nigeria with independence in 1960, the machinery of government was taken over by certain Nigerian citizens. They were expected at the time to rescue Nigeria from economic, political, social and educational decadence after years of

colonial administration and relatively little achievement. At the time, they were highly respected and seen as the only hope for the nation. With the passage of time, the leadership group began to expand numerically. But people hardly noticed any difference in terms of the way the country was being run as opposed to the colonial era. Generally, there was a feeling that the new group was overbearing, uncaring, selfish and above all, inordinately ambitious. Before long, the term “neo-colonialism” became a dominant theme - notably in history and literary works, including poems and novels, (Achebe 1960). The ever-expanding ruling group was variously described as the haves, the educated, the privileged class, the elite group etc. Although Nigeria is not a communist country, she cannot also be justifiably referred to as capitalist in the sense it is known in the western world. Following his study about various social groups in Nigeria, Ajaegbu (1976), has indicated that the term “elite” defies definition, and warns:

*“It is not intended in this study to delve into the sociological problems of defining the elite group, nor their functional differentiation from the other segments of the population.” p. 27.*

But Nigeria is not altogether a classless society. Perhaps what is more intriguing about the term “elite” is that no one seems to know precisely where to draw the line between the elite and the non-elite, or even what actually makes an individual a member of the elite group. Ajaegbu (1976), has pointed out that the term “middle class” does not apply in the case of Nigeria, because it implies lower and upper class counterparts which are difficult to distinguish in the case of Nigerian society. But the question is constantly asked regarding the Nigerian citizens that do actually constitute the elite group. Hugh and Mabel Smythe (1960), who have studied the Nigerian society in great depths, have recognised certain groups they think make up the elite group, and they include:



1. Those with extensive education, but little wealth.
2. Those with some wealth, but little formal education.
3. Those prominent in public life.
4. Those who keep quietly away from the public gaze.

The Smythes at the same time claim that there is not a single elite group since the various groups overlap and intermingle at various points; sometimes overlapping with non-elite.

But looking at Ajaegbu's own rating with regard to those that should be identified as the elite group, one inevitably comes to the conclusion that it is impossible to draw the line between the elite and the non-elite. Ajaegbu, for example, thinks that the elite should include:

*"...those people who have moved up the social and economic ladder, achieving a position in the society as well as a combination of traits at given levels which are above, and distinct from, those of the mass of the people. They possess at least a minimum (or a given) level of the following: financial and other material acquisitions (wealth); standard of living; a level of knowledge, information or awareness; and a range of perceptions."*  
p. 27.

This further supports the view already expressed that it is hard to draw the line between the elite and the non-elite. But if one accepts the views of Imoagene (1976), who, after studying about social mobility in emergent societies, concluded that community background influences occupational achievement, mainly by subjecting a man to the limitations or advantages of his birth place. It means then that those born in poverty-stricken slums, can never rise above their circumstances or aspire beyond their birth constraints and achieve elitedom.

But those who agree with Shakespeare (Lothian and Craik 1975), that although some are born great, some can also achieve greatness, will disagree with Imoagene - especially when one considers the fact that one of the aims of education is to enable the

recipient to live a better life (which is why all girls should be sent to school). Imoagene (1976), by implication, is saying also that those born in wealth will always be in the elite group, but in life this does not always happen. Experience has shown that although one may be born in great wealth, with the passage of time that wealth for one reason or the other may disappear, and the individual's fortune changes. Besides, in a true democratic and egalitarian society, there should be no limits imposed on individuals, either by birth or other circumstances, with regard to their ability to fulfil their hopes, yearnings and aspirations. This is why, politically, every society should strive for parliamentary democracy to ensure that all citizens have equal opportunity in every aspect of life, including education. In this way, the elite group becomes an open class.

Ajaegbu (1976), has looked at the qualifications which an individual should possess in order to qualify for the elite group. He has, at the same time pointed out that the qualifications for elite membership are difficult to establish because they are dependent on constraints including socio-economic ones. Ajaegbu claims that the qualifying levels differ from time to time; for example, a minimum annual wage of £250 (500 naira), has been suggested for the elite in Africa, but warns that historically, the minimum wealth, assets, operational capital, and annual income of the elite in Nigeria may be estimated differently at various times. Ajaegbu emphasises the fact that in the 1940's, for instance, the amount stood at £25 (50 naira); in the 1950's at £300 (600 naira), and at about £500 (1,000, naira) in the 1970's. Ajaegbu, concluded that there is no static level of wealth, income or any of the other conditions for entry into the elite group for all times.

The above statistics show that in financial terms, it is not too difficult to qualify as an elite member, but they do also show that the standard of living in the developing countries falls far below what obtains in the developed world. For example, a Nigerian

man with a minimum annual income of about £500, or 1,000 naira, in the 1970's was looked upon as a wealthy man, an elite, but his counterpart, in say, Britain, might be regarded as being below the poverty line. It is important that women are seen among the elite groups. Therefore their education should be given all the attention it deserves.

However, the people who assumed national responsibility following the departure of the colonial masters were looked upon as the elite and, as already stated, were hailed as heroes - particularly because some of them were involved in the lengthy and often agonising negotiations and struggle for peaceful independence. Initially, people were confident that the elite would build a great nation but, with the passage of time, they began to feel that their hopes and aspirations might not be realised so they lost faith in the elite. Eventually, the elite came to be associated with selfishness, indulgence and uncaring attitude towards the poor. Hugh and Mabel Smythe (1960), have been studying the events that estranged the elite from the masses. They stress that at the root of the disharmony is lack of identity - that is the inability of the elite group to identify with the rest of the society. They claim that the Nigerian elite follow the example of their British colonial masters, characterised by frequent travels abroad and few, if any, of social or cultural contacts with the indigenous population. The Smythes emphasise that:

*"...the Nigerian social structure has evolved an elite social group who react to the vast majority of the Nigerians in much the same way that the British reacted in the past to all Nigerians. The young Nigerians who go to the United Kingdom or to America for further training fall, on their return, into the pattern of their predecessors. There is not as yet any visible sign that the new elite are developing a more egalitarian attitude, ...the aristocratic concept is likely to persist..."* p. 100.

Arguably if women had been given the opportunity to rule, the situation might have been different. Nigerian women for example, are duty conscious and not interested in amassing wealth.

## Education and the Elite

The Smythes are convinced that of all the factors that led to the emergence of the elite, education is the most crucial in that it is one of the major ways by which young people have come to know and want western ways. They believe that although initially formal education was looked upon as alien and therefore suspect, eventually it became clear that it had economic advantages - especially when those who had learned to read and write were employed in clerical positions, at salaries far higher than those of their unskilled brethren. The Smythes point out that when the British became recognised and accepted by the Nigerians as the colonial government, the educated natives, like the clerks in government offices, became identified with authority and as a result, gained in personal status. Consequently education became more popular and at the same time, those employed by the white man, began to adopt many of the white man's manners and way of life thus deliberately seeking westernisation. But the crucial issue is that the very moment it was discovered that education had financial and social advantages, girls and women were not given the opportunity to go to school.

## Missionaries and The Elite Group

The Voluntary Agency schools and Catholic missionaries are said by the Smythes to have played a crucial role in creating the elite class, notably through the mission educated children who later went for further studies. The early overseas educated Nigerians are also believed to have played a significant role in creating the elite class because while they were studying they both deliberately and unconsciously absorbed the white man's way of life. It should however be noted that some of them especially those educated in America were the men who promoted and sustained the spirit of nationalism which remained unabated until the attainment of independence. Because women were

denied early education they were not among the early Nigerians that were educated in the universities overseas. Consequently they played little or no part in the struggle for independence.

The Smythes do also hold the view that the media helped in the emergence of the elite. They insist that one major factor:

*“contributing to the formation of the elite and to the distinction between classes was the intrusion of the complex and sometimes contradictory cultural patterns and ideas loosely referred to as “western culture”, transmitted to Nigeria through the several media by which they could be spread. Elite status came to be identified with at least a degree of westernization in living patterns and standards, particularly in the South.”*  
p. 58.

The Smythes are surprised at how westernised Nigeria has become. Understandably, they have indicated that the first impression a newcomer to Nigeria gets is in connection with Nigerian cities, particularly the extent to which the architecture, the streets, the clothing of the people, and the nature of life approximates that of the western nation.

*“Even the market place, that stronghold of local color and traditional influence, is becoming a concrete plaza with stalls in grid patterns, as in Benin; or it may even have succumbed to the modern electric-lighted and tin-roofed municipal market buildings of Onitsha.”* p. 58.

Westernisation notwithstanding Onitsha market has helped countless number of women traders. Over the years many have been responsible for the school education of their children especially girls. Some of the women are now rich traders.

### Cities and the Elite

Cities have been included in the factors that have aided and abetted the growth of the elite class. The Smythes have noted that:

*“A study of the elite as a whole inevitably leads one to the cities, where are found the majority of the elite and the circumstances out of which they grew, and it is not difficult to accept as a dominant one the role of the city in the*

*emergence of this new class. It is only in the city that there are enough of them to form a "class"; it is chiefly in the city that high-status jobs and activities are available; it is in the cities that the elite pattern of living is known and recognised."* p. 45.

Without doubt, the city is where the largest population of the elite is concentrated, given that the city is the centre for political, social, economic and educational activities. The amenities in the city, are non-existent in the rural areas. In Nigeria, the elite are also recognised by the size of their material wealth, which includes big and expensive cars, (Aka 1977). Women should be part of the elite class so that they can hold some of the offices that have always been held by men, like mayor of the big cities. this will give them the opportunity to take part in important decisions including educational issues.

It is of interest to note that Ajaegbu (1976), in the course of his research about the living pattern of the elite, visited many Nigerian elite homes and discovered that they have nice houses and eat good food. The elite are always opposed to anything that threatens their luxurious life. Lulat (1982), noticed the same opposition from the Zambian elite when their government wanted to introduce an educational reform which would benefit particularly the poor. Although the Nigerian elite enjoy a standard of living far beyond the reach of their fellow citizens, it should be noted that some achieved their own wealth by sheer hard work. It is also worthy of note that the early elite played an invaluable role with regard to educational expansion, and the political negotiations which culminated in a bloodless independence.

#### Literacy, Women and Community Development

Arguably, one of the most praiseworthy programmes that sprang up in Nigeria following the advent of western-type education was Community Development. The demand for the programme by various communities grew in strength with the passage of time, because it was associated with high standards of living. By the 1950s, there was a

general clamour that the country as a whole should be developed. It was believed that the demand for Community Development then was to some extent politically motivated. The colonial administrators felt that the natives demanded rapid development and a higher standard of living, not just because they brought relief from poverty, but also because a low standard of living had become associated with the inferior colonial status. In spite of the controversy surrounding its origin, the programme was exciting and interesting since it was meant to involve everyone.

But to understand thoroughly what the Community Development (CD) programme was all about, its implications and role, a detailed examination of its definition is necessary. Ironically, the definition of Community Development is hardly simple, as it tends to differ from person to person. Onokerhoraye (1984), has also pointed out that the term "Community Development" is defined differently by different writers. Jackson (1956), for example, has explained that Community Development is:

*"encouraging a community to undertake, on its own initiative, the various steps necessary to enrich the life of the community both materially and spiritually."* p. 6.

The British Colonial Office, on their part, defined Community Development as follows:

*"We understand the term...to mean a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community, with active participation and, if possible, on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement. (Community Development) embraces all forms of betterment. It includes the whole range of development activities in the districts, whether these are undertaken by government or unofficial bodies: in the field of agriculture, by securing the adoption of better methods of soil conservation, better methods of farming and better care of livestock: in the field of health, by promoting better sanitation and water supplies, proper measures of hygiene and infant and maternity welfare; and in the field of education, by spreading literacy and adult education as well as by the extension and improvement of schools for children. (Community Development) must make use of the co-operative movement and must be put into effect in the closest association with local government bodies."* p. 7.

This detailed definition underlines both the importance of Community Development and why communities were clamouring for it. But Jackson has maintained that Community Development can be defined in terms of its ends, claiming that the chief aim is always mass education for all the people. Jackson has also pointed out that the United Nations uses the term “Fundamental Education” for exactly the same concept as Community Development.

It is important to note that the Community Development programme was not only launched in Nigeria, but also in other colonised African countries. Du Santoy (1958), who has studied carefully the Community Development in Ghana, has claimed that Community Development:

*“is now generally accepted internationally, during the course of its growth in different countries it has been called by different names, many of which still exist and are unlikely to die out completely...Community Development has been called ‘Fundamental Education’, ‘Social Development’, ‘Basic Education’, and ‘Mass Education’.”* p. 1.

This further confirms the controversy in terms of what Community Development actually means. But the emphasis on education, shows that education is at the very heart of the programme. There was a genuine strong desire to ensure that education was made available to everyone. This in turn, reflects the depth of illiteracy in the pre-colonial Africa. But the fact that Community Development is not exclusively about education, since it embraces a whole range of other issues, could have jeopardised the literacy aspect. This is also partly why the programme is defined in different ways by different people, although it could be argued that they are all saying the same thing in different ways. Onokerhoraye (1984) has aptly indicated that the various definitions:

*“...emphasize the fact that it involves the movement of the people designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active*



*participation of, and if possible on the initiative of, the community concerned.” p. 169.*

There is striking similarity between Onokerhoraye’s definition and that of the Colonial Office. The key words and phrases include: initiative, active participation and better living. Like the Colonial Office, Onokerhoraye stresses that if the initiative was not forthcoming, then the government would stimulate the interest through various strategies; including enlightenment campaigns, the initiation of projects, and financial aid for special projects. It is noteworthy that Onokerhoraye claims that a typical aspect of rural development strategy in Nigeria has been the establishment of farm settlements in what were formerly eastern and western regions of Nigeria. But in Ghana, Du Santoy (1958), has revealed that Community Development dealt with simple things and unsophisticated people. He also thinks that the strong educational element in the Movement was because:

*“literacy has always seemed to be the password to progress in an underdeveloped country. Most mass education programmes have, therefore, started from literacy work. Literacy in such a society has an importance beyond merely teaching the actual skills of reading and writing. It removes the feeling of inferiority from the illiterate and he feels that if he has become able to read and write - a thing he never dreamt was possible - he can do many other things too.” p. 83.*

Unquestionably this explains why the Movement was mostly aimed at the illiterate. In the Ghanaian experience, Du Santoy (1958), noted that the Community Development programme was meant to achieve four main objectives:

1. Adult literacy.
2. Home Economics for women, especially by way of better child and home care; thus improving family life.
3. Self Help Project Work - regarded as the outward expression of a desire to improve.

4. Extension Campaigns - this was an attempt to teach communities all types of improvement in their ways of living.

Significantly, Du Santoy (1958), has pointed out that, in Ghana, the Government Department in charge of the Community Development was the Department of Social Welfare and that by the end of 1950, it was under enormous pressure to begin mass education activity in various parts - notably the northern territory where many people were educationally backward. This northern part of Ghana is reminiscent of northern Nigeria, especially in the early years of western education in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the Community Development programme was not as elaborate as it was in Ghana. The organisers of the programme mainly concentrated on farm settlements and road building. In time, the two became more or less the permanent feature of community development. Men turned out happily in their age-grades to build roads, which Jackson (1956) described as little roads. Onokerhoraye (1984), has looked at some of the problems which jeopardised the programme in Nigeria, and discovered that the following were the most serious:

1. Local Government: Although they were closest to the people, they did not play a leading role to promote the Movement.
2. Cooperative Society - Officials: They were supposed to promote the programme, but they were often corrupt. Because the majority of the members were illiterate; the literate officials from time to time embezzled the money designated for various projects.
3. Lack of Resources: The communities lacked resources; consequently most of the members of the cooperative societies who organised the Community Development Programme were poor people from rural

areas. Like any other programme, lack of funds can impose severe limitations in terms of goal achievement.

### Nigerian Women and the Community Development Programme

Arguably, the most important factor which Onokerhoraye ought to have mentioned was non-active participation by women. The fact that women did not take active part in the Community Development Programme was a setback in terms of the overall objectives of the programme. To start with, the main accent was on education, but not only was the literacy aspect of the programme overlooked by the organisers in Nigeria, the part played by women was negligible; they were more or less excluded. By concentrating mainly on the two projects aforementioned, (farm settlement and road building), many illiterates were denied the opportunity to rid themselves of illiteracy. The gravity of this missed opportunity becomes more apparent when one considers the fact that in Nigeria, like in many other developing nations, the illiteracy rate is high, especially female illiteracy. Even in the developed nations of the world, the illiteracy rate is higher with regard to women (see Chapter 1). Therefore, the Community Development Programme should have been better utilised, particularly by women.

Significantly, Jackson (1956), who spent a lot of time in Eastern Nigeria and witnessed the launching of the programme, has also indicated that although most Community Development projects were of interest to both men and women, the initiative and hard work always came from the men. He observed that Eastern Nigerian women were mostly interested in only two projects; namely maternity home and water supply. That the women were highly interested in maternity homes supports the fact that the establishment of hospitals and other modern medical centres, including clinics (as already discussed in Social Change) will go down in the History of Nigeria as one of the most positive social

changes brought about by western influence. Although they participated well in them, Jackson noted that in some other projects, women merely galvanised their menfolk in providing the services.

Jackson's prolonged stay in the predominantly Igbo section of the country gave him a great deal of insight into the customs and traditional beliefs of the Igbo people. Consequently, he felt that the negligible role played by the eastern women was attributable to the fact that the traditional life of the Igbo community was ordered by men. It is also important to note that Bown (1985), who has lived in several African nations, including Nigeria, has stressed the fact that women are excluded in development projects and programmes.

*"African women need to be functioning at political and technical decision-making levels, with women's concerns central to these processes so that the talk of integrating women into development becomes a nonsense. Without women, there is no development." p. 258.*

Interestingly it is being increasingly realised that women's role in terms of national development be it economic, educational, political, or social is indispensable. Significantly, Nigeria is one of the countries where this crucial realisation is viewed with urgency. Onyiriuke and Nwaogwegbe (1990), have disclosed that one of the leading education officials in Imo State has emphasised the vital role women's education can play in the revitalisation of the nation's ailing economy, and that no nation can be said to be really developed if the womenfolk are not brought into the mainstream of the nation's socio-economic and political life. To acknowledge the fact that no nation can claim full development if the female members do not play an active role in all aspects of the nation's life, is in itself a remarkable concession because it shows that women in Nigeria can and should participate vigorously in the task of nation-building.

The same could be said of women all over the universe - notably in the developing countries where women's role is hardly recognised which to a large extent, accounted for women's non-active participation in the Community Development Movement in Nigeria. The British colonial administrators were not blameless with regard to the women's poor performance in the Programme, given that not only did they place accent on initiative, they also strongly indicated that if the initiative was not forthcoming, they would do everything to stimulate it. But there is no evidence that this was done. In the end, it resulted in the Nigerian women not taking advantage of the programme to improve their lot - especially in educational terms.

It is, however, important to note that whereas in Nigeria, women participated very little in the Community Development Movement; in Ghana, women played a leading role. Du Santoy (1958), watched the launching and the progress of the programme in Ghana, and was delighted by the Ghanaian experience. He has likened the Ghanaian women's role in the movement to the popular saying:

*...If you educate a man you educate an individual, whereas if you educate a women you educate a family...it is important that, while educating the youth of the country, one must not forget their parents and in particular their mothers and future wives who will have the dominant say in their domestic arrangements." P. 106.*

Du Santoy emphasises his belief that the home and family are a good base from which to start to improve the community generally; stressing that it is in these spheres that women in any country in the world have most influence. From Du Santoy's observation, with regard to the women in Ghana and the Community Development Programme, it is obvious that there were major differences in the way the women of Ghana participated in the programme, as opposed to their Nigerian counterparts. The Ghanaian women, for instance, showed a lot of initiative, enthusiasm and interest in the Movement. But Nigerian women

seemed complacent and lost the initiative to the men

Du Santoy has attributed the Ghanaian women's active participation in the programme to the fact that Ghana is a country where matrilineal succession is still the custom in large sections of the country and where, by tradition, the Queen Mother plays an important role in the selection of the Chiefs, consequently women are specially important. Surprisingly, in some places, Community Development is the life-line of the people. In Appalachia, for example, Community Development is a strategy for achieving goals of preventive nature. Porter, Peters and Heady (1982), have revealed the emphasis placed on the organisation of social structures and collective efforts in problem-solving as a way of reducing stress, and altering life-styles, particularly as the communities are vulnerable. Porter and his associates claim that the vulnerability stems from the fact that:

*"the tax structure of the area is antiquated and governmental allocation of resources generally does not favour rural areas. In many rural communities, the visual impact of unpaved streets, deteriorated housing, and antiquated school buildings, often set against a backdrop of raw strip-mining operations, offers a stark contrast to the natural beauty of the Appalachian hills." p. 302.*

Added to the above problem is also the problem of social integration. To tackle this problem in the small communities of Appalachia, the School of Social Work of West Virginia University uses a Community Development strategy. Women participated well in the programme. In some cases, the problems of specific groups were identified so that their needs would be provided.

Porter, Peters and Heady (1982), claim that Community Development, as illustrated with the Appalachia experience, can be an effective means of achieving significant goals in community health. They have also stressed that the programme can generate affiliative and participatory behaviour as well as integrative community structures, all of which can significantly alter life-styles, reduce stress in vulnerable population groups, and develop

collective capabilities to cope. The Appalachian experience is worthy of emulation by every community in the world, particularly as the strategy is capable of reducing stress which is a common problem in a world that is becoming increasingly materialistic and uncaring. Girls and women will benefit enormously from it.

It is encouraging to note that in some parts of Nigeria, Community Development is still in existence. In Igboland, for example, various villages rely on Community Development as the most positive way of effecting social changes - thus improving the living standards of their respective communities. In the village of Umuduru in Nsu (Imo State), for example, villagers contribute money from time to time in order to maintain the educational institutions located in the village. Local leaders are proud of their achievement and boast particularly of the 1950s when the entire Nsu community contributed money for the formal education of boys and girls, the provision of pipe-borne water and pledged to install electricity by the year 2000 and raise more money for the education of boys and girls.

Currently, the villagers are contributing money for the installation of the electricity. If successful, the life of the villagers will change beyond recognition. For instance, it can bring some of those amenities that are always associated with urban centres and the elite group, within the reach of the ordinary people. They include: video, radio and television, which help urban dwellers to relax. In the long term, the above amenities could help in terms of urban migration. Women, in particular, may find them invaluable, especially at the end of each day's labour. Unlike the cities, the spirit of sharing, which characterises village life, will make it possible for those villagers who cannot afford such luxury to share with those who can. It is noteworthy that some rural dwellers have elite sons, daughters, or other relatives who will be very eager to buy them such items.

It is obvious that with the Community Development Programme, there is arguably no limit in terms of what rural people can achieve, and thus enhance positive social change. Electricity will help school children at night which is when most of them, particularly girls can find time to do their private studies and school home work. This is important because many children in the rural areas do not have good light in their homes for studying at night. Some parents, can not afford any light at all resulting in total darkness at night. Some try to improvise light by using 'Ederi' (made from palm nuts). When lit 'ederi' can fill an entire house with thick smoke within minutes. Besides, light from it is very hazy.

### The Socio-Cultural Changes - Some of the Undesirable Aspects

Considering the foregoing account, it is clear that owing to western-type education, Nigeria has undergone immense social and cultural changes. If one accepts the warning of some eminent scholars, including Nduka (1964), that all that glitters is not gold, then one will invariably accept that some of the changes are undesirable. The older generation found the trauma inherent in such changes more difficult to bear than the younger people. Read (1959), witnessed the same trauma among the elderly population of Nyasaland following the social changes of 1871 - 1901. Read claims that although attempts were made to minimise the impact:

*"It was evident, just before World War II, that the Ngoni kingdoms had had a profound shock from which they never fully recovered, in spite of the recognition of their paramount chiefs by the Native Authorities Ordinance in 1934. The older men looked back with nostalgia to what they called 'the time of peace, when the Europeans were not here to trouble us.' These older men were known as 'the generation of former days', because they had taken part in warfare as young men, and had known the independence and supremacy of the Ngoni kingdoms. The expression 'everything is finished now' was often on their lips, especially when faced by new demands from the government, or by rebellious attitudes from their former subject peoples." p.26 - 27.*



To some extent, this is reminiscent of the Nigerian experience. In Igboland, for example (as already stated), the traditional rulers watched with dismay as their authority was swept away. Their authority came under severe challenge by both their subjects and the colonial officers.

Critics of western influence believe that the contact between Nigeria and the West bred racism. Nduka's feelings about the racial aspect could reflect those of many Nigerians:

*"that this myth of European racial superiority was for all practical purposes accepted by the Nigerians themselves, as well as by most other dependent peoples, was one of the saddest of the consequences of the contact between Nigeria and the West. The natural pride of the Nigerian peoples in their own cultures and their self-confidence were dealt serious blows..."* p. 5.

Nduka emphasises the fact that the only difference between the two is that one is technologically advanced but lacked family ties like the extended family system, which makes Nigerian culture very rich. The critics' views must have been influenced or reinforced by the harsh and false assessment of Africans, including Nigerians, by some Europeans like Miller (1947), according to him:

*"the African in this tropical belt of Western equatorial Africa, of which Nigeria is a part, is a spoiled, degenerate creature. He is vicious, unreliable and immoral in all the worst possible ways. Even when removed from his surroundings and given the chance of living under utterly different and wholesome conditions on return to his own native land he soon reverts. His sense, wit, ability, all seem to be directed into evil avenues; he is treacherous, unprincipled, and has no idea of the most elementary axioms of truth, honour, or virtue. It would be impossible ever to put him in positions of ultimate trust or responsibility, for he will inevitably fail to respond. He is flabby, soft, plausible and specious, but intrinsically lacking in truth; his outlook is purely selfish and he has no regard for anyone's welfare but his own. He is false and crooked."* p. 110-111.

There is little doubt that such criticism will infuriate even the greatest advocate of western education and instead of promoting racial tolerance or harmony, will put it in jeopardy as

attitudes harden. Opponents of western influence, in particular, will always refer to such erroneous and unfair judgement of the natives by a European - criticism which shows that there is nothing positive about the African.

Those who oppose western influence in Nigeria also feel that urban life breeds corruption, anxiety, tension, impersonality, separatism, inordinate ambition etc. City life is also said to be noisy as opposed to the simple and tranquil life that village dwellers enjoy.

It is important to note that critics believe that the introduction of western education led to the demise of the traditional economy, of which agriculture was the most important. Scholars are convinced that the northern part of Nigeria remained largely unaffected by the socio/cultural changes that were brought about in Nigeria by western education. Some, including Nduka (1964), Jackson (1956), Hugh and Mabel Smythe (1960), stress that northerners were less receptive to change than southerners. The Igbo, in particular, are the most affected by the changes, and Jackson (1956), thinks that it is because the Igbo reject conservatism - whose main adherents are men of the older generation. Jackson's reference to older men supports the view that in every socio-cultural change, it is the older people that will find it most difficult to adapt to the new way of life. Nduka (1964), has also commented on the fact that the cultural changes are less discernible in the North than in the South:

*"One of the glories of the present social system in the Northern half of Nigeria is that the cultural and social moorings of the Moslem areas have been far less radically disrupted, if at all, than has been the case in the South...But no part of Nigeria has escaped from the disrupting influences of Western culture..."* p. 93-94.

That the northerners are predominantly moslem and follow the Islamic way of life, has contributed to their ability to retain most of their own indigenous cultural values. It is widely believed that in terms of fashion many girls and women in the south have gone over

the top. Educationally, it has had adverse effects on girls' education. Some of them for example, have become so fashion conscious that they only pay scant attention to their studies but waste a lot of time on their appearance, especially in terms of what to wear. As they can ill afford the money, they try to work as part-time prostitutes in order to raise money for sophisticated and psychedelic dresses, shoes, wrist watches, hats, etc.

Nigerian women need a lot of help. For instance, those that go to live in the urban centres for whatever reason, should undergo some form of induction prior to their migration to the big cities, in order to minimise the trauma they may suffer, since city life is vastly different from village life. Arguably, the growth of individualism and the weakening of family ties are seen as some of the most regrettable aspects of western-type education, and the ensuing socio-cultural changes in Nigeria.

Critics of Nigeria's contact with the West can take consolation in the fact that presumably, were it not for such contact, some of the most undesirable elements of Nigerian culture, especially human sacrifice and twin murder, might have survived to this day, and consequently the plight of Nigerian women over the years would have been better imagined than described. Economically, some women have become financially independent as a result of formal education, which is a big boost to their social status, and struggle for self determination. More importantly, they help in the school education of their children, notably girls when their fathers refuse to send them to school.

The next chapter will focus more closely on the Igbo as a people, with a view to establishing among other things why they are said to be unique not only in Nigeria, but in the whole of Africa. Consequently, their institutions and way of life will be examined, which in turn may reveal why Imo State is central to this study, especially in relation to the female members of the society.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HISTORY OF IMO STATE

The history of Imo State is crucially relevant to this study. Apart from being the location for the fieldwork, a brief insight into the history of the Igbo will among other things provide more information regarding the choice of Igboland for testing the hypothesis, as opposed to any other place in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The fact that the study is essentially about the education of girls and women in Nigeria makes a historical background of the people even more imperative. This study may therefore be lacking to some extent in terms of valid information if it fails to take into account the geography of Imo State, the way of life of the people both past and present, in short their customs and culture. This presumably may be why Professor Fafunwa (1974), one of the architects of modern Nigerian education, when asked by his students at the Universities of Nigeria Nsukka and Ife, to write the History of Education in Nigeria, stated unequivocally:

*“History is to a people what memory is to the individual. A people with no knowledge of their past would suffer from collective amnesia, groping blindly into the future without guide-posts of precedence to shape their course. Only a thorough awareness of their heritage allows them to make their public decisions as they make their private ones. For possible educational reform, reflection on previous events and policies will assist considerably in planning any future course of action.”* p. 13.

Some knowledge of the geography of the State is also important because it will help one to understand the type of environment, which has nurtured the cultural and historical background of the people and therefore largely shaped their future. In doing this, the geography of Igboland as a whole will be taken into account for the purpose of clarity and convenience, since Imo and Anambra States are the only Igbo speaking States in Nigeria, they are the same Igbo people, geographically located in the same place only politically

split into two States, (initially they were one State) for administrative convenience and economic progress and development.

## **Igboland**

### **Location**

The Igbo speaking people constitute one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. They occupy a continuous stretch of territory in the southeastern part of the country, and inhabit the entire Imo and Anambra States (former East Central State). Their neighbours include: the Igala, Idoma and Ogoja to the North, the Ibibio in the East, the Ijaw in the South, while the Edo speaking people are in the western border.

### **Physical Features**

The dominant features are the Udi Hills and the Imo River. The former form a narrow North-South ridge on the northeastern side of the central plain. Just as Nigeria derived its name from the River Niger, Imo State was named after the Imo River, while Anambra State derived its own name from River Anambra. Imo River runs more or less through the entire Imo State before entering the sea at Port Harcourt in Rivers State. Owing to its size, (very long and in some sections very wide), the river is called Imo - which in Igbo language means 'enormous size'. Consequently, among the Igbo someone or something that is very large, is likened to the Imo River.

For the people of Imo State, the river means much more than a geographical phenomenon, because of its religious significance, which is reminiscent of the River Nile in Egypt. In the traditional society for example, Imo River was worshipped. Consequently, along its bank rituals were carried out. With the advent of Christianity, the religious importance diminished. However, in a State that is land locked, (no sea board), Imo River is invaluable, especially in agrarian terms.

## Climate and Vegetation: Their Educational Implications

Nigeria lies wholly within the tropics; the climate however varies from the coast to the hinterland. At the coast the temperature seldom rises above 90° but humidity is high. Towards the North it is drier and extremes of temperature are more common, at times reaching as high as 110° by day, and falling sharply to 50° or below at night. There are two well marked seasons in Nigeria, the rainy season and the dry season. The prevalent winds in the rainy season are the southwesterly winds that blow from the Atlantic Ocean laden with moisture. The rainy season lasts from April to October, ironically it is also the hottest time of the year. In the North the rains come later and stop early. Annual rainfall is heavy, varying from 125 centimeters in the Southwest to about 500 centimeters in some parts of the Southeast, but in the North it could be as low as 50 centimeters.

The winds that blow in the dry season are the northwesterly trade winds. Because they cross the Sahara desert they are extremely dry, laden with the fine dust particles that form the haze, which is common all over the country, though with greater intensity in the North. This is because - before the winds reach the South they are already weak, having deposited most of their load in the northern section of the country. The dry season is from November to early March, but in the North it does not end until June. The dry season, which is known as the hamattan, is the coldest time of the year. Some mornings may be so cold that people have to warm themselves by the fire.

In terms of vegetation, there are five distinct belts, (from South to North): mangrove swamp forest, fresh water swamp forest, tropical rain forest, Guinea Savannah and the semi-desert scrubland. The near desert conditions in the far North are caused by scant rainfall, and extreme dryness brought about by the hamattan winds. Igboland comes mainly within the rain forest, but parts of the northern fringes are within the grasslands.

The rain forest is a region of very thick and tall evergreen trees. The tops of the trees form continuous layers of green leaves. The luxuriant vegetation is due to the high annual rainfall and high temperature. Below the huge tall trees, like the Iroko, there are layers of smaller trees, and beneath the lower layers, there is dense undergrowth of creeping plants and parasites.

The forest, even by day is dark, by night it is extremely dark. This is because most of the sunlight is shut out from the ground. Green (1964), who lived in Agbaja for many years, found the nights frighteningly dark, and described the forest as having a double-edged effect on the people. She explained that the forest shielded Agbaja people from their enemies while at the same time, hiding their enemies from sight - who could then in turn waylay or ambush them. In Igboland however, the land is fertile, and the very high population density in this part of the country is attributed to soil fertility, which enables the people to produce enough food.

It is widely believed that the geography of Igboland was fundamental to the civilization and progress of the Igbo. For instance, the location of the land in the hinterland coupled with high vegetation density and the presence of Imo River, shielded the people to a large extent from the ravages of war - especially external aggression, during the traditional society. In addition, owing to soil fertility, plenty of food could be produced which enabled women to feed their families however large. This gave rise to the very high dense population often associated with the Igbo, (thought to have played an invaluable part during the Nigerian Civil War essentially seen as a war between the Igbo and the Federal Nigerian Government). In the traditional society the Igbo with their population, could withstand as well as overwhelm an invasion. Significantly, Isichei (1970), has stressed the fact that the geography of the Igbo as well as their high population density, saved them

from the evil of colonialism, especially the type experienced by the Gikuyu of Kenya.

According to her:

*“Iboland’s climate, geography and dense population saved her from the fate of a country like Kenya.”* p. 173.

Isichei has explained that although the Igbo suffered from colonialism, their fate could never be equated with or likened to that of Kenya’s Gikuyu people, where European settlers became trespassers on the Gikuyu land, Isichei must have undoubtedly borne in mind the horrors of the ensuing struggle and conflict which ravaged Gikuyu land. Farming, settlement and timber trade are causing the forest areas in Nigeria to become smaller each year. For women farming is indispensable, especially rural women because some of them sell the surplus of their farm produce for cash, which they spend on their children’s school education, especially girls’. The role of farming in sustaining girls’ education in Igboland can never be fully assessed.

### Population

The two States, Anambra and Imo were created in 1976, together they cover the area of the old East Central State. Enugu is the capital of Anambra State, while Owerri is the capital of Imo State. They cover an area of 29,406 sq. km., (Adetoro 1983). The two States are almost entirely inhabited by the Igbo, at such high densities per square kilometre that over-population is common. It is estimated that Igboland is one of the most densely populated places in the world. Eluwa (1988), put the population density at 750-1000 to the square kilometre; Isichei thinks it is higher. Eluwa has also claimed that as a result of population pressure on the land, many Igbo people have migrated and are found in all parts of Nigeria, as well as in West and Central Africa. Today, the Igbo can be found all over the world. During her lengthy stay in several parts of Nigeria including Igboland, where she spent many years in Nneato, (near Owerri), Leith-Ross (1965), described the density of



population as bewildering, and indicated that in some places it was as high as 1,000 people per square mile and emphasised the fact that it was rare in Africa.

Isichei (1976), has also claimed that population pressure forced some Igbo groups to fight a series of boundary wars. In 1988 (Eluwa), the population of Igbo people was estimated to be 9,246,386. It is noteworthy that Adetoro (1983), once described Nigeria as a giant among the nations of the world, maintaining she has more people than all the remaining 16 West African countries put together. Adetoro has further indicated that in 1966, the population of the entire African continent was estimated at 310,000,000 and that one out of every five persons living on the continent was a Nigerian. He emphasised the fact that Nigeria is the eighth most populous country in the universe. Adetoro is of the opinion that three quarters of Nigeria's population can be traced to six tribes, Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba, Fulani, Kanuri and Ibibio. But the density of population in Igboland (Imo State) is by far the largest. The figures below reflect this:

State	Population	Area in sq. km.	Persons per sq. km.
Oyo	5158884	42862	120
Ogun	1551946	20241	76
Gongola	3002808	102067	29
Sokoto	4538808	84588	48
Niger	1271767	73555	17
Anambra	2943488	15770	186
Imo	3280340	13032	252

Adetoro 1976, p. 104.

Oyo and Ogun are in the western part of Nigeria, Gongola, Sokoto and Niger are in the North, Anambra and Imo are the two Igbo States. The figures speak for themselves, Niger for example, is more than five times the size of Imo, yet it has only 17 people per square kilometre as opposed to 252 people for every square kilometre in Imo State, Sokoto is more than six times bigger than Imo State but in each kilometre there are only 48 people.

Judging from the figures, it is obvious that the Igbo are trying to squeeze into a very small space (see appendix 5), and the pressures on land are inevitable as well as the ensuing waves of migration to other places outside Igboland. But their population is an asset, especially in educational terms. In the early years of school education for example, (see chapter 2), many age grades participated in the building of huts which were the first school buildings. Those huts helped to sustain school education which some girls and women have obviously benefited from.

### The History of the Igbo

It must be pointed out that although the fieldwork for this study is confined to Imo State, the history of Imo State is the history of the Igbo, as a people, which include Anambra State people. It is also worth noting that the history of the Igbo is better approached through their culture, particularly if one agrees with the historians: Eluwa, Ukagwu, Nwachukwu and Nwaubani (1988) who stated that culture should include people's language, their political and social institutions, religious beliefs, art, literature and all the material things which they produce and use (see Chapter Three).

### The Igbo: Their Origin

There is not as yet any conclusive anthropological, archaeological or ethnographical findings with regard to the original habitat of the Igbo. There are however various suggestions about their possible origin and routes of migration to their present place of abode. One theory, (Basden 1966), maintains that the Igbo are part of the early Egyptians or the Hebrew - perhaps the lost race of Israel. It is also thought that the Igbo migrated to their present location, (Eluwa 1988), from Sudan across the Savannah region where they sojourned for some time. Another school of thought which includes Talbot (1967), claims that the Igbo origin could be traced to their present abode from where they

later dispersed to other parts occupied by them. The Talbot school has named Awka, Nri and Isuama as the core centres, from where the dispersal took place.

Eluwa and his associates (1988), have criticised the views of the first school of thought which linked the origin of the Igbo people with ancient Egypt and Israel. Eluwa and his school claim that the earliest forms of Igbo race have been uncovered in the Northwest of Timbuktu and Khartoum, (Sudan). They also believe that the Igbo moved South, probably forced downwards by increasing dryness of the Sahara Desert, arriving at what today is Igboland about 2,500 BC, followed by huge waves of migration to other parts. But the renowned Igbo anthropologist, Professor Onwuejeogwu (1987), has warned that the problem of finding the origin of the Igbo is not a simple one, and stressed the fact that in analysing origins two general theories are indispensable, namely, the theory of permanentism or creationist theory and the theory of evolution. It is possible that Darwin's theory of evolution influenced Onwuejeogwu's views. There is hardly any doubt that the origin of the Igbo will continue to generate debates, arguments and speculations unless clear and indisputable conclusions can be reached. Adimonye (1978), has also emphasised the fact that the origin of the Igbo has always been a matter of speculation. Their origin will help in crucial information especially in terms of women's status.

### Igbo Attributes

Leith-Ross (1939), lived for many years in various parts of Nigeria in the colonial era. She described the Igbo as democratic, go-ahead, and semi-Christian. Significantly the go-ahead attribute of the Igbo was further explored by the Igbo scholar, Professor Nwoga in his 1984 'Ahiajoku' lecture when he reminded his audience of an incident during the Civil War which highlighted and reinforced the daring attribute of the Igbo, unlike the Hausa and the Yoruba, (see Field Work Design).

The Igbo are also often associated with resilience, greed, hard work and hospitality. Igbo hospitality seems to some extent to be linked with the fact that they are great travellers and could be pursuing the policy of 'one good turn deserves another'. But Green (1964), who settled among the people of the remote village of Umueke in Agbaja for many years, thinks that the Igbo are genuinely hospitable. She exchanged visits with the natives, joined in the village festivities, and attended the local markets like any other village woman. Drawing therefore from her immense experience, she is convinced that:

*"...there is a good deal of hospitality to kinsfolk, relatives, in-laws and friends...Hospitality is the affair of small units, the households..."* p. 36.

It is worth noting that Leith-Ross, (Green's colleague), lived among the inhabitants of another Igbo village, Nueato, for a considerable length of time, she described the Igbo as cheerful, industrious, honest and very good to their children. Uchendu (1965), has not only emphasised the fact that the Igbo are hospitable but has also stressed the point that the Igbo are nothing if not hospitable. Like Green, he maintains that hospitality is a major social obligation and so inability to meet it is a humiliating experience. A hospitable person does not easily attract suspicion therefore in times of big movements (whether political, educational, religious etc.), people may trust him or her.

Although the Igbo are often associated with hard work, generally women work much harder than men. Ottenberg (1962), and Green (1965), lived among the Igbo for many years. They stayed in at least two different strategic places, Ottenberg was based at Afikpo - on the Igbo eastern border with the Efik of Calabar, while Green was at Umueke, Agbaja - in the heart of Igboland. From the two opposite locations, they observed the daily activities of the natives, and were moved by the amount of work women did. Green witnessed the daily endless toil of the village women, which left many emaciated.

Most of the hard work is due to the fact that women must feed their families, as in more or less all developing countries. In a bid to fulfil this social obligation, often women find themselves working from dawn to dusk. From the farm, they go to the market. Women whose children are too small to help in any way have to fetch water and firewood in addition. Not surprisingly, the seemingly endless toil endured by women is becoming a major concern to women's organisations in Nigeria. During the 1985 Annual Conference of the Imo State Branch of the NCWS at Owerri, Dorothy told the conference:

*"About 90% if not 100% of our women suffer from overwork throughout their lives. From the day they can handle the broom or are able to carry a can of water, they spend the rest of their lives fetching water and fire-wood and in most cases, they are forced to go long distances to accomplish this. The entire domestic work rests on the shoulders of the women - cooking, cleaning, laundry, ironing in addition to giving birth to the babies, nursing them and caring for children and husbands. Our women are not exempted from agricultural work either, and so they spend hours on end in the farms, planting, weeding and harvesting crops. All these hard and time consuming works carried out all year round lead to chronic fatigue, and this constant debilitating fatigue contributes to women's ill-health."* p. 130.

In line 5 above Dorothy stresses that: "The entire domestic work rests on the shoulders of the women." This is reminiscent of Kenya where Kenyatta (1965) says that the entire house work falls within the role of women (see chapter 1). The excessive work which Nigerian women do as outlined by Dorothy also agrees with Kelly's (1987) research findings, especially in the developing countries, (see chapter 1). In the colonial era, Green (1964), noted the daily activities of women and how excessive work affected their health badly. Today too much work is still affecting their health as is evident in Dorothy's address to the conference. It is important to distinguish between working hard and working excessively hard. However, the ability to work hard is a great asset especially in terms of leadership - regarding movements or revolutions including educational innovations.

## Igbo Language: Communication Implications for Girls and Women

It is estimated that within the boundaries of Nigeria, there are approximately 248 distinct languages, Eluwa (1988). The major ethnic groups have their own different languages, for instance, the Igbo speak Igbo language, the Yoruba speak Yoruba, the Hausa, have Hausa, as their own language, (see Chapter 2, part a). Professor of Anthropology, Murdock (1959), has claimed that Nigerians speak the language of the Kwa sub-family of the Nigritic stock. But Eluwa and his school have emphasised the fact that linguists have not yet agreed on any single classification scheme for African languages.

Igbo language for instance, has many dialectical differences. Nwoga (1984), thinks that such differences promote disunity rather than unity. Naturally there is a stronger tendency among people who speak exactly the same dialect to stick closer together especially in times of adversity than people with different linguistic or dialectical backgrounds, one of the factors that helped to bind the ancient Greeks together. On a national level, the too many languages have taken their toll on the country's unity. English is Nigeria's lingua franca. Fear of domination has made it so far impossible for any particular language to be accepted by all Nigerians as the national language. It is feared that any group whose own language is adopted as the official language for the federation, will ultimately dominate the other ethnic groups. Wang (1978), highlighted the problem of multi-ethnicity when he unequivocally stressed that:

*"in most multi-ethnic societies, ethnic groups tend to differ from one another not only in religion and language but also in educational attainment, occupational characteristics, and economic status..."* p. 464.

This is very true of the Nigerian society. But now some Nigerian scholars including Nwoga (1984), think that the adoption of a foreign language as Nigeria's lingua franca is a setback both in linguistic and communication terms. Consequently, he has argued that the

Igbo are engaged in the process of speaking about the innermost consciousness of their language in English, which shares neither the cultural nor the linguistic systems with the Igbo language. He points out that the Igbo are involved in translation with all the tendencies to distortion of thought and emotion inherent in translating one language to another.

Nwoga also recognises that one of the most serious linguistic problems facing Igbo people, is that they are having to express in English, patterns and concepts which have no equivalent in English. He thinks that the problem is even made worse by the very fact that Igbo language is essentially symbolic and symbolism is the most private aspect of a people's culture. Nwoga warns about the immensity of the difficulties involved, in terms of inter cultural communications, and insists that this is because language is not only a means of communication but also an embodiment of a people's worldview. Having been the director of African Studies, Professor Nwoga is in a unique position to highlight the problems inherent in the use of a foreign language by a people as their lingua franca.

The most worrying of these problems must be the inability to find the English equivalent of all Igbo words and expressions. It is noteworthy that people in the traditional Igbo society did not have this difficulty because they lived in a much smaller world, and the use of a foreign language was not an issue. Consequently men and women, boys and girls were equal in linguistic terms. Besides, in those days formal education was non-existent. But the possibility of Nigeria having an indigenous official language is remote given the fear of domination. Nigeria is not alone in this problem, many African nations face the same predicament including Ghana. One of the ways of dealing with it in the contemporary society is to ensure that all children receive formal education, which will give them the opportunity to learn English. This will make it possible for people to communicate easily

including girls and women. This is one of the reasons why their education should not lag behind that of boys and men.

In his reappraisal of Igbo cultural heritage, Nwoga (1985), has stressed the fact that the Igbo are rich in folklores, folk songs, ballads, folk dances, folk tales, riddles, proverbs etc. Igbo people are also rich in oral literature, which has played an incredible role in preserving the history, the culture and the custom of the Igbo. Documentation was not possible since there was no form of writing widely associated with the Igbo or Nigeria as a whole unlike the ancient Egyptians who evolved the unique hieroglyphics. But the question of translation requires serious consideration. Finding the English equivalent of the Igbo, folktales, ballads, riddles etc, will not be easy.

### Igbo Village Structure

It is important to note that Nigeria is a very strong patrilineal society. Not surprisingly, the Igbo place a lot of emphasis on male issues, Uchendu (1965). It is equally true to say that at the very heart of Igbo culture is the family or household, (Green 1964), (Eluwa 1988), which in the traditional society consisted of a man and his wife or wives and children. It was essentially a pagan society and so there was no limit as to the number of wives a man could marry. On the contrary a man's wealth was gauged by the numerical strength of his family, which in turn would enable him to farm extensively and produce rich harvest. His rich farm produce would in time enable him to take some of the most coveted titles in the land, like 'Ezeji', (King of yams). The ability to produce the required number of yams (between 2,400 and 3,200), was seen as an agrarian feat and understandably only very few men could do so. (see chapter 2, part a).

After the family comes the lineage which includes the man's ageing parents, his grown up married sons and their own wives and children, the man's brothers and their



wives and children, together they form a compound or the extended family. The man's daughters marry and leave the compound for their husbands' own home, where together they have to build up their own family. A number of compounds make up a hamlet and out of a number of hamlets a village emerges. A number of villages make the village group, which in the traditional society was the largest social or communal structure. So important was the lineage system in the olden days that Green (1964), has this to say about it:

*"The kinship and local principles of social grouping correspond, in Ibo society, like hand and glove and have to be described in conjunction with one another..."* p. 17.

Although Igbo villages are quite large, they would have been much larger had the Igbo adopted the village structure of the Ga community in Ghana. They migrated to Ghana from Nigeria's Niger delta. The Ga have a unique village structure in that men live separately with their grown up sons, while their wives live with their young sons and daughters both married and unmarried. Azu (1974), has argued that in such a social structure, marriage has no necessary residential implications as women tend to manage their own affairs.

Among the Igbo, the first male issue in every family is a very special person. He commands a lot of respect within the family. As the first male offspring, (Okpara), he gets the largest share of everything including land. On the death of his father he assumes the headship of the family. In the traditional society first sons headed the lineage assembly and deliberated over matters affecting the sub-lineages. They also offered sacrifices to gods on behalf of the units. Above the lineage assembly is the village assembly, which includes all grown up men in the village, but it had an inner council made up of all lineage heads - the 'Amala'. These decided the course of action with regard to matters affecting the entire village. They were also the holders of 'Ofo', the ancestral sign of authority, represented by

a thick stick, described by Green (1964), as a sacred club-like symbol of ancestral authority of the village group. The village group assembly consisted of the representatives of the member-villages. They included the 'Ofo' holders, members of the secret societies and senior titled men. But women were excluded from all these important offices, and no woman ever held the 'Ofo'.

In the modern Igbo society the village structure is still basically the same as in the traditional society, but many changes have taken place. The village group for example, is no longer the highest authority or the largest social structure. It has been geographically expanded, stretched and overtaken by larger units like districts, divisions, towns, States etc. During the colonial era, there were provinces and Igboland was divided into two provinces, Owerri and Onitsha, which roughly correspond to the present day Anambra and Imo States. It is important to note that while the social structure has expanded at the top level, at the lower level, notably the family, the lineage, sub-lineage and village levels, the numerical strength has conspicuously dwindled. Ironically, these have always been regarded as the core or the mainstay of the entire social set up. The main cause of the shrinking is western education with its inherent social changes which include among other things urbanisation and white-collar jobs. As educated Igbo leave the villages for the urban centres in search of jobs and modern amenities, towns and cities are becoming increasingly over populated, leaving the villages with fewer and fewer people, most of them women and elderly people. Many of the migrants are very young school leavers with little or no academic qualifications. This problem was highlighted in chapter 3.

#### The Agnates: The Invisibility of Female Agnates

Among the Igbo, family ties are very strong and in various ways people are constantly reminded of the fact that blood is thicker than water. Consequently, wherever an

Igbo may be he is always thinking of home. Isichei (1976) has noted that in spite of the fact that the Igbo migrated in huge numbers to urban areas, and were instrumental to the development of the modern towns and cities, their hearts were always in their villages of birth. As a result, they formed big unions in towns to help one another particularly in times of adversity. Through their unions they kept in touch with the villages and the events there. (See chapter 3). This strong kinship attachment can be traced partly to the emphasis which the Igbo society places on patrilineal descent and partly to the role of the agnatic system in the life of the individual. Uchendu (1965), has stressed the fact that because the Igbo is a society with a strong patrilineal emphasis, the entire community can be mapped into a number of agnatic groups. He points out that since lineage determines the membership of a family group, the line of inheritance and succession to name and office, a person therefore takes most of his jural rights in social, economic and political matters from the lineage of his father. The members of his lineage are therefore his agnates, (Umunna). He validates his argument by referring to the popular Igbo proverb (Umunna bu ike), meaning agnates are the source of one's strength.

Among the Ngwa, (40 miles from Owerri), the proverb is - 'Umunna bu ike nkwu' (agnates are 'a bunch of palm nuts') it conveys exactly the same meaning. Variation is only in the dialect. Uchendu thinks that the role of agnates in Igbo culture cannot be over emphasised. Many are bound to share his views given that a person depends on his agnates to get on in life, besides they provide him social security and comfort. They support his just claims against other groups. They provide him with the ladder needed for social climbing. After marriage it is a man's agnates that will bring home his wife. It is among his agnates that he rears his children, gives them their stake in life, their title - taking ceremonies, marriage, burial rites etc. The very fact that the maternal agnatic system is not

recognised has affected the status of girls and women in many ways, socially, educationally, economically, politically etc.

The Igbo agnatic system stretches down the generations, knowing no limits. Consequently a man can trace his blood relations down to many generations. But in some other Nigerian communities, there is a set limit. For example, the Wodaabe pastoral Fulani of Western Borno in northern Nigeria, (Stenning, 1959) have a social structure similar to that of the Igbo, with household heads and lineage groups based on the agnatic descendants of a common ancestor, but the blood link does not exceed three generations. The implication is, beyond three generations, people can inter marry.

### Igbo Religious Beliefs and Women's Status

Arguably, religion is one of the most important aspects of people's culture. It tends to give people a sense of purpose and direction, something to look up to. It moderates people's attitudes by serving as a code of conduct or a guideline in terms of good or bad, what people can or cannot do. To some extent it nourishes people's hopes and aspirations and offers them comfort and consolation in times of adversity. Ojo (1966), thinks that religion is an important facet of many a culture and maintains that no culture has appeared to develop except together with a religion. He claims that in almost all unsophisticated communities, religion tends to guide the actions of the nations. He cites sacred places as an example, whose objects are treated with care and caution to avert defilement. But women are usually banned from sacred places.

The role of religion with regard to individuals and societies must never be underestimated. Individuals, for instance, have died for their faith. Some of the world events that have changed the course of history were religiously motivated, including the Reformation, (Mason 1992), spearheaded by the German monk Martin Luther in 1516. At

times issues thought to be wholly political could still have religious undertones. The Igbo are no exception, they are a people with deep-rooted belief in the existence of a supreme being, and the all powerful who can do everything. He also has innumerable spirits who act as His servants, or messengers, Isichei (1976), recalls that:

*“A circumscribed belief in a Supreme Being and a Future Life is universal among the Ibo people. They maintain that He is All Powerful and overlords all inferior spirits. His attributes include beneficence, and He grants favours to mankind in a general way. As a just God, too, He metes out punishment for wrongdoing. This is proved by happenings for which no reasons can be assigned...”* p. 36.

In situations where things just happen without any reason or explanation the Igbo believe that the Supreme Being has exercised His prerogatives as the Almighty Controller of the entire universe. The Igbo believe in the existence of a bad spirit - the direct opposite of God the Supreme Being. This evil spirit is known to the Igbo as ‘Ekwensu’ (Devil). He is believed to have smaller bad spirits with whom he perpetuates evil and thwarts the Supreme Being’s good activities on earth. But Igbo people do seriously believe that ‘Ekwensu’ and his evil spirits have far less power than God, and therefore are at His mercy. As Isichei (1976), put it:

*“Eternally opposed to God is His arch-enemy ‘Ekwensu’ (the Devil), whose one purpose is to frustrate the goodness of God and to disseminate evil. He is the author of all that is bad, and to him is attributed the worst ills to which man is subject. He, in company with innumerable associated spirits, is under the domination of God...”* p. 36-37.

In spite of all their religious beliefs the status of women among the Igbo is still low. It is also believed that the Igbo strong religious beliefs gave them a sense of identity, but obviously girls and women were excluded from that social identity.

### Worship

In the traditional Igbo society the concept of an all powerful being led to the worship of all kinds of idols, including streams, rivers, lakes, trees etc. Certain snakes

were worshipped by the Igbo including the python especially the species known as, 'Eke Ntu', (Isichei 1976). The veneration of particular snakes was widespread in the old society. For instance, Laye (1955), of the Malinke tribe in Guinea recalls a small snake that helped his father. As a goldsmith, Laye's father needed the assistance of the snake that inexplicably visited his workshop at specific times. Laye's mother explained to her son how indispensable the little creature was to his father and insisted that it must never be killed:

*"My son, this one must not be killed: he is not as other snakes, and he will not harm you; you must never interfere with him..." "This snake...is your father's guiding spirit." p. 15.*

The snake is referred to as 'he' pointing to the fact that the female gender is in the background. Amazingly, the Igbo could explain, even if illogically, natural phenomenon which they did not understand. For example, the geographical feature, dry valley, (Lines and Bolwell 1987), was believed to have been caused when a water spirit was refused sacrifice - he went away in anger leaving behind a huge dry depression.

Some of the gods were believed to be very powerful including, 'Igwekala' of 'Umunneoha' and 'Amadioha' of 'Nsu'. The most dreaded was 'Chukwu' manipulated by the 'Aro' for selfish ends, (Ottenberg 1965; Onwuejeogwu, 1987). The gods were so powerful that they could strike a man down on the day his life was sweetest, (Achebe, 1964). The supreme deities were consulted mainly in time of adversity like war. Men made all the consultations. Sacrifices including human beings were made to the gods. Those sacrificed included women. Yet they had no decision over their lives. However, to the individual Igbo what mattered most was his personal god, ('chi'). The Igbo believe firmly that as long as a harmonious state exists between the individual and his 'chi' all would go well for that person. But at the individual level the personal 'chi' of girls and

women seemed to be non-existent since things did not go well for them. They were merely seen as domestic hands, with no right or voice in the family or the wider society. It was against this background that they were denied formal education, especially in the early years of school education.

Nwoga (1984) has argued that a hierarchy of function and not of being exists among the deities and consequently people could abandon a deity if they felt he was not looking after their interests very well. As the accent is on function with regard to the deity it is therefore surprising that the traditional religion discriminated against women whose role was merely seen as servitude. Isichei claims that there is strong evidence that natives do abandon their gods including shrines allowed to fall into decay. It is important to understand that the order to abandon any particular deity came from the men, girls and women simply accepted orders without questioning them. The hierarchical relationship that existed between the Igbo deities also existed in other parts of the world including Carthage, (Cavendish 1968). Understandably, Cavendish believes that offering of sacrifices to gods was widespread:

*“The sacrifice of living creatures to appease wrathful gods was fairly widespread in ancient times, including, in some places, human sacrifice...”*  
p. 36.

Igbo belief in reincarnation, inevitably led to their belief in ancestral spirits, Adimonye (1978), and Uchendu (1965), have pointed out that the Igbo regard them as the invisible segments of their lineage. Nwogu in his 1984 Ahiajoku lecture argued that both the living and the dead are not separate in the physical sense. It is this ideology that makes the individual think that his dead relatives are always watching over what he is doing. Hence, Soyinka's (1965) Egbo, goes to the spot in a river where his parents were known to have drowned to contact them. Arguably, some sections of the Fulani in northern Nigeria

seem to have even stronger ancestral links than the Igbo. Haffenden (1967), in his study of the Kwotto, noted that unless the spirit of an ancestor consents to enter the womb of a woman there would be no conception. Consequently, childless women or women whose children have died in infancy seek the aid of the practitioners of the occult art so that they could mediate with the ancestral spirits who might be responsible for the calamity. Haffenden claims that this is why even to this day, among the Kwotto, fetish priests, witch doctors and medicine men are still held in high regard.

In the old society families consulted the spirits of their dead relatives for every thing. Probably because it was a pagan society, gods and spirits of the dead had a lot of control over people and their affairs. This was not unique with the Igbo. Not surprisingly, Cavendish (1968), claims that with the ancient Egyptian the gods controlled every event in his life:

*“Every event in his life - social, political, economic was determined by the attitude of the gods. The rising of the Nile, the failure of the crops, the death of a dog - all could be attributed to the whims of the gods.”* p. 29.

Gods not Goddesses, tend to control every aspect of people's life.

However, the fact that all the Igbo supreme deities were male did undoubtedly undermine the status of women. In other words, the perception of the female members of the society as weak and subordinate, stemmed from the events and attitudes of the previous generations. For example, the spirits of the ancestors were constantly evoked for help, they were usually male ancestral spirits. And the question is-did the dead female members of the society not have spirits?

### Age

Equally fascinating is the way the Igbo regard old age. Since they believe that the older the wiser, old age is revered. (See chapter 2, part a). The oldest person in the



community always has a place of honour. In a gathering for example, he is given the honour of breaking the kolanut - the most precious gift a visitor or a stranger could be offered in Igboland. (Women do not break kolanuts). It is often said that a person who brings Kalo brings life, (Achebe 1958), Fafunwa (1974), has emphasised the point that in Nigeria age is so much revered that people like to upgrade their age rather than down grade it. This is understandable given the honour which an older person enjoys in Nigeria and in Igboland in particular. But an old man is respected much more than an old woman. He also has more privileges.

The oldest man in his lineage for example, represents his people in the village assembly and in the village group. In case of victory in wars, he gets a large share of the war spoils. His words are heeded in the village and he can settle disputes, as in the case of the twin villages - 'Umuduru' and 'Umuopora' who quarrelled for a long time, because each claimed to be older than the other. Lineage heads had to take the case to the mission and the expatriate missionary of the time jointly called the rival villages 'Saint Lawrence', and so ended the age-long dispute. This shows that the role of church ministers at times goes beyond the bounds of spiritual matters, an issue highlighted by Abernethy (1969), who claims that in the rivalries between quarters, villages and clans, the Africans involved the missionaries.

#### Igbo Concept of Time: Its Implications for Girls

Among the Igbo, time is not measured chronologically but in terms of content of experience. For instance, a man's age is not measured by the number of years he has lived, but by what he has actually achieved within those years. Not surprisingly, one of the most popular Igbo proverbs is 'Oge onye tere Ura, bu ututu ya' (whenever a person wakes up from sleep, is his morning). In the traditional Igbo society there is no clock, but through

events people calculated time. For example, the first cock crow (about 3 am) signalled the approach of dawn, the second cock crow (4 am) meant that daylight was near, and it was when people going to distant farms used to get up, and prepare. The third and final cockcrow (5 am) ushered in daybreak. Anyone who wanted to go somewhere quite early must do so before the third cock crow. In the traditional Igbo society girls who could not wake up early at least by the third cock crow, (approximately 5 am), and go to the farm, or begin the daily chores including fetching water from the distant streams, were regarded as ineligible for marriage. They were seen as lazy and incapable of feeding their family after marriage.

Distance was also measured more or less in the same manner. What mattered to people for instance, was not how long it would take them to get to a particular place, but the event that would be taking place by the time they would be leaving and the time they came back. People going on a distant journey might agree to leave by the second cock crow and come back during the last wine-tapping of the day: Nwoga (1984), has suggested that people resorted to such measures because there was no clock. But it could also be argued that the Igbo society is an achievement orientated society, and therefore thought it wise to measure time by what people accomplished within a specific period of time. This is worth considering given that the present day Igbo, with the exception of the minority educated elite, still gauge time in the same way as their ancestors in the old society. It is worthy of note that even in the gauging of time, only men's events were used to measure time.

## Igbo Concept of Birth: Its Implications for Women

The birth of a child has always been the happiest occasion in every family. Children are adored and regarded as a blessing, an invaluable asset. Speaking about the Igbo love of children, Lugard has this to say: (Leith-ioss 1939)

*“A ruling characteristic of men and women alike is their great desire for children and their affection for them - which no change in conditions can alter.” p. 6.*

It is important to note that among the Igbo it is strongly believed that a child does not belong to one person or family, but to the entire community. To enshrine this in the mind of every Igbo, including generations yet unborn, this song was devised:

‘Onuru ube nwa gba ososo eh eh  
Owuha otu onye new nwa eh-eh’

(Whoever hears the cry of a child should rush to his or her aid, a child does not belong to one person). Consequently, if a child is misbehaving, he or she can be corrected by any adult who is on the scene or who happens to pass by.

But in a strong patrilineal society gender does matter a great deal because in such a society girls are not really appreciated as much as boys. Among the Igbo, a woman who has only female offspring could be regarded as having no children at all. This gave rise to the Igbo proverb - ‘Ama na eshi eshi, ihe anamu bu nwanyi’ (Only girls are born in a lineage that is destined to be extinct). The husband could be under pressure particularly from his own relatives to marry another woman, in the hope that she would get male issues, who would continue the family tree. Because girls ultimately marry, leave their maternal homes, join their husbands and change their name, they are never fully regarded as part of their original family. The retention of family name and the continuity of the lineage system are the main stay of Igbo social structure.

This explains the ideology behind the immense appreciation of male offspring, and also why barren women or women with only girls undergo untold suffering. It must however be pointed out that Igbo parents, unlike their Indian counterparts, never kill their daughters. But the names children are given at birth leave no one in any doubt as to the gender people appreciate more. For instance, a boy could be named 'Eze' (king), 'Ozobia' (may another one come), 'Egwuatu' (fearlessness), 'Ike' (strength), etc. But the most popular names for girls include 'Uloaku (house of wealth) 'Adaku' (daughter of wealth), 'Igbeaku (box of wealth) 'Aku' (Wealth) etc. It is quite obvious that girls' names lay emphasis on one thing – wealth. This is a reminder of the bride wealth or dowry which their future husbands must pay when they come to marry them. Girls are seen as a source of wealth, whereas boys are seen as transcending all earthly materials – invaluable. The fact that men prefer male offspring puts women constantly under pressure, it also shows that female members of the society are second class citizens.

Among the Igbo the birth of three boys in succession is regarded as the very ultimate in child bearing, and the woman is rewarded with a big feast which involves among other things, the killing of a goat, metaphorically seen as killing a goat on the woman's hip, (Igbu egbu na ukwu). On the contrary, the birth of three or more girls in succession would be an occasion of sadness. In the traditional society when there were no hospitals, every birth took place in the home, usually at the back of the house. If it were a normal birth, the umbilical cord was tied to a young palm tree which thereafter belonged to the child; but in the case of a girl, ownership ceased when she got married. But if the birth was an abnormal one - in which case the child was born feet first, instead of head, it would be regarded as an evil child, and destroyed. During the teething phase, a child who cut the upper tooth or teeth first was also regarded as an evil child and sold as a slave. Igbo

children are circumcised - usually on the eighth day of birth. In the traditional society it was done by specially gifted women known in 'Nsu' village group as, 'Ndi Nka'. (See chapter 2, part a).

The Igbo have a strong belief in reincarnation, so within the first week of birth diviners are approached to ascertain the dead relative that has been born again. If it were someone who led a blameless life, perhaps a war hero, his great achievements would be recited to him from time to time, to inspire his present life. But if the contrary was the case, nothing of his previous life would be mentioned to him, so that it would not dog his future. Arguably, the worst tragedy that could befall a mother in the traditional society was the birth of twins, in short, multiple birth. Not only were the innocent little victims destroyed, the women who bore them underwent untold suffering. The practice was widespread, but among the Efiki of Calabar the punishment meted out to mothers of twins was far worse than perhaps anywhere else. As Talbot (1967) discovered:

*"The birth of twins was regarded as so great a misfortune that, in olden times, it was followed in many tribes by the death of both mother and babes; in others the former was allowed to live in the bush and even in some parts to take her property with her into exile, after making a sacrifice to Isong, the Earth, of a duck, goat and tortoise. The babe was, however, invariably placed in a large earthenware pot which was thrown into the thick bush."*  
p. 205.

This distressing practice was only stopped with the coming of Christianity, Slessor almost single-handedly fought for the abolition of twin murder, (Livingstone, 1915). It is however, a paradox given that the society which sanctioned the death of innocent babes, is the very society that holds death in utter abhorrence, and also has a unique concept of death.

## Igbo Concept of Death: Its Implications for Women

To the Igbo - especially in the olden days, death was a terrible calamity, which should not under any circumstance happen. People should live forever. Consequently whenever a man died, even if it were a very old man, his relatives must consult diviners and fortune-tellers to ascertain the cause of death. Prime suspects were his known enemies, although his relatives would not ignore the fact that he might have had secret enemies. Even in the present day Igbo society, death is still very much dreaded. This is reflected in the style of greeting among some Igbo communities especially those around 'Okigwe' including 'Nsu' village group. When one visits a household, one greets them in the following words: 'Unu anwuna', (may you never die). It is the morning greeting within households, villages, market places etc. The fear of death is also reflected in naming ceremonies as some boys are named Onwudiwe (death annoys), Onwubiko (death please), Onwuzuruike (death rest). But it is only boys that are given these names. Nigerian novelists both Igbo, and non Igbo, including Achebe (1964), Okigbo (1975), and Wole Soyinka (the 1986 Nobel prize winner for literature) often made use of death imagery.

The death of a rich man or a chief always resulted in expensive and elaborate burial rites, often involving human lives in the traditional society. Slaves were buried alive, to serve their master in the next life. Talbot (1967), noted that it was quite common among the Efik for chiefs to be buried with expensive household property and their slaves. In some cases the most beautiful or the best loved wife, was buried along with the slaves. Chiefs' burial chambers contained enormous wealth almost reminiscent of the Egyptians. It must however, be pointed out that belief in life after death was widespread in the olden days, which was the main reason behind the elaborate and expensive burial ceremonies. In cultures like Egypt, it led to indefinite preservation of corpses of the Pharaohs (Egyptian

mummies). However, among the Igbo, the untouchables were not buried, (Green 1964), they were thrown into the evil forest in order not to arouse the wrath of the ancestral spirits. The fact that women would be buried alive when a man died also shows that they simply live for men's pleasure only.

### Igbo Occupations

As already indicated, the Igbo are by nature an industrious people. In the pre-colonial days, they had various occupations including hunting, fishing, trading, pottery, craft, blacksmithing, wine tapping, farming etc. Blacksmithing and pottery were not widespread, since they could only be done by specially gifted people. 'Okigwe' for example, had clay that was very rich and unique, and not surprisingly the people, especially women made beautiful pots, bowls and all kinds of household utensils with incredible designs. People used to come from far and wide to 'Eke Okigwe' to buy pots and other household items made of clay. In 'Nsu' village group, the people of 'Agbaghara' village were highly gifted blacksmiths, (Ndi Okpu Uzu). They made cutlery but concentrated on farming and hunting implements, including machetes, hoes and guns. Hoes in particular, helped women in farming. In Afikpo, there was also a lineage that was famous for blacksmithing, (Ottenberg 1962). But with the advent of western influence notably the introduction of formal education, those enterprises began to decline and by the 1950s the blacksmiths of 'Abaghara' had completely given up their trade. Significantly, about the same time Ottenberg (1962), from his base at Afikpo reported that by 1952 the 'Afikpo' blacksmith lineage had stopped their business.

In the traditional Igbo society a boy usually joined his father's occupation, and inherited it after his death. Inheritance of trade or occupation and succession to the throne were (and still are) among the most serious reasons why men yearn for male children in

Igboland. In the olden days a girl stayed with her mother, helping in domestic chores, unlike her brother. She also followed her to the local markets again helping, but at the same time learning the art of selling, buying and above all bargaining. She was also gradually being prepared for marriage. But with the introduction of school education, boys started going to school and could no longer take up their fathers' occupation, thus putting continuity of family trade in jeopardy. This was one of the reasons for the gradual demise of the local skilled trades like blacksmithing.

### Hunting and Fishing

Although hunting was one of the favourite occupations for men in the traditional society, Igbo hunters never achieved the same recognition associated with their Yoruba counterparts. This might be due to the fact that in Yorubaland, (Ojo 1966), it was regarded as a noble profession because the hunters contributed enormously towards the development of Yorubaland. For instance, in the course of their wandering in the forests both far and near, they acted as self appointed guards, keeping watch on their borders, reporting any intrusion or build up of aggression, notably with regard to inter tribal wars. Through their job, Yoruba hunters acquired immense knowledge of plants and herbs, many of which were used to cure people's ailments. Ojo has claimed that their contribution did a lot to promote the work of the present day Yoruba medicine men, as well as herbalists. Besides, the first paths they used were later developed as roads. Ojo thinks that the remarkable achievement of early Yoruba hunters was largely due to the personal sacrifice of the hunters themselves, given the way they prepared for hunting.

Their preparation for example, included among other things, abstinence from sexual intercourse for a considerable length of time before the hunt, in order not to undermine the efficacy of their weapons. Women did not under any circumstance touch the weapons for



the same reason; such beliefs jeopardised women's status. Hunters had to undergo spiritual preparation also which included the use of magical potions, believed to reduce the speed of hunted animals, as well as attract them to the hunters. Hunting as a means of livelihood has considerably declined in all parts of Nigeria. In Igboland for example, the sight of men with scant clothing and dark bags hanging down their shoulders is now a rarity. Wild game is also rarely seen in the local markets. The decline in hunting can be traced to the advent of school education, because younger generations no longer consider hunting a worthwhile occupation. From Yorubaland, Ojo (1966), has also observed that as far as the present day Yoruba are concerned, hunting is of diminished importance. All over Nigeria hunting is an exclusively male occupation.

Among the Igbo, fishing has never been a widespread or serious occupation. But for some of their neighbours like those around the Niger Delta, notably the Ijaw, fishing has always been a very important occupation. It is true to say that like their Yoruba counterparts, fishing has never been regarded as an occupation in Igboland because traditionally the Yoruba and the Igbo took more to land than to water. In terms of school education, fishing, unlike farming has not supported it particularly with regard to female education.

#### Trading, Markets: Their Implications for Girls and Women

Trading has always been of crucial importance in the economic life of Nigeria. The role of markets in the sustenance of every Nigerian community is invaluable. In the traditional society for example, markets were indispensable, they served as a nerve centre for economic and social events and in some Igbo communities - as strong, reliable and efficient political administration centres, (Green 1964, Uchendu 1965, Ottenberg 1962). It was in the local markets that surplus farm produce was bartered for much needed items

such as salt from Uburu near Afikpo. The only money available was cowry, (Ezego). In most cases, trade by barter was practiced - a system whereby one item was exchanged for another. If for instance, a woman needed fish, she could offer cassava, cocoyam or vegetables etc. in exchange for fish. There was no fixed price for any item, so bargaining was the order of the day.

Apart from petty trading, markets were used for many important social events including initiation ceremonies, village festivities, meetings, celebrations particularly those rejoicing as a result of having survived the duration of their oath, usually one year. The survival was a big occasion for the person who took the oath, his relatives and friends. Part of the celebration included dancing in the local market. That he did not die within the one year, meant that he was not guilty. Igbo village markets were also the places where young men could find their brides to be, because of the young girls who accompanied their mothers to the market. Markets provided people notably women, with much needed rest from too much work. Inevitably markets became places for gossip as well as dissemination of news. They also became the likely locations to find someone who would be difficult to find elsewhere. Drawing largely from her experience of many years of residence in Umueke village, Green (1964) has this to say about village markets in Igboland:

*“...whereas they farm of necessity, they trade not only of necessity but also for pleasure. Their markets are one of the main features in their lives. They provide a meeting point for the discussion of common business and for the dissemination of news; they are a social event where the spice of gossip, the recreation of dancing and the zest of a bargain relieve the almost continuous toil of hoeing, planting, weeding and harvesting throughout the year. Trading is the breath of life, particularly to the women among the Ibo, and the vigour with which bargaining and haggling are conducted is evidence of the prestige attaching to successful commercial enterprise.”* p. 37.

This shows how extremely important the market places were to the villagers.

It is interesting to note that it was through petty trading that the Igbo acquired the notion of day and week. The early natives arranged market days on four-day and eight-day basis of 'Eke', 'Orie', 'Afo' and 'Nkwo'. By this arrangement, every day, there was a local market somewhere. On the eighth day, most local markets might or might not be held, those that were held, must close after a few hours in order that villagers might attend the largest market - that is the village group market. One of the striking features of the markets was the seating arrangement. Women sat on geographical basis, that is women from a particular village sat along the path leading to their village. They sat in this way, so that in case of any eventuality, women could easily escape by running home. Given the uncertainties of the time, including raids, which characterised the traditional society, the above seating arrangement was a good idea.

#### Markets and Afikpo Igbo: Their Political and Social Implications

Special mention must be made regarding the market system of the Igbo community of Afikpo. They are on the eastern border of Igboland and the non Igbo speaking Efik of Calabar, separated by the Cross River. Afikpo markets particularly in the pre-colonial years were no ordinary markets. They were not only important economic and social centres, but also the very heart of the political administration of the community. Simon and Phoebe Ottenberg (1962), for many years lived among the Igbo of Afikpo observing and in some cases participated in their ceremonies. They discovered that the markets were part of a vast network of markets large and small, found throughout southeastern Nigeria usually within 5-15 miles of one another.

Geographically, Afikpo lies on the transitional regional zone between the Savannah and tropical forest, the land is poor. Consequently the major root crops were yam, grown by men and cassava and cocoyam cultivated by women. As the land was not very fertile,

women could not farm effectively. Palm oil and palm kernels were never produced on a commercial scale. Understandably, in the villages located near the Cross River, many men became fishermen. But by and large the markets proved to be the centre of political activities in Afikpo. Eke market in particular assumed political status of unimaginable proportion - which was not only unique in Igboland, but also in the country as a whole, and possibly beyond. The market was arranged in shelters for various political and administrative purposes. As the soil was unfertile and agricultural produce low, there could not have been much in Afikpo markets in terms of farm produce. This might partly account for the use of the market for intense political activities.

Consequently, Afikpo people relied on outside trade for most items, including salt. It must be noted that unlike markets in other Igbo communities, young girls in Afikpo did not attend the local markets because of fear for their safety. Afikpo is a border town and in the traditional society border raids were frequent, and so the possibility of girls being carried off into captivity was not ignored. But with little or no farming owing to soil infertility, coupled with their inability to attend the local markets like their counterparts in other sections of Igboland, the Afikpo girls' life was an unenviable one. From a marital point of view they suffered immeasurably.

#### Afikpo Markets and the Aro

With the passage of time, markets became extremely important in the economic life of the Afikpo, and were within walking distance of all villagers. Understandably farming was not done every day, but on alternate days - 'Orie' and 'Nkwo'. Farming was forbidden on 'Eke' and 'Afo'. Before long the thriving Afikpo markets, particularly the Eke market attracted the attention of the Aro, a complex community made up of slave dealers and slaves who settled at Arochukwu, 40 miles from Afikpo. The Aro were notorious slave

dealers, and fortune seekers, (Onwuejeogwu 1987). They travelled everywhere with great ease, but they were ruthless and unscrupulous, particularly in their dealing with other people, Leith-Ross (1939). Onwuejeogwu has criticised what he called their machiavellian method of fortune seeking. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Aro had increased in population by absorbing both Igbo and non Igbo people. But between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, they began a movement during which they traded directly with the Europeans on the coast. From the heart of Igboland they carried out raids. They established slave settlements and markets along the routes. Arondizogu was one of the places founded in this way. Because of the constant raids, young girls became more or less prisoners in their homes.

By 1900 many Aro people were living in Afikpo, scattered about in the villages as commercial settlers. The fact that the Aro could travel with relative ease to any place, at a time of social unrest, hostilities and inter tribal wars mystified people. But this was attributed to their long juju, 'Chukwu', the most feared and dreaded deity in Igboland. By continuous manipulation of the deity the Aro struck terror into the minds of the people. As a result they were feared and respected wherever they went. In Eke market in Afikpo where they sold most of their vast goods, they were very much feared to the extent that if an Aro was involved in a dispute with a native, the dispute was settled there and then in favour of the Aro, even if he were the aggressor. Unfortunately, the female members of Afikpo community, (especially girls and young women), were more or less house bound. Abduction and raids were frequent. Inevitably, young girls became very dependent and could not even go to school.

The renowned Igbo anthropologist Professor Onwuejeogwu (1987), has argued that by manipulating the long juju and the para military system of the Abam, Edda and Ohaffia, and through marriage alliance, as well as paid agents, the Aro stirred up group conflicts,

became comprado capitalist political economists in Igbo culture, and ultimately plunged Igboland into its Dark Ages. In his 1987 Ahiagoku lecture Onwuejeogwu told his audience:

*“The Aro period was the Dark Age of Igbo speaking peoples who lost respect for human life. Ritual cannibalism and human sacrifice were rampant, and rules of abominations ‘nso ani’ were negated...”* p. 41.

That the Igbo could rise above such an unprecedented onslaught is indicative of their resilient attribute.

### Trading and Education

It must however be mentioned that although some aspects of the Afikpo trade left much to be desired, Ottenberg (1962) holds the view that trading made invaluable impact on the economic life of the community, and consequently, boosted social, political and above all educational progress, including the building of secondary boarding schools. In the Igbo speaking towns of Aba and Onitsha, trading did also have remarkable impact on early education. Trade was enhanced by transport facilities provided mainly by some ‘Nnewi’ men like Onyemelukwe and Ojukwu. Interestingly, as communities became increasingly aware of the futility of slave raids and inter tribal wars, they turned to education. Uchendu (1965) believes that the introduction of currency with regard to trading, led to the emergence in Igboland of the legendary Article Man who sold everything, including school children’s stationery, which helped many pupils.

### Farming

Farming has always been an important occupation in Nigeria and in Igboland in particular. Leith-Ross (1939), once described the Igbo as agricultural people and Jackson (1956), firmly believes that:

*“No matter what success attends efforts in other direction, agriculture is bound to remain the backbone of the Nigerian economy.”* p. 53.

There are two farming methods, crop rotation and shifting cultivation (see Chapter 3). Like their ancestors, contemporary Igbo are subsistence farmers and use the same implements, hoes and machetes. Ojo (1966), has also noted that nothing has changed in terms of the tools and techniques used by both the old and present day Yoruba societies. Land sustained the Igbo of the traditional society, today land is still indispensable to the Igbo. While explaining the importance of land tenure in Igbo land Uchendu (1965), has emphasised the fact that to the Igbo land is everything. Women plant maize, cocoyam, cassava, (the main staple food), as well as a wide variety of vegetables. Yam, regarded as the king of crops is planted by men. The main planting season is between late March to June. The period immediately after the planting, is known in Igboland as 'Unwu' (famine). It is the hardest time for women because with all the crops planted, they can hardly feed their families.

#### Farming, Harvest and School Education

Farming in Igboland is inextricably linked with school education. During harvest farmers sell a large quantity of their farm produce and the proceeds are used for the payment of school fees as indicated at the beginning of this chapter. In many families farming is the main source in terms of providing children's educational needs especially girls. Consequently, many women work tirelessly. Harvest is the only time of the year that people have a lot of food to eat and to sell. Achebe (1964) vividly illustrates the abundance of food at this time of the year, when a man failed to recognise his in-law at a festivity because they were hidden from each other's sight by a towering mound of pounded yam.

#### Igbo Civilization

Archaeology has contributed enormously with regard to the discovery of the achievements of the early Nigerians and of the Igbo in particular. For instance, it is now known that some of the places the early man settled in Nigeria included: Nok, Ife, as well

as Afikpo and Igboukwu, (Nok in northern Nigeria, Ife in the West, Afikpo and Igboukwu in Igboland). Before these discoveries, it was assumed that the Igbo in particular, (Leith-Ross, 1939) did not have any past. After many years in Nigeria, Leith-Ross indicated that as far as the Igbo are concerned, one, now and then, has a sense of older culture lying behind what now seems long forgotten by the Igbo people themselves. She emphasised the point that one cannot help wondering whether or not the Igbo had a former civilization that sank into a period of lethargy rather than of decadence. Although during Leith-Ross' long stay in Nigeria, particularly among the Igbo, there were no apparent proofs of an earlier civilization, she felt by intuition that there might have been:

*“With...no permanent buildings, proofs are hard to come by, yet it seems almost incredible that a race so virile, so active, so eager as the Ibo should never have risen above the exceedingly primitive conditions in which the white man found him.”* p. 55.

Archaeology was to prove her suspicions right, by uncovering the various stages of civilization with regard to the early man in Nigeria. Some of the phases included Early, Middle, and Late Stone Ages, as well as Iron and Bronze Ages etc. The Stone Age in Nigeria covered a vast period of time. In Ireland it lasted until 1,200 BC and Feeney has aptly described it as:

*“the vast period of time from the creation of the human race until the discovery of metals. During all that time, man used weapons and tools of stone.”* p. 9.

Nigerians of Stone Age, (especially late Stone Age) made magnificent progress including the discovery of agriculture, which was to prove crucial in the years that lay ahead, particularly in educational terms, notably female education, although, women were not necessarily seen as contributors towards the Igbo civilization.



## Igbo Education

The education of the Igbo, (traditional and contemporary), has been substantially dealt with in Chapter Two. However, since missionaries played a crucial role regarding formal education in Nigeria, they dominated the educational system for many years especially in the western and eastern parts of the country. Religious men and women were in charge of schools and colleges, and were credited with the maintenance of good discipline in the educational institutions in those days. Even teachers who behaved badly faced disciplinary measures which included sacking. A Catholic teacher in those days for instance, would not be a polygamist. In terms of salary teachers were poorly paid. But with the end of the Civil War in 1970, the State took over education. Religious education was no longer seen as an important subject in the curriculum. It is thought that there was more discipline in the mission era than in the present day. Each State is now to a large extent responsible for its own primary, secondary, tertiary and university institutions.

Fafunwa (1974), reckons that today, traditional, Islamic and western education exist side by side in Nigeria. But one thing that is common with the 3 systems, is the way women's education is perceived. There is no doubt that the whole vision of women's education is in keeping with that of the Victorian Age, (Burstyn, 1980) when:

*“The ideal woman was to be responsible for organising the household, bringing up the children, and providing tranquillity to which men returned as to a haven of peace from the turbulent world outside.”* p. 32.

In other word, as far as women are concerned home comes first, among their innumerable responsibilities, upbringing of children and making life as comfortable as possible for the men, are of crucial importance. This means that any pursuit, be it education, politics etc by a woman is irrelevant. The negative perception of women and their affairs, which include education reflects the way which the society regards women. It is important to bear this

fact in mind, after all there is nothing in the National education Policy, which is the same for all the States in Nigeria including Imo State, that implies that women and their interests should be relegated to the background.

#### Imo State (National) Policy on Secondary Education

The following national policy for secondary education justifies this claim. The national policy for secondary education in Nigeria - the broad aim of secondary education within our overall national objectives should be:

A Preparation for useful living within the society.

B Preparation for higher education. In specific terms the secondary school should:

B(i) Provide an increasing number of primary school pupils with the opportunity for education of a higher quality irrespective of sex or social, religious and ethnic background.

B(ii) Diversify its curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and roles possessed by or open to students after secondary course.

B(iii) Encourage students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology.

B(iv) Develop and protect Nigerian culture art and languages as well as the world cultural heritage.

B(v) Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour , and appreciate those values specified under our broad national aims, and live as good citizens.

B(vi) Foster Nigerian unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity

B(vii) Inspire its students with a desire for achievement and self improvement both at school and in later life.

It is quite clear in both the broad and in the specific objectives for secondary education, that there is nothing that should jeopardise girls and women's education and other interests anywhere in Nigeria. On the contrary, 'gender' is on the very top list of things that should not disqualify any citizen from receiving high quality education, see the first specific aim for secondary education.

### Igbo Political Institutions

Although the political institutions of the Igbo have been discussed in the preceding chapter it is worth mentioning that because the Igbo as a people lacked centralised authority they have been variously referred to as people with no political institutions, no chiefs or kings, lawless etc. Some feel that Igbo 'enwe Eze', (the Igbo have no king) is an apt description of the Igbo political situation. However, some Igbo scholars now say that such criticism is false and unfounded. Uchendu (1965), has for instance, argued that the Igbo world is based on the egalitarian principle, which ensures that no one person or group of persons acquires too much power, or control over the lives of others. He does concede that it is an obstacle towards the development of a strong centralised authority. Taiwo and Ojo (1968), have stressed that the absence of central government in Igboland does not mean lawlessness.

*"Unlike what happened among the Hausas, the Binis and the Yorubas, it was not common place among the Ibos to have a formal concentration of authority in a single individual. The Ibo system was based upon the family group by which each family chose its own recognised head who was expected to communicate frequently with the family's ancestors and he was accordingly given respect by members of the family." p. 9.*

The above system featured strongly in the traditional society, so did various other forms. Women played no political part. There were two unique political systems in Igboland in those days, namely, Presidential Monarchy and Village Republic (see Chapter 3).

### Peace and Order

In the traditional society the maintenance of peace and order was considered of paramount importance. If any offence was committed within the family, it was dealt with by the family head. Cases like theft and murder were handled by the Council of Village heads. Ostracism was one of the ways a person found guilty of theft could be disciplined. Murder was never taken lightly because it involved blood. It was an abomination. Life was regarded as sacred, the spilling of blood was an offence against 'ala' the god of earth. The penalty was banishment. The culprit had to languish in exile for at least seven years. This explains why Achebe's (1964), Okonwko fled to his mother's village. With the advent of colonial government, many changes took place with regard to the Igbo traditional political institutions.

These changes, including the introduction of Indirect Rule by Lugard and his amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria in 1914, have been discussed in Chapter 3. It should however be noted that some scholars have criticised the British colonial government for failing to appreciate the differences in the political systems of the North and the South. Taiwo and Ojo (1968), have, for instance, argued that Indirect Rule flourished in the North because Lugard was fortunate, in the sense that the Emirs were in total control of the Emirates - with among other things, a well developed system of direct taxation. They emphasised the fact that:

*"Since the British officials could not find a prototype of the Northern System, they came to the wrong conclusion that the Ibos had no system of government, having failed to recognise the democratic clannish administration of the Ibos." p. 16.*

Today the political system in Nigeria is reminiscent of the western-type. It must however be noted that local governments and Chiefs play an indispensable role in the maintenance of law and order, because they live among the people and know a great deal in terms of what is happening in the villages. But all the orders come from men, women still remain in the background. They have no voice.

### Igbo Women and Political Office

It is worth noting that neither in the traditional society nor in the contemporary one did Igbo women hold high political offices. On a national level the situation is the same, except for Queen Amina, (Ganny 1990), of Zaria in northern Nigeria, during her reign in the olden days, her kingdom expanded and she wielded a lot of power and influence, (see Chapter 2, p70). In the traditional Igbo society women were not admitted to the Village Assembly. During her lengthy stay in Nigeria, notably in Igboland, Green (1964), noticed that women talked far less than men, and never joined men in meetings. Only men frequently met and talked for long hours. Green attributed this to the fact that women did not have time, they always had a lot of work to do.

But what Green failed to understand was that it was partly a cultural issue (see Chapter 1), the Igbo society is a male dominated society, men take decisions on all issues even though they affect the lives of women. Some see it as a legacy left by the British colonial administration, for in all their years in Nigeria, no woman held any high political office. For example, only men were governors and governor generals. Nigerian women accused the British officials of sex discrimination in farming, because only men were taught the right methods of farming, encouraged and given seeds to plant. Since Nigerian Independence, no woman has been the president, and since the creation of States in 1967

no woman has been a state governor. It is therefore not surprising that in educational terms girls have not fared as well as boys.

### Igbo Social Institutions

#### Marriage

Of all the social institutions in Igboland, marriage is, without doubt, the most important. It can be justifiably said that to some extent marriage is seen as a debt that every girl owes to the society. The utmost wish of some parents is to live and see their daughters happily married. Uchendu (1965), has emphasised the fact that among the Igbo, marriage is a very important institution and that it could be a long-drawn out affair. He has also identified the four stages of marriage in Igboland:

1. Ascertaining the girl's consent.
2. Working through a middle man.
3. Testing the character of the bride to be.
4. Paying the bride wealth or dowry.

Coincidentally, in the course of her study of the Ga community in Ghana, Azu (1974), has revealed that Ga marriage also goes through four stages; but amazingly the first phase amounts almost to physical confrontation. For example, once a man has spotted the girl he wants to marry, he then waylays her, and this is the way they meet for the very first time. Conversation follows in the course of which the girl is presented with a gift, which she in turn gives to her mother.

#### Chastity

Chastity before marriage is a crucial issue among the Igbo, particularly in the old Igbo society, given that it could make or break a marriage. Custom and tradition require a girl to be in a state of chastity before she marries, but there are no pre-marital conditions

for men. Chesaina (1987), has emphasised the fact that the Igbo of Nigeria are particularly strict on the issue of women's chastity before marriage, and has explained that during the last stages of marriage negotiations - quite apart from the bride price paid to the father, the mother of the bride is given a token as an acknowledgement of the daughter's chastity; an honourable recognition that the mother has brought up her daughter in an upright manner. Chesaina has however claimed that if the girl is found not to be a virgin on her bridal night, both she and her parents can expect swift punishment. For example:

1. The token given to the girl's mother is demanded back.
2. The girl is sent back to her parents in shame.
3. Chesaina reckons that the most humiliating is the gift which the girl must present to her parents on arrival home - which is a sheet with a big hole cut in the middle, a symbol of unchastity.

It should however be noted that Christianity has had profound impact on the institution of marriage in Igboland in that virginity is no longer seen as indispensable in marital terms. But among the moslems of northern Nigeria girls' chastity is so important that it can even affect their school education, (Csapo, 1981).

In the traditional Igbo society, marriage was relatively simple. Bride wealth or dowry could be paid with domestic animals. The man could also work for his future parents-in-law, helping them with farm work. Within the house, he could help the girl's father in building or repairing his thatched house. The man endeavours to please his future parents-in-law, so that he can marry their daughter. But among the Lele of Congo, (Zaire) Douglas (1963), has noticed that it is women who struggle to get the men to marry them. This is because in the Lele community, the size of the village matters a lot, and so every

woman recognised the need to attract young men so as to maintain the size of the village and the balance of the generations.

### Fattening House (Mgbede)

Because 'Mgbede' was discussed in detail in part A of chapter 2, no attempt would be made to repeat the same information. It is however worth noting that among the Igbo, the fattening began soon after the girl's engagement. It lasted from three months to three years or in some cases more, where for example, the would-be husband was willing to contribute towards the costs 'Mgbede' lasted much longer. With the 'Ibibio', (the closest neighbours of the Igbo in the south-east), the fattening of the girl (Talbot 1967), started after her first menstruation. Ceremonies like 'Mgbede' show that the society attached (and still attaches) a lot of importance to the appearance of girls and women. But the male members of the society must be accepted as they are.

### Child Marriage

In the olden days, child marriage was rampant in Igboland and elsewhere in Nigeria. Leith-Ross (1939), spent a lot of time at Nneato, near Owerri in the colonial era, and witnessed many child marriages. In some cases, the age of the girl left much to be desired as is evident in her report:

*"A girl, while she is still at her mother's breast, can be affianced, that is to say, her parents can begin to receive payments of her dowry, ...As she gets older, she goes to and fro between her home and her fiancé's compound, still helping her mother but at the same time getting used to her future husband's ways and the fashion of his house and of her future mother-in-law." p. 96-97.*

It is obvious that the girls were not allowed to grow up and make their own choice. Child marriage was widespread in those days because from the non Igbo speaking neighbours of the Igbo, the Ibibio, Talbot (1967), noticed that the girls were betrothed between the ages of 2 and 6. This obviously ruled out completely the girl's educational opportunity.



Unquestionably, child marriage not only denies girls access to education but also condemns them to a lifetime of dependence. They could not even think or reason for themselves. And because the men the little girls married were often much older, they ended up being dictators and not husbands. The girls lived in perpetual fear of them, and being so young they felt utterly and absolutely helpless. But formal education allows girls time to grow and mature physically, mentally and emotionally.

#### Secret Societies and Women's Vulnerability

Before the advent of the British, it was fashionable in Igboland to join secret societies. These societies excluded women. Their roles ranged from economic to political, in some cases, they wielded a lot of influence and controlled commerce. Onwuejeogwu (1987), for instance, has revealed that Ngwa civilization was characterised by the development of commerce directed through the agency of a secret society, known as 'Okonko'. Besides, in their study of secret societies in Nigeria, Taiwo and Ojo (1968), found that the Igbo communities of Ngwa and Umuahia absorbed some aspects of the culture of their non Igbo speaking neighbours, notably the Ibibio. They claim that the secret societies associated with Ngwa and Umuahia include Okonko, Akang, Ekpo and Ekpe. The Ekpo and the Okonko were later adopted by Igbo communities living further north of Umuahia including Nsu. In these areas the role of the Ekpo and the Okonko was mainly to entertain people in times of festivity and as such did not have any commercial or political validity.

The fact that Ekpe originated from Ibibio has been confirmed by Talbot (1967). In the course of his detailed study of the magic, the beliefs and customs of the Ibibio tribe, Talbot observed that the Ekpe was the most terrible of all the Ibibio secret societies. He also noted that membership was exclusive to the freeborn, in other words, outcasts were

not allowed to become members. Membership was not extended to women. Talbot claimed that members of the Ekpe indulged in criminal activities like hiding in the bushes, to waylay and kill those that happened to pass by. In addition, by the law of the land, women should under no circumstance witness the initiation rites, under pain of death. From Yorubaland, Taiwo and Ojo (1968), have discovered that cults such as the Ogboni, Oro and Egungun feature prominently in the political system of the Yoruba. The secret societies differed in various ways, notably in the roles they performed, but one thing that was common to all of them, was their exclusion of women. Unlike their Ibibio and Efik counterparts, Igbo women did not have their own secret societies, (see Chapter 3). The exclusion of women from the secret societies left them weak and vulnerable in a male dominated society.

### Title Taking

To take a title was the ultimate wish of men in the pre-colonial Igbo society. Among the most coveted were, 'Ozo' and 'Ezeji'. The latter, 'Ezeji', (king of yam) was the crowning glory of every illustrious farmer (see chapter 2, part a). But for a man to take the title, he must first satisfy the main condition which was amassing a stipulated number of yams (between 2,400 and 3,200). Men who had taken the title, 'Ozo', featured prominently in political matters, especially in those few Igbo communities where the monarchical system was popular, like Onitsha and Agbor. The 'Ozo' title was not open to all men in Igboland. It was only the prerogative of the free-born. In the traditional society the caste system was very much in evidence. The outcasts or the untouchables, (the 'Osu' and the 'Ume'), were not freeborn, but born under bondage, and so were not eligible in terms of title taking. The 'Ezeji' title took place against the background of very hard work

by women. They had to work in the farm under very difficult conditions, at times with little or no food.

### The Caste System

As already indicated, (see Chapter 2), in Igboland, one is either born free or in bondage. For the latter life could be hell on earth. In the traditional society for example, outcasts were completely ostracised by the rest of the society. They were despised, ignored and regarded as the dregs of the society, Achebe (1964). They could not go to the streams, market places or indeed anywhere at the same time as the free-born. They were not allowed to shave or cut their hair. They led a very miserable life, and underwent untold suffering. Green (1964) has spoken against the caste system, arguing that the society's treatment of the 'Osu' was unfair, given that they were once free-born before they were sacrificed to wrathful gods in order to pacify them.

But the fact is, once the sacrifice has been made, those 'Osu' and their descendants after them, remain 'Osu'. Marriage between the 'Osu' and the free-born was (and still is) forbidden. This has caused incalculable misery and heartbreak, because in some cases the girl and the man may be very much in love, the girl may even already be expecting a baby, and so both of them will want to wed quickly. But the sad reality is - at whatever stage the truth is discovered, the relationship ceases to exist. The one who refuses will expect no mercy from his or her relatives, who could among other things, disown or ostracise the individual. Because people tend to see it not as a religious but a social issue, it will be difficult to abolish. As in India the caste system is very deeply entrenched. How the 'Osu' children particularly girls suffered in educational terms was highlighted in chapter 3.

## The Age-Grade

Without doubt, the Age-grade is one of the oldest institutions in Igboland. In some communities like Nsu village group an age-grade includes all males born within a span of three years. But the age-grade system differs enormously from place to place, especially in terms of role and constitution. In several parts of Imo State for example, including Nsu, the age-grade system is a strong force particularly in terms of community work. In the early years of Christianity and formal education, work was shared according to age-sets and it helped a lot in the building of schools, churches and roads as already indicated. Members of every age-set also look after their own interests. They hold meetings from time to time. Those who live in urban areas, meet on a regular basis and are in touch with their counterparts in the villages. They pay levies securely kept for use in times of need, like supporting a member who is getting married, or is bereaved. A member who commits an offence can be disciplined by his age-set. No member likes to be ostracised by his own set. Women do not feature in the age-grade system. The exclusion leaves them isolated.

In Umueke village where Green (1964), was based, she discovered that the age-grade system made no contribution towards communal work. Each set was primarily concerned with the interests of its members. She also noticed that Umueke age-grade lacked political motivation, and as such did not participate even in the running of village affairs as in East Africa or some parts of Igboland. Green came to the conclusion that Umueke age-sets were largely social, and convivial, in their activities, and concerned with the interests of their members. She emphasised the fact that it is in the bond of common interest rather than in any specific public activity that the significance of the age group would appear to consist. Green did however observe that Umueke age-grade system acted as a balancing as well as a binding force within the village community. She realised that in

times of hostility or rivalry between the extended families, during which kinship sentiments could act as a disruptive, centrifugal force, of no mean strength - dividing the village into rival factions, members of age sets remain unaffected; because the age-grade system transcends family, extended family, village divisions and rivalry. In this way the age-grade system serves not only as a counter-balance but also as a binding force in village life.

The inability of Umueke age grade sets to undertake communal work and responsibility might be the reason why even as late as 1935 the village did not have a school. Since villages had to build mission schools and living quarters for teachers mainly through communal effort, it is obvious that a village that did not work hard could not get any school. This could explain why Umueke women appealed to Green for help so that they would have a school.

#### Afikpo Age-grade System

The age-grade system of Afikpo, deserves special reference, because of its extraordinary attributes. Of all the age-grade systems of Igboland, Ottenberg (1962), found that of Afikpo the most unique. In the traditional society, the various age-grades were a powerful political force, particularly in the running of village affairs. There were three age-grades, each consisting of six age sets. The first age-grade known as the Senior Grade (Oni eka ro), was made up of village elders. Their role was closely connected with rituals. The second age-grade the 'Ekpe Uke Esa', formed the major legislative and judicial bodies of the village group. They met quite often - on every Eke market day.

The Eke market was partitioned into shelters for the age-grades. The 'Ekpe Uke Esa' passed laws concerning Afikpo customs. They tried cases brought to them for settlement. They were the highest circular court in Afikpo, occasionally meeting other age-grades to discuss important issues. The third age-grade the 'Ekpe Uke Isi', were mostly

middle aged men. They played the role of the police in Afikpo. They reported disputes to the 'Ekpe Uke Esa' and stopped fights and other disturbances. In this way, the age-grades of Afikpo played an invaluable role in the economic, social and political life of Afikpo. The result was a tranquil, well ordered and enviably organised Igbo community. But women played no part in it.

It is interesting to note that among the Yoruba, (Taiwo and Ojo 1968), the age-grade system helped to uphold moral issues. It also aided the process of preparing young men for work or public duties, including road construction, market cleaning, road maintenance etc. Undoubtedly the age-grade system has always been associated with many positive things in Nigeria. The role of age-grade members in Igboland in particular, in terms of sustaining formal education by free communal labour is praise worthy. They built schools and living quarters for the pioneer missionaries, made footpaths as there were no roads and eventually helped in the construction of roads. Without such enormous personal sacrifice on the part of the age-grade members, the history of education in Nigeria today might have been different, and the situation of girls and women would have been obviously far worse.

#### Initiation Rites: and Women's Exclusion

The age-grade membership is often preceded by initiation; the ceremonies are elaborate as in Nsu. It takes place every three years, the initiates are usually in their early twenties. The ceremony known as 'Iwa Akwa' (Wearing Cloth), is very expensive (see chapter 2, part a). The initiation rites are also known as the rites of passage, because at the end of it all, the initiated are supposed to have passed from boyhood to manhood. The ceremony entitles them to certain privileges, for instance since they have become men, they are free to do all the things that men do in Igboland, including marriage, and speaking in a

gathering or addressing a Council of Village elders. It also carries with it heavy responsibility which among other things includes the payment of regular levies, whatever the person's economic situation. In the days of inter tribal wars they went to war, and some paid the supreme sacrifice.

In some communities like Zaria and Plateau in northern Nigeria, Stenning (1955), has noted that initiation ceremonies - especially in the pre-colonial society, were elaborate, cruel and at times ended in death. The initiation rites known as 'woroku' involved much younger initiates, 9 - 11 year olds and lasted for 5 days. The initiation rites involved blindfolding the boys for some part of the ceremony. The first thing they were expected to do once they got home, was to beat up all the girls to show that they were no longer boys but men. They should also no longer sit beside or converse with women or girls. Revealing the initiation secrets was an offence punishable by death. A boy found guilty of this was taken to his place of execution by his father with ashes all over his head. The boy was then impaled on a large stake. Meanwhile his age mates sang in order to drown the boy's screams, later on women and girls were told that the gods had swallowed him. Girls do not take part in initiation rites.

It is important to note that the initiation rites and the age-grade system of the Igbo communities of Abam, Edda, Ohaffia and Ariba involved para-military activities. This was why the Aro used to hire them to promote their slave trade, since they could very easily instigate fights, create confusion and in the stampede, people would be captured, carried away and ultimately sold as slaves, young girls in particular suffered enormously. Because Abam, Ohaffia, Edda and Ariba are matrilineal in structure, Onwuejeogwu, has called for a thorough and detailed study to find out why in a strong patrilineal society like Igboland, a few communities could still remain matrilineal. He said that the importance of

such a study could not be over emphasised, as it could be that the communities in question, migrated to their present place of abode from a place that was matrilineal in structure.

It could be justifiably summed up that the above account is the history of a civilization that stretches back thousands of years. It shows a fairly stable society, though punctuated in the traditional era by inter tribal wars and slave raids. It also shows that the Igbo - although while welcoming change, do not embrace change, just for the sake of it. Consequently, some of their institutions and beliefs remain more or less intact. For instance, they still consult diviners to ascertain the cause of someone's death, or in the case of birth, to find out which dead relative has been born again - which shows that they still believe in ancestral spirits. Some of their most celebrated institutions include marriage and the age-grade system. To the Igbo, marriage is indispensable, Reverend Sister Mary Adimonye (1964) has emphasised the fact that in Igboland, marriage is seen as a sacred calling. She has also highlighted the unique joy that the birth of a child brings to the family - because family life is the mainstay of Igbo traditional life.

In sum, from the history of Igbo people one gets the impression that there is something inherent in the social structure, as well as in the traditional ethos that tends to militate against girls and women. Taking for example the home which is the mainstay of every society, it is obvious that the way women are treated leaves much to be desired. The rigid division of labour for instance, reflects inflexibility in domestic chores, which leaves women working more or less round the clock. As already pointed out, this issue was highlighted by Dorothy (1985), during the annual conference of NCWS at the State capital, Owerri, (See p236). It would also be recalled that many years earlier, Ottenberg (1962), and Green (1964), who lived in different locations in Igboland observed that generally, women worked harder than men, (see p235).



Even the farming system does reveal that women work very hard for the sustenance of their family. In spite of this, the pride of all the farm produce, namely the yam, belongs to men. In a bid to feed their family women also do petty trading in addition to farming. In some cases they go to the local markets straight from the farms. In the traditional days, women relied heavily on trade by barter as money was not available. The trading system of that time was such that local markets were mostly attended by women, while the more lucrative markets, the distant ones, were dominated by men. Ironically some of the distant markets attended by women were those located on or near the Cross River, because men felt unsafe. They feared capture by the non Igbo speaking Ibibio people.

The social structure of the village leaves no doubt regarding the strong patrilineal nature of the Igbo society. As already noted, at the very heart of the village, is the lineage system headed exclusively by men. Decisions within the family are always taken by the senior male members. If the matter concerns the entire compound the oldest men usually deal with it. This explains why the agnatic system so vividly explained by Uchendu (1965), operates against women, to the extent that one's rights to family name, social status and inheritance can only be attained through the lineage of one's father. The maternal lineage is treated as if it does not exist, (see p241). This also explains to some extent why women do not own property in their parental home. All property, including land, is shared among male issues.

In religious terms, women do not seem to have fared any better. All the supreme deities are men, and so are their priests and shrine attendants. The ancestral gods and even the personal gods are all males. Only men also are eligible to offer sacrifices to the gods. As already pointed out - in the villages only men can be 'Ofo' holders. Among the Christian members of the Igbo, the ordination of women as priests is viewed with some

degree of scepticism and as yet there are no women priests. But some women unquestionably will like to see female priests, bishops or even pope.

The status of women in Igboland and nationwide is not enhanced either by the very fact that some people believe in superstition. On the contrary - some superstitious beliefs tend to humiliate women, a fact clearly portrayed in the system of hunting already discussed. They are excluded from the age-grade system, secret societies, men's meetings etc. The exclusion left them vulnerable in a male dominated society.

Paradoxically, the birth of a child which is the happiest event in a woman's life in Igboland and indeed throughout the country, can in some cases turn out to be a very sad experience for her, as aforementioned. Giving birth to girls only for example, can keep a woman miserable throughout life, because of the way female offspring are regarded in the society. In the traditional era multiple birth spelt doom for the woman and in some cases, led to her exile or banishment from the society. A barren woman is also a very miserable woman. She has to endure untold suffering and put up with insults notably from her husband's relatives. Women are expected to produce children within the first nine months to one year after marriage. Events such as the age-grade system and naming ceremony seem to point to the fact that girls and women are second class citizens.

Positive events or deeds within the society are attributed to men. Igbo civilization for example is strongly associated with men. The Ahiajoku Lecture, launched in 1979 by university dons, supported by Imo State government and the youth of the community, with a view to appreciating the glorious past of the Igbo - as well as finding out more about the people, their tradition and custom; has already shown a considerable degree of imbalance with regard to gender, as the lectures are male dominated.

From the educational point of view, women play an invaluable role in both the formal and informal education of children. In fact, the arduous process of rearing and upbringing of children is essentially seen as women's work. In some cases, apart from caring for and feeding the family, some women also sustain their children financially at school especially girls. The fact that in some homes, the father may only be interested in the education of boys should not be overlooked. In those circumstances, the burden falls on the women. In situations where husbands have stopped working - either due to ill health, retirement or redundancy, the entire financial responsibility is borne by their wives who have to struggle to train the children, at times, up to the university level. Even so, later on the men claim the credit of having well educated children.

The fact that women do not feature strongly in the institutions in the land, partly gave rise to the formulation of the hypothesis for this study. The judicial and political institutions for example, are not only male dominated, the top jobs have always been held by men, right from the colonial days. It is worth noting that since the creation of states in 1967, no woman has ever been a State Governor. No woman has also ever served in the capacity of president of Nigeria. This raises the question as to whether or not Nigerian women have leadership attributes. But since their counterparts in several parts of the world, including Britain and Pakistan, have demonstrated that women have got what it takes to rule a nation the case for Nigerian women in general, and Igboland in particular must be seen from the point of view that they have not been given the chance. Like any situation in life, unless one is given the opportunity, one's ability to perform a particular task or do a specific job may never be assessed or known. Igbo women are also denied access to secret societies as already discussed, and they cannot take the coveted titles in the land including the Ozo, which is closely associated with political institutions especially in

the traditional society. Not surprisingly, Green (1964), never spotted women in any of the men's gatherings throughout her lengthy stay in Igboland.

The existence of double standards with regard to some of the Igbo concepts is worth mentioning. Taking the age concept for example, the Igbo revere old age. Elderly people are accorded enormous respect. Respect for elders is one of the lessons which Nigerian children are taught in their homes very early in life. When, and wherever something is shared people pick up their share in a descending order of age, starting with the oldest person. In every gathering, the oldest man is given the honour of breaking the kolanut. But if the oldest person present is a woman, she cannot break the kolanut as long as there is a man or a boy in the gathering, however young the boy may be. This is not only a negation of the age concept, it does reflect double standard. For women, it is a humiliating experience. The fact that the famous Afikpo Age-grade system widely acclaimed for its unique political activities excluded women, reinforced the gravity of the situation.

The demands made on women with regard to social institutions like marriage, do also suggest that the society deliberately lays an intolerable yoke on women. For instance, the fattening process hailed to be the best way of preparing a girl for marriage can damage health, given that the girl has to be in a room for months and in some cases years. Staying in one place for a considerable length of time is physically and mentally unhealthy. Accumulation of fat is also not conducive to health. Girls are also expected to marry in a state of absolute chastity, notably in the traditional society but no one seemed to bother whether or not a man was chaste. Men never experienced the untold suffering undergone by women - like those sent back home to their parents, because their husbands claimed on their bridal nights that their chastity had already been violated.

Some girls were denied the dignity and the fundamental human right with regard to choice of husband, as already noted, by way of arranged marriage, as well as child marriage, (Leith-Ross 1939). In some cases greed played a major part in robbing girls of the opportunity to make their own choice of a life partner. For instance, the inordinate ambition of Aro men, with regard to wealth, led to frequent slave raids. As a result, Afikpo girls did not go to the local markets where their counterparts in other parts of Igboland often met their would-be husbands, because of fear of being captured by the Aro slave raiders. Not surprisingly, Ottenberg (1962), noted that Afikpo local markets were only attended by elderly women. It is worth noting that some of the most intriguing aspects of the social ethos include the fact that a woman must marry, depend on her husband all her life, and do all the domestic chores. It is therefore true to say that on the issue of marriage, both the traditional and the contemporary Nigerian societies resembled Victorian England, (Burstyn 1980), when marriage was a woman's profession and all the training given to her was designed to make her dependent throughout life. To worsen the matter for women - a woman without a husband was seen by the society as a failure.

Although in marriage, circumstances beyond her control could conspire and make a woman miserable throughout her married life, should she become a widow, (Leith-Ross 1939) her situation becomes even worse. In fact, in Igboland, it is generally believed that however bad a marriage may be, even if it means the couple quarrelling and fighting every day, it is a far better experience for the woman than that she should outlive her husband. The woman is treated as if she killed him regardless of the fact that the man might have died of natural causes including illness and old age. Among other things, the woman is made to drink the water with which her husband's corpse has been washed. In some cases, the husband's relatives would strip the woman of every bit of property - especially where

there are no male issues or where the children are too young to protect their mother. In certain places, the woman becomes the property of the husband's relatives, in the sense that she would automatically become the wife of one of her husband's brothers.

There is also reason to believe that under the caste system, female untouchables fare worse than their male counterparts. In the traditional society for example when untouchables were ostracised and completely shut out of the mainstream of the society, the women bore the brunt of the humiliation because they were more exposed, since they had to fetch water and firewood, go to the farm, the local markets, etc. whereas the men avoided going to some of these places.

The history of the Igbo people could be the history of any other society in the world, at least to some extent, considering that more or less in every society, women think that the society has failed them and feel they should struggle for recognition and equality with men. This fact is very well supported by the Literature Review of this study. It is therefore easy to see why the history of the Igbo inevitably led to:

- a. the propounding of a hypothesis
- b. the designing of a field work in order to put the hypothesis to the test
- c. a pilot study.

The above issues form the main theme for discussion in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE HYPOTHESIS, FIELD WORK DESIGN AND THE PILOT STUDY

In this study, hypothesis is regarded as crucially important. Interestingly Cohen and Manion (1981), hold the view that without hypothesis, historical research often becomes little more than an aimless gathering of facts. The same could be said of educational research, especially when one considers the fact that it is the hypothesis that gives the researcher a sense of direction and purpose. It is therefore noteworthy that the working hypothesis for this study is:

*the formal education of Nigerian girls and women over the years has - at best, not received the same attention as that of boys and men, and at worst has been deliberately neglected, (or both).*

#### The Bases For The Hypothesis

Two major factors influenced the propounding of the hypothesis, namely:

1. Overt factors.
2. Literature review.

#### The Overt Factors

It is worth noting that during the pilot interview, Nigerian women respondents expressed genuine concern regarding the fact that there are only few women in various Nigerian institutions particularly at the managerial level. Significantly Jackson (1956), who lived in Nigeria for many years, (especially in eastern Nigeria, which includes Imo State), and actually served for a long time in the then colonial government observed that:

*“the traditional life of Eastern Nigeria was ordered by men, and to this day women councillors and court members are almost unheard of. Government officers, whose dealings with the people are consequently confined to the men, find that community development work among the women brings them into contact with a forgotten section of the population.” p. 43.*

It should be noted that even in the present day Nigerian society a glance at the various State and national establishments and institutions including education, the civil service, the judiciary, politics, etc. reveals a one sided trend in employment in favour of men. They are not only dominated by men, the top jobs have always been held by men. For example, no woman has ever served the country in the capacity of head of state, head of the civil service, federal minister of education, attorney general etc. In educational institutions notably the universities scientific and technological courses are conspicuously dominated by male students, and lecturers are not surprisingly mostly men.

As aforementioned the judiciary, like other institutions, is male dominated. Consequently, the laws of the land which affect both men and women are made by men. Women are also excluded from the making of customary laws even at village level. The exclusion of women is further worsened by the fact that the local governments which are not merely the link between the people and the powers that be, but also represent the former at the highest levels, are run mostly by men. The conspicuous absence of women in high posts and positions of responsibility in the country even in the closing years of the twentieth century, is surely a phenomenon that is worth investigating.

In the light of the issues raised above one cannot help assuming that there might be something about the social status and the education of the female members of the Nigerian society that is not quite right. Significantly, Muckenhirn, (1966) has identified a strong link between social status and formal education and has argued that the status of women in society will determine at least to some degree, the kind of educational opportunities which will be provided for them. It is this uncertainty that has partly led to the formulation of the hypothesis - that either the formal education of Nigerian girls and women was not given the same attention as that of boys and men; or was deliberately overlooked or both.



## The Literature Review

The role of the literature in the propounding of the hypothesis for this study should never be ignored. Information about Nigerian girls and women by authors including Basden, (1966), Leith-Ross (1965), Green (1964), Simmons (1976) Csapo (1981), Akande (1987), etc. points to the fact that all is not well with regard to the female members of the Nigerian society - educationally, socially, economically, politically etc. It is important to note that the above writers include Nigerian citizens, and foreigners who have lived in Nigeria for many years.

Basden for instance, who spent a considerable length of time in Nigeria especially among the Igbo, made the following claims:

- a. Nigerian women have no social status.
- b. Husbands regard their wives as personal property and treat them accordingly.
- c. In some cases women are treated like domestic animals.

While studying about African women, especially the Igbo of Nigeria, Leith-Ross (1939), noted among other things, the tragedy of child marriage. During her lengthy stay in one of the villages in the heart of Igboland, Green (1964), became aware of the plight of the local women; and how they were excluded from various social events, meetings and gatherings by men.

Simmons (1976), and Csapo (1981), in their respective case studies, focused mainly on the Islamic communities in northern Nigeria, in the course of which several observations were made. Csapo for example, discovered that child marriage was widespread, and claimed that in some cases girls as young as five were involved. Both Simmons and Csapo indicated that school age girls served as errand girls for the women who were in seclusion, (purdah). According to Csapo, the young school age girls were the only link between the secluded moslem women and the outside world.

Akande (1987), stressed that there was a strong possibility that injustice might have been done to women's education in most of the educational systems of the world. Within the Nigerian context, he highlighted negative parental attitude towards girls' education.

Given the overt and the literature factors, it became expedient that a serious study should be undertaken with regard to the formal education of girls and women in Nigeria generally, and that of Imo State in particular.

### Testing the Hypothesis

#### (The Instruments)

Putting the hypothesis to the test by way of empirical study is a crucial aspect of this study, because it is the only realistic way of finding out whether or not there is something in the culture as well as in the traditional ethos that militates against the school education of girls and women in the Nigerian society. The main instruments of the investigation are interview schedules and questionnaires. With the first, invaluable first hand information can be obtained especially from those who make the laws of the land that affect people including girls and women. So apart from discovering any existing problems regarding female school education in Nigeria, the testing instruments can also play an invaluable role in terms of assessing the scale of the problems. This in turn will help in the subsequent events like recommendations.

Through appropriate questions, genuine responses could give a researcher an insight into sensitive issues including the way the society regards its female members. This is bound to have implications for their formal education. Questions will therefore play a crucial role in this study. It is worth noting that Calman (1984), explained the reliability as well as the importance of questions in research. A great admirer of the Greeks, Calman is convinced that the Greeks of the ancient world made invaluable contributions to the world in terms of knowledge through questions. This is evident in Calman's claim that the ancient Greeks

always wanted to know 'why' and 'how' things happened. He strongly argues that researchers follow the same philosophy based on good questions and good answers. Calman insists that people should continually question existing practices and take nothing for granted.

Significantly, questioning long-standing social practices and norms in Nigeria, (which might have affected the females adversely), is the main feature of the empirical study. It is important to note that McIntosh (1988), speaking during a conference in Scotland on the issues facing women teachers and girls in secondary education, urged schools to pursue policies which offer equal opportunity, gender notwithstanding, and to challenge those attitudes which maintain the status quo. From Africa, Obbo (1980), has indicated that East African women have called for "*traditions that break women's back*", to be ignored. It could therefore be justifiably assumed that questioning, (which also leads to challenging of norms and attitudes), can pave the way in terms of reappraisal and progress in educational research, and ultimately lead to expansion of the boundaries of knowledge which is essentially what research in education is all about.

### **THE FIELD WORK DESIGN**

The fieldwork will be carried out in Imo State, one of the two Igbo speaking states in Nigeria. It is worthy of note that when Nigeria was first partitioned into states in 1967 the Igbo had just one State, namely the East Central State. Later, it was split into two States, Imo and Anambra - mainly for administrative convenience. However the field work will be confined to Imo State, since the division was to facilitate administrative matters and thus quicken the pace of social, educational, political and economic progress, and not as a result of ethnic difference. In choosing the Igbo certain factors were duly considered. These include the unique Igbo attributes as well as social, religious and educational factors.

Socially, the Igbo community is egalitarian and classless in structure. The people are liberal minded and have a strong competitive spirit, (Anochie 1979). They are hospitable. It

is believed that this is partly due to the fact that the Igbo are great travellers and so would like to be treated well by other people wherever they go. But without doubt, one of the greatest assets of the Igbo is their ability to adapt in terms of new environment, new situations, any time, any place. It is this spirit of adaptability that enables them to migrate to other places and live in harmony with their hosts. Unquestionably, the ability to adapt to a new idea, environment or situation is an essential leadership attribute, so should an educational revolution become necessary Igbo women would find this unique attribute invaluable.

In religious terms, (Anochie 1979), the Igbo are the best equipped to initiate, direct and lead an educational revolution. In the first place, Igboland was not affected by the waves of expansionist movements from the North during which Islamic religion was firmly established in the northern part of Nigeria. Consequently, Koranic and not western education has always been popular in the North, (Fafunwa 1974).

Secondly, the Igbo are mostly Christians. The women in particular are strongly associated with the spread of Christianity and by implication - western education in Nigeria, but more especially in Igboland. This is because western education is inextricably linked with missionary evangelisation, Ajayi (1965), Fafunwa (1974). Anochie (1979), (a nun with the Congregation of Immaculate Heart Sisters), has pointed out that one of the most effective instruments of evangelisation was the introduction of schools. Anochie has set out in great detail, the indispensable role played by Igbo women with regard to the Church in Igboland. In the early years of Christianity in Nigeria, Igbo women did a lot to spread the faith among the Igbo. They were known as the guardians of morality throughout Igboland, and even beyond. Among other things women had to reflect the Christian way of life in their homes. They organised pre-marriage centres where they prepared young girls for marriage in the Christian way instead of the old pagan ways. They helped in providing accommodation for teachers. The Sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary, the first indigenous Religious Order in

Igboland, tried hard to spread Christianity and western education in Nigeria, notably in Igboland, through their numerous educational and vocational institutions. It is noteworthy that no other women in Nigeria, have been so strongly associated with the spreading and sustaining of Christianity and western education in Nigeria.

Educationally, (and logically), the investigation will be most effective if it is done among the Igbo, because they are the most representative of the three major ethnic groups. This is because the Yoruba in the west were the first recipients of western education in Nigeria. After Yorubaland the next section of the country where western education made rapid and remarkable impact on the life of the people, was Igboland. In the North, (Niles 1989), notably among the Hausa/Fulani, the process of imbibing western education, was painfully slow. The northerners were not eager to embrace alien culture. This was chiefly because Islamic education, was already deeply entrenched in the North long before the advent of western influence in Nigeria, (Fafunwa, 1974).

So from logical point of view, Igboland in the middle is ideally placed for the field work, given that both Yorubaland and the North would appear to represent extremes, both geographically as well as the chronological sequence in which western education was imbibed in Nigeria. This is important because if the investigation were to be carried out in the west, any emergent positive variables could be attributed to the fact that the Yoruba were the first to receive western education in Nigeria. Similarly, should the field work take place in the North, any arising negative variables could be put down to the fact that the northerners were the last of the main ethnic groups to accept western education in Nigeria.

### Educational Findings

The revelations made by Niles (1989), with regard to moslem women following her educational findings as recently as 1989, make the case for northern women particularly

difficult. In an extensive study about western education in the North, Niles discovered strong negative parental attitudes toward female education in northern Nigeria. She found that:

*“Educational Development has been extremely slow in Northern Nigeria. Islam, which is the dominant religion of the north, provides its own system of education through Koranic and Islamiyya schools...”* p. 13.

Niles has pointed out that in northern Nigeria, progress in the enrolment of females in schools has been extremely slow, although males tend to receive more education. She has argued that in spite of rapid changes in the sphere of education in post independent Nigeria and the attempt to create a unified system of education that is primarily Nigerian:

*“...there is a lingering fear, especially among the illiterate, that education would expose their children to alien Christian influences. Parents felt that Western-style education is “contrary to their faith and way of life...” It is believed that women, who are the embodiment of Islamic values and custodians of Islamic morality, should be guarded against the corruption of unsuitable schooling. Further, the Islamic injunction restraining the mingling of women with men has always been an important reason for parents, especially mothers, not wanting to send their daughters to school.”* p. 14.

Niles is of the opinion that because of the Hausa culture which defines a woman's role as primarily that of housewife, and the fact that many women are kept in seclusion (purdah) and young girls of 11 and 12 are given in marriage (child marriage), it is impossible for girls to remain in school up to 6 or 7 years. Parents fear that western education is against their religion and tradition and will make girls lazy, insolent, morally lax, and unsuitable as wives, unfit for marriage and motherhood. Nile's findings seem to confirm the claims made by both Simmons and Csapo that in northern Nigeria some young girls of school age are denied formal education, because they run errands for the secluded women. Csapo also highlighted the problem of child marriage. Significantly, Niles has revealed that a committee set up by the Kano State Government, (one of the Hausa states), in the 1970's, to review education, (Galadanci 1976), found the issue of female education problematic. Niles stressed that among the most contentious issues were girls' marriage, purdah and suspicion about schools. She believes that the problem is further compounded by the fact that girls are withdrawn

from school between the ages of 11 and 12, before puberty, (for fear of pregnancy), she also highlighted parental opposition to coeducation and their objection to girls being taught by male teachers. Male teachers teaching female students is a serious educational problem which Al-Hariri (1987) discovered in Saudi Arabia and warned that it has affected female education adversely (see Chapter 2).

Under the above circumstances, it is hard to imagine how Hausa women can be expected to support, let alone initiate or play a leading part in any educational reform, innovation or revolution which would obviously be about improving female school education in Nigeria at all levels and in every aspect.

However, in choosing Igboland, some of the unique natural attributes of the Igbo were also considered. But it should be noted that as far as these attributes are concerned, only those special qualities which are likely to be of crucial importance in the event of educational innovation or revolution, that will be briefly discussed. To start with, people, (including the British colonial administrators), hold the view that the Igbo are strange. There is little doubt that in life someone or something that looks unusual, or has some awe about them tends to attract more attention and respect than when they look ordinary. Not surprisingly, Ottenberg (1971), in the course of a detailed study about the Igbo, especially in terms of leadership and authority, identified strangeness as an essential leadership quality. Stressing other Igbo qualities, Ottenberg has this to say:

*“The Igbo, or Ibo are one of the most unusual peoples in Africa. They are known for their high achievement skills, their tendency to migrate from their home areas, and the major role that they played in the formation of Biafra and in the civil war in Nigeria. They are both hated and admired by other Africans.”* p. xi.

It is also widely believed that the ability of the Igbo to take chances and to be resilient and unwavering in the face of danger, even in situations where other people may capitulate was put to the test by the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70 - a fact more vividly and poignantly

expressed by the renowned Igbo scholar, Professor Nwoga in his 1984 'Ahiajoku' lecture when he told his audience that:

*"During the Nigerian Civil War, one popular stereotype was embedded in the story which said that if three Nigerians, one Igbo, one Hausa, the other Yoruba found themselves under a ripe coconut, the Hausa would say, "if Allah sends down this coconut, I will eat it," the Yoruba would say, "I will wait here, and whoever brings down the coconut, I will share it with him," whereas the Igbo man would look for some implement for bringing down the coconut." p. 2-3.*

The Igbo attitude of knowing what one wants and going unhesitatingly for it, which was partly the theme of Nwoga's lecture, was also highlighted by a British colonial administrator, a woman of incredible foresight, Leith-Ross (1939). In comparing the Igbo with the other ethnic groups within the country, she described the Igbo as:

*"the most go-ahead." p. 19.*

Obviously, indecision is a liability and people who find it difficult to make up their minds are hardly associated with great achievements. Historically, for example, people involved in movements, revolutions, or wars, both political and religious were not passive and reluctant, or daydreamers, but people of action, like Martin Luther.

Interestingly, the ability to adapt was one of the attributes emphasised by Leith-Ross when her critics demanded to know why she should write a book about the Igbo instead of any other section of Nigeria. In her defence she stressed:

*"Because in Nigeria, the most populous and potentially the most important of our Crown Colonies, the Ibo speaking people are the most numerous, the most adaptable, the most go-ahead, the most virile...." p. 19.*

Closely related to adaptability is - change, Igbo people do not resist change. In fact Jackson (1956), thinks that the Igbo like change. Drawing from experience of many years of residence in Nigeria during which time he worked very closely with Igbo people Jackson is of the opinion that:

*"...the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria rejects conservatism. He wants the higher standard of living, the services, the education that western ways can bring to him. Unrest in Eastern Nigeria is not, as Mau Mau in Kenya..., a desire to*



*return to an idealized version of the old ways, but a desire to press on even faster towards new ways...*" p. 31.

Keeping indefinitely to old methods and concepts, inability to reappraise them with the passage of time, or to explore new ones can only lead to academic disaster. People who are reluctant to change or who resist new ways or ideas, should not be connected with educational programmes or systems, given that such people may not support let alone initiate educational reforms or innovation. It is worthy of note that Jackson has argued that although the Igbo man does not necessarily want to do away with all his ancestors' customs, he is ever ready to discard those that stand between him and his aspirations. This does highlight the fact that the Igbo do not actually rush headlong or haphazardly to change. They think carefully before embracing change in order to retain the old ways or ideas that are really good and can always withstand the test of time.

#### The Special Attributes of Igbo Women

Having discussed some of the unique qualities that typify the Igbo as a people, it is important at this stage to consider some of those that apply specifically to Igbo women. These can be most vividly seen through the eyes of Lord Frederick Lugard, a man who could be justifiably called the Father of present day Nigeria. He was the chief British colonial officer in Nigeria during the colonial era. He subsequently became the first Governor General of a united Nigeria, having amalgamated the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914. His knowledge of Nigeria and its people is unquestionable, (Leith Ross 1939). Speaking therefore authoritatively about Igbo women Lugard had this to say:

*"Here environment has had its effect, but the essential characteristics of Ibo womanhood are little changed, she is 'ambitious, courageous, self-reliant, hard working and independent.' Her interests are centred in love of her yam field coupled with a passion for trading and the desire to grow rich... She claims full equality with the opposite sex, and would seem indeed to be the dominant partner..."* p. 6.

Ambition, courage, self-reliance, hard work and independence are essential leadership qualities, in the event of educational reform or innovation they could be crucial. Women who possess such qualities are likely to fare better than their counterparts who lack them.

Bearing in mind that if and when educational reform, innovation or revolution becomes expedient in Nigeria, it is not to the girls, but to the women that people will look up to for leadership, (as happened in Cuba and Nicaragua, McCall 1987), it is therefore important to consider the opinion of Leith-Ross (1939), a woman very well qualified to speak about the Igbo people. She lived in Nigeria for many years during which time she developed a special bond with Nigerian women. For example, she was a student of Fulani language, which brought her into very close contact with the moslem women in northern Nigeria. She also featured strongly in the education department in the south, notably Lagos, (in the west). She lived in several places in the East among the Igbo as well, including Nueato. During that time she endeared herself to the women. Her long stay in Nigeria and in particular her special friendship and relationship with the female members of the Nigerian society enabled her to justifiably claim that Nigeria is part of her life. Speaking therefore authoritatively about Nigerian women, she has no doubt that:

*“The Ibo women in particular, by their number, their industry, their ambitions, their independence, are bound to play a leading part in the development of their country. Their co-operation will be as valuable as their enmity would be disastrous. The women who could organize in a few days a movement as original and as formidable as the Aba Riots, known to them as ‘The Women’s War’, which necessitated the calling in of military forces before order could be restored, and the subsequent appointment of a Commission of Inquiry, cannot be disregarded in future plans and policies.”*  
p. 19-20.

During his study of people in northern Nigeria especially in terms of men-women relationship, Barkow (19886), made certain findings which provide invaluable insight into the status of northern women that will help in determining whether they should or can initiate

and sustain educational reform, innovation, or revolution. Barkow noted carefully what the men think and say about their women:

*“...women are inferior creatures say the men... A man who takes a woman’s advice is a fool. Women cannot be trusted, they have no sense. Therefore, a woman should always be respectful towards a man. She must obey her father or elder brother. She must greet her husband gracefully in the morning by kneeling down to him. If he wants food, it must be brought...”* p. 319.

It is clear that Barkow did not discern in the Hausa women those qualities which both Lugard and Leith-Ross were quick to spot in Igbo women, which include; ambition, self-reliance, courage, industry and independence. In a place where women’s advice is not heeded but rather treated with utter disregard, and women are considered untrustworthy and senseless - it is hard to see how women, in that particular community, can think of playing a leading role in educational innovation, reform or revolution, should it become necessary. It would be attempting the impossible.

Barkow did also observe that:

*“A married woman must always be in seclusion, leaving the compound only with her husband’s permission. When she does venture out her head and shoulders must be draped with a cloth, her eyes modestly downcast. This is how a woman must act...”* p. 319.

It would be recalled that both Csapo (1981), and Simmons (1976), during their research in northern Nigeria found that women were required to be in seclusion (purdah) (See Chapter 1). Because of their situation Csapo and Simmons claim that the women make use of young girls of school age (errand girls), who are their only communication with the outside world. It is inconceivable that such women can ever participate, in the event of an educational revolution in Nigeria, let alone initiating it or playing a leading role.

From Muckenhirn (1966), a great deal can be learnt regarding Yoruba women. She lived in western Nigeria among the Yoruba for a long time during which she undertook an important study about the people, particularly girls and women. She even went on to do a research regarding the secondary education of girls in western Nigeria. Living among the

people afforded her the unique opportunity of finding out Yoruba beliefs, customs and general way of life. She discovered for instance, that although Yoruba women might wield some influence in their homes - attitudes and practices still exist within the Yoruba community which point to the female as the inferior sex.

Muckenhirn has explained that polygamy in parts of western Nigeria does suggest that women are held in low esteem. She observed that the children of the discarded wives are kept by their father. She holds the view that denying the women access to their children shows that women's feelings are disregarded, which in turn could further undermine the female status. Muckenhirn thinks that the prevalent attitude - that all women must marry suggests that women are incapable of looking after themselves. She has also highlighted the assumption in the West that unmarried career women must be leading a wayward life. She strongly feels that such marital attitude coupled with the fact that women outnumber men, may strengthen the hold on polygamy and force women to concede polygamy. Muckenhirn noted that a woman's role is dependent on the role assigned her by the society and that marriage as well as child bearing is considered the most important. Not surprisingly - a woman who failed to produce a child is considered a failure. She concludes that such attitudes may at least to some extent account for why girls' education is regarded as less important than the boys'.

From Muckenhirn's account it is easy to see that Yoruba women are hardly in an enviable position, more so, when one thinks in terms of taking a leading part in the event of an educational innovation, reform or revolution. If one feels inclined to suggest or assume that the plight of Yoruba women is also wholly or partly applicable to Igbo women, it is important to recall Lugard's and Leith-Ross' findings about the latter. For example, Igbo women are not complacent, they are continuously struggling for recognition and equality of status. Lugard even conceded the fact that in some cases Igbo women appear to be the

dominant gender. In short, Igbo women have not resigned themselves to the role, which the society has assigned them. It is significant that, the very crucial attribute which Leith-Ross discovered among the Igbo and described as 'go-ahead' was not spotted by both the Hausa and the Yoruba researchers. It is an indispensable quality in times of major movement - be it political, social, educational, religious etc.

It is noteworthy that during the pilot study, the opinion of Nigerian respondents, particularly women, was sounded regarding the best venue for an investigation of this nature. There was a strong indication that Igboland is the most suitable place. Some argued that owing to the strong presence of Islamic religion in northern Nigeria, which governs the way of life of the people, the women might not be in a position to initiate or provide the leadership required to sustain an educational revolution, should it become necessary. In the case of the Yoruba, respondents hold the view that - probably due to their culture the Yoruba are quite supportive but may be hesitant in terms of playing a leading role in the event of an educational revolution in Nigeria.

From the above account, it is quite clear that all indications point to Igboland as the most appropriate venue for the empirical study.

### Field Work Technology and Methodology

Interview and questionnaire are the main tools for information and data gathering. 'Participant observation' for instance, is inappropriate. It is more effective in ethnographic than in educational research. This is because in the former, the researcher is mostly concerned with the way of life of a particular group of people, (say the Masai of Kenya), and may have to live for a fairly long time with the people in order to be able to record as fully as possible their culture and general way of life. This was the type of research done by a leading ethnographer, Mead McNeill (1985).

## Interview

Interview, as a technique is indispensable in this programme because of the quality of information required. Questionnaires alone are inadequate. For instance, included in the sample are traditional leaders and chiefs. They are influential and uphold the traditional values and ethos that determine the day to day life of the people, especially those in rural environment. It is important to note that an estimated 70% of the Nigerian populace, (Babangida, 1986), are rurally based. Most of these are women and girls. Meeting the local authorities will be more effective than asking them to complete questionnaires. Besides, interview is likely to have direct and more immediate bearing on the research objectives. By providing access into what is in a person's mind and head, (Cohen and Manion 1980), interview makes an assessment of people's knowledge, values, preferences, attitudes and beliefs possible, especially with regard to specific issues.

It is noteworthy that Bell (1987), has highlighted the importance of interview in educational research by stressing the fact that in interview situations - because the respondent is face to face with the researcher, the latter has the advantage of observing every gesture made by the respondent including facial expressions, the tone of voice, the manner in which a specific question is answered, all of which will be of enormous help to the researcher, when analysing and interpreting results.

It must however be pointed out that opinion is divided with regard to the credibility of interview as a field work technique. For instance, McNeill (1985), has described interview as an artificial situation arguing that there is no guarantee that what people say in an interview is what they do. She claims that this is because people are quite capable of saying one thing and doing another. She maintains that it is difficult to know whether people are lying deliberately or genuinely believe in what they are saying. She thinks that generally people are reluctant to speak honestly about sensitive or embarrassing issues - especially when such things concern

them. She is also convinced that the place where the interview is conducted can influence its credibility. Significantly, she holds the view that by guaranteeing respondents' anonymity, the researcher will be able to get as near the truth as possible. It is noteworthy that the promise of anonymity and confidentiality brought out the very best in respondents during the pilot study.

The Depth Interview technique, (Wiseman and Aron, 1972), tested during the pilot study, will be used. This method allows the researcher to start by asking general questions, as he or she receives answers, he or she follows up on certain specific points, with specific questions, until as much information as possible has been acquired. It is worth noting that because interviews are time consuming and expensive, some researchers in education rely on postal questionnaires.

### Questionnaires

Questionnaires are important in this investigation, since participants include secondary school pupils and teachers. Their sheer numerical strength makes questionnaires a desirable technique. Through the questionnaires, a large number of people can take part in the fieldwork, thereby facilitating data collection, an advantage which the interview does not have. However for the questionnaire to be effective, questions must be clear and unambiguous. Leading questions as well as those that are likely to cause confusion should be avoided.

### The Open Structure Model

The Open Structure Model (Youngman 1978), was adopted in designing the questionnaires. With this technique, respondents are not limited to 'yes' or 'no' answers, in all the questions. McNeill (1985), has however pointed out that interview schedule and questionnaire indicate that the researcher has set a limit in terms of what a respondent can or cannot say. She believes that the more structured the question the tighter the limit.

Significantly, this is why the Depth Interview and the Open Structure (questionnaire), have been adopted, in this study. In the questionnaire for example, secondary school pupils are asked this question:

*At what level do you think that girls' education should stop?*

Primary

Secondary

University

*Please, tick the appropriate box and give a brief explanation.*

The fact that respondents have to give a brief explanation means that no limit has been set regarding their response. Special focus will be on the response of male pupils.

### Sampling

In educational research careful sampling is important, given that it is not practicable to involve in the investigation - the entire population under study. The same applies to other researches, a botanist for example does not examine all the plants but selects those he considers truly representative. Similarly, from a cross section of Imo State, a thorough sampling has been made resulting in the selection of categories that are unquestionably representative, as far as this study is concerned. These include secondary school pupils, teachers, education officers, the clergy, (for the Church), Chiefs, natural leaders, local politicians, NCWS.

It is noteworthy that the selection of the above categories was done by Random Sampling, (Cohen and Manion, 1980). This technique in sampling is considered the most effective compared with other types like Stratified, Snowball, Cluster, etc. With Stratified sampling for instance, the population is divided into groups say, on gender basis, then the researcher will have to choose from each group. But Random sampling enables the researcher to choose from the population those that are really relevant to the study. Consequently, in terms of validating the fieldwork Random sampling is most reliable.



Teachers

The participation of teachers is crucial because of the unique position they occupy in schools, as well as their indispensable role in the educational system of every nation, notably as teachers of tomorrow's adults and world leaders. It is believed that the role of teachers is second in importance to that of parents, (Musgrave 1986), given the amount of interaction between children and teachers and the length of time that children spend at school. Often pupils see teachers as role models. This is especially the case in Nigeria, where the writer has noticed the tendency on the part of girls to hero-worship female teachers. Teachers' influence on children is far reaching and in some cases, lasting. Considering the unique position of teachers in the Nigerian society, how they, (especially male teachers), respond to a question like the one below will be carefully noted:

*Whose education should be given top priority? Explain briefly.*

Boys

Girls

Both

Neither

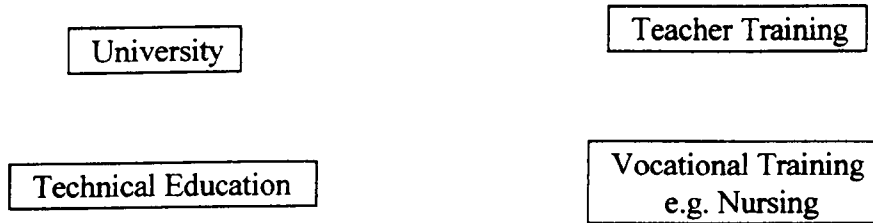
Don't Know

Their response among other things will help in the assessment of gender discrimination in education in terms of how widespread it is.

Secondary School Pupils

Secondary school boys and girls should take part in the fieldwork because they are the future hope of Nigeria. It is interesting to note that some of them, in the not too distant future, may hold very high offices including the Head of State. They will then be in a position to make far reaching decisions that will affect the life of fellow citizens including girls and women. The questionnaire will help in terms of assessing the opinion, views and attitudes which now as youngsters, they have towards the education of female members of the society. Again, the response of male students will be very crucial. The question indicated below is therefore particularly relevant:

*What post secondary education should girls have access to? Give brief explanation.*



It is also important to note the type of response that will come from girls.

### Chiefs, Natural Leaders/Politicians

The participation of Chiefs, natural leaders and politicians is considered important in this study, because they are closely associated with the traditional ethos, social norms and expectations, that affect the daily life of the community particularly girls and women. In a society that is essentially patrilineal in structure, the survey will provide an invaluable opportunity for speaking face to face with those who determine what individuals should or should not do. Chiefs, natural leaders and politicians help the government in the maintenance of law and order, so their position in society is regarded as highly relevant and indispensable. In the case of politicians they represent the interests of villagers at the highest level. The questions relating to child marriage and division of labour will help in gauging the current views of Chiefs, natural leaders and local politicians on the issues of girls and women.

### The Clergy

It was missionaries who brought western education to Nigeria. The unique role played by the Church in bringing formal education to Nigeria is unparalleled, (see Chapter 2). Not surprisingly from 1842 when education was introduced in Nigeria (in Igboland, 1855), all educational institutions were more or less controlled by the Church. The domineering influence of the Church on the society only began to dwindle, particularly in Igboland, during the Civil War. By the end of the war (1970), it was almost non-existent with the State take over of schools.

It is however noteworthy that in spite of the close link between Church and education throughout the ages, critics of the Church, including King (1987), say there is a biblical basis for the secondary role which women play in the society. In other words they believe that the Church has not done enough for women but has rather let them down. In Nigeria women made huge sacrifices, particularly in Igboland, to sustain the Church. In this survey therefore a good effort will be made to find out whether the Church has done enough to raise the status of women. There is no doubt that the questions like the one below will help the Church to clear some of the confusion:

*Is there a biblical basis for the traditional role of women?*

### Education Officers

The role of education officers in Nigeria is essential. Teachers are accountable to them, and they monitor school activities very closely. They work hand in hand with the government of the day in matters relating to education. Their colossal responsibilities include employment, promotion, transfer and discipline of teachers, the grading and promotion of schools and closing of unviable ones. They carry out the educational policies of the government of the day. Their important position in the educational system of the nation makes their participation in this survey indispensable. Being close to the government they can also make educational recommendations to them. In this survey, their views on crucial issues like free and compulsory education will be sounded. It is a programme which can ensure that all boys and girls of school age attend school.

### National Council of Women's Societies

This is a non-militant organisation that is deeply committed to the welfare of Nigerian girls and women, and has been struggling for years to improve their lot. It is in effect the voice of the female population in the country. The members believe in emancipation of women and question the validity of attitudes and social norms, which they claim operate

against the female members of the society and in some cases jeopardise their educational opportunities, (Focus 1986). Significantly Calman (1984), has argued that in life we should continually question traditional practices and take nothing for granted. It is noteworthy that the organisation has always believed that formal education is central, with regard to full emancipation of Nigerian women.

### **THE PILOT STUDY**

This proved invaluable with regard to the field work design because in some cases, it led to the inclusion of brand new questions. These questions correspond to questions: 25 for the 'National Council of Women's Societies' and questions 28 and 17 for the secondary schools and teachers respectively.

The first question above has been included because, in the course of the pilot study it emerged that some women are funding their university education through prostitution. It is important to note that a television programme - 'Kilroy' (shown on November eighteenth 1992, at 9.00 a.m.), entitled, 'Prostitution', confirmed the above claim. It was disclosed during the programme that some women are so academically ambitious that they are prepared to go into prostitution, in order to raise money for their university courses. Male university students who took part in the discussions spoke at length about their female counterparts who flirt openly and without any remorse, in a bid to get money from men to pay their university fees and fund other related matters. A spokeswoman for 'The English Collective of Prostitutes', (an unofficial women prostitutes' Trade Union), was quoted in a national newspaper, 'The People' as saying that more and more women are turning to prostitution because of the recession. She was said to have claimed that:

*"...lots of students find it is the only way they can survive while they are studying." July 25<sup>th</sup> 1993, p. 25.*

The pilot study was done in Britain and not in Nigeria because of the distance involved as well as the financial constraints. However, Nigerians of all ethnic groups live, work and study in Britain. This is evident in the subsequent detailed analysis of participants. In terms of the study, it will be invaluable because the findings from the pilot study, will be compared with those from the main investigation in Nigeria. The pilot study lasted for about one and a half months.

### The Instruments

The instruments used for the pilot study were mainly questionnaires and interview schedules. These are also the very instruments that would be used with regard to the fieldwork in Nigeria. Consequently comparison will not only be possible but also credible.

### Participants

The sampling of participants for the pilot study was fascinating, because it involved respondents from various parts of the world, Africans, Europeans, West Indians, Asians, Americans, South Americans, the Middle East etc. thus validating the first chapter of this study, namely, the Global Perspective of Women.

### The Pilot Questionnaire

The questionnaires were completed by 90 pupils from four secondary schools in south Yorkshire. The schools included an all boys' school, two single sex girls' schools and one very big mixed state school. The single sex schools are independent institutions. Participants were boys and girls in the final year of the secondary school, the same age group that will be required to complete the questionnaires in Nigeria. It is a very important time in educational terms in Nigeria because for many, it will mark the end of their formal education, as they go out in search of jobs and ultimately adjust to life outside formal educational institutions. It is noteworthy that the pupils are from various ethnic groups including Asians and Afro-Caribbeans. The choice of institutions with different status is remarkable because in Nigeria,

participants will be drawn from secondary schools of various status and backgrounds.

### The Pilot Interview

Interview respondents included the clergy from various denominations. It should however be mentioned that no representatives of Hindu or Judaism were interviewed. Teachers included heads of secondary schools, both men and women, some with well over 20 years of teaching experience. Some are university lecturers. Respondents also included members of an educational organisation, (The Minerva Education Trust), PhD students, as well as students reading for the Masters and Bachelors degrees, and Diploma. It is interesting to note that housewives as well as professionals like lawyers and doctors were also interviewed. One of the female respondents has served as a school governor for ten years in different schools. Some moslems, Christians and those who do not believe in anything, were also interviewed.

Of the 40 people interviewed about half were Nigerians from different ethnic groups including housewives and professionals, (living and working in south Yorkshire, Humberside etc). Significantly among them were a woman lawyer, six medical doctors, (four men and two women), five teachers, (two men and three women). The two men are university lecturers. It is important to note that one commented strongly on the disparity regarding the numerical strength of male and female Nigerian university students, and stressed that female students are conspicuously fewer in the sciences. He did also highlight the shortage of women lecturers. Other respondents that need special mention are: a nurse, an accountant, a businessman, the clergy and a Russian born Nigerian, (a Russian woman with Nigerian citizenship). Of the five clergymen interviewed, one was a Nigerian (not a Catholic priest). Two of the clergy were Catholic priests, the others Anglican.

## The Interview Schedules

The interview schedules were arranged personally with each respondent, depending largely on when he or she could spare the time. In some cases the interview had to be postponed until the respondents could find the time that was most convenient for them. Housewives for instance, seemed to prefer morning hours, notably between 10.00 a.m. and midday, whereas workers found the evenings and nights more suitable. It is important to note that almost all the respondents emphasised the fact that weekends are very important to them. Contact was done mostly by telephone, which was quite expensive. On average the interview lasted for an hour. The shortest interview was conducted within 57 minutes and the longest took about 1 hour 53 minutes. The maximum number of interviews conducted in a day was three, while the minimum was one. Respondents were interviewed in South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Humberside and London – depending where each respondent lives.

It should also be mentioned that working mothers had very little time to spare. Understandably they felt that governments should treat the plight of working mothers as a special case. They praised the work of ‘The Foundation for After School Activities’. This organisation has discovered that many primary school children are not cared for after school because their parents are working long hours. It is estimated that about 800,000 children return from school to empty homes.

‘The Foundation for After School Activities’ wants the government to ensure that schools organise after school classes. This is a childcare class, whereby teachers can involve pupils in various activities, designed to keep pupils reasonably occupied in school, so that they can go home at about the same time as their parents or a bit later. The organisation claims that one out of every five children returns to an empty house and that if authorities do not act with minimum delay, many children will be at risk. Women who want to return to formal education or some form of adult education will find such arrangements particularly

helpful. Many women wish to see every obstacle to their education removed. It is interesting to note that this is precisely what the former Nigerian First Lady, Mrs. Babangida, is trying to do in Nigeria. She is also doing everything possible to enhance the status of Nigerian women. For example, through her efforts Nigerian women can now stand surety for bail, (Nigerian Daily Times - Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup> 1993, pp. 1 and 16).

#### The Pilot Respondents, (the Questionnaire)

How respondents completed the questionnaires in the pilot study justified the Open Structure technique used in designing the questions. The quality of the response must have been enhanced by the promise and guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity. The analysing of the results helped to include as well as reconstruct certain questions including those relating to domestic chores.

#### The Pilot Respondents (the Interview)

Judging from the reaction as well as the way in which those interviewed responded, it is obvious that the guarantee of anonymity is essential. Many respondents made it absolutely clear that they would not speak as honestly as they would like to unless anonymity was guaranteed. Even those who did not say anything about anonymity at the start of the interview, were initially reluctant to give certain information, but they changed dramatically, once they were guaranteed anonymity.

It is important to note that the nature of information and discussion that emerged during the pilot interview, far exceeded the expectations of the author. It is therefore considered appropriate at this stage to highlight some of them because they could have far reaching implications for the fieldwork in Nigeria.

#### Marriage

Marriage has always been a sensitive educational issue, especially in developing countries. During the pilot interview respondents were asked whether marriage should



interfere with formal education of girls. Although most respondents felt it should not, some Nigerian male respondents, including the Nigerian clergyman (from the North), said that, marriage should interfere with girls' education. They spoke strongly against the idea of parents training their daughters up to the university level. The clergyman stressed that parents should not educate their daughters beyond the secondary phase and that when they marry, it is the responsibility of their husbands to bear the financial demands which their wives' further education will make. He angrily emphasised the fact that parents should only train boys to the highest level in education where possible, because they are the ones that will stay in their parents' homes and continue the family tree. Speaking visibly furiously he claimed that it is financially futile to waste money on girls who will ultimately get married, leave their maternal homes and answer their husbands' names. He also highlighted the fear of pregnancy among many parents especially moslem ones, should girls be allowed to go on and on with regard to education.

But one of the British clergymen, drawing from many years of service in the developing countries including Nigeria, pointed out that as much as possible, the Church should play an active role in the school education of women in the developing nations, given that in those countries more often than not, girls' education is jeopardised by lack of funds and also by the fact that more priority is given to the education of boys. He stressed the fact that financial help is often inadequate and that practical help is indispensable. He spoke happily and proudly of the schools, (including girls' schools), which his Church has built in northern Nigeria, where school education of girls has been adversely affected by the Islamic religion. Teachers were also provided for the schools and their role includes talking to parents, particularly about the need for formal education of girls - with a view to effecting a change of attitude. The clergyman said that there is a duty on the Western Churches to assist in the education of children in less economically advanced nations of the world, stressing *that*

*“as Christians we should be our brothers’ keepers”*. If more Churches in the developed countries were to be more generous, the impact on the formal education of girls in the developing nations could be inestimable. Significantly, the following question which is in both the interview questions as well as the questionnaires, is very crucial:

*At what age do you think a girl should marry?*

How participants in the survey in Nigeria will respond to the same question will be carefully noted.

### Choice of Courses

All those interviewed, with the exception of one female respondent, spoke convincingly about the fact that girls and women should be free to make their own decision about what they want to study. But the woman who opposed this view maintained that because of women’s role as wives and mothers they should be excluded from doing certain courses like medicine. She claimed that a woman doctor would not be able to cope with all the demands that the profession makes on doctors, including night calls. It is interesting to note that when the woman’s husband was interviewed separately a few days later, his own view was totally different from his wife’s because he stressed the need for everyone to make their own choice according to their interests and ability. The issue of choice of courses is important because certain fields like engineering, architecture and until recently medicine, etc. have always been considered men’s courses.

### Coeducation

The question of single sex schools was one of the most controversial issues discussed during the pilot study. Opinion was divided. About two-thirds of all those interviewed were in favour of coeducation, in spite of the fact that they were all aware of the academic disadvantages especially with regard to girls; among them were some moslem female respondents. Understandably they have lived in Britain for a long time and have become

accustomed to the Western way of life. The advocates of coeducation emphasised the social aspect and stressed the need for girls to learn as early as possible to coexist with boys.

One of the leading members of the organisation that promotes the educational interests of girls and women in Britain, (The Minerva Educational Trust), suggested that girls should be taught separately with regard to science subjects and mathematics. She claimed that such an arrangement should be adopted in mixed schools because girls are easily intimidated by the presence of boys. But some teachers and heads of mixed secondary schools claimed that in their schools girls are doing better in some subjects including science and that more girls stay on for the 'A' level. A housewife whose children are now university undergraduates said that girls should be in single sex institutions until they are 18, by which time they would be in a stronger position to handle the issue of male/female relationship.

The views expressed by the headteacher of a mixed school deserve special reference. With more than 22 years of teaching experience to her credit, she praised unequivocally the academic as well as the social advantages inherent in mixed schools. She stressed that the very presence of single sex schools in itself, perpetuates gender inequality. She claimed that single sex institutions hinder educational progress by generating imbalance in education. Speaking about non-academic subjects, she emphasised the point that in single sex schools, the tendency is to teach girls things that one considers feminine like Home Economics, while in boys' schools they are taught things considered masculine like Crafts, Carpentry, Design and Technology etc. and that there are no facilities for teaching Home Economics.

She also deplored the fact that in all girls' schools, facilities for teaching Crafts, Carpentry, Design and Technology etc. are not available. It is important to note that her views are supported by the findings of the Equal Opportunity Commission, (West Glamorgan 1988), following an extensive survey carried out in West Glamorgan. When the survey team visited single sex schools, it was discovered that in the girls' schools there were no facilities

for teaching Crafts, Design, Technology, Carpentry etc. Similarly, in all boys' institutions the team found that the facilities for teaching Home Economics were conspicuously lacking. But the team also noted that in certain mixed schools, despite the fact that there were facilities for teaching all subjects, during the time for practical subjects girls and boys went their different ways, girls were taught Home Economics, while boys were taught Crafts, Carpentry, Design and Technology.

The experienced respondent went on to say that as far as class performance was concerned, where situations are handled properly, girls in mixed schools should do very well and expressed fear that segregation would achieve nothing. She questioned the wisdom of educational systems that segregate girls given that in families, children, both boys and girls are brought up together and she stressed that schools have a duty to continue the strong foundation laid by the home instead of sowing seeds of discord. She pointed out that in some cases children start well by going to mixed schools only to be separated at the secondary level. She claimed that when they meet again at the university level, it would look like turning back the hand of the clock, as they would have to start learning all over again - how to coexist. Drawing from her own experience, she explained how she found social life at the university exceedingly difficult, almost intolerable, having attended an all girls' school throughout, before going to university at the age of 18. Finally, she advised that since ultimately boys and girls would stay together as workers or husband and wife, the sooner both sexes learn to coexist the better.

### The Curriculum

On the question of the curriculum, all the respondents strongly indicated that the government of the day should not be the sole decision-maker in terms of what should or should not be taught in schools. But one woman unequivocally said that governments would always want to control the curriculum because, "he who pays the piper calls the tune." Some

did not however know exactly who should be involved. But all the heads of institutions interviewed said unequivocally that designing the curriculum should be the responsibility of a body of experts, in cooperation with government representatives, parents and teachers and even in some cases, pupils.

### Parents and Financial Constraints

Moslem respondents interviewed indicated that when money becomes an issue in the family, the education of girls should be stopped so that parents could train the boys. But one of the Zambian women interviewed said that the education of boys should be stopped or suspended in times of financial constraint, so that girls could go on uninterrupted given that girls' education has not received the same attention as that of boys. A female head teacher with many years of service behind her, expressed the same opinion but added that under no circumstances should girls' education be stopped, because boys can always find something to do. She pointed out that job opportunities for girls and women are quite limited, and claimed that sound education is one obvious way of guaranteeing jobs for girls and women.

Some housewives spoke emotionally of how in their own time, their parents stopped their education, so that their brothers could go on with theirs. Some claimed that in spite of the fact that they were more intelligent than their brothers, their own education was regarded as unimportant. They criticised their parents' attitude towards female education and said that in times of financial hardship, decisions should not be made on the basis of gender because it is divisive as well as discriminatory. Many respondents suggested that in the case of developing nations, parents should educate the older ones first so that later they could help with the education of the younger ones. Because of the feelings generated by this particular issue the following question in the fieldwork questionnaire, is regarded as highly appropriate.

*If parents do not have money to train all their children, what should they do?*

## Teachers and Gender Discrimination

Most of the respondents hold the view that teachers discriminate against girls in schools. A moslem woman with two school-age children, a boy and a girl, stressed with enormous concern and bitterness the fact that teachers are lukewarm with regard to the education of children from minority ethnic groups, especially girls. She accused teachers of being responsible for the low achievement of such girls, notably moslem girls in schools. She holds the view that in a multicultural society teachers and providers of education should take into account the needs of individuals, ethnicity notwithstanding. She strongly believes that in such a community the education of girls from minority ethnic groups should not be neglected, given that women are nation builders and so in the years that lie ahead the girls could help build a healthy nation - free from division, racial discrimination and prejudice. But all the teachers and head teachers in the pilot study were quick to point out that it is not a deliberate action on the part of teachers. Interestingly, the teachers stressed that preferential treatment should not be condoned in schools. Some of them hold the view that the home is guilty of perpetuating gender inequality. They cited as an example the way parents allocate duties to their children in the house, claiming that the tendency is to ask boys to wash cars while girls are asked to help with cooking, dish washing, cleaning etc. They also indicated that during Christmas and birthdays, parents tend to give boys masculine things like toy guns, cars etc. while girls are given dolls.

## Employment

With the exception of just one respondent, the rest strongly emphasised the fact that women suffer discrimination in the job market. Some highlighted the plight of women who are paid less than their male counterparts in the same job and also the fact that more women are in part time jobs. They deplored the fact that only very few women are in top jobs, and called on governments to provide child care centres because many women would like to go

out and work. They criticised the courts for their discriminatory attitude towards women, and called for many women to be appointed high court judges. They strongly indicated that there should be more women in medicine, law, politics, university staff etc. They condemned employers for discriminating against women on grounds of domestic issues including maternity leave. They claimed that their objections are supported by research findings.

It is noteworthy that during lunchtime news on BBC1 on Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1992, it was revealed that women barristers suffer double discrimination - at the Bar and during practice. Six out of ten women experience discrimination as barristers. The survey commissioned by the Lord Chancellor's Department discovered that more often than not - attention is focused on the marriage and number of children women in the legal profession have, and not necessarily on their qualifications as lawyers.

It is important to note that several women respondents said that women should not be excluded from boxing, football, wrestling, deep mining, magic etc.

### The Ordination of Women

This was controversial. Some male respondents did not believe in the ordination of women as priests. Some Protestant clergymen who said that they approved the ordination of women warned that they should not be allowed to become bishops and archbishops. No Catholic clergy was in favour of ordaining women. They made it clear that once women were allowed to become priests, it would be difficult to stop them from becoming bishops and archbishops. They claimed that women might even aspire to become Cardinals and even Pope. It is noteworthy that the ordination of women is a very sensitive issue which has already caused deep division in Churches.

### Domestic Chores

The question of domestic chores brought strong emotional response from many female respondents, who hold the view that household work should be a shared

responsibility. It is worth noting that in spite of the fact that some male respondents did say that ideally the work should be shared, they admitted that they never help their wives. A housewife who has a good degree in science stressed the fact that men can never comprehend the sheer weight of domestic chores that women undertake from day to day. She suggested that if it were biologically possible, men should conceive and bear children, rear them, see them through their school years, and that only then, would they begin to have a clue regarding the enormity of the personal sacrifice which women make. She also said that since we live in a modern world which is changing all the time, boys should be taught how to cook, wash up and make beds. She called for more men to be trained as nannies and baby-sitters.

Significantly, a Russian woman doctor also suggested role swapping when she was being interviewed. She emphasised the fact that if men could swap roles with women even for one day, they might begin to understand. But a West Indian woman who now looks after her grandchildren, (her own children are grown up), stressed the need for mothers to be at home for the sake of their children. She blamed most of the social ills of today on the fact that both men and women rush out to work. Consequently, children are either abandoned or left in the care of nannies. She spoke happily about her joy and satisfaction regarding the way she had raised her own children. She also warned that even when children stray, (like girls becoming pregnant), parents must give them a lot of support, or out of despair the girls would end up in disastrous situations. She suggested that parents could in some cases take the babies from them so that the girls could pursue a career.

It is interesting to note that her views were echoed by another woman, who after raising a large family, did a degree course in the university and now works part time. She spoke of emotional stability which children derive from their mothers staying at home. She argued that because some parents do not give adequate care to their children, the latter grow up, incapable of offering what they did not get. Consequently, they tend to abandon their



parents, and so in old age some end up in old people's homes, having no other alternative. She declared "*we all get as much as we put in*". She proudly disclosed that she now looks after her aged mother because she was a very good mother to her as a child. She also condemned inflexible division of labour in homes.

Understandably Nigerian women respondents in the pilot study called for an immediate change with regard to what they called rigid division of labour. They pointed out that a review of the existing social norms cannot be over emphasised given the rising number of professional women in Nigeria today. The women also said that children, (both boys and girls) should help in household work. Most of the women interviewed called on governments to recognise domestic work like any other job, and pay women. Obviously, this will help women and encourage them to stay at home and look after their families.

### Financial Independence

On the question as to whether women should be financially independent, all the men interviewed responded more or less from economic point of view, by saying that it would help to reduce the financial burden on them. But the female respondents said that apart from the economic advantages, financial independence would enable them to assert their own dignity as individuals. Nigerian women respondents strongly indicated that it would boost a woman's self-confidence and dignity within the family, and also in the wider society. This was also the view of Kenyan women. One spoke emotionally of a desire to see a quick change in the existing social norms and attitudes towards women in Kenya. She explained that men feel threatened by educated women and are not happy with formal education of women. She claimed that Kenyan men disapprove of the idea of women being financially independent and see it as an erosion of their authority within the household. This is because if their wives depend financially on them - they will obey them, and do whatever they are asked to do without any question.

To ensure that this is the case, men whose wives are in employment take their wives' salaries from them at the end of the month. She went on to say that married women are regarded as personal property by their husbands and are not expected to own anything. It would be recalled that Basden (1966) made similar findings regarding Nigerian women. Significantly, her observations are supported strongly by the findings of Obbo (1980), in an extensive survey regarding East African women, especially those from Kenya and Uganda. She discovered that even highly educated men feel threatened by educated women and may at times prefer illiterates who will be as submissive as they want them to be. Obbo also found out that the men were not keen on the formal education of women and that there is a general feeling that educated women are arrogant. Significantly, in Victorian England (Burstyn 1980), educated women were accused of arrogance and were considered ineligible for marriage. Burstyn claims that those who were lucky to be married were found to be unsuitable as wives and mothers. How the respondents in Nigeria, particularly women, would react to the same issue of financial independence will be crucial.

It is important to note that on Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1992, in the ITN programme entitled "The Time, The Place", the topic for discussion that day was - Women and Domestic Violence. It emerged during discussions that financial independence is very important for women. Women participants stressed strongly, (some quite emotionally), the need for women to be financially independent of men. They pointed out that in wavering or failed marriages women are usually unable to get out because they are financially trapped. It was also revealed that even when women are victims of violence often arising from violent or drunken husbands, they cannot escape however much they try, because there is nowhere for them to go. They cannot afford rented accommodation or day to day maintenance. The situation was said to be worse in cases where there are children. The women's first consideration is often their children. They worry about where to go with the children, what

may or may not happen to them, lack of funds, and so being financially hemmed in, the women stay on against their will since they cannot help it. It must also be noted that in the course of her extensive investigation in East Africa, the women of Kenya and Uganda told Obbo (1980), that having their own money helps them to make decisions.

### Women and Politics

Only time will tell whether the political ambitions of Nigerian women will ever be fulfilled. The response to the question "Do you think Nigeria will ever be ruled by a woman?" was not encouraging. It was put exclusively to Nigerian respondents. Most of them said unequivocally that they did not think that Nigeria would ever be ruled by a woman. The few who were less pessimistic ruled out the possibility for the next five to six generations, during which time they hoped the existing social norms and traditional ethos would have disappeared and so generations yet unborn would grow up in a different culture knowing nothing about what went before.

The response of a Nigerian business man, who has lived in Britain for a long time is worth mentioning. He explained that it would take years of training and education before Nigerian women would be fit to be entrusted with a national responsibility as important as Head of State. He pointed out that training and education would eventually help in the integration of Nigerian women into the fabric of the Nigerian society, and according to him - an inevitable step towards achieving their political goal. But he warned that it would be a long and arduous process. He explained that this is because a Nigerian woman as a result of social attitudes, custom and tradition is not expected to play any role, except a secondary one in the society. He maintained that she is conspicuously absent during men's meetings and gatherings which are when important issues are discussed and decisions often taken. She is banned from decision making in all issues both at the local level as well as the national level - including issues which affect her own life. Significantly, this confirms Green's (1964),

findings about women while at Umueke. The business man went on to say that it would require gradual and step-by-step battle before a Nigerian woman can finally emerge from the shadow of her husband and convince her fellow citizens that she can compete with men for the highest job in the land, and demonstrate that she has all that it takes to head a nation. He stressed that the first battle which a woman must win is that of the family by overcoming male prejudice and domination. He said that this would help in the process of emancipation.

As if by some strange inspiration he declared:

*“When women have been fully integrated and fully entrenched in the society, we can begin to expect a true woman president. Achieved by merit, loved by all Nigerians for her special qualities and attributes that command respect - a woman without complex...”*

The businessman's view shows that much is expected of Nigerian women. For instance it is taken more or less for granted that any Nigerian man can be a president. But colossal demands are being made on women for the same post.

#### Worldwide or Separatist Movements

Following the emotional response from female respondents, on several issues, respondents were asked whether there should be a worldwide or nation based movement whereby women would meet, organise and work out strategies, in their struggle for recognition and equality. Women respondents were more than delighted with this particular question. Some said that worldwide movement would be ineffective - given the diversity of culture that exists from one nation to another, and even in some cases within the various ethnic groups in the same country. But one moslem respondent spoke quite emotionally as she described the plight of women in her own country where she claimed that women are treated as second hand citizens. They are banned from doing certain things including driving cars. They have to wear the 'sari' all the time. She emphasised the fact that women have to obey their husbands in everything, and in the wider society they also do not have any say. She argued strongly in favour of worldwide movement pointing out that if it were nation

based, women in the Islamic world would never be able to make a breakthrough. Even though some women were in favour of nationwide movements they emphasised the fact that there should be a coordinating body which would monitor what is happening in various nations.

It is worthy of note that no man supported either national or international feminist movements of any form and only two women, (a lawyer and the Russian born Nigerian lady) said that they were against all movements. The latter argued that historically movements do not succeed in that they would begin with the best motives only to be hijacked by extremists. She cited as an example the French Revolution. It is possible she might have been disillusioned by the wars that affected Russia adversely, particularly the Second World War in which 20 million Russian men perished thereby leaving a huge male void which to this day is still like a gaping hole. On the whole younger women seemed more enthusiastic regarding the World Movement, which is not surprising because younger people tend to be more impatient.

#### Local Women's Organisations

It is interesting to note that here in Britain there is a local women's organisation namely, The Minerva Education Trust, founded in 1979 with the primary objective of promoting the education of girls. Three of the foundation members spoke convincingly about their deep commitment to the organisation. One of the leading members said that some women, including members of Parliament, realised that girls' education did not compare quite favourably with that of boys and felt something ought to be done about it. The result was the formation of the above organisation which was initially known as 'The 300 Education Trust'. She explained that it was so named because in 1979 the year of its foundation there were just 20 women members of Parliament, whereas there were over 600 men. The members of the Trust therefore vowed that they would endeavour to ensure that by

the year 2000 there would be at least 300 women members of Parliament. They also believed that to achieve this they must look thoroughly into the education of girls. They communicate regularly with schools and seek the cooperation of teachers and head teachers, to ensure that girls' education is sound. They see to it that girls are encouraged from time to time, especially with regard to studying science subjects.

It is important to note that in Nigeria, there is an interesting educational programme known as 'The Better Life Programme for Rural Women'. It was founded in 1986 by the wife of the then Nigerian Head of State, Mrs. M. Babangida. It is a very elaborate programme organised at national, state and local government levels. As the name implies it is geared mainly towards improving the quality of life of rural women. Under this programme, women in rural communities who live from year to year under harsh environment are taught virtually everything, including: nutrition, child care, first aid, weaving, pottery, knitting, cookery, jewellery-making, better methods of farming, dressmaking, dyeing of clothes etc. Interestingly, girls and women are taught electronics and technology, areas hitherto regarded as exclusively men's.

Above all Mrs. Babangida wisely realises that for the rural women to achieve all the things mentioned above and many more, all women should have at least basic education. Consequently in several places, centres for adult education have been set up in the rural areas. Educated women volunteered to teach the women without asking for reward. Nursery centres are also being provided where children are left in the care of specially trained nursery teachers, while their parents go to work. It is worthy of note that within a relatively short time, Mrs. Babangida has achieved a great deal, for instance she has launched 7,635 cooperatives, built 992 cottage industries, established 1,751 new farms, 487 new shops and markets, 419 women's centres and 163 special programmes. She endeavours to provide markets for the women's products so that they can earn some money. In recognition for her

hard work and brilliant leadership, she was awarded the 1991 African Prize along with Kenya's Environmentalist, Professor Muta Maathai. It is awarded to deserving African leaders at all levels, in recognition of their praiseworthy achievements in the bitter struggle to end hunger in Africa. It is noteworthy that a video showing Mrs. Babangida's work so far, is available.

### The Twenty-First Century

With human beings, the past, present and future are always relevant and often overlap. So respondents were asked how they saw the status of women as we gradually approach the year 2000. One of the women headteachers said that men should begin to recognise the worth of women. She pointed out that women have numerous capabilities and great potential which are not being fully utilised or even recognised. She warned that unless women are accepted fully as equals by men, a calamity hitherto unknown could be precipitated, culminating in the demise of the society as we know it today.

One of the headmasters said that societies seem to be changing their attitudes towards women but that in actual fact nothing is changing. He stressed the fact that everything is superficial. He cited the British society as an example and said that because it is a stratified society the pace of change is negligible. He recognised two phases with regard to the status of women. He explained that this current first phase has been sustained by an act of law through legislations like the Equal Opportunities Commission. He wished that by the year 2000 the second phase would be totally different, so that men would respect women and recognise their immense capabilities and real worth through change of attitude and not legislations or stereotyping. He stressed the point that stereotyping has done incalculable harm to women's image. He deplored the fact that women are often portrayed as sex symbols. Significantly, Pickersgill (1980), has examined carefully the effects of sex stereotyping on female education, with special reference to secondary science.

## Hopes and Aspirations

It is important to note that some of the women respondents expressed their hopes and aspirations which they wished would come true. For instance one of the Ph.D. students from Brazil said that her wish is for all women to have equal opportunity with men and play the same role which men play in the world. An American woman who is a Youth Organiser as well as a teacher said that her own wish is that men should recognise women's potential which is not being tapped to the full. She also said that men should accord women deep respect for their invaluable and selfless sacrifice. One housewife said she would like women to unite in their struggle for equality and stressed the point that lack of unity would do incalculable harm. . One of the Zambian women said she would like to see all women economically independent and fully liberated. Two Nigerian female doctors said that they would like to see more opportunity for women and an end to discrimination at work and in the society at large. One said that she would like to live to see the day when women would be seen as clever and competent in their own right, capable of making worthwhile contributions both in the home and in the wider community. She deplored the present quota system in Nigeria whereby women are guaranteed a number of places in the universities with lower admission standards, as divisive. She feels it portrays Nigerian women as dunces, and under achievers.

However, the hopes and aspirations of a headmistress with more than 23 years of teaching experience deserve special mention. She said she would be happy to live to see the day when women would accept that they are the architects of their own downfall, and abandon the ideology of feminism. She emphasised the fact that the world is a lovely place made more pleasant and habitable by the existence of women. She claimed that she has enjoyed great respect and huge privileges because she is a woman and thinks it is unfair with regard to men. She insisted that in all her life and notably in all her years as a teacher, she has



experienced many wonderful positive things which would have been impossible had she been a man. She stressed the fact that women are their own enemies and spoke proudly, confidently and convincingly about the privileges that go with being a woman. She condemned feminism as a sham, a fake, devised and employed by weak women who have failed themselves and the society, in order to explain away their failure. Finally, she warned that feminism would not achieve anything and advised strongly that the way ahead for women is through hard work, trust, self-confidence, competence and success.

It is important to note that during the interview, several women blamed women's predicament on the fact that women themselves lack self confidence, although a few blamed the society. Coincidentally on International Women's Day, March 8<sup>th</sup> 1993, before a huge gathering of women in Sheffield, it was stressed that one of the major problems facing women, is the fact that women do not feel confident about themselves. However, the views of a female respondent who reads the Bible constantly, deserves special reference. She spoke quite convincingly of how biblical knowledge has been an invaluable asset with regard to her marriage particularly in terms of stability and happiness. She argued that because some women, notably the highly educated, are headstrong and disrespectful to their husbands, men have become disillusioned and sceptical about women's education. It is important to note that her views about educated women are reminiscent of those associated with educated Kenyan women and their counterparts in Victorian England. She emphasised the fact that family values as stipulated in the Bible, should be upheld. She referred to and quoted from Ephesians Chapter 5, verses 22-25 entitled "Wives and Husbands":

*"Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, His body, of which He is the Saviour. Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her..."* p. 1176.

She pointed out that if well-educated women would take the lead and show respect and loyalty to their husbands, they in turn would love them and even campaign for greater educational opportunities for women.

The next chapter will reveal among other things how respondents in Nigeria will react, especially to some of the most contentious issues, following the empirical study in Imo State.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THE EMPIRICAL STUDY - COMPUTER AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The fieldwork was extensive and elaborate. Thirteen schools were involved. It is important at this stage to note that in Nigeria, heads and deputy heads of secondary schools are referred to as principals and vice principals. Secondary school pupils are called students, and when they go to the university they become undergraduates. The inclusion of as many as thirteen schools was to ensure that all the various types of educational institutions within the secondary sector in Imo State, participated in the investigation which in turn would lead to a more representative and well balanced study. This would not be the case if only a few schools were selected. Consequently the following schools were chosen:

#### **1. Secondary Model Schools**

As the name implies, model schools are supposed to be the best schools in the State especially in terms of educational facilities, well trained teachers, high academic standards, good discipline etc. In short they are expected to be an example to other schools.

#### **2. Technical Schools**

Technical secondary schools are a welcome change, in that unlike the old traditional secondary schools, they offer technical subjects that would be of great help to the less academically gifted. Following the change in the duration of secondary education in Nigeria, whereby students stay for six years instead of five, (3 years in the junior secondary and 3 years in the senior secondary), only the very bright ones proceed to the senior secondary. The rest are advised to pursue other forms of education like technical education.

#### **3. Comprehensive Schools**

#### **4. Commercial Schools**

#### **5. Commercial/Technical Schools**

Like secondary technical schools, the availability of technical subjects means that the students who are not doing well in commercial subjects can try the technical ones.

Other schools include a Mission School, Private Schools, Government Boys' School, Government Girls' School, State Urban Schools, State Rural Schools, Boarding Schools and Day Schools.

### Control of Educational Institutions

The various educational institutions indicated above are controlled by different bodies or agencies.

### State Schools

Today in Imo State, most of the schools are controlled by the State following the departure of expatriate Missionaries at the end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970. Unquestionably since then schools have grown numerically in strength. But some people stress that it is all quantity and no quality - claiming that strong religious education, moral dignity, discipline, high academic standards, employment etc. which epitomised school education in the Mission Era are now non-existent.

### Federal Government Schools

Some schools in Imo State are directly under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Federal institutions are said to belong to a class of their own, in terms of staffing, facilities and good conditions of service.

### Private Schools

It is important to note that private schools in Nigeria differ enormously from those in England. To start with, in Nigeria private institutions are owned by individuals - who allegedly put personal profits before academic excellence. Consequently they do not employ well-trained teachers. Most of the schools in this category are commercial institutions with accent on typing and shorthand. Due to lack of resources both human and material, science

and mathematics are hardly taught. Compared with other educational institutions, commercial schools are considerably cheaper. Most of the students are girls - notably those in the older age range; who may not be academically brilliant. Because they are less expensive, notably the unregistered ones, (particularly in terms of fees), some parents prefer to send their daughters to commercial schools, while their sons go to the secondary schools. In other words, for some girls, commercial education is the only post primary education available to them.

### Mission Schools

Only very few schools are controlled by Missionaries today in Imo State. But they are all citizens of Nigeria unlike their European counterparts, prior to the Civil War. The writer included Mission schools in order to find out whether those values, (both moral and academic), that characterised the old Mission schools and endeared them in the hearts and minds of people, have any place in today's Mission education in Imo State.

As already discussed in Part A of this section the methodology of the empirical study involved questionnaires and interviews.

### The Questionnaires

It should be unequivocally stated at this stage that for the investigation, the writer applied a unique and purely personal strategy termed, (by the writer), 'On the Spot Approach'. This in effect means that the would-be respondents were not notified before the writer left the UK for Nigeria. This method was adopted because:

1. In most developing countries including Nigeria, communication is painfully slow and so it could take an indeterminate length of time for correspondence to reach the intended respondents, (especially those in authority), from the UK, and their response to get to the writer from Nigeria.

2. Communication network in developing nations can hardly compare with that in the developed world. Consequently telex, telephone or fax messages cannot be sent. With many educational institutions located in the rural areas, the only option left is written information, even so, there is no guarantee that letters will get to their destination.
3. Even if the letters do actually reach the would-be participants, some, for inexplicable reasons may not bother to respond.
4. All or some of the would-be respondents could reply negatively. Correspondence could go on for years in an attempt to get them to change their mind, and whether they would do so is in doubt.
5. On the Spot Approach enables a researcher to look round and study the location as well as the type of educational institutions that would be best suited for the investigation.
6. It is also a method that is bound to attract more attention, as well as cooperation, particularly if the would-be respondents realise that the researcher has come all the way from Europe to undertake an empirical study. They become curious.
7. However much a researcher endeavours to explain in a letter, a lot would still be missed out, so his or her message is more effectively delivered verbally. Respondents would prefer to hear from the researcher regarding the study - what it is all about and what the researcher intends to achieve. In the process a close bond, borne out of curiosity and interest, could develop. It might manifest itself by way of unwavering support and cooperation, particularly on the part of reluctant would-be respondents.
8. A researcher stands a better chance of convincing the intended respondents in terms of participating in the investigation - notably those who for one reason or another are unwilling to involve themselves or their organisation in the empirical study. For instance, through discussion, the writer was able to convince certain educational institutions to take

part in the investigation. Hitherto, they were reluctant - fearing that what ever they say could be made public. They were assured of absolute anonymity.

9. On the Spot Approach, makes it possible for the researcher to make a more reliable timetable particularly with regard to interview schedule. For example, if he or she writes from, say, the UK, as already indicated, response might not be forthcoming, even if it does, the researcher may be given the wrong time, and may not be able to find out until the very moment the interview is due to start.
10. Brevity of Office. Relying on correspondence, (instead of On the Spot Approach), is fraught with uncertainties. Things for instance, may change suddenly and unexpectedly regarding certain posts including educational jobs. For instance, a school principal may go to another school on transfer or retire unexpectedly, the new person may not know about the study and may be unwilling to cooperate. Similarly an education officer could be sacked or sent to another department.

### Choice of Time

The time for the empirical study in Imo State was chosen with planting season in mind. For example, it was carried out between April and September (1995) and by the time the writer arrived in Nigeria from the UK most of the planting had been done - early farmers had finished. The advantage was that most if not all the village students had resumed schooling. With harvesting still many months away, April - September is undoubtedly an ideal time for any investigation that would require the participation of schools. The ideal timing by the writer resulted in rich and elaborate data.

### A Study of Imo State Educational Institutions

The first thing the writer did when she arrived in Imo State from Lagos was to go to the Ministry of Education in the State capital Owerri, in order to study the location of the

participating schools within the State. This helped to ensure that the chosen educational institutions were not only academically - but geographically representative.

### The Location of the Schools

In terms of distance, the selected institutions are far flung. This is to ensure that important localities are included. Among these are ancient rival communities that belong to different creeds. While some of the selected schools are located in the heart of rural areas, some are on the borders of Imo State and other States. Interestingly one of the rural schools now stands on a piece of land that was once an evil forest - where the outcasts, (the osu and ume), and those that died of dreadful diseases like leprosy were left unburied. That was in the traditional society, in a village where a member of the British Colonial Administration, (Mrs. Green 1964), lived and worked among the local inhabitants. For many years, she identified with the village women in their harsh every day life.

She was very much loved and in 1935 the women begged her to build a school for them because by then, the village did not even have a primary school. In those days, when Missionaries requested land for churches or schools, they were given evil forests. Not surprisingly - the village is now like a shrine, visited by foreigners and some Nigerian citizens, all eager to see the village, not just because it was one of the strongholds of the British Colonial Administration all those years ago, but because a European woman, the village women regarded as one of them, (she did a lot to improve their lot), spent many years of her life there. Arguably, it could be to her credit that in the coeducational institution sited on the evil forest in the village she lived, girls outnumber boys. The writer was told that the older members of the village still remember her with fond memory.

It should also be noted that one of the border schools that participated in the empirical study is located in the furthest part of Imo State, (the name of that place symbolises enormous distance). It is an area a researcher is unlikely to include in terms of fieldwork, because of the



great distance involved. The writer was fortunate to have certain facilities that made it possible for such a place to be covered in the course of the empirical study.

### Facilities at the Disposal of the Writer and the Distribution of the Questionnaires

Given the various locations of the educational institutions as outlined above, the distribution of the questionnaires would have been impracticable were it not for the unique provisions made by the writer's relatives in Nigeria. By far the most vital of these was in the area of mobility. The writer was given a vehicle that was strong, reliable and very much suited to the road conditions in Nigeria. A driver of exceptional ability (who also happened to know various places in Imo State), was paid to take the writer to all the places she would need to go to, during the entire period of the fieldwork. But the provision of the facilities was by no means easy in financial terms given the economic constraints of the time nationally and individually. The facilities therefore meant an enormous personal sacrifice on the part of the writer's relatives. It is worth noting that without these facilities the empirical study would not have been possible because of the scarcity of public transport in Imo state - due mainly to the acute shortage of fuel in the country at the time. Vehicles could be seen in very long queues in petrol stations. Some had queued for days.

The private transport made the distribution of the questionnaires, (typed in England owing to availability of better facilities) relatively easy. The teachers' questionnaires consisted of 69 questions and since there were 113 teacher respondents, it means 7,797 questions were involved. The students' questionnaires were made up of 63 questions and altogether there were 37,296 questions, given that 592 students took part in the empirical study. Between them therefore - the teachers and the students answered 45,093 questions. It is quite obvious that the amount of data involved is staggering.

In each school, the principal or the vice principal, (where the former was unavailable), was given a letter of introduction from the writer's supervisor. This was followed by a brief

explanation by the writer - stressing what the study is all about. The reaction of school authorities in most cases was very encouraging. They were curious, enthusiastic and cooperative. Some even demanded to know why no such study had been thought of in the past. Finally, the writer was told when to come and collect the completed questionnaires.

It is noteworthy that one of the highlights of the fieldwork was the conviction of a few schools who were unwilling to take part in the completion of the questionnaires, to drop their hard line policy and join the other schools. The authorities in the reluctant schools made it abundantly clear that they never take part in empirical studies with regard to educational research. That they ultimately took part in the empirical study, must be seen as a measure of the amount of importance attached to this study by all those involved in the field work in Nigeria, (especially those in position of authority). It was also partly due to the appeal and popularity which the study generated, and also the fact that On the Spot or Face to Face Approach does work far better than distant communication. For instance, were it not for this method the alternative would have been distant correspondence with all its shortcomings as already indicated. Besides, the reluctant institutions and some individuals would never have taken part in the investigation.

While in Imo State, the writer was based in a village about 20 miles from the State capital, Owerri. It turned out to be an ideal location because its proximity to the seat of government and also to the Ministry of Education, meant that the writer was able to find as much information as possible from the latter with relative ease - including the various types of schools, their location within the State and the most suitable time each education officer could be interviewed. For instance, some had to cancel the initial appointment owing to some pressing matters or other engagements. In fact, there were last minute cancellations - at the very moment the interview was scheduled to begin. The writer was given another appointment. This is one of the drawbacks in conducting an empirical study in a developing

society. For example, the writer was not contacted regarding the cancellations either by phone or by writing, the former would be quite difficult given that it is a rare commodity in a developing country. There are no telephones in the schools, unlike those in the developed nations.

### The Questionnaire

The writer started with schools that were close to the base so that in the event of any complaint or problem, the situation would be handled more swiftly than would be the case in the more distant institutions. But as expected, there was not a single problem or complaint as both teachers and students found the questions unambiguous. The questionnaires were distributed to all the participating schools under one week because of the writer's personal transport which facilitated movement from one educational institution to another. If the writer were not mobile, distributing the questionnaires only would have taken months, given the socio-political, as well as the economic situation of the time. Besides, public transport can be quite slow. It is very important to bear in mind that public transport in a developing society is no where near what it is in the developed parts of the world. Lack of mobility would have compelled the writer to rely on postage that is fraught with even greater uncertainties. The parcel may not reach its destination, even if it does, it could take a very long time.

### Collecting the Questionnaires

Owing to the writer's mobility, the collection of the completed questionnaires was not very difficult. It must be stressed that collecting the questionnaires depended on the time given by each school, because at the time of the distribution of the questionnaires, the writer was told when to come and collect them. The time ranged from a few days to weeks. Collecting the questionnaires was more difficult than distributing them. One of the major problems was knowing whether or not the questionnaires would be completed and ready by

the expected time. The possibility of a researcher having to make more than one trip to a school in order to collect as many questionnaires as possible should never be ruled out. However, the writer had to make several trips to some schools while in some others, the questionnaires were ready even before the agreed date.

### Wastage

There was no wastage. This accounted for the enormous size of the data. Obviously this was made possible by the writer's transport facilities. For instance, she could go to a school for as many times as was necessary until every questionnaire had been collected. This would never have been the case had the writer relied wholly or even partly on public transport. For instance, road conditions in most places were quite treacherous, so it would be very difficult for a researcher to travel from his or her base many times to certain educational institutions by public transport. Besides, public transport vehicles only stop at certain locations along the major roads. Consequently, for schools located deep in the heart of remote villages which could be many kilometres from the major roads, the researcher must have to make special arrangements by way of private transport in order to reach them. In the rainy season, it will be extremely difficult. For example, the researcher may be left at the mercy of the elements, (like heavy torrential rain), which could inflict incalculable damage on the questionnaires. In such circumstances it is highly unlikely that the researcher can make more than one trip to a school to collect the completed questionnaires. Health risks and financial costs can also prevent frequent trips to any school. This is one of the main causes of high wastage rate with regard to empirical studies in a developing society.

### Mobility and Wastage

The writer's transport facilities helped to ensure that there was no wastage. For example, the students who were absent the day the rest of the class completed their own questionnaires had to do theirs' when they came back to school. This was why the writer had to go to some

schools more than once, to ensure that there was no outside interference. Besides, the students had to be timed, (not exceeding one hour)

### The Interview

#### The Clergy

A total of seven people in the Sacred Ministry from different denominations were interviewed, among them were three nuns and surprisingly a woman cleric. The writer knew by experience that the most convenient time for seeing religious people in Imo State is in the morning, especially after the morning service in the Church and breakfast. Consequently, the interview with the religious dignitaries, (with the exception of the woman cleric), was spontaneous. The cleric's own schedule was different because she has a part time job in a hospital, and is also married with children. Her favourite free time is in the night after 8 pm, (after supper and domestic chores).

#### Chiefs

Four chiefs were interviewed. The writer was fortunate to have among them a woman chief, (it was the first time the writer had seen a woman chief). Women chiefs are very rare in Nigeria. The woman's name even reflects the rarity. She is called 'Lolo Odi Uko'. Lolo is a woman of royal status, and Odi Uko means very rare. One of the male chiefs belongs to the non-hereditary order of chieftaincy. It is important at this stage to note that in Imo State, one must distinguish between hereditary and non-hereditary chieftaincy. The first is as old as the society and accession to the throne is based on heredity. For example, the first son always inherits his father's title at his death. Although it must be mentioned that the amount of respect that the chief will receive from his subjects will depend partly on several variables including his own personality and that of his family.

The second type of chieftaincy is a more recent event and can be acquired by achievement. For instance, an individual who through sheer hard work becomes reasonably

wealthy, can be made a chief by his local community elders. But the hereditary chieftaincy is more authoritative and commands far greater respect than the non-hereditary one.

From the writer's knowledge of Igbo chiefs, knowing the time that would suit them regarding the interview, was relatively easy. One of the most convenient times is in the evening especially after 6.30 p.m. when they have done with the day's deliberations and are resting in the armchair, eating kola nuts and drinking palm wine, while supper is cooking. The only exception was 'Lolo Odi Uko'. She was at the time staying with her grandchildren, her own interview was after 8 p.m., (just like the woman cleric). She could not be interviewed until she had cooked supper for the youngsters and finished her domestic chores. Actually as a chief she should be served - but by and large, in Imo State she is basically a woman, a wife, a mother and grandmother, and has to do all the household chores that an average Igbo woman does.

Private transport facilities once again proved invaluable with regard to the interview with the chiefs, as some of them live in remote villages, surrounded by thick woods and forests - quite scary in the night, and hardly accessible by day let alone by night. For an immobile researcher interviewing chiefs could prove an arduous task, because when public transport stops him or her on the major road, finding the means to get to the chiefs' residential palaces could be very difficult, more so in the night.

### The Natural Leaders and Local Politicians

Two natural leaders and two local politicians were interviewed. Owing to the nature of their daily commitment, the only time that was convenient for them was early in the morning. Each had to be interviewed before breakfast. None of the interviews lasted beyond 8 a.m. They were incredibly knowledgeable. In fact, one of the local politicians had so much to say that his own interview was continued the following morning. Significantly, because of the writer's personal transport, a respondent could be interviewed at any time in any place.

### Education Officers

For the providers of education it was quite difficult to find a convenient time for each of them. They were five including two women. Some of the officers were from the Secondary Sector of the Imo State educational system. There were cancellations, and in each case the writer only learnt about it at the very moment the interview was due to start. A new appointment was given. This is one of the problems facing a researcher in a developing society as already pointed out - particularly if he or she does not have the advantage of personal transport to go as often as possible, until a suitable time is finally fixed. It can therefore be justifiably said that personal mobility is indispensable in a developing society with regard to empirical studies, because among other things, it means the ability to shuttle from one place to another, by day or night, as the occasion demands.

### National Council of Women's Societies

The women in this organisation can be found in all walks of life. The writer was fortunate to interview eight of them, including three that had once held the office of presidency. Some preferred the evenings and some, Sunday afternoons. Those lecturing in institutions of higher learning find Sundays more relaxing.<sup>7</sup>

### A Moslem

The writer was quite fortunate to interview a moslem man. It must be clearly stated that he was not interviewed because he belonged to a specific religious sect or ethnic group. The writer discovered that he was well educated, with immense experience both of Nigeria and overseas. As a patriotic Nigerian citizen he felt he had important views and suggestions regarding the study, and it was on this basis that he was interviewed. Like all other respondents, he expressed a desire to remain anonymous. He was interviewed during his break time.

Unlike questionnaires that do not involve so much of the researcher's time, interviews consume a lot of time. Besides, respondents can only be interviewed at their most convenient time. There were 30 respondents and it took between two to three months to interview all of them. This is a relatively short period of time. Good transport facilities and the writer's knowledge of the nature of the work some of the respondents do (like the chiefs and the clergy), facilitated the interviews, notably in terms of fixing the right time.

### The Unplanned Interview

It is noteworthy that the writer conducted other interviews outside the planned ones. It involved about 200 people - men and women of various educational and social backgrounds, (including parents and teachers). It was the transport facilities at the disposal of the writer that made this possible. It was a unique experience. Arguably no researcher has had such a wonderful privilege. Because of the easy mobility the writer was able to save a lot of time and consequently was able to visit many people who were eager to make valid contributions to the study. Teachers liked to talk to the writer straight after school. Many parents invited the writer to their homes in the evenings after the day's work. Many came to see the writer at her base on Sundays. It must be stressed that the unplanned interview was informal. The volunteer respondents were happy to express their views, and incredibly made worthwhile contributions.

### Important Places Visited

#### Abuja

The writer took advantage of her stay in Nigeria during the empirical study to visit places of educational importance, in connection with the study. One of such places is Abuja, (in northern Nigeria), the new federal capital of Nigeria and also the headquarters of the "Better Life Programme for the Rural Woman". It has a very strong emphasis on education - especially women's education. The founder, Mrs. Babangida, wife of the former Head of



State, was written to by the writer's supervisor through the Nigerian High Commission in London, when the writer was about to leave the UK for Nigeria. Lagos, (in the West), the former capital of Nigeria, was the first place the writer stopped when she arrived in Nigeria and it became a temporary base.

From Lagos the writer went to Abuja by plane, which was the best means given the enormous distance involved. It is also more convenient and faster to reach Abuja through Lagos than from Imo State in the East, since the distance is even far greater. Before the writer left Lagos, the Better Life office in Abuja was contacted by telephone. The woman in charge of the programme is highly educated - a woman of great experience, a school principal, (including girls' institutions), for many years. She received the writer very well and introduced her to other executive members of the programme. The main object of the visit was to see in terms of first hand information what the programme is all about and how it works in practice.

In lengthy discussions and interviews the writer was told that the main objectives of the programme include:

1. Economic independence for women - bearing particularly in mind, rural women and the hard conditions in which they live.
2. Restoration of women's dignity.
3. Enhancing women's status by raising self-awareness - particularly in terms of what women can or cannot do. For instance, women are made aware of their rights not only educationally, but also socially, politically and even legally. Consequent upon this, now women in Nigeria can bail someone out or stand as surety - something that has never happened. Politically women are said to be gaining grounds and that in the 1993 General Election for a President, a woman came fourth in the country.
4. Hygiene and Family Health. The writer was told that one of the highlights of the

programme was educating women with regard to hygiene and family health, and the need to live in good hygienic environment. Women are taught about baby care, including preparation of baby food in sound hygienic conditions. It is thought that this will help to reduce infant mortality which is much higher in developing countries compared with developed ones. Remarkably women are also taught to boil drinking water and allow it to cool before drinking especially those that live in areas where the quality of water for domestic consumption is in doubt. In addition, women are given regular instructions on how to wash fruits and vegetables before eating them especially fruits with edible skins like mango and guava.

5. Education. On the issue of girls' and women's education, one executive member made it clear that the promotion of their school education is the programme's most important target, notably those that reside in the rural areas where the daily life is harsh and unbearable. Through the 'Better Life Programme' women are made constantly aware of the validity of school education. As a result, many women, including old ones now go to school, in the North. They are eager to acquire basic education that will enable them to read and write and thus communicate with the outside world - away from their own immediate environment. As the official put it:

*"It is only now that women know what education is. They come out in large numbers and more so because the education is more or less informal. They would learn in the farm, in the bush, by the riverside, in the market place etc. They don't need to be within the four walls of the classroom."*

Significantly, the informal method seems to be working well. The main attraction seems to be the natural setting. For example, the old ones feel relaxed, learning in the farm as opposed to the classroom, which may scare them away. Understandably, they might feel nervous and ashamed of going to school at their age. But the fact that they are out in large numbers to learn how to read and write, could be indicative of a burning desire to fulfil an ambition - which perhaps in their younger days they did not have the opportunity to achieve.

## Education of the Nomads

Arguably the most outstanding achievement of the 'Better Life Programme' so far, is the impact it has had on the nomadic communities of northern Nigeria - especially among the Cattle Fulani. The writer was told that in 1992 a nomadic school, (with classes 1 - 3), was built for the Fulani nomads. There were 103 pupils. Before the end of that very year, four more schools were built for the nomads in four different area councils. This is a remarkable achievement given that the nomads have always resisted western education.

The writer was shown the 'Better Life Programme' library. Understandably, most of the books are about the programme, with very informative ideas about the education of women and girls in Nigeria. The writer read some of the books and thought that with the passage of time the programme might become more popular. But one of the organisers expressed concern regarding the fact that the programme was not receiving as much publicity as it should; and also the fact that it has come under severe internal criticism from the very women for whom such an elaborate and expensive programme has been set up. The official went on to say that the under privileged women whose lot the programme mainly seeks to improve now say that it is their counterparts who are already well off, that are benefiting from the programme; and that because of this the grumbling women have renamed the programme "Better Life Programme for Better Off Women".

## Federal Ministry of Education

After the successful visit to Abuja, the writer was eager to go to the Federal Ministry of Education in Lagos to see if anything was being specifically done in connection with girls and women's education in Nigeria. The Federal Ministry of Education in Lagos is of course not only where important decisions about education are taken, but also where all the major policies affecting the educational system in the entire federation are formulated. On arrival at the Ministry, the writer was told that a department has been established exclusively for

women and was taken there. The writer discussed with some of the officials and it was quite obvious that girls and women's education was receiving attention. There were magazines and journals with valuable information about women's education in various aspects. The officials in charge of the women's department explained that the creation of a department solely for women - is mainly to monitor women's educational needs and progress. The same reason also accounts for the creation of a women's department in the Ministry of Education of every State. It was also claimed that above all, the existence of a separate department for women would help to tackle the problems women face in Nigeria in terms of getting into the so-called men-dominated disciplines.

The writer read some government papers including the Annual Report of April 1990, in connection with the establishment by government decree of National Commission for Women. Some of the objectives include:

- a. To promote the full utilisation of women in the development of human resources and to bring about their acceptance as full participants in any phase of national development, with equal rights and corresponding obligation.
- b. To stimulate action to improve women's civic, political, cultural, social and economic education.
- c. To work towards elimination of all social and cultural practices which tend to discriminate against and dehumanise womanhood.

### The Universities

From the temporary base in Lagos, the writer visited some of the institutions of higher learning including the universities. It emerged that some of the lecturers had done some studies about girls' education. One had looked specifically into the plight of girls in mixed schools. The lecturers seemed concerned about the employment situation in the country, (which of course affects education - especially women's education), and told the writer that

owing to poor conditions of service, some very brilliant lecturers had left their teaching career in search of other jobs. The writer also visited the University of Nigeria Nsukka, the first Igbo university.

### Other States

The Abuja trip motivated the writer to visit a few States to see how the 'Better Life Programme', (with its strong emphasis on women's education), was being organised in other places away from its headquarters in Abuja. Consequently, the writer visited some southeastern states including, Enugu, Anembra and Imo - all Igbo speaking States. One of the most important things the writer learnt is that each State has to make a decision in terms of what its own women really need. Some of the women who have played leading roles in organising the programme stated that in the North, owing to the high illiteracy rate among women, especially the moslem women, accent is on school education, but that in places like the South where western education has been well established and many parents are becoming increasingly aware of the validity of girls' and women's education, school education is not the priority of the 'Better Life Programme' - but women's economic, social and political aspirations.

It is worthy of note that the writer was told that women in the rural areas (in the South) feel embittered and alienated from the programme, claiming that away from the State capitals there is no sign of the programme elsewhere in the States. They were said to have accused the women that are better off - of having exploited the programme for their own benefit. As a result, they too have renamed the programme 'Better Life Programme for Better Off Women'. However, as a result of the programme, communities have set up banks known as 'People's Bank'. Individual community members can borrow money at a low interest rate. Some women try to produce various items for sale and both internal and outside markets are being found for the products, including crafts. Some female farmers are taught to abandon

the primitive methods of farming and adopt modern ones, as a result of which some women can now drive tractors. In Imo State some women feel that the programme has boosted women's confidence. Significantly, the visit to the various States to see how the programme was working was a rewarding experience. Undoubtedly it was made possible by the fact that the writer was mobile and had a lot of time to spare.

### Reaction of the Respondents

While the empirical study was going on it became quite obvious that the study has popular appeal to all classes of the society. Many people praised it and found it very interesting and informative. Some women education officers asked why such an interesting and important piece of study had not been thought of earlier. Many students, (particularly female students), thanked the writer indicating that the study would highlight the plight of girls' education in a male dominated society. Amazingly one male education officer expressed surprise that the writer is a private student and emphasised the fact that such a very important educational study is worthy of a scholarship. The officer went further to say that the nation's immense wealth was being wasted on things that were not for the good of the people.

### Empirical Study and Mobility

From the writer's personal experience, it is quite obvious that, personal mobility (although while not indispensable), is extremely useful with regard to empirical studies in a developing country. For example, it makes the method devised by the writer, namely, 'On the Spot Approach', possible. Some of the merits of this method include the fact that:

- a. It helps the researcher not to rely helplessly on correspondence that in a developing society is fraught with uncertainties.
- b. Problems or emergencies arising from the empirical study can be contained more swiftly.

- c. Respondents in the remotest localities can be reached.
- d. The researcher is able to add more dimension to the empirical study, (like the unplanned interviews and various places visited by the writer), and thereby achieve more.
- e. Private transport helps to ensure that a large amount of data is collected, by greatly reducing wastage.

### Schools, Discipline and Empirical Studies

It is possible to learn a great deal about educational institutions through empirical studies especially in terms of organisation, discipline and even academic performance. This is evident in the course of the investigation when the writer discovered that the schools in the rural areas were better organised than those in the urban centres. It was during the collection of the completed questionnaires that this was very convincingly proved. In all the village schools the questionnaires were completed and ready, even before the expected day. But for the urban schools the writer had to go to each school several times, before all the questionnaires could be collected. There is hardly any doubt that there is more discipline in the village educational institutions, as opposed to the urban ones. This may be largely due to the fact that some urban students are said to be unruly, arrogant, haughty and overbearing. The possibility of students slipping in and out of school unnoticed and without permission cannot therefore be ruled out. Truancy is also possible.

### Private Schools

From the way the questionnaires were completed, particularly in linguistic terms, the private schools are lagging academically behind, compared with the other schools. Judging from the questions that require the students to make complete statements, it is clear that many students especially in Mission, model and government schools, can write very good English.

The same can be said about some of those in the State controlled schools. But many of their counterparts in the private commercial institutions are quite weak in English language.

### The Mission Schools

It can be justifiably said that today's Mission schools in Imo State are a true reflection of the old Mission schools. Good organisation and discipline are well maintained. There is high academic performance that the authorities must be very proud of. Religious education is a very important part of the curriculum unlike other schools, and moral standards are high. Parents who are worried about moral laxity, send their children to the Mission schools. Interestingly, Mission school students are taught farming and actually take pride in farming. The writer saw them at work and also saw some of their farms. This is a very important aspect of education especially at a time when youngsters tend to rush to the towns and cities, in search of white-collar jobs, and think that farm work is for the old illiterate villagers.

### COMPUTER AND DATA ANALYSIS

The role of the computer in this study notably in terms of data processing and analysis is invaluable. It is hard to imagine how these could have been effectively done in the pre-computer days, given particularly the sheer size of the data. For example, there were 69 questions with regard to the teachers' questionnaires, 113 teachers participated - giving a total of 7,797 responses. The students' questionnaires were made up of 63 questions and since 592 students took part in the empirical study, their own total came to 37,296. The combined responses, (teachers' and students'), totalled 45,093. It is important to note that all the responses were not simply 'yes' or 'no'. Many were value-related responses. For example, out of 45,093 responses, 22,081 were value related. Consequently, in some cases a respondent could write as much detail as he or she wanted in a given question.



### Transportation of the Questionnaires and the Interview Questions

Special mention must be made regarding the way by which the questionnaires and the interview questions were taken to Nigeria and how they were brought back to Britain for computer processing and analysis. The questionnaires and the interview questions filled two huge travelling trunks. The writer was advised that it would be very expensive to travel to Nigeria by air with so heavy a luggage. A cheaper means would be to send the luggage unaccompanied to Nigeria either by sea or by cargo plane. Getting someone to travel with the writer was also considered advisable given the size of the luggage, and the difficulty of moving it about, particularly at the airports. The writer's relative in Canada kindly volunteered to come to Britain to fulfil this crucial role.

But the other problem, namely, the financial implication of getting the luggage to Nigeria remained unsolved. Given the fact that there was no guarantee regarding the safety of the luggage either by sea or by the cargo plane, plus the fact that it could take too long by sea, the writer decided to travel by air with the luggage. This was because in the event of loss, the empirical study would be adversely affected. To begin with, producing all the questionnaires and interview questions all over again would have been impracticable, especially on the required scale - given scant facilities in Nigeria and the inestimable financial costs. It is worthy of note that by choosing to accompany the luggage in a passenger plane, the writer was motivated mainly by the importance of the study and the crucial role of the empirical study in it.

It was at the Heathrow airport that the writer became fully aware of the true realities of the financial implications, when the two travelling trunks weighed over two thousand pounds in excess luggage. More excess luggage would have been incurred had the writer not taken only very few personal effects contained only in hand luggage. The amount obviously far exceeded what the writer had expected, and because it could not all be paid, the empirical

study seemed to be in jeopardy. It took a lengthy and tough negotiation with the airline officials before the writer was allowed to travel in the plane with the luggage.

Not surprisingly, the same problem resurfaced in Nigeria when the writer wanted to bring back the two huge trunk boxes, (then containing data), following the successful completion of the empirical study in Nigeria. It became even more expedient that the luggage was accompanied in a passenger plane because loss of part of - or the entire data could have dire consequences with regard to the study. At the airport there was an excess luggage charge of over 9,000 Naira. Fortunately, the writer's relatives who accompanied her to the airport were able to handle the financial issues with immense difficulty. They were fully aware that the empirical study was central to the main study and also that it had already cost a lot of money.

However, on arrival in Britain, the most important task was that of processing and analysing the data. But the very first phase of that long and arduous process was coding. This meant that the data, which filled two huge travelling trunks had to be translated into codes. The coding phase was very important since the computer can not analyse information straight from the paper. Although the amount of information to be coded was enormous as already indicated - the actual coding did not prove very difficult because of the writer's knowledge of both English and Igbo vocabularies, which made it possible for appropriate codes to be remembered quickly. As much as possible, the information from the questionnaires was coded in such a way that the message it conveyed would be easily remembered. For example, the investigation revealed that Imo State students were faced with three pressures, namely:

- a. financial pressure
- b. peer pressure
- c. parental pressure

The three ps, (or pressures), were in educational terms, all negative. The codes used to represent the pressures were as follows:

fp (financial pressure)

pp (peer pressure).

Regarding parental pressure, in some cases parents might bring pressure to bear on their children to do domestic work, or to marry - especially in the case of girls. When the pressure is for domestic chores the code is: ppd (parental pressure for domestic chores). But when the pressure is for a girl to get married, the corresponding code is: ppm (parental pressure for marriage). It is quite obvious that with coding, the data size was greatly reduced. It is also equally obvious that coding entails a lot of hard work because it involves among other things reading each response very well in order to know the best code to represent it. The entire coding took about six months which is a relatively short period of time - given the size of the data - 45,093 responses, many were quite lengthy. Besides, each response did not exceed 4 characters. It is important to note that the computer does not analyse more than 8 characters. There is also no doubt that the longer the response, the more difficult it is to represent it in a code. The completion of the coding marked the end of the first phase of data processing and analysis, and the beginning of the second phase - featuring the use of computer.

As already indicated, the role of the computer at this stage of the study is inestimable. It is however worth noting that as the writer had no previous knowledge of computer, a course in computer became inevitable. This was done in Hull and Sheffield Universities respectively. Owing to proximity, most of the work was done in the latter; (the writer is resident in Sheffield). It should be noted that a letter from the Institute of Education in Hull to the Sheffield University, made it possible for the writer to use the facilities in the latter institution - notably computers. The writer was also given very good help by some of the Sheffield University students with advanced knowledge of computer, (particularly Ghanaian

students), who were quite willing to spend some time teaching the writer. With easy access to the computer, in a place that is within easy reach, the writer was able to practise for many hours a day, (at times 10 hours).

It is interesting to note that the writer found textbooks on computer extremely useful. For instance, from the Introduction to PC's and DOS, one could learn a lot about the various aspects of the PC hardware as well as how to use it. There was, in addition, highly informative literature about preparing and defining data and also about statistical software packages such as SPSS-X and SPSS-X Job, which are used to analyse information. It is worth noting that the information gathered from literature enormously enhanced the writer's computer practice. There is always a limit to the amount of help one can expect or get in any given situation so, self help, is always the best help. Therefore as much as possible the writer tried to put into practice various relevant information from the text books. Consequently, it took a relatively short period of time, (approximately two weeks), for the writer to acquire sufficient computer knowledge to start the data processing and analysis.

However, before information can be analysed with SPSS, it must be entered into a computer file. But the very first step was to transfer the data, (the coded response), from paper into the computer disks, thereby creating computer files. Since 13 schools took part in the empirical study, the writer considered it appropriate to create 13 files, so that each file could represent a school, (the students and the teachers). This was one of the most trying stages of the computer processing, because disks are very fragile and must be kept very carefully in specially made boxes for safety - since exposure to light, scratching the surface, etc. could mean the loss of the entire information contained in a disk. Besides, any piece of data, entered into the computer must be saved in the disk, if not it could also be irretrievably lost. It took about two months to enter all the data into the computer disks, that in effect meant the creation of 13 data files. Each file had a special name in which it was saved and

recalled on the computer screen if and when required. Watching the computer recall a file and its content displayed on the screen was fascinating, it was like watching an enigma.

It is noteworthy that the writer used two systems with regard to the computer processing and analysis, namely, the Multi Edit (ME) and the Windows. For entering the data from paper into the computer disks, the Multi Edit was used. One of the incredible advantages of this system is its organising ability. For instance, the writer was able to enter the variables of each case, (or respondent), in a single row or file, however huge the information is, the elasticity of Multi Edit knows no bounds. As each respondent represents a case, in computer terms, it meant that variables from a number of respondents could be seen at the same time, thereby making comparisons possible, unlike the Windows - where the variables of just one respondent can fill the entire screen. Significantly, if there is an error, one gets an error message of some kind, thus making instant correction possible.

But the disadvantage of the Multi Edit system is that it relies exclusively on language. One for instance, has to know what commands to type, and must get them exactly right. Besides, the software which operates under the Multi Edit system does not conform to any known pattern. Consequently, the knowledge of one, does not necessarily mean the knowledge of the other. In other words, there must be a specific set of commands for any task one wants the computer to perform.

But in preparing the data files for the SPSS files - for the ultimate analysis, the writer was advised to use the 'Windows' system. It is noteworthy that when using Windows, one finds that once the basics have been learnt, one can go a long way by following more or less the same pattern, unlike the Multi Edit, where the knowledge of a particular pattern does not help with the other. One advantage is that the Windows environment enables a user to experiment with the menu system, this system enables a user to build up complex statistical

commands quickly and easily, using 'point' and 'shoot' method, (with the cursor), without necessarily getting involved in detailed knowledge of the command language.

Apart from the advice to use the Windows for the preparation of the SPSS files, the need to split the files was strongly suggested to the writer; so that instead of a single file representing a school, (students and teachers), two files had to be created. This was to ensure that the students' files would be quite separate from those of their teachers. The reason was that ultimately all the students' files would be joined together to make one long continuous file, the same with the teachers' files, because the computer could not process both files at the same time, since they were not exactly the same. When the files were split, there were 26 files instead of 13, 13 for the students and 13 for the teachers. The joining of the files was followed with the restructuring of the file contents - deleting what was not needed, which the SPSS-X Job would not analyse. This special preparation for the ultimate analysis took 3 - 4 weeks.

Once the files were ready, the final aspect was running the SPSS-X Job. The usual job for this package is threefold:

- a. data definition
- b. data transformation
- c. procedure specification.

The data definition provides information about the variables and their location in the data file. The data transformation is used to restrict analyses to a subset of cases, (or respondents), create new variables and modify existing variables. Procedure specification's own task is to indicate what statistics, reports or tables should be produced. The actual SPSS-X Job or analysis did not take too long, (about a week). In other words, what goes on before then is where most of the problems lie. But this final phase was extremely important. For instance, it made it possible for the first time for the writer to know the way the students and their

teachers responded. The writer for example, could say the number as well as the percentage of the students, who were in favour of coeducation and those that were not. In addition, the writer could also find which students were urban or rural-based, their gender, age, etc.

With the above knowledge, the writer was able to interpret the responses, compile reports, and write up, (including statistical tables). It is absolutely inconceivable how all this could have been done without the computer - given particularly the size of the data. On a personal level, the writer has benefited enormously with regard to computer, especially when one considers the fact that before this study, the writer had no knowledge what so ever about the computer. But the knowledge of computer was to prove invaluable and truly manifested itself in the process of data analysis, notably when the writer was able to work with both the Multi Edit and the Windows systems at various stages of the data processing and analysis. In sum, the computer processing and analysis, although undeniably long and arduous, can be invaluablely rewarding.

Unquestionably, with the computer, a researcher can now undertake a very elaborate empirical study which could among other things mean - a richer piece of study; as opposed to the pre computer days, when the research students of the time confined themselves to relatively small scale field work, which they could analyse with minimum difficulty. It can therefore be justifiably assumed that the new computer age has added a positive dimension to research, particularly educational research. This is evident in the following data analysis of the empirical study

**THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE****STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRES****Key to Tables:**

U - Urban

R - Rural

0 - Didn't answer

M - Male

F - Female

X - Not required to answer

T - Total

Y - Yes

N - No

D - Don't Know

It is important at this stage to note that although percentage will be indicated in most of the tables, in some it may not be relevant. In the tables where percentage is deemed necessary, not all the variables will require it, only those that convey crucial pieces of information. Brief explanation will precede analysis in some of the tables. The issues that are highly sensitive will be analysed in great detail – like marriage, domestic chores, female head of state etc. Paragraphs will separate reflections, comments and interpretation of data. The chapter will end with a short summary of some of the most important aspects of the data.

**Indicate your age, (in years)****Table: 1**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>Under 16</b>	24	51	75	104	212	316
<b>Under 20</b>	21	5	26	58	93	151
<b>Over 20</b>	2	-	2	8	14	22

village students 83%

girls over 20 58%

boys over 20 42%

The figures in the above table show that an overwhelming majority of secondary school pupils, 83%, live in the villages.



This reflects reality in that unlike the Yoruba, the Igbo are essentially rural dwellers. Another contributory factor is the fact that boarding is no longer essential. With many secondary schools now located deep in the heart of the rural communities, many boys and girls are day students; and the tendency is to attend the nearest village school.

One obvious vital educational implication is that, it has enabled many parents to provide secondary education for their children - parents who have never been able to do so, because of high costs of boarding education. This was mainly why only few parents could afford to send their children to secondary schools before the Civil War, which ended in 1970. Before then, boarding education was more or less the order of the day, and secondary schools were relatively few.

The table shows also that girls far out number boys, this may not be representative because of the commercial private institutions in the villages which attract more girls than boys, especially girls in the older age range. For instance, of the over 20s, 42% are boys and 58% girls. Since commercial education is comparatively cheap, many parents prefer to send their children there, especially girls. They study mostly typing and shorthand. It should be stressed that the disparity created some degree of dilemma for the writer, in terms of whether or not to include the commercial schools. But the decision to include them was unquestionably right. For instance, whatever the disadvantages of the disparity - to exclude them would have been far worse given that it would have meant

1. Unrepresentative sampling. Obviously without the commercial schools the participating schools would not have been representative
2. Concealing the realities of female education. there is no doubt that excluding the commercial schools would have meant among other things - hiding the realities of female education in Nigeria generally, and in Imo State in particular. For example, people will not know that commercial schools are attended mainly by girls and

women - mostly for economic reasons on the part of parents. Both the quantity and quality of commercial education leave much to be desired. But parents are not particularly bothered as long as their sons attend secondary schools, which means that gender is a big educational issue in Imo state, especially in terms of the quality of education provided for boys and girls. From the table, it is also clear that the vast majority of the students are 16 and under. In Nigeria there is no age limit for attending any educational institution, which accounts for the presence of the 20s and the over 20s in the secondary schools.

Another reason for the presence of the older students is the examination system which operates in Nigeria. Unlike Britain where children in the primary and secondary schools are automatically promoted each academic year from one class to the next, their counterparts in Nigeria have to pass the promotion examinations. A child who fails repeats the same class and cannot go on to the next one until he or she passes. Children who fail constantly may become considerably older while still in the primary or secondary school. They may become frustrated, and drop out. This is why fear of school examinations or inability to pass them, is one of the reasons why youngsters drop out of the school system; (see the teacher's questionnaires, Table 18). At times they end up in commercial institutions, (notably girls), where academic ability is not a pre-requisite.

**Indicate whether male or female.**

**Table: 2**

	U	R
M	47	170
F	56	319
T	103	489

As already indicated, the numerical strength of the girls may not necessarily reflect the trend in Imo State, or in the country. The above table reveals the fact that there are more female students in the rural areas than male.

This may be due to a number of factors. Firstly, apart from the presence of a large number of girls in the village commercial institutions, some urban parents may at times decide to send their daughters to the villages, to stay with relatives and attend village schools. This is to ensure that the girls are not affected by the corruption and moral decadence often associated with urban centres.

Secondly, where a parent or both parents have elderly relatives, living in the rural areas, some of their daughters could be sent to the villages to live with them in order to assist them in domestic duties. This will inevitably include fetching water and firewood - considered too laborious for very old people. Consequently, the girls have to attend the secondary schools located in the rural areas.

Thirdly, some wealthy village parents might send their sons to boarding schools in the urban centres while the girls attend the village schools. This is mainly because the secondary schools in the urban centres have better academic facilities than those in the rural areas, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table: 17).

**Do your parents see school education as important?**

**Table: 3**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	%
<b>y</b>	47	56	103	168	317	485	99%
<b>n</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>d</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>0</b>	-	-	-	2	2	4	1%

The above table is unquestionably fascinating in educational terms. Nearly all the students (99%), indicated that their parents regard school education as important.

This obviously shows how popular formal education has become in Imo State, and arguably in many other parts of the country. It does also reflect growing parental confidence in school education, which in turn suggests that many parents are becoming aware of the validity of western education particularly with regard to girls.

**Should all school age boys go to school?****Table: 4**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	43	52	95	125	230	355	76%
<b>n</b>	2	3	5	29	43	72	13%
<b>d</b>	2	-	2	14	40	54	
<b>0</b>	-	-	-	3	6	9	

Although the majority of the students, (76%), are in favour of all school age boys going to school, 13% think otherwise.

Having overwhelmingly indicated that their parents regard school education as important, it might have been assumed that the students themselves are equally supportive of school education, for all school age youngsters.

The above question was designed to find out what the youngsters think about school education, and whether they feel there should be other alternatives. Although the opponents of formal education for all school age boys are in the minority, it is important to find out in the next table what their objections are.

**Give brief explanation why all boys of school age should not go to school.****Table: 5**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>Bpf</b>	-	-	-	7	13	20
<b>Bpj</b>	-	-	-	5	3	8
<b>Bu</b>	-	-	-	5	7	12
<b>Fp</b>	1	1	2	3	5	8
<b>Qm</b>	-	-	-	5	5	10
<b>Td</b>	-	-	-	2	5	7
<b>Pwt</b>	-	1	1	-	3	3
<b>Nit</b>	1	1	2	2	2	4
<b>X</b>	45	53	98	141	276	417

bpf - boys pressed for farm work

bpj - boys pressed for job

bu - business

fp - financial pressure

qm - quick money

td - trade

pwt - palm wine tapping

nit - no interest

It is clear from the above table that some students object to all boys of school age going to school for a variety of reasons.

Some of them for example, fear that if all school age boys were to go to school, some families may starve. A village school boy even thinks that it is unreasonable to expect all boys of school age to go to school. In responding to the question another male respondent says:

*“No, some of them go to work to get money for their food.”*

This shows that in developing countries, owing to abject poverty, some children start very early in life to carry responsibilities far beyond their age. In those circumstances, financial pressure is always an educational issue. This is quite evident in another boy's response:

*“No, all school age boys should not go to school, because money is hard to get, so not all is getting money to send them.”*

It is worth noting that financial pressure is one of the most serious reasons why students drop out, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table 18).

It should however be noted that some boys and girls could inexplicably, develop intense dislike for school, and decide to resist school education.

*“Some boys don't like to go to school.”*

It should be pointed out that in some cases, the parents might be relatively rich, so that financial pressure has nothing to do with the young people's dislike for school. In such cases, parents and teachers should carefully and patiently find out the cause. At times, it could be bullying or a dislike or hatred for a particular teacher. It should be pointed out that some students hold the view that:

*“Not everyone is interested in studying.”*

However, boys' physical strength is being seen by some as sufficient reason to keep them away from school. As one of the female students put it:

*“Boys are physically fit and can be trained easily for farm work.”*

It would be recalled that boys' physical fitness, in terms of their ability to do any type of job, was first highlighted by the highly experienced headmistress during the pilot study.

In some cases, bereavement can adversely affect a child's school education. A boy said about his friend who is not at school:

*"His father is not alive so that there is no money to send him to school."*

This strengthens the case for female education, not only in Imo State but all over the country. If a woman is well educated and has a job, she can help with her children's education in times of adversity. The need for good female education is highlighted in the brief but moving account of another boy, in relation to his friend, who is not receiving secondary education.

*"It is because his father is dead and the mother has no money for his education."*

This is also one of the reasons why students drop out, (see teacher's questionnaire, Table: 18).

Surprisingly some female students have objected to all their male counterparts of school age going to school, because they claim that the State may experience acute shortage of palm wine:

*"If all school age boys go to school there will be no one to tap wine for us."*

This, not only highlights the importance and the demand for this unique drink from the palm tree, but also the extent to which some people can go, to ensure that it is in regular supply, in Imo State. However, a lifetime of illiteracy is too high a prize to pay for palm wine. It does show some measure of selfishness on the part of the young advocates of palm wine. Selfishness should be discouraged in children by parents and teachers.

Surprisingly, assessing school education from employment point of view, some boys questioned the validity of acquiring school education, when there is so much unemployment in the State and in the nation as a whole. They argued that going into business to make quick money would be better than having a university degree and being unemployed, stressing that the person would be a laughing stock, as he struggles desperately to feed himself, while the

business man or woman is comfortable and feeds well. A male student indicated that education is not important, and that in Nigeria today, only traders feed well. He despises school education, but holds strong positive views about business.

*“Business men and women are the richest people we have in our society today.”*

Undoubtedly, fear of unemployment is one of the factors that frustrate the educational aspirations of some boys and girls in Imo State, and make them drop out, (see teacher’s questionnaires, Table 18). Some students suggested that the boys who are under enormous pressure from their parents, to do some jobs for money, should not go to school.

### **Should all girls of school age go to school?**

**Table: 6**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>Y</b>	43	54	97	136	250	386	82%
<b>N</b>	2	2	4	18	28	46	8%
<b>D</b>	2	-	2	12	33	45	
<b>X</b>	-	-	-	7	5	12	
<b>0</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	

Significantly, the above table reveals that more students, (82%), think that all girls of school age should attend school; but in the case of all boys of school age, only 76% are of the opinion that they should go to school. And whereas 13% of the respondents object to all school age boys having formal education, only 8% are opposed to all girls of school age receiving school education.

The fact that most of the students would like to see all girls of school age go to school as opposed to their male counterparts, could be partly due to the fact that there is more pressure on boys to work in order to sustain their families or to leave school and go into business, with a view to making quick money. It is however important to examine closely the reasons why some of the youngsters are against the idea that all girls of school age should go to school.

**Give brief explanation why all school age girls should not go to school.****Table: 7**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>Fp</b>	1	2	3	7	9	16	38%
<b>dc</b>	1	-	1	5	7	12	26%
<b>nit</b>	-	-	-	2	-	2	
<b>Td</b>	-	-	-	-	3	3	
<b>Fw</b>	-	-	-	2	4	6	
<b>m</b>	-	-	-	2	5	7	
<b>x</b>	45	60	115	149	288	602	

Fp - financial pressure  
 dc - domestic chores  
 nit - no interest  
 td - trade (petty trading)  
 fw - farm work  
 m - marriage

It is clear from the above table that some of the reasons given by the opponents of school education for all school age boys also apply to the girls. Financial pressure is obviously one of the most serious reasons why the students think that all boys and girls of school age should not be expected to go to school. However, the fact that it accounts for 13% of all the reasons in the case of boys, and 38% with regard to girls is significant.

It does suggest that when parents are under severe financial pressure, girls' education is more likely to be stopped than the boys'. This confirms the woman chief's statement that when it comes to the crunch, parents would always prefer to send boys to school. Some male students believe in male superiority, and consequently feel that girls should not receive formal education. Arguing from biblical point of view they insist that:

*"girls are subordinate to boys according to the Holy Bible."*

Several male students consider it a bad idea to let all girls of school age go to school.

According to them:

*"Some girls ... don't like school. Some girls love helping their parents and often get married."*



This is indicative of the fact that in Imo State, within the family system, girls are more likely to volunteer to help their parents. This is evident in the way some girls responded with regard to the question about all girls of school age going to school. One girl for instance, said:

*“No, some girls help parents to sell things in the market.”*

Some of the male students argued that there is no need for all girls to be ‘bookish’.

It is worth noting that some parents, notably those from illiterate background, who are hardly aware of the validity of female education, may decide to withdraw their daughters from school, and leave the boys; because they think that female education is of little consequence. But the girls themselves yearn to go to school and are eager to point out that:

*“... Girls of nowadays like to go to school. It is because boys of today like to run out into business, get out of school to make a lot of quick money.”*

This is why some of the teachers indicated that in some schools, girls outnumber boys.

**Do you know anyone who should be in the primary school but is not?**

**Table: 8**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	19	30	49	97	158	255	51%
<b>n</b>	20	16	36	45	112	157	
<b>d</b>	7	10	17	13	45	58	
<b>0</b>	1	-	1	15	4	19	

From the figures above, it is obvious that most of the students either have friends - or at least know someone who is not receiving primary education. This seems to suggest that a large number is missing out on primary school education.

Arguably the situation may be the same in the rest of the country. In these recessionary times, it is highly unlikely that all these children will get jobs, so the possibility of some of them indulging in anti social behaviour cannot be ruled out.

**Do you know anyone who should be in the****secondary school but is not?****Table: 9**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	21	38	59	120	202	322	64%
<b>n</b>	24	16	40	42	109	151	
<b>d</b>	2	2	4	5	2	7	
<b>0</b>	-	-	-	3	6	9	

Statistically, the students even know more youngsters who are missing out on education at the secondary level than at the primary sector. For example, 51% of the students know children who are not attending primary school. But when it comes to secondary education, the percentage rises, with 64% of the students indicating that they know fellow young people who are not in the secondary school.

This does suggest that the higher the educational level, the fewer the consumers. Even so, a closer look at the above table reveals that more girls know fellow youngsters who are missing out on secondary education than boys, which seems to confirm the fact that, the higher the level of education, the fewer the girls and women. One obvious reason is the tendency on the part of parents, (especially fathers), to send only their sons to school in times of financial difficulty.

**Do you know why he or she is not in school?****Table: 10**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>Fp</b>	5	18	23	40	40	80
<b>Exm</b>	-	3	3	-	5	5
<b>Bu</b>	3	-	3	10	15	25
<b>Ilb</b>	2	2	4	3	5	8
<b>Ppf</b>	-	-	-	22	25	47
<b>Ppm</b>	-	3	3	-	4	4
<b>Tqm</b>	4	-	4	13	5	18
<b>Oph</b>	3	7	10	3	15	18
<b>Nit</b>	2	-	2	4	5	9
<b>X</b>	26	18	44	50	117	167
<b>0</b>	2	5	7	2	1	3

fp - financial pressure

exm - examinations

bu - business

ilb - illiterate background

ppf - parental pressure for farm work

ppm - parental pressure for marriage

tqm - to make quick money

oph - orphan

nit - no interest

It is worth noting that the reasons indicated above regarding why youngsters are missing out on secondary education are similar to those in Tables: 5 and 7. The problems are twofold, the socio-economic and the individual problems.

Although solving the first may not be within the capability of the youngsters, nonetheless, they should endeavour to overcome the personal problems like fear of examinations, and lack of interest in school education. Parents can help a great deal by encouraging their children to show greater interest in school activities, and by reducing the amount of pressure put on them at home, particularly in terms of domestic chores, and farming. The pressure is usually more on girls.

It is noteworthy that in some cases the parental pressure can be too overwhelming for the girl. For example, a female student gives a brief insight into her friend's predicament, including why she is not making any progress;

*“This is due to the fact that not only are the fees too high for her parents, she also has not been able to pass the necessary exams as she has no spare time to dedicate to her books, due to the selling on the street of palm oil after school, to add to the family’s keep.”*

This shows how much pressure some parents can exert on their daughters. In this particular circumstance, the girl’s inability to pass her school examinations has a direct link with the pressures coming from her parents. At times the pressure may take another form, like parents forcing their daughters to get married. When that pressure becomes irresistible the girls have no choice but to withdraw from school and marry. A girl for example explains why her friend is not at school:

*“She is not attending the secondary school because her parents feel marriage is the best for her.”*

There is little doubt that in some cases, the parents’ negative attitude towards school education can be attributed to the fact that they are ignorant of the validity of western education. Some parents also have an illiterate background and may be complacent about school education. For instance, some of the respondents pointed out that:

*“Not all the parents take education seriously.”*

For some parents, financial gains far outweigh whatever merits school education may have. This is evident in the response of a male student regarding his friend’s inability to attend secondary school.

*“His parents withdrew him after primary school, to go into business.”*

It must be mentioned that not everyone that goes into business succeeds, and arguably the younger, the tougher it is to achieve success in the highly competitive world of business.

Of all the problems that militate against the school education of youngsters in Imo State financial hardship is without doubt the most serious. Several respondents stressed the fact that their friends are not attending school because:

*“of financial problems, the parents have nothing to do to get money.”*

This is partly why the education officer emphasised the need for free education not only in Imo State, but throughout the country, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table: 19).

It could also be argued that it is because of financial difficulties that some students have come to regard school education as a waste of time. They no longer see it as a worthwhile investment. Consequently for such youngsters, (especially boys), business has become a popular alternative to school education. One male student has no hesitation in pointing out that:

*"Education is not important these days, only traders feed well in this country."*

**What can parents do if they are unable to send all their children to secondary school for financial reasons?**

**Table: 11**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>td</b>	4	2	6	3	1	4
<b>ocf</b>	3	5	8	7	45	52
<b>apr</b>	5	10	15	15	25	40
<b>fw</b>	5	3	8	5	2	7
<b>bm</b>	7	10	17	50	80	130
<b>sio</b>	2	10	12	10	7	17
<b>sfh</b>	10	5	15	75	95	170
<b>bu</b>	7	5	12	3	50	53
<b>gvt</b>	3	3	6	2	4	6
<b>mg</b>	-	-	-	3	7	10
<b>0</b>	1	3	4	-	10	10

td - trade

ocf - older children first

apr - apprenticeship

fw - farm work

bm - borrow money

sio - send intelligent ones

sfh - seek financial help

bu - business

gvt - government

mg - marriage for girls

In the preceding table, (Table: 10), the question was designed - to get the students themselves to say why their friends are not in school. But the above question gave them the

opportunity to suggest what parents should do if they are not financially capable of providing secondary education for all their children.

It is clear from certain suggestions that some boys have very little or no regard for girls, and do not think that parents should bother at all about girls' education especially in times of financial crisis. One male student holds the view that in such trying times parents:

*"must try at all costs to train the boys."*

Although he does not indicate why boys should be trained at all costs, his friend has no hesitation in saying why boys' education should be given top priority at all times.

*"I think they can try and provide secondary education for only their sons, because sons are more important in the family than daughters."*

His perception of girls is a cause for concern, he is arguably not alone, which is indicative of the fact that within the family system and the society at large, the way women are treated and regarded, leaves much to be desired.

More often than not, the type of education a youngster receives can make considerable impact on the way he sees other people, as well as his judgement of situations and circumstances. Some of the boys from the Mission School made their own suggestions from a religious point of view.

*"Some of the children can be given to the Mission to be trained in priesthood for the service of God."*

But the youngsters failed to realise that vocation is a very important element in a religious life. Obviously inspired by God's wonderful attributes, their friends suggest something a bit different

*". . .with God everything is possible, so to solve their problem the parents should work very hard and pray to God."*

This may appeal to many parents in Imo State given the strength of Christianity within the State, as well as its influence on the people in their daily life. It is worth noting that Igboland is the stronghold of Christianity in the whole of Nigeria. Besides, the type of solution the

mission school boys' are advocating is sensible and logical. For instance, they think that people should work - not just hard, but very hard while at the same time putting their need before God, through prayers.

Because commercial schools are comparatively much cheaper, it is not therefore surprising that some of the male students should advise parents to send their children to those institutions when they are faced with financial problems. There are however some boys who feel that only girls should be sent to such schools, while parents try hard to send their sons to secondary schools. One boy even thinks that parents:

*"should send sons only and allow the daughters to marry or send them to vocational training."*

This shows that boys feel they are superior to girls and think that in times of financial crisis, girls' own educational programme should be scrapped in order to save theirs. In other words, the boys are saying that it is only girls that should make all the necessary sacrifices when families are going through financial hardship. It is worthy of note that none of their teachers, (see teachers' questionnaires, Table 19) suggested these selfish measures, which could be partly attributed to the fact that teachers are mature men and women. It must however be noted that in some cases parents either deliberately or otherwise perpetuate the ideology of male superiority within the family. For example, in those homes where girls come under enormous pressure to get married when there is financial crisis, so that their dowry will be spent on their brothers' education, the clear message the boys in those families pick up is that - girls are inferior to boys, so their education does not matter.

Significantly, in their own suggestions, some girls hold the view that boys' education is irrelevant. One girl unequivocally suggested that when parents begin to experience financial hardship:

*"They should send their daughters only."*

This might have been borne out of genuine concern for girls' education. As a girl she probably knows that girls' education has not received as much attention as boys' education has over the years, and thinks that girls should not suffer indefinitely in educational terms. She may also be one of those girls who think that boys are physically stronger than girls, and therefore have better job opportunities, notably those that require a great deal of physical strength. It would be recalled that during the pilot study one of the most experienced headmistresses did suggest that when families come under financial pressure only the girls should continue with their education, since boys would always find something to do, and warned that girls' education should not under any circumstances be stopped.

Some of the girls suggested one of the oldest methods in Imo State, that is, parents:

*"should send the bigger ones so that when they succeed, the little ones would be trained by them - reducing the burden on their parents."*

One of the most serious problems often associated with the method of educating the older children first is that, in some cases, they may not be academically clever and consequently their education may take longer than expected. Besides, however long it takes, some may never make any progress, thereby jeopardising the educational opportunity of the younger ones who may be more academically gifted. It is worth noting that some teachers also did suggest the method of educating the older children first, when financial problems threaten the education of children in the family, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table 19).

The uncertainty surrounding the educational progress of the older children may have led some girls to suggest something more realistic. One girl for instance, is of the opinion that:

*"If the kids are promising kids they can try winning a scholarship or they would be 'adopted' by people who can finance their secondary education."*

It must however be mentioned that in the developing countries, adoption of children is not as popular as it is in the developed world. Besides, in Imo State, (as in the rest of Nigeria), it



will not be easy to find people who will adopt youngsters for the sole aim of financing their school education. The more common practice, (which some teachers suggested), is parents sending their children as domestic servants to wealthy people, so that those people will take care of the school education of the youngsters, in payment for domestic service.

Some girls hold the view that education is so important that parents should do everything possible, to keep their children at school when money becomes an issue in the family. Like their teachers, some girls have suggested that parents should borrow money if need be. In fact, some think parents:

*“Can borrow money from the people’s bank.”*

The people’s bank, is the bank that came into being as a result of the “Better Life Programme”. Borrowing money, not necessarily from the banks, but from friends or acquaintances, is one of the oldest ways by which parents strive to sustain the education of their children in the face of mounting financial difficulties.

Some female students have also advised Imo State parents, to seek various kinds of financial help including asking the government directly for help, while at the same time trying various activities.

*“Ask the government for help, if it is not possible, the girls can marry and the boys start business.”*

Ironically some girls believe that early marriage can reduce the financial pressure in the family, and their advice is that parents:

*“Can send the daughters to early marriage and send the boys to go and learn work.”*

It is interesting to note that no teacher suggested the early marriage option, with regard to financial problems within the family. Obviously as mature men and women they are not unaware of the amount of damage early marriage has done, in terms of girls’ and women’s education throughout the country, not just in Imo State.

Arguably the most constructive suggestions and advice came from a group of girls in some of the model schools in the State.

*“They can send the most promising ones to school and help others to get apprentice jobs which can also contribute to family income.”*

It is worthy of note that apprenticeship is very popular in the State. In the traditional society, it was one of the most popular and also one of the most effective methods of education, (especially boys’). Since scholarship has helped people go through various educational levels, it is not surprising that some girls should advise parents to allow their children sufficient time at home, to study for scholarship examinations.

*“They can arrange, the children - put in extra time to their study so as to be able to win any free secondary education.”*

They recognise the fact that parents should create a lot of time at home for their children if they are to study effectively and achieve something. Girls from some of the coeducational institutions have given Imo State parents diverse suggestions. Some consider it a good idea for the children in the family to work and save money for their education. Some feel that when money becomes an issue, the children should help their parents in their own work. Some have also strongly advised that when the financial burden becomes too much for parents:

*“Girls should get married. Boys should find work.”*

Given the importance of farming in the sustenance of family life in Imo State, and in Nigeria generally, it is hardly surprising that some female students should advise parents to send their children to the farms, to cultivate food when financial problems arise. For the urban based parents, the girls have advised them to send their children to the villages to engage themselves in farm work.

Interestingly, the most humane approach with regard to the financial problems of parents has been advocated by a model school girl. She thinks that in times of financial crisis

both parents and children suffer enormously, especially if the children must discontinue their school education. Her advice is that when those trying times come parents should first:

*“explain the situation to them, and then all of them can team up and decide the area of skill, they like to take up.”*

She believes this method will go a long way in alleviating the pain and the suffering caused by the financial pressure. Communication, especially in times of adversity can never be over emphasised. Obviously explaining the situation first in a humane manner will at least remove some of the trauma, notably on the part of the children, and help prepare them for the difficult times ahead.

What could be seen as the most cruel or inhumane solution has come from a state school girl. Her suggestion to parents is exclusively for girls

*“They can go and sell them, or give them out for marriage.”*

This can cause an outrage especially among her fellow girls. Judging from the way both male and female students feel, it is quite clear that financial problems in the family can be a very sensitive issue. Not surprisingly they have come up with many suggestions and advice ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous.

**At what level should education be free?**

**Table: 12**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
1	15	23	38	100	170	270	52%
2	15	16	31	40	70	110	24%
3	16	14	30	25	64	89	20%
4	-	1	1	3	5	8	
0	1	2	3	2	10	12	

1 - primary                      3 - university  
 2 - secondary                  4 - none

Given that in Imo State, as well as elsewhere in Nigeria, financial pressure has undoubtedly affected the school education of many a youngster, the need for free education at

least in one educational sector cannot be over emphasised. But if and when such an opportunity comes, choosing the particular educational level could prove daunting. This is therefore an opportunity for the youngsters to make a choice. As the above figures show, the majority of the respondents, (52%), are in favour of universal primary education, 24% would prefer education to be free at the secondary level, while 20% want university education to be free. Support for free secondary education is strikingly close with regard to students and teachers, for instance, it is supported by 25% of the teachers and 24% of the students. Free university education has little support from teachers, (17%), but more youngsters, (20%), want to receive free university education.

This partly explains why the students have not overwhelmingly supported free primary education. The fact that many of the students, especially girls, are interested in free university education is significant, because it does among other things prove that girls do want access to higher education. Besides, they are probably aware of the fact that the higher the educational level, the fewer the girls and women, and that money is the main reason.

**How can free primary education affect school attendance?**

**Table: 13**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
1	19	12	31	40	185	225	43%
2	14	25	39	54	27	81	20%
3	14	19	33	67	104	171	34%
4	-	-	-	8	2	10	
0	-	-	-	1	1	2	

1 - all                      3 - many  
 2 - most                    4 - few

It is important to note that when universal primary education was first introduced in the late 1970's, although it led to a massive increase in terms of the number of children that went to school, all primary school age children in Nigeria did not go to school. The above question was therefore put to the students, to find out how they think the programme might

affect school attendance in Imo State if it were to be launched. It can be seen from the above table that 43% of the students think that if primary education becomes freely available in Imo State all primary school age children will go to school. 20% hold the view that not all - but most children of primary school age in the State might take advantage of the programme and go to school. But as high as 34%, feel that many children may respond positively to the programme. The students in this category are not even convinced that the majority of children in Imo State who are within the age of primary school will utilise the programme.

The way the students have responded indicates that if universal primary education were to be introduced, not all primary school age children in Imo State would avail themselves of the opportunity. In other words, it may receive the same response as it did when it was launched for the benefit of all Nigerian children of primary school age nearly two decades ago. What the providers of education in Imo State must therefore bear in mind is that universal primary education can only reduce the rate of illiteracy in the State but will never rid it completely of illiteracy. It is important to note that ridding a society of illiteracy is never going to be an easy task, given that there are illiterates in even the most advanced nations of the world, which in turn highlights the universal nature of the problem.

**Should education be free and compulsory at the primary level?**

**Table: 14**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	43	52	95	145	300	445	91%
<b>n</b>	4	3	7	12	14	26	6%
<b>d</b>	-	1	1	11	3	14	
<b>0</b>	-	-	-	2	2	4	

The above question was asked to gauge the students' reaction especially in the light of the preceding question. What strikes one immediately is the overwhelming huge support for compulsory universal primary education. For example, 91%, are in support while just a handful, 6%, disagree.

The massive support for free primary education, that is at the same time compulsory, does suggest that the respondents are aware of the fact that - although education at the primary sector is relatively cheap, there are still many parents who are too poor to provide it for their children. Even among the richest nations of the world, if free primary and secondary education were to be scrapped, the education of many children could be affected.

The respondents are obviously aware of the fact that unless universal primary education is made compulsory, not all Imo State school age children will attend primary school. Consequently getting rid of illiteracy within the society will continue to prove elusive.

**Do you study Science?**

**Table: 15**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	42	37	79	122	214	336	70%
<b>n</b>	5	19	24	18	80	98	
<b>d</b>	-	-	-	-	-		
<b>x</b>	-	-	-	29	23	52	
<b>0</b>	-	-	-	1	2	3	

Male urban students 89%  
 Female urban students 66%  
 Male rural students 72%  
 Female rural students 67%

Science is an area of the school curriculum that deserves special attention, bearing in mind the scarcity of Science teachers in Imo State, and how some members of staff teach Science subjects which they are not qualified to teach. It should also be noted that it is at the secondary sector, that the foundation for scientific studies at the later stages, must be firmly and decisively laid. To assess the numerical strength of Science students the above question was put to them. Although the majority of the students, (70%), study Science, a closer look at the details reveals that more boys than girls appear to be studying Science. For instance, 89% of the urban male students study Science compared with 66% of their female

counterparts. In the rural secondary schools, 72% of the boys study Science as opposed to 67% of the girls. One remarkable feature of the response of the female Science students, is the consistency in terms of the number of girls that study Science in both the urban and the village schools. For example, in the secondary schools located in the urban centres, 66%, of the female students study Science and in the rural areas, 67%, are Science students, a difference of only one percent.

The fact that only 72% of the rural male students study Science as opposed to the 89% of their urban counterparts would suggest that resources, (both human and material), are more lacking in the village schools than in the city ones. Besides, in the village commercial schools, Science is not taught, as the private owners cannot afford well-qualified science teachers or science equipment.

Although the number of girls that study Science in both the urban and the village schools, is not as high as that of their male counterparts, it does throw doubts into most of the comments made by teachers, (see teacher’s questionnaires, Table: 10), about girls and Science. From the way some of the teachers responded one could justifiably assume that not even a single girl in Imo State, or in Nigeria, would be studying Physics, Chemistry and Biology in the school.

**Do you like Science?**

**Table: 16**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	44	41	85	130	235	365	76%
<b>n</b>	2	11	13	9	50	59	12%
<b>d</b>	1	4	5	29	23	52	
<b>o</b>	-	-	-	2	11	13	

MUS - male urban students (4% do not like science)

FUS – female urban students (20% do not like science)

It is possible that some boys and girls are studying Science subjects at school not necessarily out of interest, but perhaps to please their parents who desperately want them to study Science, especially given the State and the federal governments' emphasis on the need for more and more youngsters to study Science at school. The authorities may have realised that any future progress or development, notably in the technical, technological or scientific sense, must mean many youngsters studying Science particularly at the secondary school. The above question was therefore asked in order to distinguish between those students that are genuinely interested in Science and those that are not.

It is abundantly clear from the above table that 76% of the students like Science, while 12% do not, which means that the students that are studying Science are fewer than those that actually like Science. There is hardly any doubt that the vast majority of Imo State students like Science. A glance at the above table, for instance, reveals that nearly all the urban male students like Science, (94%), and in the case of their female counterparts, 73%. Only 4% of the boys in the urban schools do not like Science compared with 20% of their female counterparts.

It is encouraging to note that most Imo State girls do actually like Science, which quite obviously challenges the validity of the claims by their teachers that they are not interested in Science but in arts, and also that they dread Mathematics and Science.

However, the fact that numerically, the students that study Science are fewer than those that actually like Science can have vital educational implications. It is possible for instance, that some students may like Science, only to discover it is too difficult for them. This is evident with regard to a girl from a rural school who disappointedly explained:

*"Science was too difficult for me so I dropped it and took up arts."*

Because of the views the teachers have about girls and Science, it is doubtful whether this girl got any encouragement from her Science teachers. Another female student also from a



village school stated that in her school they do not study Science even though she would have very much liked to study it, because the school has no laboratory. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why those who are studying Science are fewer than those that like Science. However what is not in doubt is the fact that more boys are studying Science and are performing better than girls. They are also performing better in Mathematics. But the reasons why the girls are lagging behind and some actually dread Science and Mathematics may not be all those indicated by teachers which include among other things, gender, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table: 10).

It is worth noting that when the writer discussed with some university lecturers in Nigeria, including those in the former federal capital, Lagos, it emerged that one of them had carried out an investigation regarding girls and Science. It was in the course of that investigation that she discovered that some girls, (notably those in mixed schools), do actually dread Science and Mathematics at school, not because they are academically incapable of doing them, but because the girls feel intimidated. She stressed the fact that in some cases the underlying causes could be traced to marital reasons. The lecturer found out that the girls do not want to show that they are cleverer than the boys, since men would not want to marry someone who used to be more intelligent than themselves at school. The investigator strongly claimed that the inevitable result is that - brilliant girls refuse to answer questions in class, deliberately perform badly in Science and Mathematics, (regarded as boys' subjects), or drop them outright. It was also indicated that the opponents and critics of women's education believe that the male gender may possess more academic ability in Science and Mathematics than the opposite sex.

It is worth noting that a research done for the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which involved working with primary school children seems to confirm the above claim by showing a higher level of understanding and performance in boys with regard to Mathematics. But

this cannot rule out the fact that some girls are really very intelligent and are capable of doing better than some boys in Mathematics and Science, if only they have the courage to show what they can do. As the lecturer who looked into the problems of girls (with regard to Science and Mathematics), discovered, because the girls feel intimidated, they hide their real ability more or less to please the boys. Teachers failed to discover this crucial fact which they should have included in the factors they indicated as being responsible for the dreading of Science by some girls and also why girls perform badly in Science.

It is important at this stage to refer to the findings from the National Child Development Study, regarding Examination Results in Mixed and Single Sex Schools, sponsored by the Equal Opportunities Commission, which revealed that generally boys do better than girls in Physics, Chemistry and Biology, and that of the three, boys do far better than girls in Physics. The study also showed that girls perform better than boys in the Arts, especially in French and English, while boys are ahead of girls in Mathematics and Reading - notably at the age of 16. These findings seem to confirm those in Nigeria and therefore raise the question as to whether there is any truth in the claim that the male gender might have more scientific ability than the opposite gender. The fact that Physics involves a lot of Mathematics could also be connected with the reasons why girls find Physics particularly difficult.

Significantly, a report from 'The Girls Into Science and Technology', (also sponsored by the Equal Opportunities Commission), has shown that when Science and Mathematics were optional there was a high drop out rate among girls. It was estimated for instance, that four times as many boys as girls took CSE Physics and three times as many boys as girls took the 'O' Level Physics, and that at least 95% of entries in all technical subjects are from boys. Consequently, 'The Girls Into Science and Technology' was launched for two main purposes:

- a. To find out the cause or causes of girls' under achievement in Mathematics and Science related subjects.
- b. To find remedial measures including changing girls' attitude towards the above subjects.

Statistics from the National Board for Technical Education in Nigeria also show that the number of women that enrol in Technical Colleges as well as the Polytechnics is much lower than that of their male counterparts. The tables below seem to confirm this:

Enrolment in Technical Colleges

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE
1984/85	47,400	2,256
1985/86	52,519	7,710
1986/87	26,703	4,717
1987/88	52,772	9,329

Enrolment in Polytechnics

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE
1984/85	48,466	12,117
1985/86	46,646	14,490
1986/87	45,405	11,365

It is worthy of note that while assessing 'The Role of Women in Nigeria's Technological Development', Maduka has conceded the fact that:

*"In most African societies, formal education of girls has lagged behind that of boys and so it is not surprising that the situation is much worse in the field of science and technology which are regarded as male disciplines. As in most other countries of the world, especially the western world women are still grossly under represented in the various fields of technology."*

It is interesting to note that in 1989, The Nigerian Association of Women in Science, Technology and Mathematics, was launched. Like its British counterpart, 'Girls Into Science and Technology', the main purpose was to find why women have lagged behind in the above areas of study and to find ways of making women more competitive especially with regard to men.

**Who should study Science?****Table: 17**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>1</b>	-	-	-	-	3	3	
<b>2</b>	-	-	-	4	2	6	
<b>3</b>	21	24	45	66	172	238	48%
<b>4</b>	25	32	57	93	140	233	49%
<b>0</b>	1	-	1	7	2	9	

1 - boys

2 - girls

3 - some boys and some girls

4 - everyone

As Science is generally regarded as a male dominated area, the students were given the opportunity through the above question to say who should actually study Physics, Chemistry and Biology at school. Significantly, only three rural girls think that only boys should study Science, while two village girls and four of their male counterparts feel that female students only, ought to be taught Science at school.

It is interesting to note that 48% of the students believe that Science should be studied by some girls and some boys, (presumably the capable ones). But (49%) think that every one should study it.

Inevitably, one obvious and encouraging fact is that the youngsters have not indicated that Science should only be studied by boys. More importantly, the girls know that they are entitled to study Science just like boys. It is important to note that none of the handful of students who indicated that Science should only be studied by one gender or the other comes from the urban schools. This could be partly attributed to the fact that urban dwellers tend to be better informed and more liberal minded in their outlook than villagers.

**Do you like examinations?****Table: 18**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	40	23	63	147	299	446	86%
<b>n</b>	1	13	14	5	12	17	
<b>d</b>	1	6	7	6	4	10	
<b>o</b>	5	14	19	12	4	16	

Male urban students 85%

Female urban students 41%

It is known that some school children dislike school examinations. It is also indicated by teachers, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table 18), as one of the reasons why some boys and girls drop out. However, the purpose of the above question was to assess their feelings regarding school examinations. The above figures reflect a huge support for school examinations, (86%), but specific details seem to suggest that more boys than girls like school examinations. For example, 85% of the urban male students like examinations as opposed to 41% of their female counterparts.

Although a large number of rural female students indicated that they like school examinations, they may not be representative given that most of them are in the private commercial schools in the villages, where accent is mainly on the practical things like; needlework, typing and shorthand etc.

**Would you like to be a boarder?****Table: 19**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	28	15	43	78	209	287	56%
<b>n</b>	12	8	20	34	61	95	19%
<b>d</b>	-	-	-	6	6	12	
<b>x</b>	6	-	6	46	30	76	
<b>o</b>	1	33	34	12	13	25	

Boarding school education has always been a controversial issue in most educational systems of the world. In the days when it used to be more or less the order of the day in Nigeria, one of the criticisms often levelled against it by its opponents, was that it excluded the children of the poor from receiving secondary education, because of the high costs, which were unquestionably beyond the reach of many parents. Some of the parents who could pay tuition fees found that boarding fees were unaffordable. They felt bitter, betrayed and finally concluded that the system had let them down.

Now that there is greater freedom of choice, given the numerous secondary schools and boarding is no longer a pre-requisite for secondary education, the boys and girls through the above question were given the opportunity to say whether or not they would like to be boarders.

Over half, (56%), expressed a desire for boarding education, while 19% rejected the idea.

It is very important to find out why at a time when secondary schools have been brought more or less to the doorsteps of every family in Imo State, many youngsters are still clamouring for boarding school education.

**Explain briefly why you would/would not like to be a boarder?**

**Table: 20**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>stu</b>	15	10	25	75	125	200
<b>fp</b>	5	3	8	10	10	20
<b>dc</b>	1	10	11	5	60	65
<b>pg</b>	-	3	3	5	25	30
<b>imt</b>	5	5	10	5	15	20
<b>pun</b>	5	3	8	5	9	14
<b>pdf</b>	3	10	13	11	15	26
<b>dtu</b>	7	4	11	6	20	26
<b>idp</b>	5	3	8	3	5	8
<b>0</b>	1	5	6	45	35	80

stu - studious	pun - punctuality
fp - financial pressure	pfd - poor food
dc - domestic chores	dtn - distraction
pg - pregnancy	idp - independence
imt - immorality	

It must however be mentioned that statistical information, though relevant, is not particularly crucial in this very issue. What would be of more educational importance are the reasons for and against boarding school education in Imo State - which of course could have educational implications for the rest of the country.

For instance, those who wish to be boarders seem to be motivated by a very strong desire to do well because they feel that boarders have an advantage over day students when it comes to studies, examinations and results. As a day student who cannot wait to be a boarder put it:

*“Boarding students do a lot of things which we do not do that affect our results, i.e. they go to prep.”*

It must be mentioned that among some day students, there is a very strong feeling - almost bordering on resentment, regarding the seemingly limitless opportunities that their counterparts in the boarding house have. For example, they firmly believe that:

*“Boarders study better. They engage in school activities always. They have the teachers always around them.”*

The academic advantages inherent in boarding education are never in doubt. It is noteworthy that some day students feel that something special is missing in their school days due to the fact that they are unable to participate in school activities like their counterparts in the boarding house. Inevitably, they yearn for the opportunity to join in school activities. Significantly, complacent and lukewarm students feel strongly that being in the boarding house will motivate them. A day student for example, has no doubt about what boarding will do for him:

*“It would enable me to read my books, it will enable me to have interest in school.”*

There is evidence to suggest that the boys and girls who attend school from home do not have sufficient time for their studies owing to pressure from their parents to work for them in the house. One respondent not surprisingly has this to say about his wish to be a boarder:

*“It will enable me to put more effort in my studies. If you stay at home domestic work will not allow you to read.”*

For some day students domestic chores may not be the only hindrance with regard to their studies, it is likely they also work in the farm. Arguably farming is the main cause of academic retardation and under achievement as far as village students are concerned, (see teacher’s questionnaires, Table 17). Understandably one village school boy explains why he is very eager to leave his parents and live in the boarding house:

*“... so that family activities do not affect my studies.”*

Village school girls may be under more pressure to assist in domestic work than their brothers. This may partly be due to the fact that in Nigeria girls find it more difficult to disobey parents than boys, they are also more sympathetic to the plight of long-suffering parents. For example, in response to the question about boarding a rural female day student has this to say:

*“Yes, because I will always read my book only, because if I am at home I will go to work and fetch fire wood for my parents.”*

It must however be mentioned that in some situations boys can make enormous self-sacrifice as in the case of a boy who decided to leave the boarding house in order to be with his father for health reasons. With failing vision, the boy’s father can hardly do anything for himself. His son now assists him in his daily engagements which include writing letters and signing cheques. As a day student, he helps his father mainly in the evenings.

Significantly, for some day students the longing for boarding education is not necessarily to escape from domestic chores at home, but from distractions brought about by



modern items of entertainment, notably television and video. Some day students have therefore argued that the boarding house will enable them to utilise their time better, given that the sources of distraction will no longer be there. In the opinion of one male student:

*"... if one is in the boarding house he will utilise more of his time very well, than when the one is at home where you watch TV ..."*

From what some day students say, one gets the impression that some youngsters do whatever they like in their home and that their parents either by design or accident do not intervene, at least to ensure that their children take their school education seriously.

*"Being a boarder will keep away all distractions and help you concentrate more e.g. at home you watch TV, listen to music and go to outings regularly."*

Undoubtedly this raises among other things, the issue of discipline especially in terms of how much control parents have over their children.

Interestingly, there are some respondents who are yearning to be boarders because they hold the view that as long as they are with their parents, they will find independent life very hard with all the responsibility it entails. A boy from a relatively poor background insists on persuading his parents to send him to the boarding house, believing that:

*"Boarding prepares students for future independent life."*

Undoubtedly, financial constraints are behind the inability of many parents in Imo State to provide boarding education for their children. It must also be borne in mind that more often than not families in Imo State are very large. Some parents may have eight children or more and in such circumstances the provision of boarding education for all the children becomes impossible, especially when parents are very poor. This is the situation in which a respondent has made this acknowledgement:

*"My parents cannot pay for me as a boarder."*

He has always wanted to be a boarder in the belief that boarding educational facilities will enhance his academic performance, because he wants to be a successful adult member of the society.

It is however necessary at this stage to examine the views of the opponents of boarding education. Interestingly, some village day students have argued that:

*“Boarders don’t feed well. They also don’t know what is going on in the village.”*

It seems that while some day students feel that they are missing out on school activities, their counterparts think that the boys and girls in the boarding house do miss out on village activities.

There is evidence to support the view that poor feeding may be a very serious issue in the boarding house. As one young boy movingly put it:

*“In the boarding house we don’t feed well like in our homes, and so students steal. They steal my milk and bread.”*

Although wrong doing should neither be justified nor condoned, there might be a greater tendency on the part of students to resort to stealing if they are not well fed than otherwise.

It is worthy of note that some day students are scared of boarding education because they will not like to live in the boarding house. They claim that:

*“Boarders are not well fed. There is a lot of corruption.”*

It is possible that the providers of education and parents in Imo State may not be fully aware of the nature and the scale of corruption associated with boarding education. A youngster whose parents wanted to send to the boarding house refused, insisting:

*“I prefer coming from home because some senior students take drugs which they cannot take in the presence of their parents.”*

The very fact that youngsters can take drugs as they like in the boarding house will undoubtedly:

- a. scare away many decent boys and girls from the boarding house;
- b. raise the question as to how much discipline there is in the boarding house;
- c. challenge the validity of boarding institutions and thereby strengthen the case for the opponents of boarding school education.

There is hardly any doubt that if parents of boarders get to know all that goes on in the boarding house they will be very much worried especially with regard to their daughters, and that can mark the beginning of the end of boarding education in Imo State. Parents will among other things feel there is no discipline in the boarding house.

Ironically discipline is what some youngsters claim has kept them out of the boarding house. Some students have actually left the boarding house, blaming harsh discipline in the house. One of the youngsters who left the boarding house has this to say in defence of his action:

*"... there is a lot of law and discipline there, and also there is usually hard labour and small food."*

The claims and counter claims can only point to one thing, that is, boarding education in Imo State is highly controversial.

What is however not in doubt is the fact that the welfare of the youngsters in the boarding house lies within the jurisdiction of school authorities. It is equally true to say that away from parents, peer pressure becomes more irresistible, at least for some boys and girls. This is presumably why a youngster holds the view that boarding education is not worth the trouble because:

*"It will make one to be close to friends, who would influence him for the worse without parents' influence."*

Peer pressure is a world wide problem. Parents should strive very hard to inculcate in their children while they are still very young desirable habits including self reliance, which will help them to resist peer pressure, particularly when they leave home, bearing in mind that

youngsters are more vulnerable when they are living away from their home, than when they are with their parents.

The thought of being maltreated has also made many boys and girls in Imo State to reject boarding education. A respondent whose parents can very easily afford the boarding costs has rejected the idea:

*“Because of too much maltreatment by the senior students.”*

Bullying is another common problem in schools all over the world. Even in the most advanced nations of the world, some children are known to have committed suicide rather than put up with bullying at school. In Imo State, bullying seems to be far worse in the boarding house. This is evident in the report of a youngster who ran away from the boarding house claiming that:

*“... senior students usually maltreat the junior and the weaker ones.”*

One can therefore assume that in Imo State boarding houses, not only are the junior ones bullied by the older students, the senior students who are perhaps not very physically strong are also at risk. This can only support the case for those who are calling for the abolition of boarding education in the State.

Some boys and girls in Imo State will never compromise their health. Not surprisingly these youngsters are more concerned with the cleanliness as well as the general hygienic conditions of an educational institution, than with the academic excellence. A day female student whose wealthy parents wish to send her to the boarding house insists:

*“I will not like to be a boarder because the school compound is very dirty and unhealthy.”*

Given the above responses from the students both for and against boarding education, it is hard to deny the fact that the issues surrounding boarding education in Imo State are as numerous as they are compelling. They are also issues the providers of education, parents, teachers and all concerned cannot afford to ignore.

It is very important to note that following many complaints about the boarding house, a very thorough investigation was carried out which involved parents, students and teachers in Imo State, Bendel and Benue States. The findings which were reported to the Federal Ministry of Education, (see Education Today Vol. 3, No. 1, Dec. 1989), revealed that:

1. Seniors and prefects maltreat junior students.
2. Teachers do not guide the moral behaviour of students.
3. Many house masters/mistresses do not live on the school compound.
4. Dormitories lack adequate and well maintained facilities, e.g. living space, lockers, toilets, water supply, electricity etc.
5. Feeding is poor both in quality and quantity.
6. Students generally do not like the restrictions of dormitory life.
7. Too much stealing in the dormitories.
8. Staff no longer bother to supervise students and their welfare.
9. Parents do not cooperate with staff in the maintenance of discipline and hostel rules.

#### Day Studentship and Boarding

1. Day studentship is cheaper for parents, so they can see more children through secondary education.
2. The boarding system is not worth the trouble it involves.
3. Day studentship keeps students in touch with their family circumstances and problems.
4. Most homes do not have facilities for private study for their children.
5. Day studentship encourages truancy in students.
6. Boarders have a greater urge for achievement - motivation.
7. Boarders receive better supervision of individual learning.

Reasons why some students choose to board:

1. Better opportunity for social and leadership training.
2. Better opportunity for training in self reliance.
3. Better supervision and guidance of students' behaviour.
4. Better social integration as students learn to live with students from different family circumstances.

Reasons for day studentship:

1. Parents cannot afford to pay the lump sum that will be required at the same time for all their children.
2. School population explosion.
3. Boarding will become elitist as only the rich can pay for it.

It is not surprising that financial constraints feature when students make decisions with their parents regarding boarding education. It is also remarkable that the above findings agree with the views expressed by the respondents. It is however important to note that over 70% of the parents interviewed by the writer indicated that they would prefer to send their sons only to the boarding house, because schools might not be able to inculcate moral discipline with regard to girls.

What post secondary education should girls have access to?

**Table: 21**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>1</b>	15	44	59	67	130	197	43%
<b>2</b>	5	-	5	9	11	20	4%
<b>3</b>	1	-	1	1	3	4	
<b>4</b>	24	7	31	83	164	247	47%
<b>0</b>	2	5	7	10	11	21	

1 – University

3 - Technical Education

2 - Teacher Training

4 - Vocational Training, like nursing

MUS - male urban students 51%

FUS – female urban students 13%

Bearing in mind that in Nigeria the higher the academic level, the fewer the female members of the society, and also the fact that they are expected to perform certain roles, the above question was put to the students. As the table shows, the university, (43%), and vocational training, (47%), are the respondents' favourites. A closer look at the table reveals that many boys hold the view that vocational training is what is good for girls when they leave school. For instance, over half of the urban male students, (51%), think that girls should receive vocational training like nursing at the end of their secondary school education, compared with just 13% of the girls.

It does raise the question as to whether the respondents, (especially boys), who think that girls should not rise above vocational training like nursing, have been influenced by the views of the older members of the society; notably those who hold extreme negative views regarding the education of girls and women. For example, some of the boys who come from homes where parents attach very little or no importance to school education of girls, and see the role of women as essentially pastoral, could grow up sharing the same views. The children of the teacher (Table: 37 of the teacher's questionnaires) who thinks that education of girls and women is responsible for all the disasters in the world, and has actually called on the government to reappraise the education of girls and women in Nigeria, could be influenced by such a hostile attitude towards the education of girls and women.

Stereotyping of girls and women particularly in terms of the work they should or should not do, is another possibility that should not be ignored. But it is a worldwide problem. Some boys might base their views on what they see girls and women do in their homes, as well as in the society at large. One male respondent for example thinks that:

*"Women should do nursing because women take care of babies in hospitals."*

This could be partly due to the fact that in Imo State hospitals almost all the nurses are women; if many men were to be trained as nurses, people, (especially youngsters), may not get the impression that nursing is exclusively a woman's job.

The same measure should apply to household chores. Fathers and sons should show interest and participate as much as possible, if not, the latter might think that domestic work should only be done by the female members of the society. This is evident in the response of a male student who says that girls:

*“should have only vocational training like nursing, because the girls take care of the household and so as to train their children accordingly.”*

If such a boy were taught from the outset to do domestic chores, he might have thought differently.

There are even boys who have a very low opinion regarding girls' educational capabilities. A male student for instance has pointed out that:

*“Girls should stop at primary school because they are lazy.”*

This is a view that many girls and women will find hard to accept because on the contrary, many girls and women work very hard at school, in the house, at the work place, etc. As one female student put it:

*“Girls are fit for any profession so they should go to the highest level of education if possible.”*

This is why those who oppose higher education for girls and women must think again. If their access to institutions of higher learning is restricted, it could undermine their status as well as their capability in the society. They should be encouraged to go for those causes that are traditionally regarded as men's like Engineering, Medicine, Aviation, Architecture, Survey etc.



**At what age should girls marry?****Table: 22**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>bt</b>	2	1	3	15	35	50	9%
<b>at</b>	45	53	98	152	281	433	90%
<b>d</b>	-	-	-	3	-	3	
<b>0</b>	-	2	2	-	3	3	

bt - before the age of twenty

at - after the age of twenty

d - don't know

Since in Nigeria, many young girls were denied formal education because they had to marry while still very young children, the above question was designed to get the students to indicate the right time girls in Imo State should marry. Their response could have vital implications for the rest of the country. The massive support, (90%), for marriage after the age of 20 speaks for itself. Only 9% of the respondents think that girls should marry before their twentieth birthday.

The overwhelming support could partly stem from the fact that the students are not unaware of the fact that child marriage has interfered with the formal education of Nigerian girls on a scale difficult to imagine. They also know that if girls were to marry in their teens, their opportunity for higher education is greatly reduced.

Significantly, some girls hold the view that a girl should not marry until much later in life, when she has done all the things she wants to do. A few expressed a desire to be rich before getting married so that their husbands would respect them. In fact, some of the girls feel it would be sheer folly for a girl to contemplate marriage before she is ready for it both mentally and economically. It is worth noting that some of the female students strongly indicated that they would never marry until they have got their PhD. One of them stressed the fact that a girl should only marry:

*"when she has made it in life, whether 18 or 50. I'm scared of marriage, a lot of heart break and suspicion."*

It is quite obvious that girls do not want to be rushed into early marriage. Many of them want to study and achieve something for themselves in life before marriage. Some are also genuinely concerned about the uncertainties that surround marriage.

There are however some male respondents who think girls should marry early, preferably in their teens. They have condemned the 6334 system, whereby boys and girls spend 6 years in the primary school, 3 years in the junior secondary, 3 years in the senior secondary and 4 years in the university. The boys have argued that the system would push up the marriage age for girls if they were to attend the university before marriage. But they feel it does not matter how late a man marries.

**Will you marry?**

**Table: 23**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	20	29	49	71	126	197	41%
<b>n</b>	3	1	4	11	19	30	6%
<b>d</b>	1	6	7	40	27	67	13%
<b>0</b>	23	20	43	48	147	195	43%

This study offers the students in Imo State the unique opportunity of indicating whether or not they would like to get married. This is mainly because in Nigeria, like in most developing countries, a girl's role in the society is inexplicably linked with marriage. The above figures reflect the sensitive nature of the issue. 42% say they will marry, while 6% have rejected marriage. Some, (13%), have doubts about marriage, but many of the respondents, (40%), declined to say anything.

Perhaps they do not want to let anyone know what is in their mind - in case it happens not to be what the society wants or expects of them. However, that some of the students, especially girls, could decide not to marry is quite remarkable in a society where marriage

means more or less everything, even the very survival of the society itself is tied up with marriage.

**Give brief explanation why you would/would not marry.**

**Table: 24**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
bb	5	7	12	28	65	93
loc	8	15	23	69	120	189
lof	9	10	19	39	50	89
rsr	-	2	2	-	10	10
rfr	3	-	3	7	-	7
soc	-	12	12	-	28	28
ft	6	-	6	15	-	15
ppm	10	10	20	-	22	22
cok	5	-	5	12	-	12
0	1	-	1	-	24	24

bb - bible

loc - love of children

lof - love of family

rsr - Reverend Sister

rfr - Reverend Father

soc - society/social attitude

ppm - parental pressure

for marriage

cok - cooking

It is important at this stage to find out the reasons that have guided the students in making the choice of whether to marry or not to marry. It should however be noted that the reasons given by the respondents for or against marriage will be of more significance than the statistical information. Since marriage is a very important issue among the Igbo, in that among other things, it determines a person's status within the society, great care will be taken in outlining and examining the issues raised by the students. For clarity, it is important to distinguish between the responses of the male students and those of their female counterparts.

It is worthy of note that for many of the male students who wish to marry sometime in the future, the main objective is to achieve immortality with regard to their name on earth. In reply to the question as to whether they would like to marry one unequivocally says:

*"Yes, of course to raise kids who will take over my name."*

The same view is even more strongly expressed by another boy who warns:

*“If you don’t marry it means that your name on earth will vanish, as there are no children to answer such name.”*

It is however worthy of note that it is in a bid to ensure that a man’s name lives in perpetuity after he is dead that more importance is attached to male offspring among the Igbo, (see Chapter One). Consequently names such as ‘Ahamefule’, (may my name never vanish), and ‘Eze’, (king), are among the most popular male names in Igboland. A boy who could hardly wait to grow up stated:

*“I want to marry and get my own offspring who will inherit my property.”*

Understandably, the boy’s anxiety is based on the fear among the Igbo that if a man dies without any children especially male issues, other people would take over his property, for which he probably laboured all his life. This is why to wish a man death before he could have an heir is one of the worst curses in Igboland.

In a society where domestic work is regarded as part and parcel of women’s role within the family system, it is not surprising that some of the male respondents indicated that they would like to marry purely for domestic reasons. They stress the need for comfortable life especially in terms of going to work and coming back to a clean house and ready meal. One boy has no doubt in his mind about why he wants to marry!

*“someone who will be cooking for me when I went for work somewhere.”*

It is true to say that in some cases there is parental pressure on the male offspring to marry early. This pressure is almost unbearable in a family where the boy is the only child, (Okpolu) or the only male issue. In some cases it could cost him the opportunity for further education, say, to university, because his parents live in constant fear - in case he dies without having children. The possibility of the untimely and unexpected death of the ‘Okpolu’ is ever present in their mind. At the earliest opportunity the ‘Okpolu’ marries, and in most cases he

has no choice. In a family where there is only one male offspring, (and the rest are girls) pressure can be brought to bear on him to marry. As one pointed out:

*“I will marry because I am the only son of my father. If I don't that means our lineage has discontinued.”*

This proves that the desire for the continuity of family trees can be overwhelming. It also partly explains why boys are much more desirable to parents than girls in Nigeria. There is evidence to support the view that in some cases, parents may be perceived by their children as role models, when it comes to the question of marriage and parenthood. The desire to do what their parents have done can be irresistible for some youngsters. In response to the question about marriage, a male student says:

*“Yes, because I want to rear children like my parents did for me, and also to answer papa like my father.”*

It seems quite obvious that the reasons for which the male students wish to marry are mainly personal, and centre mainly around continuity of family tree, which in turn, immortalises a man's name on earth. But the female students on the other hand, appear to have more diverse and complex reasons for marriage. Unlike their male counterparts, the girls' marriage objectives are not essentially personal, but relate more to the society at large. For example in answer to the question as to whether they would like to marry one girl has this to say:

*“I'll marry for marrying sake because the society expects me to. I'm a born career woman.”*

Here is a girl who probably does not feel she has the maternal instinct. She seems to be totally absorbed in her studies, with a particular career in mind. She fears her educational ambition could be threatened by social expectations inherent in the Igbo society, with regard to marriage and women. The fear that the society interferes with a girl's life in Igboland, especially in terms of marriage, is also discernible in the response of another female student; who in response to the same question says:

*"Yes, because if you don't marry, as a girl, you will not be regarded as anything in the society."*

Arguably, because of the way marriage is regarded in Igboland, some girls inevitably have come to associate marriage with protection and feel that an unmarried girl has no protection what so ever in the society. In the opinion of one female student:

*"... a married woman is protected by her husband in all perspectives of life and she has a higher class of reputation than a single woman."*

The reference to protection does reveal women's vulnerability in the Igbo society, notably single women, and why at times a girl may marry even when she does not feel like doing so. For some girls, the thought of being exposed to all kinds of danger is enough to drive them to marriage, as one girl put it:

*"It is good to be under a man so that she can't get trouble."*

It could be argued that it is because of the way the society regards marriage, that makes young girls feel that a single woman has no protection.

There are also girls who are convinced that the Igbo society only respects married women and so they wish to get married so that the society will respect them. This is evident in this girl's response:

*"I will like to marry because in Igboland they believe that a married girl has a respect."*

This view has been highlighted by another female student who firmly believes that the Igbo culture is responsible for the way marriage is regarded in the society, especially when it concerns women.

*"Yes it is one of our culture to marry in order to get that little respect in future."*

It is clear that this girl does not contemplate a future without marriage, because she feels she cannot do without that respect which the society only bestows on married women.

There is little doubt that there are girls who genuinely wish to marry in order to have their own family and bring up their own children. In fact one girl emphasised the fact that her:

*“duty in life is to bear children.”*

In developing nations, owing to lack of social security, children are always seen as old age security by some parents. It is not therefore surprising that some girls would express a desire to get married and have children in order to secure their old age. One female student has no doubt about why she wants to marry sometime in future:

*“To produce children who will help when I am old.”*

Among the Igbo there is a strong belief that children should take care of their ageing or old parents. This is one of the reasons why childless couples worry a lot.

There are female students who worry about what they see as oppressive social attitude towards single women. One girl for example, does not want to marry but nevertheless she is concerned about the fact that:

*“People laugh at those who did not marry.”*

This inevitably suggests that among the Igbo, a single woman suffers a great deal of humiliation. In most developed societies single women are not humiliated. It is obvious that Igbo girls have been conditioned by the society, to hold extreme views about marriage. A girl who indicated that she would like to marry as soon as possible says it is:

*“because a girl without a husband is just like a bastard child ... a woman must be under a man.”*

Due to the way the Igbo society regards marriage, it is true to say that some young girls are scared of facing life without a husband. Some are so desperate to get married that they evoke very powerful images to liken life without a man. One desperate girl, for instance, stresses that:

*“a woman who has no husband is like a hen without feathers.”*

This may be partly why the members of the NCWS have argued that within the Nigerian society the female members have no self identity, they must be seen as only daughters or wives.

Some of the female respondents see marriage as part of God's design. They have therefore argued that marriage:

*"is instituted by ... God. We should marry and multiply in the world."*

Since among the Igbo, there is some obligation on husbands to help their wives' relatives, some girls marry precisely for this reason. For example, in answer to the question as to whether they would marry, one female student has this to say:

*"Yes, to help my parents and the junior ones."*

Because the Igbo society does not recognise single women, there are female students who have indicated that they would like to marry in future, so as not to fade into obscurity in the society in which they are supposed to be members. Understandably, in replying to the question about marriage one of them clearly says:

*"Yes - I will marry to be recognised in the society."*

As it is a taboo to have illegitimate children in Nigeria, girls who love children cannot escape the institution of marriage. As one female respondent vividly put it:

*"If you don't marry you will not have children."*

In a society where moral values run deep and strong, illegitimacy is frowned upon. This is one of the differences between developed and under developed societies. In the former unmarried women feel they have as much right as their married counterparts with regard to having children. Economically, the State supports them, whereas their counterparts in the developing nations do not get any help from their governments. More often than not they are also rejected by their own family, because illegitimacy is regarded as an abomination.



Interestingly, as some boys see their parents as role models in terms of marriage and parenthood, some girls do exactly the same. In fact, in Igboland if a girl does not marry her parents may find it difficult to acknowledge her as their child. It is hardly surprising therefore that a female student should stress that in future she must get married because her mother:

*“... at her own time ... didn't disgrace her parents.”*

This explains at least partly, why some of the female students regard marriage as both compulsory and obligatory. This idea is clearly reflected in the response of a girl who firmly asserts:

*“... being a girl you are supposed to marry, because it is compulsory that you will form your own family. Being a girl you must marry.”*

It is worth mentioning that in the developed societies there is no pressure on girls to get married. The social stigma attached to spinsters in the developing nations is more or less non-existent. It could be justifiably argued that it is because of the social stigma, that the girls in Nigeria have developed a strong notion that marriage is compulsory. One female student for example has made it clear that she must marry because:

*“It is compulsory that everybody must get married.”*

It is quite obvious that this girl now sees marriage as a duty that she owes to her family in particular, and the society in general. For instance, if she decides not to marry, her family, particularly her parents, will be ashamed of her and feel that she has disgraced them. She runs the high risk of being disowned by them. Within the Imo society, she will neither be respected nor recognised. On her own part, she must have to endure the gossips, the jeering and taunting. She will also have lost a man's protection. The girls are therefore not prepared to face a future without husbands, in a society where an unmarried woman accounts for nothing.

A reflection on the responses outlined above, shows that in Imo State, men do not feel the social pressure which their female counterparts feel with regard to marriage. Bachelors

for example, are not seen as having brought shame or disgrace to their families. Above all, they neither see their life nor their future as empty without marriage.

It is however necessary at this stage to examine the reasons given by those students who do not believe in the institution of marriage. The students in this category are understandably very few. It is important to note that several of these came from homes where the parental relationship, or marriage has broken down. One boy for example, stressed quite strongly that he would never marry because of the way his mother treated his father, which culminated in divorce. A female respondent pointed out that her parents are in a divorce court and expressed deep doubts about the validity of marriage. A male student who claimed that his parents' marriage was like hell on earth and ended in acrimonious divorce stated unequivocally:

*"I don't need woman trouble i.e. I don't like woman 'wahallah'."*

In some cases, the way women are treated in marriage not only by their husbands, but also by their children can result in some girls developing negative attitudes towards marriage. For instance, a girl who seems reasonably knowledgeable about what is going on around her has indicated strongly that she would never marry:

*"because married women ... suffer a lot either from their husbands or children."*

Those who are brave enough to opt for single life, (especially girls), will need at least two types of preparation, namely, mental and economic preparation. The first will enable them to cope with the harsh realities of life in a society where unmarried women are neither recognised nor respected. They could also undergo untold suffering. The second will make it possible for them to rely on themselves in terms of day to day sustenance. This is why school education of girls and women are not only important but also expedient. For example, a well-educated woman with a good job may find single life a lot easier to cope with, than her counterpart who has little or no education and perhaps no wage earning job.

**Choose between school and marriage.****Table: 25**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>1</b>	-	7	7	15	78	93	17%
<b>2</b>	45	43	88	151	232	383	80%
<b>0</b>	2	6	8	4	9	13	

1 - marriage      2 - school

As already indicated marriage has prevented many girls, not just in Imo State but throughout the country, from receiving formal education and in some cases, denied them access to higher education. They had no choice. It is interesting to note that this study offers youngsters, (male and female alike), the opportunity for choice between marriage and school. The statistical importance of the above table cannot be over emphasised, with 80% of the respondents preferring school to marriage and just 17% going for marriage.

This seems to suggest that without the social pressure perhaps not very many people may be willing to marry.

The above figures could also be interpreted at least in two ways. One is that there is a possibility that today's Imo State young people do not like the way the society regards marriage, and now feel that marriage should not be a focal point in their own life, and therefore should not stand between them and school education. On the part of girls in particular, it could be argued that some of them now see school education as a means of escaping from what they see as an oppressive social institution.

**Should boys and girls have separate schools?****Table: 26**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>Y</b>	33	16	49	64	169	233
<b>N</b>	10	29	39	77	116	193
<b>D</b>	3	8	11	23	32	55
<b>0</b>	1	3	4	6	2	8

Like boarding education, coeducation is another highly sensitive and controversial issue in most educational systems. It is worth noting that in the days of mission schools, secondary schools were single sex institutions, particularly Catholic schools. Coeducation became a strong feature in the educational system, particularly in Igboland, after the Civil War.

Critics of mixed schools claim that the existence of these institutions is economically motivated, because building and maintaining separate schools for boys and girls will cost more. They are also suspicious of the moral and the academic standards in coeducational institutions. However, this study has offered the students a unique opportunity to say what they think about mixed schools. It does seem from the above table that opinion is more or less evenly split. There is no overwhelming majority either in favour or against coeducation. Several respondents also are not sure of the validity of such education. It is therefore true to say that the above table has highlighted the controversial nature of coeducation in Imo State.

**Explain why boys and girls should/should not have separate schools.**

**Table: 27**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>hsi</b>	16	13	29	81	90	171
<b>abo</b>	13	7	20	25	130	155
<b>dtn</b>	10	5	15	50	30	80
<b>cmp</b>	1	5	6	5	25	30
<b>sgs</b>	-	5	5	-	7	7
<b>bvd</b>	-	2	2	-	-	-
<b>gba</b>	-	5	5	-	16	16
<b>bb</b>	3	5	8	7	10	17
<b>0</b>	4	9	13	2	-	2

hsi - highlights social interaction

abo - abortion

dtn - distraction

cmp - competition

sgs - some girls are shy

bvd - boys are very bad

gba - girls do better studying alone

bb - bible

It is important to note that this study is the only opportunity the youngsters, who are actually the consumers of education have, to express their views with regard to coeducation. It is also worth noting that the statistical information is not the main issue, what will undoubtedly be of more educational significance are the reasons both for and against coeducational institutions. It should also be noted that in some cases coeducation can prevent girls from receiving formal education especially among Islamic communities.

For reasons of clarity, the views of those who are in favour of mixed schools will be examined first. Some of them referred to the Bible and argued that:

*“When God created the world, He didn’t separate men and women.”*

They then wonder why human beings should impose the division on themselves. Some feel that since boys and girls live together at home they should continue to do so at school. A male student indicated that coeducation could make them behave like brothers and sisters. There is also a feeling that having been together at primary school it is unwise to separate them at the secondary school level. One female student insists:

*“Boys and girls should not have their own separate school because in primary school they did not separate.”*

It is important to note that this very point was highlighted by one of the experienced headmistresses during the pilot study, (see Pilot Interview). Some of the respondents also stressed the fact that socially coeducation would reduce shyness especially in girls, promote tolerance between the two genders thereby aiding good social interaction. A female student strongly argued that if girls:

*“have their own separate schools they will shy away when they are called to any occasions to speak to ladies and gentlemen.”*

It is worth noting that in Imo State the girls in mixed schools are often referred to as ‘tomboys’, because they are said to be bold and shameless, and behave more or less like boys; whereas their counterparts in single sex institutions are said to be calm, quiet and reserved.

Academically, some respondents believe that studying together would promote healthy rivalry as boys and girls genuinely compete for academic supremacy. One female student explained that this is because:

*“Where boys and girls are studying together, boys will like to beat girls...”*

However, there are some female students who are of the opinion that girls are educationally inferior to boys, and therefore believe that coeducation would make it possible for girls to be receiving help from boys. As one of them put it:

*“Boys and girls should not have separate schools because in a school boys are more intelligent than girls, so... they will be helping the girls.”*

This is a view that many fellow girls may find difficult to accept, because it means that every girl is academically inferior to boys.

There are however some students who believe that coeducation can lead to good relationship in later years especially in terms of marriage. They have therefore argued that since boys and girls:

*“will eventually live together, they should learn that now.”*

It may be hard to prove that mixed schools prepare individuals for future successful long term relationship like marriage.

The views of the students who do not believe in coeducation may also hold vital information. It should be noted that most of the respondents who are not in favour of coeducation are primarily concerned about what they refer to as a ‘high degree of immorality’, that exists in mixed secondary schools in Imo State. They claim that more fornication is committed in the coeducational institutions than elsewhere in the world. As one boy carefully explained:

*“This is because if boys and girls are together in the same school, boys will also have the opportunity of seeing some girls which might lead to pregnancy. This activity has caused some worry in our mixed secondary schools.”*

Some female students are equally concerned about the possibility of unwanted pregnancies in mixed schools and have inevitably argued that:

*“Boys and girls should have separate schools to avoid unwanted pregnancies and promiscuity.”*

Significantly, boys in mixed schools have claimed that the validity of coeducational institutions is in doubt given their moral decadence, and have demanded their abolition. They insist that the abolition would make it possible to:

*“avoid corruption that exists in coeducational schools, like unfortunate pregnancies and immoral behaviour.”*

It would be recalled that pregnancy is one of the factors that teachers identified, with regard to female drop out in Imo State, (see teacher’s questionnaires, Table: 18). School girl pregnancy is a problem that faces many parents as well as educational systems in the world. This is why the advice as well as the experience of one of the women interviewed during the pilot study could be of educational significance to Imo State. Because she looked after her grandson, her daughter was able to go back to school which she successfully completed, and later got a job.

As the woman warned:

*“If pregnant school girls were not helped and encouraged to go back to school, they might not be useful to themselves, to their family and to the society at large. They could end up being indefinitely dependent on the society.”*

This warning should be heeded in Imo State because formal education of young girls should not come to an abrupt end when they become pregnant. There should be many people to give the young mothers help and support, given the extended family structure. Grandparents, (particularly grandmothers), will always be willing to help.

It is worthy of note that some female respondents in mixed schools are worried and scared of what they see as relentless sexual harassment from the boys. They now want all mixed schools to be abolished and insist that:

*“Girls should have their own separate schools because if they are in mixed schools, boys will be disturbing girls everyday as it is now.”*

The fact that girls from single sex institutions have also called for all mixed schools to be converted to single sex does suggest that the issue of sexual harassment could be posing serious educational threats within the State. One of the girls strongly indicated that she would not like her own school to become a mixed school because she does not want:

*“to be a victim of sexual harassment from the opposite sex.”*

The threat by some of the female students in single sex schools to leave school should all schools in the State become mixed should be a cause for concern, especially in the light of the allegations that some of the boys in mixed schools are physically very strong and violent and could rape, kill and destroy the girls.

Academically, some of the respondents have claimed that students in coeducational institutions are under achievers because of what they regard as deep-rooted corruption and distraction in Imo State’s mixed schools. As a girl in a mixed school unequivocally put it:

*“... it is in a mixed school that you get the worst corruption ... a child will not concentrate in his or her study - only to discuss with their boyfriends.”*

The enormous distraction in mixed schools has also been highlighted by a girl in a mixed school, who from her own personal experience authoritatively stresses the fact that male students in coeducational institutions in the State do not study hard because they are busy looking for girlfriends, and do not allow the girls involved, time to study. She goes further to claim that:

*“Some boys may come to school just to look for girls.”*

Some male students have even warned that if mixed schools remain in Imo State, education as we know it today, will cease to exist.

Some of the female respondents have pointed out that the academic problems of shy girls in mixed schools are being ignored. They claim that because the girls are shy and quiet they feel intimidated by the male students. Consequently they perform badly. The girls have no doubt that:



*“Girls study better when they are alone.”*

It has also been revealed by some respondents that generally boys do better academically when they are in all boys' schools. They claim that this is partly because some boys are shy. More often than not they hesitate to answer questions, especially if their girlfriends are in the same class. The thought of getting the answer wrong can prove too overwhelming for them. Speaking from personal experience a girl in a mixed school maintains that:

*“Some boys cannot answer questions in the class because they are shy and some will be thinking of their girlfriend in the class.”*

This shows that shyness is not confined to girls. It should be mentioned that according to the findings of the Research Student interviewed during the Pilot study, (because she was looking into the educational problems of the shy and the quiet children), more girls than boys belong to this category.

Another important fact that has emerged in the course of this investigation is that boys are not responsible for all the distractions in coeducational institutions in Imo State. Some female students in mixed schools claim that their fellow girls deliberately distract boys by seeking their attention. Some boys have also indicated that in the class they are distracted by the very presence of girls as well as their trendy fashions. The more academic minded male students in mixed schools have expressed a desire to go to single sex schools. As one of them explained, it is:

*“because in a coeducational school boys and girls are corrupt. In class boys are attracted to the way the girls dress.”*

This does suggest that in coeducational institutions girls could deliberately dress to provoke boys.

As some male respondents in mixed schools wish to go to single sex schools, their female counterparts in coeducational institutions want to do the same. The girls are very

concerned about loss of privacy in mixed schools, and have stressed their dislike for mixed schools:

*“because girls have private things that they don't want boys to know, and boys too have secrets they don't want girls to know.”*

Considering the arguments both for and against coeducation in Imo State, it could be justifiably argued that some of the reasons given by the opponents of mixed educational institutions are worrying and compelling, and might strongly support the case of those who are calling for mixed schools in the State to be abolished. One of them is a nun who during the interview explained that from her experience as a principal of secondary schools, (including mixed schools), for many years, coeducational institutions are morally, educationally and socially undesirable. She spoke of very serious moral laxity that exists in mixed schools, which is not easy to appreciate by someone outside these institutions. The nun claimed that some boys would stop at nothing and could in fact go to any length to distract and befriend girls, even if it means being responsible for their school fees. This partly explains why many parents worry about their daughters in mixed schools, and some especially moslem parents will not under any circumstance allow their daughters to attend coeducational institutions.

It is worthy of note that an investigation (Ndu, 1987) carried out with a view to establishing the problems of coeducation in Nigeria, (all the States were involved parents, students, teachers, principals, various types of schools etc.), showed that:

- a. A mixed school with boys and girls studying together is a natural setting.
- b. Concentration in terms of academic work, is greater in single sex schools.
- c. Moral training is also easier in single sex schools.
- d. Communities find it cheaper to build coeducational rather than single sex institutions.

- e. There were mixed feelings and doubts about the validity of coeducational institutions, and even whether the government should continue to encourage the building of mixed schools.

The Investigation shows that the future of coeducation in Nigeria is in doubt. Inevitably it validates the reasons given by those students who are opposed to mixed schools in Imo State. The academic implications can be very serious. It is important at this stage to refer to the findings of an investigation sponsored by the Equal Opportunities Commission with regard to the Examination Results in mixed and single sex schools in Britain in October 1983. Some of the findings include the fact that:

- a. Boys do very well when they are in all boys' schools.
- b. They do not do well when they are in mixed schools.
- c. Girls do well in girls educational institutions.
- d. Girls in mixed schools do very badly.

The table below shows the proportions reaching 'O' Level standard in science:

Proportions Reaching 'O' Level Pass Standard in Science

Boys in boys' schools	40%
Girls in girls' schools	38%
Boys in mixed schools	21%
Girls in mixed schools	14%

It is worthy of note that the results are similar to those in appendix I, regarding examination results of Imo State boys and girls in mixed and single sex secondary schools. The findings did also reveal that the chances of both genders scoring top marks in science are far greater in single sex schools than in coeducational institutions.

It is also worth noting that in the 1995 GCSE examination in England, the best results were achieved by pupils in single sex schools, notably those located in South Yorkshire. In one of those schools, (Birkdale in Sheffield), a boy offered 12 subjects and passed all of them

in the new 'A starred Grades'. In an article entitled 'Sheffield Schools Beat Trend', M. Houston, the headmistress of an all girls' school was quoted as saying:

*"I certainly think that, once again these results, as last week's national survey proved, demonstrate the outstanding advantages to girls of girls only education."* Sheffield Telegraph, Friday, August 25, 1995. (J. Stapleton), p. 5.

**Boys, does the presence of girls distract you?**

**Table: 28**

	U	R		
<b>Y</b>	24	85	109	50%
<b>N</b>	12	49	61	28%
<b>D</b>	5	9	14	
<b>0</b>	6	27	33	

The figures above show that the majority of the boys, (50%), have conceded the fact that they are distracted by the presence of girls, while only 28% say they are not.

This only goes to confirm the findings both in Nigeria and by the Equal Opportunities Commission in England with regard to academic performance and achievement in mixed schools.

**Girls, does boys' presence make you nervous?**

**Table: 29**

	U	R	T	
<b>Y</b>	19	156	175	47%
<b>N</b>	31	141	172	46%
<b>D</b>	4	17	21	
<b>0</b>	2	5	7	

Since boys have been given the opportunity to say whether or not the presence of girls distracts them, it was considered necessary to offer the same opportunity to girls. The educational significance of the statistical information cannot be over emphasised. A glance at the above table reveals that only one per cent separates the number that is uncomfortable with

regard to boys' presence in the class and the number that is not bothered by their presence, (47% and 46%).

One obvious implication is that the distraction is having more negative effect on boys than on girls. In other words, most of the male students find girls' presence and attraction irresistible. But in academic terms, boys seem to cope better than girls, (as the Equal Opportunities Sponsored Investigation Team has shown). One possible explanation could be that the girls involved in a relationship with their male counterparts are not devoting enough time with regard to their studies. This in turn may support the views of those who claim that the main asset of mixed schools is that of enhancement of social interaction. But the future of coeducation in Imo State could be in serious doubt especially if mixed schools are seen not to be academically serious.

**What would you like to do when you leave school?**

**Table: 30**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
eco	-	1	1	-	-	-
med	6	17	23	63	32	95
pi	5	-	5	-	-	-
act	5	15	20	20	10	30
rsr	-	7	7	-	2	2
rfr	1	-	1	15	-	15
jb	-	-	-	-	12	12
ach	-	1	1	-	-	-
typ	-	-	-	-	10	10
t	-	5	5	6	19	25
td	3	-	3	-	-	-
eng	14	-	14	40	4	44
bu	5	-	5	3	11	14
fmr	-	-	-	-	5	5
m	-	-	-	-	16	16
lw	4	5	9	-	20	20
jr	4	1	5	-	10	10
nse	-	3	3	23	95	118
fe	-	1	1	-	73	73

eco - economics	td - trade
med - medicine	eng - engineer
pi - pilot	bu - business
act - accountant	fmr - farming
rsr - Reverend Sister	m - marriage
rfr - Reverend Father	lw - law
jb - job	jr - journalism
ach - architecture	nse - nursing
typ - typing	fe - further education
t - teaching	

Obviously what boys and girls will do when they leave school, does to a large extent depend on their academic performance and achievement while at school. However bearing in mind that in some cases, there may be a clash of interest in terms of what parents want their children to do, and what the youngsters themselves will actually like to do, the students have been offered a unique opportunity in this study to indicate exactly what they would like to do when they leave the secondary school. It should however be noted that the statistical information may not matter much, but what would be of crucial importance are the courses the students would like to pursue once their secondary education is over, especially girls.

The above table still reflects male dominance in courses like medicine, engineering and aviation. Nursing, teaching, typing etc. are still girls' favourites, particularly girls in the village schools to whom lady teachers and nurses are role models.

The choice of typing by some village girls is hardly surprising as private commercial schools in the villages have very high female population. It is interesting to note that some girls would like to be lawyers and accountants. But they need a lot of encouragement so that many may go for courses like medicine, engineering, architecture, aviation etc. As some of their teachers suggested, with a lot of encouragement, girls can reach any academic height, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table: 37).

**Explain the type of help and encouragement you get from your parents.****Table: 31**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>Ps</b>	12	5	17	49	116	165	31%
<b>Sps</b>	32	39	71	106	178	284	60%
<b>Vps</b>	1	9	10	8	8	16	4%
<b>0</b>	2	3	5	7	7	14	

ps - parental support

sps - strong parental support

vps - very strong parental support

Everyone needs encouragement, it can help boost one's confidence. Giving young people all the support they need and encouraging them to learn, especially when they are still at school is very important given that it is when the foundation for their future career is laid. Parents should not leave everything to the school. Indeed in certain issues they should take the lead, like encouraging their sons and daughters to take their education seriously, providing them with the necessary material needs and making home conditions, (especially for day students), favourable for effective studies. Table: 19, for instance, shows that many youngsters would like to be boarders owing to unfavourable reading conditions in their homes.

The above table shows that 31% of the students get just average support from their parents. The majority, (60%) are strongly supported by their parents, but only 4% are getting very strong support.

In spite of the heavy population of female students in the rural areas, the above figures show that only a handful of them are very strongly supported by their parents. This could mean that many rural parents are still lukewarm and complacent about female school education. Some of them, as a result of illiteracy, may be unaware of the validity of formal education unlike their better informed urban counterparts. This is very important because the amount of help and encouragement a child gets, can make all the difference in terms of

academic achievement. For instance, a girl from one of the model schools whose parents are urban based, has this to say about the type of help and encouragement she gets from her parents:

*“They help me in my home assignment, and give me guidelines on my future career. They scold me when I do badly, and celebrate with me when I do well.”*

It is worthy of note that in some cases, parents may go much further, regarding the type of help and encouragement they give to their children, even if it involves extra expenditure over and above school fees. For example, another female student whose parents also live in the town has revealed that her parents want her to do very well at school, so that she could have a good career in the future. Here she describes the way the parents help and support her:

*“They put me in extra lessons, check my results through and sometimes teach me some subjects they know.”*

Obviously, the chances of such a girl succeeding, in academic terms, are far greater than her counterpart in the village who, perhaps due to domestic chores, may not have time to do even her homework. If her parents are illiterates they cannot teach her. As rural dwellers, her parents may not also be able to afford the money for private tuition. It is noteworthy that some villagers are abjectly poor. This was highlighted by a priest during the interview. He claimed that many parents can hardly feed their children, let alone pay their school fees. He also said that because many churches are poor they cannot help those parents who are desperately poor.



**Which of these chores do you do?****Table: 32**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>1</b>	30	16	46	99	134	233
<b>2</b>	3	3	6	9	4	13
<b>3</b>	2	5	7	15	84	99
<b>4</b>	1	-	1	1	3	4
<b>5</b>	4	1	5	14	11	25
<b>6</b>	5	29	34	26	82	108
<b>0</b>	2	2	4	6	1	7

- |                        |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 - Sweeping the floor | 4 - Washing dishes  |
| 2 - Making beds        | 5 - Washing clothes |
| 3 - Cooking            | 6 - All             |

As already indicated, domestic chores do interfere with students' school work, although the scale of interference differs from family to family, and also from place to place. For instance, students in the villages get more pressure from their parents, and in some cases engage in farm work instead of going to school. The above figures reveal that the bulk of household work is done by girls. The boys who help more or less confine themselves to the lighter items like sweeping the floor, whereas cooking, which takes up a lot of time and energy is done by girls.

In the rural areas it will involve going to fetch water and firewood. In some places the streams may be very far away from the village, and the girls have to go immediately they come back from school. In some cases the girls may go to the farm to get the food items to be cooked, or go to the local market to buy them. This is partly why some of them do not have time to do their home work.

It is also clear from the above table that more girls than boys bother to do all the various types of domestic chores in the house. The figures also show that students in the rural areas do more than their urban counterparts. It can also be seen from the above table that more girls than boys do sweeping in the villages. This is because in the rural areas, sweeping

is a very laborious task, as it involves sweeping the entire compound, and not just the rooms like in towns and cities. As it is done early in the morning, punctuality with regard to school, is one of the big problems facing rural school girls.

If girls in Imo State will not become academically under achievers they must devote more time to their studies. This means that the amount of time they spend on domestic chores should be reduced. Parents have to ensure that every one does their fair share within the family system. Only this can guarantee girls in Imo State more time for their studies like their brothers. It is noteworthy that urban students in Imo State especially boys, do as much domestic chores as most of their counterparts in England, (as revealed by the Pilot Study), which allows them a lot of time for private studies.

### Who should do domestic chores?

**Table: 33**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>1</b>	-	-	-	-	1	1	
<b>2</b>	2	3	5	16	55	71	13%
<b>3</b>	43	51	94	152	260	412	85%
<b>0</b>	2	2	4	2	3	5	

- 1 - boys only
- 2 - girls only
- 3 - both

Given the inherent social expectations in Igboland with regard to women and domestic chores, no one seems to bother, in terms of finding out from the youngsters what they think about division of labour, within the family system. This study has made it possible for boys and girls to have a say on the issue.

It is encouraging to note from the above table that only 13% of the respondents think domestic chores should be done by girls only, while the overwhelming majority, 85%, feel that boys and girls should be equally involved. Statistically only one village girl holds the view that household work should be done by boys only. The majority of those who consider

domestic chores to be solely girls' responsibility are rural girls, followed by their male counterparts. The difference in opinion between urban and rural respondents is quite striking. For example, only 4% of the male students who live in the towns and cities think that boys should not bother about domestic work in the home, as opposed to the 9% of their fellow boys in the villages.

This could reflect the fact that there is more work to be done in the villages, (including farming) and consequently more pressure on rural students to assist parents.

However, the fact that the vast majority of the students hold the view that household chores should be a shared responsibility is significant because it does show among other things, that today's young Imo State people, who are also tomorrow's adults and leaders, might succeed where their elders have failed. Support and encouragement coupled with practical examples both from school and home, (especially from parents), can go a long way to make this a reality.

**Do you find it difficult to study at home?**

**Table: 34**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	12	17	29	45	102	147	30%
<b>n</b>	27	23	50	110	200	310	61%
<b>d</b>	1	1	2	1	6	7	
<b>x</b>	2	2	4	14	2	16	
<b>0</b>	5	13	18	-	9	9	

In Imo State, like in most developing societies, children do help their parents in various capacities. It may however be wrong to assume that in each case, the demand made by parents is such that the youngster is left with little or no time to devote to his or her studies. This is why it has been deemed necessary to find out from the students themselves whether or not they find it difficult to study at home.

The figures reveal that 30% of the respondents come from homes where the conditions are not conducive to effective studies, while 61% say that they can study well in their respective homes. But 30% still reflects a large number of male and female students who for one reason or the other find that studying at home is quite difficult. It is also clear from the above table that numerically more village students find home study difficult as opposed to their urban counterparts. It is also obvious from the figures that the number of girls that finds it difficult to study in both rural and urban centres exceeds that of boys.

This could be interpreted to mean that girls are under more pressure from their parents than their brothers, to assist in domestic chores and other types of work. The fact that more village students find it difficult to study at home, than those in the urban centres does suggest that there is more work to be done in the rural areas as highlighted in the preceding table.

**Why is it difficult for you to study at home?**

**Table: 35**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>Dtn</b>	7	5	12	15	22	37
<b>dc</b>	1	3	4	2	20	22
<b>Tfw</b>	-	-	-	13	30	43
<b>nrm</b>	-	-	-	5	5	10
<b>pp</b>	-	2	2	1	5	6
<b>tmw</b>	1	2	3	3	12	15
<b>tv</b>	2	3	5	1	3	4
<b>noi</b>	1	2	3	5	5	10
<b>x</b>	28	23	51	112	208	320
<b>0</b>	7	16	23	13	9	22

- dtn - distraction
- dc - domestic chores
- tfw - too much farm work
- nrm - no room and other facilities
- pp - parental pressure
- tmw - too much work
- tv - television/video
- noi - noise

To assume that domestic chores and farming are the only things that make it impossible or difficult for boys and girls to study well at home, may be unwise, given that

there could be other reasons. This is why the respondents have been given this unique opportunity to mention all the things that make studying at home very difficult.

One of them appears to be distraction from modern items of entertainment, notably television and video. One respondent for instance, said:

*“I find it difficult to study at home because I often watch TV”*

This is why self-discipline is indispensable so that a youngster knows when to study and when to relax. Parents should watch their children carefully, helping and encouraging them in terms of getting the right balance, so that they do not study too hard or on the other hand, relax too much. It is worthy of note that some parents told the writer that they removed their television sets, videos etc., and hid them because their children’s schoolwork was being seriously affected. Besides, the youngsters failed to heed the warning - to cut down on the amount of time they spent watching television and video. There is hardly any doubt that in some cases the students do not make any effort to study, let alone do their home work. For instance, one girl explained that she would neither study nor do her home work due to distraction from television, video, and entertainment of her friends who are always coming and going.

It is worthy of note that due to lack of space, some students cannot study at home or do their assignment. This complaint is more common in the villages where more often than not, families are very large and parents cannot provide adequate accommodation. One boy for example, comes from a village family of nine and this is what he has to say about his plight; regarding studying at home:

*“I find it too difficult because we live in a room and everywhere used to be noisy.”*

Neither he nor his brothers and sisters can study at home or do any school assignment as they have to squeeze into one room along with their parents. The problem is fairly widespread and disturbing. For instance, from another village a respondent movingly stresses his point:

*"It is difficult for me to study at home because I don't have a room or a place to study."*

This is obviously a very serious educational problem which the young victims can do very little about.

Ironically, the students who do not have an accommodation problem in their homes may still lack other facilities including tables and light. A village boy for example, has only a broken table and as a result, he can not study at home or do his school assignment. Consequently, he finds academic progress extremely difficult and in a moving manner says it is because:

*"I do not have a good table."*

There is no doubt that he will find writing particularly uncomfortable.

Non availability of good light is also making it very difficult for some students to study at home. Although the urban students rely mainly on electric light, (unless when there are power cuts), their village counterparts have lighting problems all the time. Some do not have any form of light at all in the night, which is when most students have a lot of time to study. In some homes there may be just one lamp for the entire family. Some locally prepared lanterns like 'Ederi', (made from the palm nuts), with their very thick choking smoke, and extremely dim light, pose enormous threat to vision itself. This, undoubtedly is one of the reasons why village students perform badly.

In some cases studying at home can be very difficult for both urban and rural students because of noise. One urban male student for example, has unequivocally stressed the fact that he can hardly study at home because:

*"There is always a noisy atmosphere."*

At times the noise could be caused by siblings. Surprisingly, in some circumstances, the parents may be responsible for the noise as one rural boy explained:

*"My father and mother disturb me by going to the farm and bringing friends."*

Among the Igbo, couples' friends can help them with their farm work. As a reward those friends could be invited for entertainment, in the course of which an awful lot of noise could be made - perhaps not deliberately.

There is evidence to suggest that in some families parents deliberately make reading conditions unfavourable. This is a situation in which three sisters find themselves. As one of them put it:

*"Our parents used to distract our attention when we were reading."*

Their parents could belong to the category from illiterate background, who are not aware of the validity of school education. Since the students are all girls, it is also possible that their parents may have very little or no regard for girls' formal education, given that there are still parents in Imo State who have negative attitudes towards girls' school education. This is very important because in some cases, parents can go to any length to ensure that their daughter does nothing relating to school work at home. This is precisely the fate of one rural girl:

*"My parents will not allow me to do my home work at home. They tell me to fetch water and firewood."*

In Imo State, collecting firewood can be a laborious task, notably during the rainy season when the heavy torrential rains make the forests wet and damp. Fetching water can be equally difficult, especially when the streams or wells are located very far away from the village.

It is true to say that in Imo State within the family system, girls are under more pressure than their brothers regarding parental demand. It is also possible that the amount of suffering girls undergo in their homes may never be fully appreciated. It may be even harder to assess or reappraise how much damage that has been done in terms of their educational performance and achievement. It should be noted that girls in the urban areas hardly ever experience the problems that their fellow girls have to endure day after day in the rural areas, including farm work, fetching of water and firewood etc. One rural girl whose own personal

experience could provide an insight into the lot of other village girls, has this to say about her predicament in her parents' home:

*"When you come back home, immediately you drop your bag, many messages will come, do this and that."*

It is quite obvious that such a girl cannot study effectively in her home, given that the parental pressures on her, begin more or less the very moment she comes back from school.

The daily experience of a very ambitious village girl who never finds time to do her school work could also show how indifferent some parents in Imo State can be, with regard to their daughters' educational aspirations. This statement sums up the girl's frustration:

*"The domestic work did not allow me to do my home work."*

It is noteworthy that apart from domestic chores, what makes life particularly harsh for village female students in Imo State, is the amount of farming their parents expect them to do. A rural girl whose academic progress has suffered immeasurably due to constant farming says:

*"I find it difficult to study because they can send me to the farm any time."*

Under such enormous pressure, it is hard to imagine how the girls can study well and perform brilliantly at school. It would be recalled that farming is one of the factors responsible for academic retardation of rural students, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table: 17).



**Can you say any good thing which school education has done for the Nigerian society?****Table: 36**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>dev</b>	10	20	30	50	120	170
<b>prf</b>	10	7	17	35	15	50
<b>idp</b>	1	4	5	10	10	20
<b>gvt</b>	1	-	1	3	5	8
<b>com</b>	-	-	-	11	5	16
<b>RE</b>	-	1	1	1	15	16
<b>mac</b>	3	2	5	5	19	24
<b>cvl</b>	4	4	8	15	36	51
<b>lis</b>	10	4	14	25	70	95
<b>emt</b>	2	7	9	10	2	12
<b>0</b>	6	7	13	5	22	27

dev - development  
 prf - the professions  
       e.g. teaching, medicine  
 idp - independence  
 gvt - government  
 com - communication

RE - Religious Education  
 mac - modern amenities and  
       comfort  
 cvl - civilisation  
 lis - literate society  
 emt - enlightenment

It is interesting to note that since the advent of western education this is the first study that has offered young Nigerian school children the opportunity to express their views with regard to the merits and demerits of western education; bearing in mind that formal education in Nigeria has always had its critics. The significance of the students' response may not lie necessarily on the statistical aspect, so more importance should be attached to what they have to say.

Some of the students seem to be fascinated by the whole concept of western education. They strongly believe that it has brought about enlightenment and civilisation with regard to the Nigerian society, of which Imo State is a part. As one boy bluntly put it:

*"Without education, we would have been a bunch of uncivilized monkeys running around in bushes."*

This shows that at least some of the respondents are aware of the fact that no society can boast of civilisation, without a certain degree of literacy. The introduction of western

education is being obviously seen by the students as the beginning of that long and often arduous march towards full civilisation and development.

There are some respondents who think that western education has not only brought about civilisation and development, but has also made communication between Nigeria and the outside world possible. This is very important because in the traditional Nigerian society, communication as we know it today did not exist. For instance, Nigerians of those distant days did not travel by air or sea to various parts of the world. Although they travelled by land, they did not have trains, cars, bicycles etc. Because of limited mobility, their world was very small. In terms of development, hospitals and health centres, are seen by some respondents as some of the wonders of school education. They have also attributed modern amenities and comfortable life to the embracing of western education by Nigerians.

In a society where people are now trained in various professions, it is understandable that some youngsters will see some people as role models. Inevitably there are some boys and girls in Imo State for whom school education is particularly fascinating because:

*“... it has brought professionals e.g. doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers etc.”*

The brutal murder of twins, as well as the untold suffering undergone by women whose only guilt was multiple birth, sums up the degree or scale of ignorance, especially in moral and religious terms, in the traditional Nigerian society. It is therefore interesting that young Nigerians today do realise that Christianity, which in the Nigerian context is inextricably linked with western education, made it possible for the killing of twins to stop, as well as the inhuman treatment meted out to their mothers. It should however be noted that the unfortunate events took place against a background of ignorance, illiteracy and superstition - and not that the society did not care. As one of the youngsters explained:

*“western education has eradicated all the ancient beliefs of the Nigerian society and cleared many superstitious beliefs.”*

It could be argued as to whether or not the Nigerian society has been completely rid of superstitious beliefs. But what is not in doubt is the fact that multiple births are no longer occasions of deep sorrow, but of ostentatious display of great merriment and indescribable joy.

It is very important to note that for many respondents, the advantages of western education can never be over emphasised. For example, a female student who stressed the fact that school education has transformed her entire family stressed that:

*“Western education has made our parents aware that it is also necessary to educate girls as it is to educate boys.”*

This shows that even young girls are aware of what school education is doing for the female population of the society. Some of the students have also argued that schooling has taught people to be literate and to learn a lot of things that will help the society.

Some have pointed out that the art of government and the Nigerian independence have all come about because of western education, they recalled the emergence of educated citizens, who later on were to lead the non-violent struggle for Nigerian independence. Obviously, without western education it is hard to imagine how an illiterate society could have aspired towards self-government, let alone achieve it.

Some of the youngsters hold the view that political independence in the Nigerian context, also reflects economic independence which is equally important. They believe that by attaining nationhood, Nigeria, now has at her command her own citizens, who are engaged in the exploration of their own natural resources and are capable of tackling their own problems. As one of the respondents has carefully explained, western education:

*“has made people more learned, and now they are independent, produce their own things and tackle their own problems.”*

This shows that as far as some of the students are concerned, western education is invaluable.

**Are there bad things about western education?****Table: 37**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
Y	17	30	47	76	125	201	42%
N	21	15	36	78	167	245	47%
D	7	5	12	9	10	19	
O	2	6	8	7	17	24	

Although statistical information may not be the focal point with regard to the above question, the respondents who think that there are negative things in the Nigerian society which can be attributed to western education are fewer, (42%), than those who hold the contrary view, (47%).

It is worth noting that many of the students who think that all is not well with western education point to a morally lax and decadent society, which they strongly believe western education has created. They also attribute cheating, stealing, murder, 419, (obtaining by tricks and dishonest means), etc. to school education. As one female respondent has argued:

*“Schooling has brought about corruption, crime e.g. stealing, promiscuity, rape and inferiority complex.”*

Some of the students hold the educated Nigerians responsible for the inferiority complex, because they claim that they make the illiterates feel very bad, inferior and worthless. This is evident in the response of a female student who has observed that:

*“Educated children now look down on uneducated old people ...”*

Similar observation has also been made by her male counterpart who has pointed out that the:

*“ones that go to school insult those that don't.”*

This is a very serious issue because this type of attitude can discourage some parents from sending their children to school. They may for example, feel that if education turns out rude and disrespectful youngsters, what is the point in acquiring it? Among the Igbo, respect is a very essential attribute, particularly the respect of the old by the young. But the Igbo also

believe that to be able to respect others one must first of all respect oneself. In short self-respect is regarded as indispensable. However, some of the respondents now genuinely feel that self-respect has disappeared. One male student has no doubt whatsoever that:

*“Western education corrupted us a little in that self respect has become a thing of the past.”*

Surprisingly, some of the boys and girls have blamed their teachers for the irresponsible behaviour of the society's youth.

*“Some teachers are not good both in teaching and behaviour.”*

This accusation is likely to strengthen the case for the critics of the state system of education, who claim that mission schools, which were abolished in Igboland after the civil war, produced better quality education, disciplined teachers and responsible youth.

Juvenile delinquency that was more or less non-existent in the traditional society owing to the way the society was organised and run, is becoming increasingly a social problem. Some of the students also see it as one of the demerits of school education, and a direct result of peer pressure. According to one respondent:

*“Smoking has been encouraged among peers, disobedience, lesbianism, boys/girls are crazy.”*

It seems that in extreme cases some students involve themselves in the occult and other secret societies, as one of the students disclosed:

*“... students team up to form secret societies.”*

Significantly, some of the students are of the opinion that the home is not totally blameless in terms of the reckless behaviour of today's youth in Imo State in particular, and in Nigeria as a whole.

*“... students come from bad homes and therefore they influence others in abstaining from good morals.”*

There are some respondents who see wealth, capitalism, greed, inordinate ambition, pride etc. as some of the 'evil fruits' of western education with regard to the present day Nigerian society. As a female respondent unequivocally remarked:

*"... due to education people have acquired wealth and some look down on the poor."*

Some students have also expressed fear and deplore the current practice in Nigeria whereby the desire to get rich overnight has resulted in:

*"Educated people oppressing the illiterate by taking their land."*

These revelations seem to point to a society that has not only become less caring, but which has also lost a sense of direction and purpose.

It is noteworthy that some of the boys and girls have blamed the loss of Igbo cultural heritage on formal education, which is also regarded as foreign culture. They fear that the youth in particular are increasingly alienating themselves from the culture of their own motherland. As a worried female student passionately explained:

*"Western education has made the youth neglect most of their cultural heritage. Most children cannot speak their mother tongues."*

This highlights the scale of the problem. The inability to speak any of the Nigerian languages is very true of those youngsters that were born abroad, but whose parents made no attempt to teach any Nigerian language before going back to Nigeria.

With the state of unrest and wars in several parts of the world it is not surprising that some of the youngsters would express deep concern and hold western education responsible for the:

*"production of deadly weapons e.g. guns."*

It is hardly surprising that they should cite guns as an example, given the relative ease with which guns can be obtained in almost any society in the world today.

Arguably the most damning accusation yet to be levelled against western education by Imo State students, is the denial of freedom of speech to Nigerian citizens. They fear that school education has not created an egalitarian society, a society where people would have equal right and equal opportunity and above all freedom of speech. As one anxious respondent bluntly put it:

*“There is no equal right in Nigeria, if you talk you will be put to death because of it.”*

This shows how much people value their freedom.

However, in spite of all the criticisms levelled against school education, more or less all the students, (99%), think that Nigeria did well to embrace western education. In other words the students are saying that the advantages of western education far outweigh its disadvantages.

**Would you like to see a female Head of State in Nigeria?**

**Table: 38**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	20	34	54	80	181	261	53%
<b>n</b>	21	14	35	70	107	177	36%
<b>d</b>	3	3	6	6	9	15	4%
<b>0</b>	3	5	8	14	22	36	7%

MUS - male urban students 52%

FUS - female urban students 61%

MRS - male rural students 53%

Education should among other things prepare individuals for leadership including political leadership, irrespective of their creed, gender, race etc. It should however be noted that Nigerian people have not had the opportunity of expressing their opinion in terms of female political leadership. It is therefore of special significance that youngsters are now being offered the first opportunity through this study to express their views on the issue. Statistical evidence could be very crucial, notably on the part of male respondents.

What the above figures do reveal however is a moderate support, (53%), for a woman Head of State in Nigeria. 36% of the students do not want to see a woman rule Nigeria. Some, (4%), are not able to make up their minds, while 7% declined to answer. A closer look at the table reveals that there is less support for female political leadership in Nigeria from the male students. Taking the urban respondents for example, (52%), would like to see a woman at the head of Nigerian government as opposed to 61% of their female counterparts. Among the village male students 53% think that a woman should rule Nigeria.

But the fact that both figures are very close, (52% urban, 53% rural) does reflect some measure of consistency on the part of the male students on the issue of women becoming political leaders in Nigeria. It is quite obvious that there is greater enthusiasm on the part of the female students, in terms of having a woman as the head of government in Nigeria. It does inevitably raise the question as to why their male counterparts both in the urban and in the rural areas are less supportive of the whole concept of woman political leadership in the Nigerian society. The reasons for and against this concept could therefore be very crucial.

**Briefly explain why you would/would not like to see a female Head of State in Nigeria.**

**Table: 39**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>chg</b>	15	15	30	23	95	118
<b>bb</b>	3	2	5	28	17	45
<b>bt</b>	1	2	3	9	15	24
<b>wck</b>	-	-	-	-	10	10
<b>env</b>	-	3	3	-	15	15
<b>dc</b>	2	-	2	2	-	2
<b>eco</b>	1	4	5	-	30	30
<b>mtv</b>	-	3	3	-	12	12
<b>wmc</b>	4	2	6	15	70	85
<b>cmp</b>	-	3	3	-	9	9
<b>emo</b>	10	-	10	20	-	20
<b>gwc</b>	3	10	13	10	20	30
<b>dif</b>	1	-	1	50	-	50
<b>lit</b>	-	2	2	-	5	5
<b>0</b>	7	9	16	13	31	44



chg - change	mtv - motivation
bb - bible	wmc - women are more caring
bt - better	cmp - competition
wck - wicked	emo - emotional
env - envy	gwc - give women chance
dc - domestic chores	dif - difficult
eco - economic	lit - literate

Arguably, the most crucial finding that emerged in the course of the fieldwork is the way the students perceive the whole concept of female political leadership in Nigeria. It is therefore very important at this stage to mention that - the issue of a Nigerian government headed by a woman, is not necessarily being seen as a political matter. Far from it, the young respondents are looking at it as an educational issue - the very ultimate, (the highest goal attainable), in terms of formal education of girls and women, in the Nigerian society of which Imo State is a part. It is very important to understand that because the students see the prospect of a woman being the Head of State in a society that is not only strongly patrilineal, but also politically unstable - that they feel the whole question of political leadership should be inextricably linked with women's school education. To them, the issue will inevitably call into question women's mental and physical attributes, and resourcefulness, especially when compared with their male counterparts.

Owing to the special significance of the issue of female political leadership in Nigeria, the views expressed by the students will be examined in some detail. For the purpose of clarity and better understanding, the opinions of each gender will be discussed separately. It should be noted that statistical evidence is not particularly important, but the reasons for and against women being at the head of government in Nigeria can be crucial. It is however worth noting that the table does reveal that many of the students think that the time has now come for change, (chg).

A male student who is of the opinion that the time is even long overdue in terms of change in political leadership has this to say:

*“For a long time the women’s pride has been suppressed and referred to the kitchen, but with the Head of State accession, they can prove that they are worth more than that.”*

It could be argued that this is a proof that the lot of women in the Nigerian society leaves much to be desired and that even youngsters could bear testimony to it. Besides, the male student knows that an illiterate woman can never become the Head of State in Nigeria, which partly explains why a political issue is being inextricably linked with formal education of girls and women in Nigeria.

Interestingly, women’s innate maternal care is being seen by some male students as evidence that women can and should make successful political leaders in the country. As one of them explained:

*“This is because she will have a motherly heart in dealing, and caring for the people that are under her.”*

The ability to understand situations, circumstances and above all people, is very important and an invaluable asset especially in terms of political leadership. From what goes on within the family system, it is obvious that children can assess the attributes as well as the capabilities of their parents. For example, a boy has this to say about his mother on the issue of female political leadership in Nigeria:

*“If all women were like my mother they should be allowed to rule, they understand people, human beings more than men.”*

Some of the male students have even argued that in a country that is so diverse, and where there is very little or no understanding among the various ethnic groups, that it is only a woman Head of State that can bring about deeper and more realistic understanding. As one boy who could not wait to see a woman become the head of state put it:

*“I would like to see a female Head of State in Nigeria because it will bring understanding in the country.”*

It must be noted that there is a general feeling among many students that there should be a change in political leadership in the country with regard to gender. They feel very

strongly that men have been in office for too long and have nothing positive to show for it.

They have therefore argued that there should be a woman Head of State now:

*“because the Head of State had been the males and the country is growing worse every day, it will be good if we try the females to see if there will be a change.”*

Some of the male respondents have actually suggested that what they referred to as ‘trial and error’ should be applied to the Nigerian political situation with regard to having a woman to head the government. According to one boy:

*“Yes, what we are now doing in Nigeria is trial and error. Since males have ruled and there was no forward step, rather we are going back, let us now try a female.”*

Arguably, women may like to become political leaders by merit and not by the process of ‘trial and error’, because men have failed to deliver what they promised. On the issue of achievement, male respondents felt bitter and resentful. One even unequivocally stressed the fact that:

*“... men have achieved nothing. They have been ruling and there has been no change. I would like to see a woman head to see whether there would be any change.”*

This is indicative of the fact that if and when a woman does become the Head of State in Nigeria, she must have to work extremely hard because a lot will be expected of her. Some of the male respondents would like to see a woman at the head of Nigerian government, out of sheer curiosity. As one said:

*“Yes, I will like to see it happen, to know what the women can do, because these days women do what men do.”*

What this suggests is that when a woman becomes the leader of the country people will inevitably compare her records with those of her male predecessors.

It is however necessary at this juncture to see what the female students have to say about people of their own gender becoming the leaders of the nation. There is a very strong indication that a woman becoming the Head of State will not only boost the image,

confidence and status of women in the Nigerian society, but will also act as a powerful incentive to young girls to study very hard and perform well at school. This is well reflected in the response of a girl who stresses:

*“If I see her, I will force myself to read hard and be an important person in my country.”*

One can easily see how women’s political leadership is being connected with their school education. It is noteworthy that there are girls who think that having a woman as a leader in Nigeria will be an inspiration to other women, and at the same time epitomise women’s undoubted capabilities. As one girl pointed out:

*“Yes, with a female Head of State it will give other females the zeal to strive harder in order to get to the top, and show their capability in achieving what women have achieved.”*

Judging from the views some of the girls have expressed, it is quite obvious that many girls have been silently clamouring for a woman Head of State. One girl for instance commented:

*“men have ruled for so long we want to take over now.”*

The fact that many girls have been longing for a government in Nigeria headed by a woman, is further highlighted by girls who have mathematically argued that since Nigeria’s Independence, (1960), the office of Head of State has never been held by a woman. According to one of them:

*“... since we gained our independence we have not had any woman head.”*

Speaking on the same issue, on a personal level another female student has pointed out:

*“Since I was born I have never seen a woman Head of State in Nigeria.”*

Undoubtedly this is a sign that silently and privately, people have been yearning to see the day when a woman will assume the political leadership of the nation.

There are female students who have approached the female political leadership issue, from the point of view of equality and have argued that men and women are equal and on that basis men should now give women a chance. They stressed the fact that since:

*“Both men and women are equal, and since men have ruled, women should also be given the chance to rule, and at least contribute their own part for the development of the country.”*

It is very important to understand how strongly some of the female students feel about having a woman at the head of the Nigerian government. One of them has even supported her argument from biblical point of view, insisting that the eligibility of any office must never depend on gender.

*“... everybody, no matter the sex, should be given a chance, after all, all men are created equal and also what a man can do a woman can do it better. Behind every successful man is a woman.”*

There is little doubt that some of the girls feel that women in the Nigerian society, are being deliberately left out of high political offices like the post of Head of State. As one girl pointed out:

*“... in our country today women are not given any say in the government, but I am quite sure that if the chance is given to them, they would do far better than men, treat everyone in a motherly way.”*

It is worth noting that women's unique ability to understand people, so convincingly argued by some of the male students, has also been highlighted by their female counterparts. Some of the girls for example, have emphasised the fact that because of women's maternal instinct, they are more understanding than men. One girl has even claimed that women:

*“understand the problems of both young and old.”*

It should be noted that some of the female respondents do hold the view that women are more gentle, considerate and sympathetic and therefore better qualified than men to hold political offices. More importantly, there are girls who have highlighted the issue of corruption in Nigeria, and strongly believe that a nation's wealth is safer in the hands of

women because they are not corrupt like men. They have also accused men of extravagance and claim that since women are 'Odoziaku', (preserver of wealth), in Nigeria:

*"A female Head of State can economise our nation's wealth ..."*

There are female students who cannot wait to see a woman Head of State in Nigeria. This is because they believe it will make all Nigerian girls and women happy, and at the same time bring them that long awaited respect in a society where men only seem to be worthy of respect. In the society for example, a woman is expected to respect her husband, no one talks about respect being reciprocal. This partly explains why some of the male teachers are not in favour of women being financially independent, and a woman being the Head of State, (see teacher's questionnaires, Tables: 21 and 30).

Some of the female students are of the opinion that women should be allowed to become political leaders immediately, because it will help the people of Nigeria to decide whether it is the men or the women that are the better politicians. As they put it:

*"Female Head of State will enable us to compare with the male Head of State, and find out which is better for the country."*

They are also confident that women will perform better as politicians. To boost their confidence they indicated that women have become successful leaders in several countries, and stressed the fact that for many years the British Prime Minister was a woman. They emphasised the fact that women have indomitable will:

*"As women once they become dedicated to something nothing can stop them."*

Like their male counterparts, most of the girls believe that there should be change in political leadership with regard to gender.

*"Men have always been the head so . . . there should at least be a change."*

It is therefore obvious that there are students both male and female, who want to see a woman Head of State in Nigeria, just for the sake of change.

Having seen the reasons why some of the respondents want a woman to be the Head of State in Nigeria, it is important at this stage to find out why their counterparts think otherwise. Not surprisingly, for some male students, their major concern is that Nigerian men would lose their respect if women were allowed to become political leaders. According to a male respondent:

*“It will make men feel ashamed. It will make females not to respect the males, (husbands).”*

This does give the impression that in Nigeria women do not at all deserve to be respected. The boys are even convinced that within the family system, it can destroy husband/wife relationship because:

*“it is not good for a man to be looking at his wife and wife will be ahead of him.”*

There are some male students who think it would be an act of folly for a woman to campaign for the presidency at any time in Nigeria. As one of the boys explained:

*“If a woman is the Head of State in Nigeria, people will not respect her, mostly men, and will not honour her.”*

Some of the boys have even argued that in a country where there are men, women should never aspire to become political leaders. They claim that women cannot control men, and men will not like to obey them. They warn that a Nigerian woman should not try to be a political leader because:

*“She wouldn’t get all the co-operation she would need, especially from the males.”*

The very fact that young secondary school boys can respond in this manner, does say a lot regarding the status of women in the Nigerian society.

In fact, some of the male students have been so embittered by the whole concept of female political leadership in Nigeria, that they have had to refer to the Bible - strongly stressing that:

*"A woman has no right to rule a man, because the Bible says a woman should be under a man."*

Significantly, some male students consider Nigerian women political liabilities. As one of them explained:

*"This is because we need experienced people to rule Nigeria for its continuous survival, and no woman for now has that type of experience."*

But what the young respondent has not realised is the fact that experience comes with practice, and that as long as political leadership continues to elude Nigerian women, they will never get the experience. There are however some male students who perhaps genuinely believe that the responsibility that goes with political leadership will be too much for Nigerian women. They do not think that the women have got what it takes both mentally and physically to perform the role of Head of State. According to one member of this school of thought:

*"I don't think women will be able to survive the stress that comes with the portfolio."*

But the very fact that women have been political leaders in other parts of the world will almost certainly throw this view into doubt.

Some of the boys have however accused Nigerian women of cowardice, and think that they are too fearful to become political leaders in the Nigerian society. They insist that:

*"Women are known to be fearful and with that quality will be unable to rule Nigeria."*

But it could be argued that courage is not necessarily a gender issue, given that not all men can claim to be courageous.

It is noteworthy that there is strong evidence to suggest that some male students do already hold very strong negative views about women in Nigeria. To them women symbolise weakness and so they do not see the basis for Nigerian women's eligibility in terms of political leadership. As one of them has unequivocally stressed:



*“Head of State is not to be given to women, or people will get the image that Nigeria is weak.”*

Arguably, the family structure may influence the opinion its members, (notably the male members), may have about women in the society. The above respondent for example, is one of four boys in a family of six children. Their father is a lawyer - a job that in Nigeria seems to command a lot of authority. So there is an inherent male dominance in the family structure.

Some of the male students have compared a nation with the family, where a man is always expected to be the head, and feel that women should never attempt to hold the office of Head of State because:

*“in a family a man is supposed to be the head, why then will a female want to be a Head of State.”*

It is possible that the way the role of women is perceived in the society, especially in terms of domestic chores, could affect their eligibility for political posts. A male student for instance, is of the opinion that women should not be allowed to become leaders in the Nigerian political system because women:

*“... will not do their domestic work well.”*

If there were flexibility in terms of division of labour he might not have given the above response.

It is quite clear from the reasons given by the male students who are opposed to Nigerian women becoming leaders of the nation, that most of their objections have a lot to do with the male ego. It is however necessary at this stage to find out why their female counterparts also think that Nigerian women are not fit for the office of Head of State. As in the case of some boys, it seems there is a biblical basis for the negative attitude of some female students towards the idea of women becoming political leaders in Nigeria. For instance, one female student insists:

*“It is well indicated in the Bible, that a female should not be above a male, rather females should be under males.”*

It is possible that such girls have already resigned themselves to the fact that Nigerian women should not - and will never become political leaders in the country.

Like some of their male counterparts, some of the female students do also hold the view that Nigerian women have not got what it takes to rule a nation. One girl expresses deep doubts:

*“I don't think women no matter what they think, can govern a nation, especially, without having to indulge in emotional, social and physical problems.”*

Undoubtedly, she does not think that women can cope with the stress and strain that are inherent in the job of political leadership. She does also envisage the possibility of a female Head of State encountering social problems, (probably lack of male cooperation). Some of the female students feel that women are too soft to be leaders of a nation. They hold the view that women are not as tough and as strict as men.

It is important to note that some of the girls consider Nigerian women too dependent to rule the country. They believe that a female Head of State will always rely on the men including their husbands. As one girl unequivocally claims:

*“She will always act according to her husband or male friend, who may not be the people's choice.”*

She has raised a very important issue, which was also mentioned in Table: 24, in connection with marriage. Because of the way the society regards marriage, Nigerian women feel vulnerable outside marriage, and as married women, they are supposed to be protected by their husbands. This is why some of the girls have come to the conclusion that no matter what a woman is, without a husband she is nothing. It is therefore difficult in the light of this ideology, for a woman to rule Nigeria, independent of her husband. And because the man, unlike his wife, does not have the mandate to govern the country, the woman's political

career and leadership will inevitably be in doubt. In other words, it may be important for women in Nigeria to achieve self-independence first, before aspiring to become national leaders. This is why their financial independence, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table: 21), could be of some assistance.

The issue of Nigerian women's dependency and vulnerability must never be taken lightly since it has very serious political implications. For instance, if a woman is dependent on her husband who is also supposed to protect her – how then can she be the head of state? Because as the leader of the nation, her citizens will rely on her more or less for everything. In fact, one of her major roles is that of protecting the territorial integrity of Nigeria. But if she feels weak and needs the protection of her husband – it is quite obvious that political leadership is a responsibility that will be too difficult for her to assume. This is precisely why the female respondent feels strongly that a woman can not rule Nigeria independent of her husband or a male friend. It is also the main reason why some male students believe that female political leadership will reflect a weak nation. What is therefore unquestionably crucial is the fact that female self independence lies at the very heart of women's political leadership in Nigeria.

Significantly, some of the female students have accused Nigerian women of greed and inordinate ambition, and feel they are unfit for top political offices. They claim that Nigerian women are:

*“very ambitious, so they would like to use the money for their wants.”*

It is important to note that like some of their teachers, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table: 30), female students who are vehemently opposed to the idea of women becoming heads of government in Nigeria claim that women are too wicked to be associated with the leadership of a nation. But ironically some of the girls think that if there is any single factor that can keep Nigerian women permanently out of the leadership contest, it is jealousy. Their view

does remind one of Shakespeare's Othello (Alexander 1990) who - in spite of his military prowess, his breathtaking conquests and achievements, was in the end destroyed by jealousy. A female student has emphasised the fact that she would not like to see a government in Nigeria headed by a woman:

*"Because females are very jealous of themselves and cannot rule properly."*

Surprisingly, jealousy was mentioned several times by the members of the 'National Council of Women's Societies' during the interview. They stressed the fact that jealousy among Nigerian women could cost them the political leadership of the nation. The women did also express doubts as to whether a woman candidate for the presidency would be able to get her family's support, which is very crucial and indispensable especially that of her husband.

Considering all the reasons given by the female students for not wanting to see a woman at the head of any government in Nigeria, it is quite clear that unlike their male counterparts whose views mainly reflect the male ego, the girls appear to be genuinely concerned with Nigerian women's ability to cope with the stress and strain inherent in a high profile job like that of Head of State.

**What job does your father do?****Table: 40**

	U	R	T
ly	5	6	11
doc	5	9	14
eng	6	19	25
bm	11	51	62
cs	15	56	71
t	9	37	46
fmr	1	77	78
td	4	42	46
pc	1	3	4
jr	1	-	1
dri	3	11	14
ach	1	-	1
don	4	1	5
hun	-	1	1
act	1	-	1
sec	-	1	1
agc	3	4	7
rtd	3	2	5
rvd	2	-	2
0	7	-	7

ly - lawyer  
 doc - doctor  
 eng - engineer  
 bm - business man  
 cs - civil servant  
 t - teacher  
 fmr - farmer  
 td - trader  
 pc - police officer  
 jr - journalist

dri - driver  
 ach - architect  
 don - university lecturer  
 hun - hunter  
 act - accountant  
 sec - secretary  
 agc - agriculture officer  
 rtd - retired  
 rvd - reverend

In developing countries, (including Nigeria), most of the people are subsistence farmers. Many are also self employed in innumerable little businesses. For instance, some are car mechanics, tailors, seamstresses, traders, petty traders, painters, builders, hair dressers, cloth weavers, craftsmen, fishermen, carpenters etc. Only a small minority is actually employed in various public departments as engineers, doctors, nurses, journalists etc. The above table confirms this fact. For example, it shows that only 187 men are employed.

During the interview the local politicians were reminded of the need to create jobs in the villages and also to make life in the rural areas more attractive, in order to prevent rural population drainage particularly of the youth, This in turn may reduce the crime rate in towns and cities. In Imo State, some lawyers, doctors, businessmen, civil servants, traders etc. live in the rural areas, but some of them go to work in the urban centres, as the above table shows.

**What job does your mother do?**

**Table: 41**

	U	R	T
t	36	70	106
cs	6	17	23
act	2	-	2
doc	1	3	4
nse	9	18	27
rtd	-	1	1
sec	1	-	1
vet	1	-	1
ptf	1	2	3
don	-	-	-
bw	13	31	44
tfm	-	1	1
fbw	3	1	4
typ	-	1	1
ptd	1	160	161
hw	1	3	4
ft	6	1	7
fmr	5	85	90
cnt	2	-	2

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| t - teacher                      | bw - business woman          |
| cs - civil servant               | tfm - teacher, farmer        |
| act - accountant                 | fbw - farmer, business woman |
| doc - doctor                     | typ - typist                 |
| nse - nurse                      | ptd - petty trader           |
| ttd - teacher, trader            | hw - housewife               |
| vet - veterinarian               | ft - farmer, teacher         |
| ptf - petty trader<br>and farmer | fmr - farmer                 |
| don - university lecturer        | cnt - contractor             |

The above women's job table contrasts sharply with the men's. The figures reflect the fact that as far as the job market is concerned, Imo State women are still very much in the

traditional jobs, notably teaching, farming, petty trading, nursing etc. Unlike the men's job table, there are no engineers. There are also no university lecturers.

In Nigeria - just as the higher the academic level, the fewer the female members of the society, similarly the higher the institution of learning, the fewer the women teachers. This partly explains the absence of women university lecturers in the above table, given that there are not many of them. Even when it comes to trading, the job tables reveal that only men do the real trading, because the vast majority of their female counterparts are only engaged in petty trading. It is not surprising that there is not a single woman engineer in the women's employment table. Of all the so called men's jobs, engineering is one of the most prominent and few girls who may be clever enough to study it may not be willing to do so, for fear of coming into direct competition with men.

But if the education of girls in Imo State were to be realistic, many things must have to change including social attitudes towards women and certain courses and jobs. Besides, girls must be genuinely encouraged to go for the male dominated disciplines, as highlighted by some teachers, (see teacher's questionnaires, Table 37). This is also where the activities of the 'National Association of Women in Science, Technology and Mathematics' will be invaluable, since the main objective of this organisation is to encourage female students to get into science based courses which lead to careers that were hitherto considered too masculine for Nigerian women. This will improve the lot of Nigerian women especially in terms of the job market.

Figures released by the Establishment Division, Federal Civil Service Commission, (1989) which show the distribution of staff in the Federal Civil Service, are a reminder that Nigerian women have a long way to go with regard to employment especially the top jobs. The table below shows the huge disparity between men and women:

**The Distribution of Staff in the Federal Civil Service**

LEVEL	MALE	FEMALE	YEAR
17	61	1	1980
16	158	4	1980
17	74	3	1985
16	252	10	1985
17	85	8	1988
16	253	17	1988

The above table shows that in 1980, there were only 5 women in the two top levels, (17 and 16). Five years later, (1985), very little had changed. After nearly a decade, (1988), the rate at which women were recruited into top level jobs in Nigeria still remained negligible.

It is however quite obvious from the students' response that they feel very strongly about certain issues including marriage, boarding education, coeducation and female political leadership. How teachers respond to the same issues will be carefully noted.

**THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE****TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRES****Key:**

U - Urban

T - Total

R - Rural

M - Male

Y - Yes

F - Female

N - No

0 - Didn't answer

D - Don't Know

x - Not required to answer

G T Graduate Teachers

P G T Post Graduate Teachers

N G T Non Graduate Teachers

NCWS National Council of Women's Societies



Although this section is essentially about the Analysis and the Interpretation of Teachers' Questionnaires, where necessary some of the views of the interview respondents will be indicated.

**Indicate Age, (in years)**

**Table: 1**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>25 - 30</b>	2	1	3	1	5	6
<b>30 - 40</b>	10	4	14	14	9	23
<b>40 - 50</b>	15	6	21	12	5	17
<b>50 - 60</b>	10	2	12	5	1	6
<b>60 - 65</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>0</b>	2	3	5	3	3	6

The age of teachers as shown in this sample may not necessarily typify, or genuinely represent the age of teachers in Imo State of Nigeria, given that the questionnaires were completed mainly by principals, vice principals and heads of departments, posts usually held by the more experienced teachers. The above table shows that at least half of the respondents are middle aged. In the Nigerian educational system, they constitute a very important teaching force, since they can combine both administrative and teaching roles, a responsibility too complex and too heavy for young and inexperienced teachers. From the table it is also clear that there are more young teachers in the villages than in the urban areas. For instance, 29 village teachers are under 40 as opposed to just 17 in the urban centres. One explanation could be the fact that the urban schools with more modern amenities are better placed to attract and employ those that may have more to offer in terms of qualifications and years of experience. Of the under 30s, the majority are women in the rural schools.

In Imo State as well as in other parts of the country, married women whose husbands live and work in the towns and cities are given priority with regard to the recruitment and appointment of female teachers in the schools located in the urban areas. Heavy

concentration of female teachers in the villages is hardly surprising, because it is only until very recently, (the last few decades), that social attitude towards single women who live and work in towns and cities has begun to change. Hitherto such women were regarded as morally loose, (prostitutes), and young men who lived and worked in urban centres usually went to the villages in search of wives. This is because towns and cities are regarded as places of moral laxity. Consequently, young and unattached women who live and work in them are seen as morally corrupt and unworthy of marriage.

The social norms and traditional ethos that govern rural life are almost non-existent in the urban because of its metropolitan structure. This has strengthened the case of the critics of urban single women, who argue that such women are not only morally corrupt but also bold and sophisticated, and therefore cannot make good wives. Ironically young men can live and work anywhere and still be eligible for marriage.

**Indicate whether - male or female**

**Table: 2**

	U	R	T
M	41	33	74
F	15	24	39
T	56	57	113

Numerically, in this investigation, male teachers, (74), outnumber their female counterparts, (39) almost by two to one. This may not represent the exact strength of teachers from school to school in gender terms.

One explanation for this is that, in the secondary schools many teachers are graduates and in Nigeria like in most developing countries, the higher the educational level, the fewer the women. For instance, there are more women teachers in the primary schools. Secondly, the questionnaires were completed mainly by principals, vice principals and heads of departments, these posts are mostly held by men.

**State your qualification****Table: 3**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>grad. T</b>	18	8	26	18	10	28
<b>p grad T</b>	3	2	5	4	3	7
<b>N grad T</b>	17	5	22	11	9	20
<b>0</b>	3	-	3	-	2	2

The above table seems to confirm the fact that fewer women have access to higher education. There are 43 male graduate and post graduate teachers, while their female counterparts are just 23. It is also clear from the above table that there are many non graduate teachers in Imo State, with various teaching qualifications such as Nigerian Certificate of Education, (NCE), Higher National Diploma, (HND), City and Guild etc. The majority of graduate teachers, are first degree holders.

Most of the female graduate teachers are to be found in the village schools. It is worth noting that of the 26 science teachers only 4 are women. This appears to confirm the claim that science is a male dominated area not only in Imo State but also in other parts of the country. Arguably, the fact that out of 113 teacher-respondents only 26 are graduate science teachers shows that both the State and the federal governments are genuinely concerned regarding their appeal for more people to study science. It is important to note that the two crucial issues namely, the fact that fewer women than men seem to gain access to higher education and also the fact that science is a male dominated area, were clearly put to the Imo State Education officers during the interview. Although they gave the impression that social attitude towards women was mainly responsible, they did stress that steps were being taken to redress the imbalance. They pointed out for instance, that within the State, women's centres were being created, (the writer was shown some of the centres). The centres would make it possible for women's needs to be closely monitored in educational terms, according to the

officers. They also claimed that with the passage of time, not only would more women gain access to higher education they would also feature strongly in science subjects.

Significantly during the interview with some members of the NCWS, which included those who had held the presidency for many years, the fact that the education of girls and women has been neglected over the years was emphasised. They stressed quite strongly that it was partly why their organisation made school education of girls and women a top priority. They maintained that because the majority of those who gain access to higher education to study science are men, their organisation must ensure that girls and women have the same educational opportunity as boys and men. They explained that it was mainly for this reason that a huge amount of their resources is committed to education every year. Consequently, they are able to sponsor women particularly those who are admitted to the universities to study science, both within and outside Nigeria. They cited 1993 as an example - the year they claimed that 6 Nigerian women successfully completed their medical courses overseas and returned to Nigeria to practise as medical doctors. They indicated that the young doctors' service would be particularly appreciated by those women who do not like to be treated by male doctors, and that they would serve as motivators to young girls. The members of the NCWS, also praised this investigation, stressing that it would help highlight the need for, as well as the problems facing - school education of girls and women not only in Imo State but in the country as a whole.

The clergy, during their own interview conceded that in the early years of the Church, not much was done especially by the Western Church in terms of supporting women's education. They did however claim that a lot was now being done by the Church in the State and throughout Nigeria to encourage and promote the education of girls and women. The clergy in Imo State visit families and community leaders emphasising the need for boys and

girls to be given equal educational opportunity. In financial terms, the Church can hardly offer any help.

**Have you always wanted to be a teacher? Explain briefly**

**Table: 4**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>sat</b>	10	9	19	13	7	20	35%
<b>ss</b>	7	-	7	3	-	3	
<b>pcs</b>	15	-	15	10	-	10	22%
<b>voc</b>	1	2	3	1	5	6	
<b>lik</b>	5	2	7	3	9	12	
<b>0</b>	3	2	5	3	3	6	

sat - social attitude

voc - vocation

ss - stepping stone

lik - like to impart knowledge

pcs - poor condition of service

Judging from the response to the above question, it is quite obvious that many teachers in Imo State are under enormous pressure. The table also reveals the fact that all the complaints about poor conditions of service, come only from male teachers. This suggests that Imo State lady teachers do not bother much about the conditions under which they work and that they are more tolerant than their male counterparts. It also unquestionably reflects the ability of Igbo women to endure hardship, both in the family and in the wider society.

However, Imo State teachers are not doing their job happily because they claim that their condition of service is very poor, and also that the social attitude towards them and their profession is demoralising. For instance, in response to the above question a teacher has this to say:

*“I had always wanted to be a teacher. A few years ago, I would have changed my mind because of the way society looks at teachers as mean, poor, and abject members of the society, rather as nation builders to be well paid, treated with honour and respected.”*

This does actually suggest that all is not well with the teaching profession in Imo State. The teachers have even stressed the fact that the powers that be have never bothered to improve

their lot, by looking favourably on their poor condition of service, from which the contempt with which teachers are held by the general public stemmed. As one teacher movingly put it:

*“Teaching has always held ideal hopes for me, but I came in to find out that it is one job which has nothing attached to it. The society you serve abhors you. Your students don’t even regard you as anybody ... insult you, and get away with it. It is terrible.”*

The gravity of the situation does give cause for concern. This is more so when one considers the fact that right now some Imo State teachers are reconsidering their position as teachers, and some have even regretted being teachers. One female teacher for example stated:

*“... I am regretting it. The teacher has no place in our present Nigerian society.”*

It is important to note that some of the teachers in the State now regard the teaching profession as a stepping stone to what would be a better paid job because of what they see as:

*“... the social stigma attached to teaching which reflects among other things low payment.”*

It should be noted that any attempt to dismiss the teachers’ complaints as nothing may be fraught with grave difficulties, especially when one reads the convincing and moving experience of this young female teacher:

*“I have not always wanted to be a teacher because I’ve heard even as a young girl that teachers were not well paid, and were not recognised in the society. But somehow I found myself in the teaching field. Though I am enjoying it now, I feel it will be better if the condition of service is improved, and if teaching is professionally recognised.”*

One fact that should not be ignored is the possibility of the teaching profession in Imo State attracting the wrong people -as some of the current teachers leave for what they see as well paid jobs, and jobs that are regarded as socially acceptable. This has been highlighted in the response of a male teacher who claims that:

*“The conditions of service of teachers and attitude of the society and government towards teaching, and teachers, make the job very unattractive...”*

It is however very important to note that some teachers in Imo State are not only worried because of their poor condition of service and the negative social attitude towards them and their profession - but also because the students they teach no longer study hard. There is little doubt that some of the teachers especially the long serving ones, who have spent more or less a life time in teaching would feel that the youngsters could rob them of that job satisfaction which every teacher cherishes, notably when they see those they teach make sustained and satisfactory academic progress. One experienced male teacher for example, has this to say:

*“Personally I’m proud to be a teacher but what worries me about the profession is the way the society looks down on teachers and the poor condition of service of the profession. Added to this is the nonchalant attitude of the students to study these days, which makes it seem as if our efforts do not yield any dividend. Teachers are rich in spirit.”*

This shows quite clearly that teachers’ job satisfaction is also at stake. In fact, it can be assumed that among some long serving teachers, job satisfaction with regard to student’s performance may be paramount. This is presumably evident in this teacher’s remark:

*“I have always wanted to be a teacher but these days the attitude of the students and the society has made me feel bad. Students no longer study hard and teachers are looked down upon by the society and they are not paid on time.”*

Undoubtedly the issues raised so far by Imo State teachers have serious educational implications. They have also given rise to certain questions, including those that relate to the condition of service of their counterparts in other parts of the country. But there is evidence to suggest that all over Nigeria, teachers’ condition of service may be the same. One teacher for instance, has claimed that:

*“In ... Nigeria teachers are neglected, they are not paid well and they are not recognised very well in the society.”*

However, the very fact that in Imo State, complaints have come from all categories of teachers, men, women, young, old, urban and village teachers etc. points inevitably to the fact that their complaints may be genuine.

As nation builders teachers play a very crucial and indispensable role in terms of school education. The promotion of girls' and women's education in particular may be in jeopardy, unless their lot is improved. This will enable them to work with happiness and satisfaction instead of bitterness and resentment. Refusing to listen to their complaints could threaten the very foundation of education perhaps beyond Imo State. But there is evidence to believe that Imo State teachers will readily and happily welcome any move to resolve the situation, as soon as possible. An optimistic female teacher for example, says:

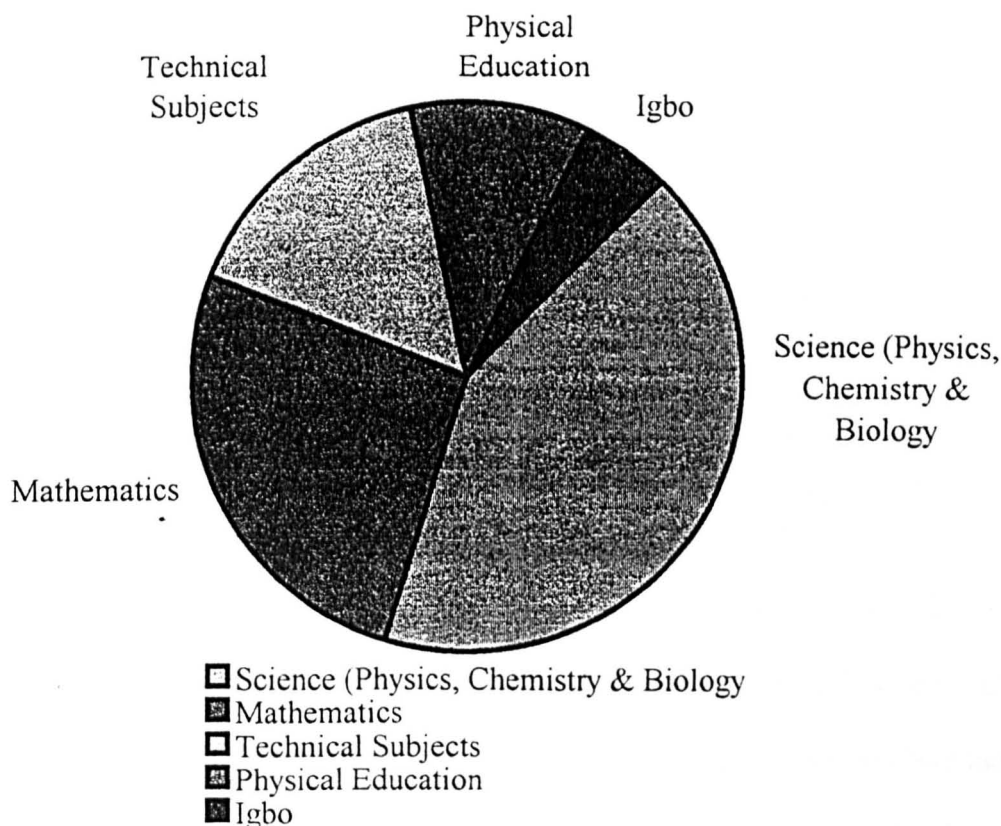
*"I have always admired teachers and hoped to be like them. Teaching is a dignified job. I hope one day that government and members of the society will recognise the teaching profession."*

A sense of hope is discernible in the above comment. This is why the teachers' condition of service should be improved sooner than later. This in turn, will remove the social stigma which has over the years tormented Imo State teachers.



**If your school is not adequately staffed, which subjects are affected?**

**Table: 5**



It is not surprising from the above chart that science subjects are the most affected with regard to staff shortage. As already indicated, (Table: 3), of the 113 teachers that completed the questionnaires only 26, teach science.

From the teachers' response it is clear that in some schools the shortage is so acute that some teachers teach subjects for which they are not qualified. For instance, a teacher from one of the model schools, (which are expected to be the best equipped and staffed, and as the name implies, serve as an example or a model to other schools) in response to the question about staffing stated:

*"At least in the area I am teaching which is Integrated Science, I am not supposed to be there, but I have to teach it because of lack of teachers."*

This gives some measure of insight regarding the scale of science staff shortage in Imo State and the educational problems it poses. The chart also shows that other affected subjects

include Mathematics, Technical subjects, Physical Education and Igbo. It is worth noting that a teacher told the writer that Technical Colleges in Imo State lack resources both human and material, to the extent that certain subjects are not taught.

**Does the Nigerian society discriminate against women?**

**Table: 6**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	10	13	23	13	14	27	44%
<b>n</b>	28	1	29	17	8	25	48%
<b>d</b>	3	1	4	2	2	4	
<b>0</b>	-	-	-	1	-	1	

male - 31%  
female - 69%

urban women - 87%  
rural women - 58%

On the question of how the Nigerian society treats women, only 31% of the male respondents admitted that women are discriminated against as opposed to 69% of their female counterparts. It is important to note that 87% of the urban female teachers indicated that the Nigerian society discriminates against women. But only 58% of the female teachers in the rural areas think that women suffer discrimination within the society.

The disparity could be due to the fact that in the villages, the traditional ethos and social norms are still relevant in the day to day life of the people, - but understandably less evident in the towns and cities, due to their metropolitan structure. Consequently, over the years many women in the villages have come to accept the status quo and even see it as normal. Significantly, during their interview, the chiefs and natural leaders conceded the fact that the society has never accorded women the same status as men, but they were quick to point out that there is nothing wrong with it. They stressed that in every society, including western societies, men have set themselves over and above women. But members of the NCWS not only criticised what they claim to be an inherent negative social attitude towards

women, but went further to allege that it has jeopardised the status of women including their educational advancement in Imo State and the rest of Nigeria.

**Whose education should be given more priority –boys’ or girls’?**

**Table: 7**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
1	3	-	3	7	-	7	9%
2	-	1	1	-	3	3	
3	36	14	50	26	18	44	83%
4	1	-	1	-	1	1	
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	
0	1	-	1	-	2	2	

1 - boys

2 - girls

3 - both

4 - neither

5 - don't know

It is very clear from the above table that an overwhelming majority of male and female teachers, (83%), feel that boys and girls should be given equal educational opportunity. In other words, their message is that gender should not be a decisive factor when it comes to the question of education of children. It is worthy of note that 14% of the male teachers, (3 urban and 7 rural), are of the opinion that priority should be given to the education of boys. The fact that the majority of teachers in this category are rural based is significant.

It could reflect the view that male dominance is more deep rooted in the rural areas than in the urban centres. Should such people hold high offices especially where decision making (including educational matters), would be of crucial importance, they could pose serious threat to school education of girls and women in Imo State.

The wish or opinion of the few female teachers, (1 urban and 3 rural), should not be ignored. They might feel that boys and men have had more opportunity in education than girls and women, and feel that it is now time to reverse the trend. It is also possible that like the highly experienced female head teacher, (interviewed during the pilot study in the United

Kingdom), the teachers feel that if it comes to the crunch, girls should be sent to school while boys are left out because the latter have better job opportunities. That the majority of women in this category are in the villages, is also significant, because they might be feeling that more educated women could make the task of challenging the social norms that dominate rural life a lot easier. It is worth noting that of the 200 parents interviewed informally by the writer which included all categories - men, women, literates, illiterates, urban and village dwellers two-thirds indicated that if it came to choice they would give more priority to their sons' education. Not very long ago all the parents would have preferred to educate boys.

**At what level should girls' formal education end?**

**Table: 8**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	
3	5	-	5	4	1	5	9%
4	34	15	49	28	23	51	88%
0	2	-	2	1	-	1	

1 - Primary

2 - Secondary

3 - Teacher Training

4 - University

The above table makes an interesting reading. In the first place, there is not a single male or female teacher who thinks that girls' formal education should end either at the primary or the secondary sector. Secondly, only 10 teachers, (9 male and 1 female), think that girls' education should stop at the teacher training level.

Only one lady teacher belongs to this school of thought, it could mean that more and more women are becoming increasingly aware of the advantages of higher education, both socially and economically. For the advocates of female university education both in and outside Imo State, (notably members of the NCWS), the overwhelming majority of teachers 88% that support their views will be an encouraging news.

**In which profession would you like to see more women?****Table: 9**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>all</b>	2	3	5	2	5	7	
<b>tch</b>	21	7	28	17	11	28	50%
<b>nse</b>	13	3	16	11	5	16	28%
<b>lw</b>	3	2	5	2	1	3	7%
<b>eng</b>	1	-	1	-	-	-	
<b>med</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>pol</b>	1	-	1	-	-	-	
<b>0</b>	-	-	-	1	2	3	

tch - teaching

nse - nursing

lw - law

eng - engineering

med - medicine

pol - politics

Although many male teachers, (as the above table shows), may wish more and more women to have access to university education, it seems that when it comes to the question of choice of profession, they feel that women should keep to those that are more traditionally associated with them, like teaching and nursing. This is evident with regard to the above table. The women themselves seem to agree with their male counterparts as the figures show.

It could however be argued that social attitude and expectations, might have influenced the way women in Imo State and possibly in the rest of Nigeria see themselves, especially in relation to their role in the society. For instance, a woman might think that it is more befitting for a man to be a doctor, an engineer, an architect etc. and that as a woman, she would serve her community better as a teacher or a nurse. Some women for example unequivocally stated that they:

*"... consider teaching a good profession for a woman."*

Another area where women have scarcely made any worthwhile contributions is politics. The local politicians conceded the fact that there are only very few women in politics and that none has held a high political post. They gave the impression that they would like to see

women at the head of government. It is important to note that the role of the society in determining what a woman can or cannot do was highlighted by the woman chief.

**Which gender is more keen on science? (for science teachers only)**

**Table: 10**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>b</b>	1	-	1	18	3	21	19%
<b>g</b>	-	1	1	3	-	3	4%
<b>x</b>	39	11	50	3	3	6	
<b>0</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	

6 boys

9 girls

Without doubt, the most striking feature of the above table is the low response due mainly to the fact that the question is exclusively for science teachers and not many teachers teach Physics, Chemistry and Biology. For example, only 26 out of the 113 teachers that completed the questionnaires teach science. Equally striking is the number of respondents both men and women, who from their experience as teachers, indicated that girls are less keen on science than boys. 85% of the science teachers for instance are convinced that boys show far greater interest in science than girls, as opposed to only 15% who hold the contrary view.

From the teachers' response - the huge disparity could be attributed mainly to social attitudes and expectations within the society regarding women. One teacher for example stated:

*"Women in this part of the world make more significant progress in the arts, while the boys excel in the sciences."*

The possibility that this view is fairly widespread among teachers in Imo State and probably in other parts of Nigeria cannot be ruled out. The response of another teacher seems to confirm this:

*"It is the culture that girls keep to the domestic work."*

It is hard to imagine how teachers with such preconceived ideas about science, culture and gender, can effectively teach science in a mixed school or in all girls' educational institutions.

Another cause for concern are the views some teachers hold about girls with regard to a subject that is closely related to the Sciences, namely Mathematics. For example, indicating the gender that is more keen on science a teacher insists:

*"The males, because science involves calculation."*

What the teacher is saying in other words is that, girls are not good in science and they are not expected to do well, because science involves calculation and girls cannot calculate. It is obvious that the views held by some teachers could affect the way the girls themselves perceive Science and Mathematics especially in relation to their own ability. One teacher for instance, claims that:

*"Girls see Science as boys' subjects and excel in the Liberal Arts. Boys prefer science and technological subjects."*

Because of the teachers' preconceived ideas about girls, Science and Mathematics, it is unlikely that female students are being encouraged to develop interest in the above subjects.

This seemingly complacent attitude is discernible in some teachers' response:

*"The girls dread Maths and Physics, while Needlework is seen as purely female subjects."*

From the remarks of another teacher, one can conclude that the negative attitude towards girls in Imo State secondary schools especially with regard to science, could be very deep rooted and fairly widespread.

*"Most girls don't like subjects that task their brain a lot, while a good number of boys do. Girls are keener on local languages."*

Similar comments from more and more teachers, seem to give the impression that as far as Imo State secondary schools are concerned, only boys should study science:

*"Girls prefer the theoretical subjects to the science subjects."*

It is very important to note that some teachers in Imo State hold very strong views in terms of what girls should or should not learn at school. For instance, not only do teachers regard Science and Mathematics as boys' subjects, they also see Needlework and Domestic Science as exclusively girls' disciplines.

*"Needlework and Domestic Science have always been taught to girls."*

Not surprisingly, no effort is being made by Imo State teachers to teach the boys how to sew, cook, wash up etc. Consequently their attitude is comparable to that of their counterparts in West Glamorgan schools, where the 'Equal Opportunities Commission' discovered in the course of its investigation that boys had no access to home economics and similarly girls were denied access to craft, design and technology; (see Equal Opportunities Commission, 1988, "A Summary of the Main Conclusions of a Formal Investigation Report into Access to Craft Subjects in the Curricula of Certain West Glamorgan Schools").

But for boys and girls to have more meaningful and balanced education in the world of today, this attitude has to change. For instance, it will be more beneficial for a boy if he knows how to sew on buttons when they drop off his shirts than if he does not. In the same way it may help a girl if she knows how to change or replace a burnt out fuse from an electrical appliance.

Tradition, social attitude and expectations may be partly responsible for pre-conceived ideas and complacent attitude of some teachers in Imo State, regarding girls and science. This is why the members of the NCWS strongly emphasised the point that women who show exceptional talent and interest in science and science related courses including medicine would be sponsored, regardless of where in the world they happen to gain admission.



**Should boys and girls be educated separately?****Table: 11**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	26	10	36	23	15	38	65%
<b>n</b>	8	2	10	6	6	12	
<b>d</b>	4	3	7	2	1	3	
<b>o</b>	2	-	2	3	2	5	

Female urban teachers 67%

Female rural teachers 63%

The above figures show that the majority of the teachers (65%) are against coeducation. The views of women teachers on the issue would be regarded more seriously than those of their male counterparts, because it is taken for granted that naturally men would always desire the company of women. Perhaps more importantly is the fact that in Imo State and elsewhere in Nigeria, women are regarded as the custodians of morality both in the family and in the society at large. Moral issues are of crucial importance given that the opponents of coeducation are partly concerned about moral values. The figures above also show that female teachers in the urban schools are more supportive of coeducation (67%) than their rural counterparts (63%). This is hardly surprising given the moral decadence often associated with urban areas.

Besides, in the rural areas, one's next door neighbours may still be members of one's biological relatives, but in the towns and cities such neighbours can be people from any place - other States or even other nations, and with such people, there are no sexual taboos. The availability of structures in the urban centres like hotels, clubs, restaurants etc. where people can relax and socialise away from the prying eyes of relatives, makes immorality very difficult to resist among some urban dwellers.

The teachers who support coeducation do so mainly on social grounds. They feel there is more to life than academic qualifications. A similar impression was given by some of

the teachers interviewed during the pilot study. It would be recalled that the same view was very convincingly and passionately expressed by one of them, a headmistress of a large secondary school with over 20 years of teaching experience.

**Does the presence of boys make girls nervous?**

**Table: 12**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
y	8	2	10	5	3	8	16%
n	20	7	27	24	17	41	60%
d	11	6	17	3	3	6	20%
0	2	-	2	1	1	2	

Coeducation is one of the most controversial issues in Nigeria's educational system. The preceding table, (Table: 11), shows that the controversy is even discernible within the teaching force in Imo State, because the figures do not reflect massive support for coeducation in Imo State on the part of teachers. They do not also show that the teachers are overwhelmingly opposed to it. However, to find out whether or not girls in coeducational institutions in Imo State are relaxed and happy, the above question was put to the teachers.

It is quite clear from the table that most of the teachers think that the presence of boys does not in anyway affect girls in the class room. But the very fact that up to 20% of the teachers are not sure whether or not boys' presence poses a threat to girls especially in educational terms only adds to the controversy.

It is worthy of note that when the writer discussed with some of the university lecturers in the former Federal Capital of Nigeria, Lagos, very important issues were highlighted. A woman lecturer who recently carried out an investigation regarding the behaviour and attitudes of girls in mixed schools in Nigeria - strongly emphasised the fact that girls in mixed schools feel intimidated by the boys. She pointed out that the degree of intimidation varies from one girl to another. She explained for instance, that in some cases girls would be very reluctant to answer questions even when they know the answers,

particularly in science, and mathematics. The lecturer claimed that this is because the girls would not like to be seen as being cleverer than the boys. She stressed the fact that some girls are so naive that they feel being more intelligent than the boys would jeopardise their social life, including marriage.

**Does girls' presence distract boys?**

**Table: 13**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
y	19	8	27	17	15	32	52%
n	13	2	15	12	6	18	29%
d	8	4	12	3	2	5	15%
0	1	1	2	1	1	2	

Inevitably, the above question is designed to find out from Imo State teachers how the presence of girls affects boys in mixed schools. Surprisingly, the figures in the above table contrast sharply with those in Table 12. For instance, the majority of the teachers think that boys are distracted by the presence of girls in the class room but in the preceding table, most of the teachers feel that girls are unaffected by boys' presence. It would be recalled that in the students' questionnaires, the number of boys that is distracted by girls' presence in mixed schools is higher, compared with their female counterparts who indicated that boys' presence distracts them. That students and teachers think alike on this very issue, is quite significant.

For those who are mainly interested in the social aspect of coeducation the academic implications may not matter. But in Imo State - the heart of Igbo land, a community where academic excellence and qualifications are highly valued - and seen not only as a sure sign of one's educational success, but also as a measure of one's achievement in life; many are likely to frown on coeducational institutions. With the passage of time, their validity could be questioned and challenged if they are seen to do no more than enhance the social aspect of life.

**In a school situation should boys and girls be treated differently?****Table: 14**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	19	6	25	11	13	24	43%
<b>n</b>	15	6	21	18	11	29	44%
<b>d</b>	2	-	2	1	-	1	
<b>o</b>	7	3	10	3	-	3	

What is particularly striking regarding the above table is that teachers are more or less evenly split on the question of how to treat both sexes in mixed schools. For example, 43% of the teachers are of the opinion that boys and girls in mixed schools should not be given the same treatment, whereas 44% are opposed to any form of differential treatment.

Opponents of equal treatment argue mainly from a biological point of view insisting that since nature has made male and female differently, the school should therefore uphold the work of nature and not to oppose it. One of the ways they feel this can be done in a school situation, is by giving boys tougher tasks to perform notably during manual labour. They also think that in terms of corporal punishment, boys should be flogged on the buttocks - but on the hands and legs in the case of girls. But the advocates of non differential treatment fear that by treating boys and girls differently in mixed schools, no useful purpose would be achieved either academically or socially. They fear it will only make girls feel inferior to boys.

If differential treatment were to be upheld in schools, it could affect the way girls see themselves generally in relation to boys, especially in terms of ability and achievement. It is also possible that the over zealous members of the teaching force in Imo State could be carried away by the idea that biologically, male and female are different, and the Igbo society has assigned them different roles, so the school must do exactly the same; instead of exploring means and ways of bridging the gap. For instance, in Table 10, the figures show that some teachers in Imo State have very strong views regarding gender and science.

**Who should be motivated?****Table: 15**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>1</b>	4	-	4	2	-	2	5%
<b>2</b>	3	-	3	7	4	11	12%
<b>3</b>	29	11	40	22	19	41	72%
<b>4</b>	2	3	5	1	1	2	
<b>0</b>	4	1	5	-	-	-	

1 - boys

3 - both

2 - girl

4 - neither

Imo State teachers appear to be more united when it comes to the question of motivating children. The above table shows widespread support on the part of teachers with regard to encouraging both boys and girls to learn.

However, a few teachers apparently driven by economic ideology hold the view that only boys should be motivated. They argue that since boys would ultimately become men, marry and inevitably become family bread winners, everything should be done to motivate them. They insist that academic failure would invariably imply personal and social failure. One of the teachers emphasised the fact that:

*"Only boys should be motivated because a boy has to take over from his parents."*

Some teachers think that only girls should be motivated. It is important to note that the views of the teachers in this category have been enormously influenced by the attitude of some of the school girls towards marriage. For instance, a teacher from one of the privately owned commercial institutions in the rural areas, where some of the girls are over 25 years, in age is convinced that only girls need to be motivated:

*"...because some of them believe that furthering their education will waste their time or make them to become old before marriage."*

Early marriage is also considered an issue by some teachers with regard to motivation. A teacher for instance, strongly feels that only girls need motivation since:

“...most of them are distracted by early marriage.”

Significantly, a teacher has accused some girls of seeking school education in Imo State in order to get husbands, and has called on his fellow teachers to motivate boys only. The teacher insists that:

*“Some girls use school as a means of getting a husband. Boys face more problems in life.”*

It is however important that teachers use their discretion in the class room with regard to motivation, gender not withstanding.

It is noteworthy that some teachers through class interaction have observed that some girls are lazy and need to be pushed, if not they might remain complacent and possibly end up as under achievers.

### How do boys regard girls?

**Table: 16**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
1	-	-	-	1	-	1	
2	17	7	24	19	11	30	48%
3	6	-	6	6	6	12	16%
4	10	4	14	2	6	8	19%
5	7	3	10	3	-	3	
0	1	1	2	2	1	3	

1 - superior      4 - rivals  
 2 - inferior      5 - don't know  
 3 - equals

In a seemingly male dominated world it is important to find out how the future generation of Imo State males, regard their female counterparts, through the eyes of those that help to shape their future, the teachers. It can be seen from the above table that 48% of the teachers think that boys regard girls as being inferior to them, 16% believe that boys look on girls as equals, while 19% are of the opinion that boys see their female counterparts as rivals.

For campaigners of male/female equality like members of the NCWS, the above statistics may not be encouraging.

It should be noted that the issue of gender inequality in Imo State was strongly highlighted by the woman chief during the interview. She stressed the fact that the society has still got a long way to go, in terms of any meaningful equality. She even cited herself as an example and emphasised the fact that although she is a chief, she can never become a paramount chief because only men can be made paramount chiefs. She is convinced that her exclusion from what she referred to as 'the enviable rank', (the paramount rank is the highest rank in chieftaincy), is not due to incompetence. She has no doubt that it is a gender issue.

Commenting on the same issue, some of the local chiefs gave the impression that men and women would always have different roles to play in the society. They almost laughed at the idea of equality. One of the natural leaders (whose father was a paramount chief), said that in all societies including those in the western world, men enjoy special status. The local politicians' views did not differ significantly from those of the chiefs or natural leaders, which is indicative of the fact that the task of breaking down or dismantling the ideology of male superiority in Imo State could prove to be an arduous one. A local priest is convinced that the school could do a lot in terms of promoting male and female equality in the State. The clergy emphasised the fact that since today's children are going to be future custodians of the society, they should be treated as fairly, equally and humanely as possible by teachers, so that they learn by example.

**Are there learning difficulties experienced by village students only?****Table: 17**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	26	11	37	26	15	41	69%
<b>n</b>	5	2	7	5	4	9	14%
<b>d</b>	7	1	8	-	4	4	11%
<b>0</b>	3	1	4	2	1	3	

In Nigeria, like in most developing nations huge differences exist, in terms of quality of life with regard to urban and rural dwellers. To find out whether the disparity has academic implications, (particularly for girls), the above question was put to the teachers. As the table reveals, most of the teachers, 69%, are aware of the fact that village students face certain academic disadvantages. Only 14% of the teachers think that students resident in the villages have no problems that can be associated exclusively with their environment, while 11% are probably unaware that the boys and girls that attend school from the villages have special problems.

One of their problems relates to English language. Village students generally are reluctant to speak in English. They are also known to lack the ability to express themselves fluently in English. As one teacher put it:

*"It is difficult to get them to express themselves in English. Many of them don't have good study environment at home."*

This may be the reason for one of their problems which is, 'shyness'. Understandably, because they are unable to speak good English they will be shy and reluctant to speak, especially girls. As many parents in the villages are illiterates, they can only communicate with their children in the mother tongue 'Igbo'. But many urban parents are literate and at least occasionally speak to their children including the pre-school age ones in English. Economically, most village parents are too poor to send their pre-school age sons and daughters to the kindergarten or the nursery schools where they are taught early to read and



write. But some of their counterparts in the towns and cities, provide their children with such early academic advantages. The plight of village students notably in linguistic terms may only be better appreciated if one considers the fact that for some of them their first contact with English language is when they start primary school.

Their problems seem to be further compounded by the absence of modern educational facilities in the villages. As one of the teachers explained:

*“Sometimes if you cite examples with modern things they might not know them and some of them don’t listen to news.”*

It is possible that in some subjects village female students may suffer more academic disadvantage than the male students. Home Economics for instance, is a subject taught exclusively to girls and in the rural areas modern cooking utensils are hardly ever used. A teacher for example, pointed out that:

*“Village pupils suffer from lack of exposure to modern household and educational gadgetry’s including electronics.”*

According to teachers, farming is one of the major causes of academic retardation among rural students. The teachers claim that during the planting season, village students scarcely attend school. In Imo State the planting season begins in March or at times as early as late February, depending on when the first rains come. It lasts till May or early June in some cases. A village student could miss as much as a term or most part of it, which in academic terms is an awful lot. It is noteworthy that farming was one of the setbacks encountered by the early missionaries as it disrupted school attendance (see Chapter 2).

As far as physical appearance is concerned, the teachers have stressed the fact that students from the rural areas are scruffy looking, while their urban counterparts are trendy. There is little doubt that rural girls will be very worried about the way they look. Their scruffy appearance may make them feel ashamed of themselves even to the point of being passive in the class room, because girls tend to be more self conscious than boys. The

problems of village female students are made worse by the fact that their trendy urban counterparts taunt them. This situation will surely affect their academic performance. They may feel unease in the class room, and hesitate to answer questions, fearing they could be laughed at when they stand up to answer, because of their appearance. Their male counterparts may be teased by the urban students. It is clear that for a village student, life at school can be quite tough. It is therefore hardly surprising that a teacher should make this remark:

*“Students from village schools behave like cheated human beings.”*

During the interview, local politicians conceded that enormous disparity exists in terms of life in the villages and in the urban centres. They were reminded of the need to modernise the villages because, apart from economic and educational advantages, such a process could also help to combat urban migration. They were also asked about the possibility of subsidising the scant income of village parents, after all their sons and daughters look scruffy because it is hard for them to pay their school fees and at the same time provide them with trendy fashions.

### Why do students drop out of school?

**Table: 18**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>Fp</b>	27	7	34	20	11	31	58%
<b>Pg</b>	4	2	6	-	2	2	7%
<b>Lit</b>	-	-	-	1	2	3	
<b>Fex</b>	4	-	4	-	-	-	
<b>Dgp</b>	-	5	5	-	4	4	8%
<b>Fqm</b>	3	1	4	5	-	5	8%
<b>Oph</b>	2	-	2	4	3	7	
<b>Ppm</b>	1	2	3	3	2	5	7%

fp	-	financial pressure
pg	-	pregnancy
lit	-	illiterate background
fex	-	fear of examinations
dgp	-	domestic chores/parental pressure
fqm	-	farming, quick money
oph	-	orphan
ppm	-	parental pressure for marriage

The drop-out problem is not peculiar to Imo State. What may differ from place to place are the reasons why children leave the school system. Imo State teachers have identified the main factors responsible for students' drop out each year. Financial pressure which is inextricably linked with employment is one of the main reasons.

Students are worried that they may not find jobs after their secondary education and because there is enormous financial pressure in the family, students feel that school education will not offer them the means to overcome their financial predicament. As one of the teachers explained, ultimately the students inevitably come to the conclusion that:

*"It is not worth the trouble going to school when graduates are not employed ... others employed are not adequately paid."*

It is worth noting that in some cases a number of factors may combine to force individual students out of school. For example, a long serving teacher has this to say:

*"Some were unable to do so due to financial reasons. Some were not interested because most people in the society are jobless so there is lack of incentive. Some are not brilliant. Some lose their sponsors and there are non to take them up again."*

This shows among other things that in a developing society owing to financial pressure, employment is one of the greatest incentives with regard to school education. Lack of sponsorship often resulting from the death of a parent, (particularly the father), or both parents, can create financial vacuum which no one else will fill. The plight of orphans is one of the reasons why free education at least up to the secondary phase would be most desirable.

Students who are not academically clever are often reluctant to continue with school education. Some are very eager to leave and make quick money. The desire to abandon

school education becomes irresistible when they fail school examinations and have to repeat the class, since they cannot move on to the next class without passing the promotion examination. As one of the teachers put it:

*“They are eager to make money. Some others if they happen to fail in a class, they will refuse to repeat.”*

This is one of the major differences between the British system of secondary education and that of Nigeria. In Britain for instance, children in the secondary schools are automatically promoted from one class to another at the end of every academic year, while their counterparts in Nigeria must pass the promotion examinations. If the British system were to be adopted, it could reduce the wastage.

The consistency in the teachers' response seems to suggest that the drop out problems are serious. One teacher for example, carefully identified the following reasons:

*“(i) Unforeseen circumstances such as the death of the sponsors and where no one else undertakes to continue the assistance.*

*(ii) Influence (negative) of association with wrong peer group.*

*(iii) Dislike for further education for quest for money.”*

This further highlights the plight of orphans and the desire on the part of some students to leave school in pursuit of quick money. There is also an indication that peer pressure is partly responsible for the wastage.

Peer pressure is one of the major reasons why some boys abandon school education in Imo State. In the case of girls, pregnancy is one of the reasons why many girls' formal education comes to an abrupt end. But this type of wastage can be stopped or its rate substantially reduced if Imo State parents, (notably mothers), were to emulate the example of the woman the writer interviewed during the Pilot study. By looking after her secondary school daughter's baby, the woman made it possible for the girl to complete her secondary

education. She now has a job and her mother continues to look after the baby. The woman warns that abandoning the girls when they become pregnant would only make matters worse.

Significantly, some teachers told the writer that comparatively, more boys tend to drop out, driven mainly by inordinate ambition to make quick money and by peer pressure. The male drop out rate is said to have reached alarming proportions in the neighbouring sister state of Anambra. One of the teachers even commented that history might be repeating itself. He recalled that in the early years of school education, at Onitsha, (in Anambra State, the first Igbo community to embrace western education, see Chapter Two), the boys abandoned the class room in pursuit of bush rats, while the girls stayed on to learn.

However, in Imo State it is also known that students whose parents are illiterates are more likely to drop out than those whose parents are literate. In the case of the former, because their own parents are from an illiterate background, they do not see the inherent advantages in school education, and so some of them instead of supporting their children, prefer to withdraw them from school, even when there are no obvious financial constraints. Domestic chores including farming, also militate against school education of boys and girls in Imo State, especially girls. Besides, in some homes, the girls may come under enormous parental pressure to marry so that the dowry could be used to educate the boys. This is why free education at least up to the secondary school would be advisable, if not, many girls may not stand a chance of finishing secondary education let alone going on to further education.

**When financial pressure threatens the education of all  
the children in the family, who should be sent to school?**

**Table: 19**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
1	1	-	1	-	-	-	
2	1	1	2	-	-	-	
3	25	5	30	19	6	25	49%
4	-	1	1	-	1	1	
5	4	1	5	-	1	1	5%
6	3	5	8	7	5	12	18%
7	4	2	6	3	8	11	15%
0	3	-	3	4	3	7	

1 - boys  
2 - girls  
3 - both  
4 - none

5 - (ocf) older children first  
6 - (sbo) send brilliant ones  
7 - (sfh) seek financial help

A glance at the above table reveals that most of the teachers think that in times of severe financial pressure, parents should endeavour to educate all their children, gender not withstanding. It is also clear from the table that only one teacher, (male), feels that parents should only send the boys to school in times of financial crisis. Two teachers, (one male, one female), support girls' education only, when parents come under financial pressure. 18% of the teachers think it would be a good idea to send the brilliant children irrespective of their sex. One teacher has another idea:

*"If a financial problem arises in a family the industrious, obedient children should be pushed ahead to be more useful to the country and the community whether boy or girl."*

This tends to exclude the academically brilliant who may neither be industrious nor obedient. 15% of the teachers however think differently and have this advice for parents with financial problems:

*"Such parents should seek help from others either by borrowing or by giving their children out to other wealthy people to help them train their children while such children help such people in their homes."*

Both methods, borrowing money and giving children to financially capable parents to train in return for domestic services, are not new. But the problem some children face with regard to the second option is that their adopted parents may make so much demand on them that they have little time for their school work.

The fact that only 5% of the teachers are in favour of educating the older children first when money becomes an issue in the family, seems to suggest that this old practice is becoming less popular in Imo State.

The idea is that when the older children finish their own school education, they start training the younger ones. But this method does not seem to take into consideration the academic ability of those first born children.

Interestingly, a teacher from the point of view of what he refers to as 'the changing pattern', has strongly advised parents:

*"Both boys and girls should be given equal opportunity because of the changing pattern, in that, when the boys are married they hardly take care of their old parents because of the demands of their immediate family, while the girls have more concern for their aged parent."*

It should be noted that when the woman chief was interviewed she unequivocally stated that if it came to the crunch, parents would always prefer to educate the boys irrespective of how clever the girls might be. She regretted the fact that some parents in Imo State send their daughters to school purely on economic grounds - mainly because the girls would provide for them in their old age.

It is very important to note that one of the education officers said that to protect girls' education an enormous amount of money must be committed to education every year. He suggested that the first step should be the immediate provision of free and compulsory primary education, to be followed shortly after by free education at the secondary level. He stressed the fact that ideally education should be provided freely at all sectors. He strongly emphasised the fact that Nigeria has enormous wealth and vast resources to provide free

education for all her citizens at all levels including the University. He regretted that the wealth and the resources are not being used for the right purpose. If the officer’s advice and suggestions were to be heeded, girls in Imo State and in Nigeria as a whole, stand to benefit enormously.

**Should women be financially independent?**

**Table: 20**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	15	9	24	12	16	28	46%
<b>n</b>	15	1	16	13	4	17	
<b>d</b>	6	1	7	3	1	4	
<b>o</b>	5	4	9	5	3	8	

Male teachers                      36%  
 Female teachers                    64%

It is very clear from the table above that less than half of the teachers, (46%), support the idea of women in Imo State becoming financially independent. It must however be mentioned that their views may have implications for women in the rest of the country. Significantly, the above table does also reveal that there is very little support on the part of the male teachers. For example, only 36% of the male teachers are in favour of the idea, as opposed to 64% of their female counterparts who strongly feel that women should be financially independent of their husbands.

It is important to know why some teachers, (especially male teachers), in this day and age, still feel that Imo State women should be financially under the control of their husbands.



**Explain briefly why you think women should/should not be financially independent?****Table: 21**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>euc</b>	-	2	2	-	5	5	
<b>fod</b>	1	3	4	2	2	4	
<b>wmb</b>	-	2	2	-	5	5	
<b>wrh</b>	13	-	13	12	-	12	22%
<b>wtf</b>	1	3	4	-	3	3	
<b>vp</b>	14	-	14	11	-	11	22%
<b>whb</b>	7	-	7	5	-	5	
<b>pps</b>	-	2	2	-	6	6	
<b>fu</b>	2	3	5	3	3	6	
<b>0</b>	3	-	3	-	-	-	

- euc - economic unity and comfort  
 fod - better family organisation, independence  
 wmb - women will misbehave  
 wrh - will not respect husband  
 vp - very proud  
 whb - women have private needs  
 pps - planning, parental status  
 fu - future

*“It is very important for women to be financially independent, so that men will not continue to treat us anyhow in a society both of us own.” (a lady teacher’s plea)*

The preceding table has shown that most of the male teachers object to women being financially independent.

It is noteworthy that most of these teachers worry about what they see as the inevitable negative consequences, should women decide to be in control of their own money.

Some of them for instance fear that women in Imo State will no longer respect their male counterparts.

*“They will find it difficult to regard or respect their husbands.”*

Some of the male teachers feel very strongly against the whole idea. It does however seem that their fears and worries are borne out of the desire to subjugate and control women. One male teacher for instance, thinks that financial independence:

*“Will make them feel on top of the world and insubordinate to husbands.”*

For some of the male teachers, the very idea of financial independence is unthinkable. and would under no circumstances consider it. One of them said:

*“No, they tend to lose their head.”*

It is quite obvious that some of the male teachers are prepared to go to any length to ensure that women do not control their own money. One for instance, tried to draw inspiration from the Bible by pointing out that it is wrong for any one to encourage financial independence on the part of women:

*“because God made women to rely on man’s sweat.”*

There are some male teachers who are convinced that if women were to become the controllers of their own finance, it might lead to immorality on a scale never seen in any society. They warn that when that happens Imo society as we know it will cease to exist.

One unequivocally stated:

*“...will lead to immorality. They will resort to any anti social activity to make the money. As mothers of the nation, their children will copy them and this will lead to social quackery.”*

This shows the strength of feeling among some of the male teachers with regard to the very idea of women managing their own money.

It is however worth noting that a few male teachers think differently. One praised the idea and stressed that women:

*“should be financially independent so that in case of death of their husbands they would run the family financially. Also in case their husbands throw them out of the marriage they would stand on their own feet and support themselves.”*

Here is a teacher who has approached the issue from a realistic point of view. He is fully aware of the plight of widows in Imo State especially in the villages. For most women, the death of their husbands means the end of the world, as they find themselves absolutely

helpless and incapable of supporting their family. If there are school children in the family, they drop out automatically. This is one of the reasons why school education of girls and women in the State and in the rest of the country should be taken very seriously. If they are well educated and have good jobs, if their husbands die or their marriage breaks up, they can support themselves and their children.

It is worth noting that the female teachers who favour the idea, feel that as women are naturally closer to the children and manage domestic affairs in the house, they should be allowed to be independent in financial terms. They also argue that it will enhance peace and harmony in the family. From the responses of some of the lady teachers, it is quite clear that some of them feel highly delighted by the whole issue. They are convinced that it will, among other things, enhance the status of women in Imo State. They do also firmly believe that financial independence can go a long way in improving the lot of women and as one of them passionately put it:

*“so that men will not continue to treat us anyhow in a society both of us own.”*

This shows how strongly some women feel about the whole subject and how important it is to many women. One can also now understand why many male teachers are opposed to the idea of women relying on themselves financially, and why the majority of their female counterparts whole-heartedly support it. Even the views of the lady teachers who object to women's financial independence contrast sharply with those of their male counterparts. For instance, some of the lady teachers think that if they were financially dependent on their husbands, it would lead to economic unity and better cooperation in their respective families.

It should however be noted that some of the male education officers spoke admirably about the need for women in the State and all over the country to be financially independent. Like the thoughtful male teacher they emphasised the fact that in the case of unforeseen negative circumstances, women would be able to keep the family going particularly in

financial terms. One of the lady officers stressed the fact that for women financial independence is indispensable, she spoke passionately about the sense of pride, responsibility, respect, dignity etc. which it will bring to women. But some of the male education officers are bitterly opposed to the very idea of women in the State becoming financially independent. One of them felt so bad about it that he warned that if women in the State were to be allowed to be financially independent it would precipitate a disaster on a scale very difficult to imagine or comprehend, and that Imo society as we know it today would surely cease to exist. He spoke with fury, anger and bitterness, knocking loudly with clenched fists on the table.

The woman chief did however emphasise during the interview that financial independence would boost the image of women in Imo State and in the rest of the country. She strongly stressed the fact that without it Nigerian women would still be like people in bondage. It is important to note that one of the most important objectives of the 'Better Life Programme', launched by Mrs. Babangida, is to make Nigerian women financially independent, particularly women in the rural areas, who are constantly under enormous financial pressure.

**If education should be free at only one level, what level should it be?**

**Table: 22**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
1	2	6	26	17	15	32	51%
2	7	5	12	10	6	16	25%
3	11	3	14	4	1	5	17%
0	3	1	4	2	2	4	

1 - Primary

2 - Secondary

3 - University

Conscious of the fact that financial constraints are ever present in many homes and actually account for many drop-outs each year at various educational sectors, the above question was put to Imo State teachers. Understandably, knowing the educational level that would suit every parent is not going to be an easy task but teachers with all their years of

experience, (in some cases spanning a generation), will undoubtedly know the sector that most parents would advocate. Besides, they are close to the parents and are therefore not unaware of their needs, fears, hopes and aspirations.

As the above table reveals, there is strong support among teachers, (51%), for free education at the primary level. A quarter of the teachers (25%) favour free education at the secondary phase. There is little support for free university education.

**Explain briefly why education should/should not be free at your chosen sector.**

**Table: 23**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>be</b>	18	5	23	11	8	19	37%
<b>huc</b>	2	7	9	5	1	6	13%
<b>li</b>	3	-	3	7	2	9	
<b>hsc</b>	3	-	3	5	-	5	7%
<b>sep</b>	3	1	4	-	3	3	
<b>0</b>	12	2	14	5	5	10	

be - basic education

huc - high university costs

li - literacy

hsc - high secondary costs

sep - secondary education

prepares one for later life

Since teachers are closely associated with education at all levels, knowing why they have responded in the way they did could be helpful particularly to the providers of education in Imo State. The teachers who are in favour of free secondary education argue that many parents can afford to train their children in the primary school. Some pointed out that with secondary education, one could work and save for university education. But some of the advocates of universal primary education insist that:

*“Primary education is the foundation on which other levels are built upon.”*

Interestingly, some of them think it is the best way of combating illiteracy in Imo State. They seem convinced that no other means will be effective. One of them pointed out that:

*“Education should be free in primary schools so that all and sundry will have basic education and illiteracy will be wiped off in the community.”*

It is very likely that with universal primary education illiteracy among the younger members of the society may become non-existent, with the passage of time. During the interview education officers were asked about adult education which would combat illiteracy with regard to the older generations in Imo State. They indicated that there are adult education classes in several places in the State. In some cases it is not quite academic and may take the form of a workshop where women learn various trades like weaving, sewing, artistic designs, pottery, jewellery making, domestic science etc. The workshops are located mostly in women's centres. The writer was shown some of the centres where she saw many women at work. It was a pleasant sight seeing women engaged in different trades. At Akwete near Aba, where one of the largest traditional centres is located, women engage mostly in dyeing and weaving. Arguably they produce the most beautiful fabrics in the world. Speaking about the cloth Isichei (1976) once said:

*“The southern Ibo town of Akwete made textiles so superb that imported cloth could not rival them...”* p. 31.

Although women in the workshops are taught to read and write, accent is on skill acquisition with regard to different trades.

Although the providers of education in Imo State did not know about the Cuban and Libyan Revolutions, (see Chapter 1), some of the things they are engaged in are praiseworthy. The writer did find however that the literacy classes are fraught with problems including finding a suitable time in the evenings for all the interested adults, and also getting women to attend the classes. There are more illiterate women in Imo State than men. Many women are genuinely interested with regard to the classes, but their only problem is finding the time.

**Should primary education be free and compulsory?****Table: 24**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	36	13	49	29	21	50	88%
<b>n</b>	3	-	3	3	1	4	
<b>d</b>	-	2	2	-	-	-	
<b>0</b>	2	-	2	1	2	3	

Bearing in mind that when universal primary education was launched in Nigeria in the late 1970's, although the programme brought about massive increase in terms of school attendance, not every child of school age went to school. The programme collapsed after some time for financial reasons. If it had been made compulsory, every school age child would have attended school, at least for as long as the programme lasted. To find out what the teachers in Imo State think about gradual eradication of illiteracy they were asked the above question -given that it is only compulsory universal primary education that can rid the society of illiteracy with the passage of time. The massive support (88%) for compulsory universal primary education speaks for itself. It shows how seriously the teaching force in Imo State regards the problem of illiteracy. This also partly explains why many teachers, (see Table: 22) strongly feel that if education should be provided freely in only one sector in Imo State - that sector should be the primary school.

The advocates of compulsory universal primary education rejected the claims of 25% of their counterparts - the teachers who believe that secondary education prepares one for later life and should therefore be provided freely. They also dismissed the counter claims of 17% of their colleagues who feel that because of their high costs, the universities still remain the exclusive right of the rich and should be provided freely so that the academically talented including the children of the poor can benefit from university education.

Although the advocates of free secondary and university education have valid points, the eradication of illiteracy in Imo State and in the whole of Nigeria can only be achieved

through compulsory universal primary education. Ideally, free education at all sectors, is what Imo State, (and the rest of the country), should aspire to, as one of the education officers stressed, (see Table: 19). This will undoubtedly, among other things, guarantee equality of opportunity in educational terms especially with regard to girls and women.

**Who should help in domestic chores, boys or girls?**

**Table: 25**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
1	4	-	4	3	-	3	
2	-	-	-	-	1	1	
3	36	15	51	30	22	52	91%
0	1	-	1	-	1	1	

1 - boys      2 – girls      3 - both

The fact that an overwhelming majority of the teachers, (91%), feel that both boys and girls should help with domestic chores within the family is remarkable.

In mixed schools, teachers should ensure that male and female students sweep and tidy the class rooms. The same thing applies to the toilets. If they are done only by the girls, the boys will inevitably feel that domestic chores are only for girls and women. In the home parents on their part, should see that the boys participate in cleaning, cooking, washing up etc. Fathers in particular ought to teach by practical example. If a boy sees his father from time to time cook, wash clothes, sweep the rooms etc. such a boy is less likely to think that domestic chores are just for girls and women.

The main difficulty is how to change the inherent social attitude towards women and domestic chores. It is important to note that during the interview a highly educated moslem man laid the blame on the society. He explained that when he was studying in Britain, he used to shop, cook, wash up and clean the house with his wife. When they returned to Nigeria, he tried to do exactly the same, his father was very angry with him and warned him of dire consequences if he did not stop. The man also said that he was worried that people



might laugh at him and make derogatory remarks if they saw him helping his wife. He claimed that to compound the situation, his wife had to put on the veil, (sari), and go into ‘purdah’, (seclusion), against her will. Secretly and privately, she yearns for the type of life they led in Britain.

When the question of domestic chores was put to the local chiefs and natural leaders, they gave the impression that ‘household work’ is part and parcel of a woman’s role within the family system. They did however concede the fact that it would be a good idea if women were to get some assistance from the men folk. But they were quick to add that a man who chooses to help his wife must do so secretly so that he does not become an object of laughter and fun.

Significantly during the Pilot study one of the English ladies interviewed explained that in her home, the boys are taught to clean the house, make beds, cook, wash up etc. just like girls, so that they will not only appreciate, but also take pride in doing domestic chores. This is laudable and should apply in Imo State. If every family were to adopt this method, arguably the future generation of men in the State might see domestic chores in a new light unlike their ancestors. Before then, there should be some measure of flexibility in terms of division of labour, so that women may have more time for themselves. This will make it possible for more women to attend the adult education classes, which are now controlled by the Adult Education Department, in the Ministries of Education in Imo State.

**At what age should girls marry?**

**Table: 26**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
Bt	7	-	7	3	-	3
At	32	15	47	30	23	53
0	2	-	2	-	1	1

bt - before the age of twenty  
at - after the age of twenty  
female teachers 97%  
male teachers 84%

Over the years, child marriage has seriously affected formal education of girls and women in Nigeria. Of special significance is the way the female teachers responded. It is interesting to note that all the lady teachers, (97%), with the exception of just one abstainee, indicated that the right time for girls to marry should be after 20, 84% of their male counterparts agree with them. It is worthy of note that no female teacher, (as is evident from the above table), thinks that any girl should marry before the age of twenty.

As adult members of the society, they are not unaware of the fact that the high illiteracy rate among women in Imo State and in other parts of the country is partly attributable to child marriage. It should also be noted that if girls and women were to go on to further education, marriage before the age of 20 will make it very difficult if not impossible.

It is very important to note that a very crucial revelation was made by one of the local chiefs during the interview with regard to child marriage. Speaking on the issue the chief conceded the fact that for many years, child marriage was practised all over Nigeria. He regretted the harm done to the society in general, and to the individual in particular as a result of child marriage. But surprisingly, he proudly disclosed that 'child marriage is now a thing of the past in Imo State'. He acknowledged the fact that school education made considerable impact with regard to the discontinuation of child marriage in the State. The chief explained that parents became increasingly ashamed when their little girls were given away in marriage while their mates probably were about to start their formal education. He said that the sense of guilt and shame, proved too much for most parents. They could no longer

withstand the innuendo, the gossips, the derogatory remarks etc. Consequently parents gave up the practice of child marriage. He stressed that the State has set a precedence which he hoped other states would emulate. A female teacher who felt very bitter about the practice of child marriage indicated very strongly that no girl should marry before the age of 30.

**As a teacher from whom do you get most encouragement?**

**Table: 27**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
1	6	4	10	7	1	8	
2	8	4	12	7	8	15	24%
3	3	-	3	-	2	2	
4	7	1	8	5	2	7	
5	4	-	4	2	1	3	
6	10	6	16	11	9	20	32%
0	3	-	3	1	1	2	

- 1 - head teacher
- 2 - fellow teachers
- 3 - education officers
- 4 - government
- 5 - parents
- 6 - none

As teachers of tomorrow’s adults and leaders of the society, Imo state teachers were asked to indicate from whom they get the encouragement and the inspiration, which help them in their arduous task. As the figures show, many of the teachers indicated that no one encourages them. It is also clear that some teachers draw strength from one another. There is little encouragement from the government and parents.

This does seem to confirm the negative social attitude towards teachers and their profession in Imo State - so vividly, (and in some cases), so movingly explained by teachers. But if teachers in Imo State must fulfil the big responsibility placed on their shoulders, especially in terms of training and educating the young, then the hostile attitudes towards them must stop. It seems ironic that the society, (including parents), would like to look up to teachers in terms of satisfying their hopes, yearnings and aspirations - all of which are

implicit in the school education of children, and at the same time look down on them and on the teaching profession.

**Are your conditions of service satisfactory?**

**Table: 28**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	11	2	13	2	5	7	18%
<b>n</b>	23	13	36	31	17	48	74%
<b>d</b>	4	-	4	-	-	-	
<b>0</b>	3	-	3	-	2	2	

In every job, the condition of service is always important, because if it is not satisfactory, it can affect the workers and the work they do. Teaching is no exception. As far as Imo State teachers are concerned, a glance at Table: 4 reveals that they are not happy. It is therefore not surprising that the vast majority of them, (74%) have indicated that they are dissatisfied with the condition under which they work. A close look at the above table reveals that there is greater dissatisfaction among village teachers compared with their urban counterparts.

This can be attributed to the fact that in the rural areas, life is rougher and harder due mainly to non availability of modern facilities and amenities which has lowered the quality of life in non urban areas.

Lady teachers in Imo State suffer discrimination within the teaching profession. They are denied child tax free allowance. As one male teacher explained:

*“Female teachers do not have child tax free allowance as the male teachers, even though some female teachers are bread winners.”*

Since the money is connected with children, ideally it should be made available to the female teachers. It is reminiscent of ‘Child Benefit’, in the United Kingdom which is paid to mothers except in the case of single parents, where a man is looking after the children.

**Can you see Nigeria ever being ruled by a woman?****Table: 29**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	9	7	16	6	6	12	25%
<b>n</b>	24	5	29	25	11	36	58%
<b>d</b>	6	3	9	2	5	7	14%
<b>0</b>	2	-	2	-	2	2	

If there is one area where women in Imo State in particular, and Nigeria in general need to make a big break through, that area is politics. It is very important to note that at the United Nations International Year for Women held in September, (1995), in Beijing, China, the women delegates emphasised among other things the need for women to be given access with regard to greater participation in politics. They also stressed the fact that men should stop treating women like second class citizens. However, to find out what the teachers in Imo State think about women and political leadership, the above question was asked.

The table above does reflect a fairly widespread pessimism among teachers as to whether a woman will ever rule Nigeria. For instance, only a quarter of them consider it a possibility, over half, 58%, think it will never happen, while 14% are yet undecided but probably have doubts in terms of women getting the opportunity.

Knowing the reasons for the negative attitude towards women and politics in Imo State is important. It might also have implications with regard to the women in other parts of the country in terms of politics.

**Comment briefly on whether you think or do not think****that Nigeria will ever be ruled by a woman?****Table: 30**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>nsa</b>	-	-	-	-	3	3
<b>ny</b>	-	3	3	8	7	15
<b>ufc</b>	3	1	4	2	-	2
<b>wdr</b>	-	2	2	-	-	-
<b>wgp</b>	5	-	5	-	2	2
<b>nsc</b>	2	-	2	3	-	3
<b>ubn</b>	-	-	-	-	3	3
<b>chg</b>	3	-	3	3	-	3
<b>dev</b>	12	3	15	15	-	15
<b>0</b>	16	6	22	2	9	11

nsa - Nigerian men are selfish and arrogant

ny - not yet ready

ufc - inferiority complex

wdr - women don't rule

wgp - women given the opportunity will do well

nsc - Nigerian society and culture

ubn - unlike Britain, Nigeria has never been ruled by a woman

chg - change

dev - under developed

It is worth noting that if the views expressed by most Imo State teachers were to reflect those of the rest of the society, it could be assumed that at best, Nigerian women may wait for a very long time before they get the opportunity with regard to political leadership; and at worst, that moment will never come.

It is important at this stage to examine first the reasons why male teachers are opposed to women becoming political leaders. There is evidence to suggest that some of them feel quite bitter about the whole idea. One of them for instance, furiously commented:

*"... it is impossible! How can that happen - over my dead body - educationally, socially, economically."*

Significantly, the same man has argued that female education is a waste of resources because women are very wicked and that education will never change them. Inexplicably, this seems

like a man with deep rooted hatred for women. Another male teacher who feels that there is no circumstance under which a woman can assume political leadership of the country asserts:

*“It is very impossible for a woman to command or subdue a man under her. There will also be disunity to bring about a chaos situation.”*

This does show how men in Nigeria regard their female counterparts. Therefore, the fact that male superiority may have a lot to do with the issue of political leadership and women must never be ignored. One male teacher for example, stated that women should not be the head of State because:

*“they are termed to be inferior to their male counterparts.”*

A similar view was expressed by another male teacher when he unequivocally indicated:

*“Men would find it difficult if a woman were to rule Nigeria, as they would take her to be inferior to them.”*

It is very important to note that women's inferiority was the theme constantly emphasised by the business man in the pilot study, with regard to Nigerian women and political leadership. What would also worry the advocates of female political leadership in Nigeria is the fact that some of the teachers do not think that there is even any need for a woman to rule Nigeria. As one of them put it:

*“There is no need for a woman to be a nation's ruler. Women are wicked. Where ever they have ruled, they turned the world upside down...”*

This does reveal at least to some extent, the scale of hatred and bitterness some Imo State men harbour against their female counterparts, especially when it comes to the question of power and authority. Some have even accused Nigerian women of extremity and claim that:

*“Nigerian woman goes to the extreme in her dealings - Rulership does not require an extremist.”*

However, female political leadership in Nigeria may still be a reality because of the optimism which is discernible in the response of very few male teachers. One for example, has pointed out that female political leadership:

*"... has happened in other countries and women have proved themselves to be equally efficient in public administration."*

This is a direct challenge to the claim made by his colleague that "where ever women have ruled, they turned the world upside down." A stronger sign of hope and optimism has come from a young male teacher who thinks that:

*"Nigerian women are not having opportunities of occupying positions in government, with time they will surely rule Nigeria..."*

Having seen the reasons why some male teachers do not want women to become political leaders in Nigeria, it is important to know what the women themselves think. One of them has this to say about the whole issue:

*"If women are given the chance to rule Nigeria they could succeed, like their counterparts in civilised countries, but Nigerian men are selfish and have sworn never to give women a chance to rule Nigeria."*

This again raises a question mark over the claim made by the male teacher - that women have always turned the world upside down where ever they ruled. This lady teacher is convinced that selfishness on the part of Nigerian men is the one factor that has been militating against the political yearnings and aspirations of their female counterparts. Her female colleague seems to think in terms of social attitude and stresses that:

*"There is still that unfriendly attitude towards women when it comes to the question of power and authority."*

It is important to recall that one of the most crucial issues that emerged in the course of King's (1976), research with regard to world's religions and female education was that where power and authority were involved, women were excluded. Arguing from cultural point of view some of the lady teachers believe firmly that Nigerian women might never get the chance to rule the country. One of them for instance holds the view that women:

*"May not be given the opportunity because the Nigerian culture is most unfavourable for a woman to rule Nigeria."*



Many Imo State lady teachers have accused Nigerian men of arrogance and of deliberately denying women equal opportunity in the society. They claim that:

*“Nigerian men relegate women to the background so they will never allow her to rule.”*

There are however some lady teachers who have not completely ruled out the possibility.

They think:

*“It is not likely. But if it will happen it will take very many years in the future.”*

This seems to confirm the indication already made that at best Nigerian women may have to wait for many years. It is noteworthy that some of the women teachers in Imo State think that the possibility of a woman becoming the Head of State in Nigeria is limited since Nigerian women have not been encouraged to take active part in politics or leadership in general. They have inevitably concluded that the:

*“Chances are very remote because our women have not been encouraged so much in the field of leadership.”*

It should also be noted that some Imo State teachers especially men, think that because Nigeria is an under developed country, it will be very difficult for a woman to emerge as the Head of State. But the very fact that Pakistan, an Islamic under developed country, has been ruled by a woman, makes this claim hard to accept.

Surprisingly, during the interview some local politicians and some chiefs praised the mental and physical strength of Nigerian women as well as their competence, commitment and devotion to duty. They indicated very strongly that they could make great political leaders, although they did make reference to women's indispensable role and position in the family and expressed doubts as to whether they could get enough votes during elections. It is interesting to note that some women principals emphasised the fact that if all or at least most young girls go to school, during political elections women could secure enough votes.

But ironically members of the NCWS are not at all optimistic about women becoming political leaders in Nigeria. They feel that Nigerian women are their own enemies and warn that because Nigerian women are jealous of one another, female political leadership may prove an illusion. They also claimed that a woman Head of State might become very proud and unapproachable. They carefully explained that if and when a Nigerian woman decides to run for the presidency, the role of her family, notably the husband, would be indispensable. They stressed the fact that if her husband supports her, the society would do so. They said the same thing applies to the women who may campaign to be ordained as priests. But when some nuns were interviewed, they dismissed the idea of women becoming priests, and emphasised the fact that there is no need for women to become priests. They claimed that there are countless other roles which women can play in the Church. The nuns tend to see priesthood as men's exclusive right.

The issue of female political leadership in Nigeria is very important because the validity of school education of girls and women in the country could be challenged if women were to be excluded from being political leaders. It would also be recalled that Imo State students in their own questionnaires, linked formal education of girls and women inextricably with political leadership (see students' questionnaires, Table: 39).

**Would you like to see women in high political posts in Nigeria, including Head of State?**

**Table: 31**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>y</b>	21	12	33	19	20	39	64%
<b>n</b>	15	3	18	14	1	15	29%
<b>d</b>	3	-	3	-	1	1	
<b>0</b>	2	-	2	-	2	2	

Male teachers 54%

The above question was designed to compare and contrast the reaction of teachers, particularly male teachers with regard to the preceding question, (Table: 30). The fact that

54% of the male teachers have indicated that they would like to see women in high political posts in Nigeria including Head of State may not reflect necessarily a change of mind in terms of how they feel about women becoming political leaders in Nigeria. Only 25% for instance, (see Table: 29), think that a woman can rise to the post of Head of State in Nigeria.

It may be therefore true to say that what the above figures, (notably the 54%), seem to suggest is that Nigerian men may not wish to exclude their women folk completely from politics, women can be assigned political posts as long as they do not become the Head of State.

**What are the effects of western education on the Nigerian society?**

**Table: 32**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>1</b>	18	4	22	11	9	20	37%
<b>2</b>	5	1	6	2	2	4	9%
<b>3</b>	16	9	25	18	11	29	48%
<b>4</b>	1	1	2	2	-	2	4%
<b>0</b>	1	-	1	-	2	2	

1 - positive

2 - negative

3 - both

4 - neither

It was deemed necessary to find out from teachers since they have played a leading role in terms of dissemination of western education, (and by implication western values), in the Nigerian society, what they think the effects of what is often referred to as imported culture, have been. The above table shows that 37% of the teachers consider the effects positive, 9% of their colleagues disagree while just under half, 48% hold the view that the effects have been both positive and negative. Of special significance is the 4% who feel that western education has not had any effect on the society.

Although this school of thought is very much in the minority, nevertheless, it is inconceivable that since the introduction of western education in Nigeria in the early 1840s it has not touched any aspect of life in the society.

However, the teachers who consider the effects of western education as essentially positive claim that as a result of western education, illiteracy has been wiped out and that Nigerians have become Christians. They stress the fact that science, technology and civilisation have all been brought about by western education. They also hold the view that primitivity is now a thing of the past.

It may however be more true to say that since Nigeria embraced western education, many of her citizens have become literate, given that illiteracy has not been completely wiped out. Even in Britain illiteracy has not been got rid of. Many people both within and outside Nigeria may identify with the views of a young male teacher who thinks that the effects of western education have been admirably positive especially in terms of:

*“Building up a man to face the challenges of nature, through acquisitions of education, provision of amenities etc.”*

This teacher has more or less summed up the basic purpose of school education.

The teachers who are critical of the British claim that:

*“The education they brought was narrow only prepared the lower manpower. It paved the way for continued western domination. It did not provide training in technical education which could lead the country to technological breakthrough.”*

It is important to note that critics of western education in Nigeria have always emphasised the absence of the technological aspect, (see Chapter 2). Some of the teachers accused the British of deliberately bringing the wrong type of education to Nigeria.

*“They failed to show us the light of science and technological education. It is full of tricks.”*

Apart from the critics of the content of western education there are some teachers who have assessed the effects of western education on the Nigerian society from moral and religious points of view, and are convinced that western education:

*“has created a more sophisticated and pervert society.”*

Some of the critics claim that there is hardly anything good in western education and feel that even modern amenities and items of entertainment like the television are all synonymous with immorality. They are deeply convinced that western education has brought about the:

*“evil fruits of television, pornography, nepotism, election rigging, bribery and corruption. The Machiavellian attitude aspect of the capitalist economic system imported from the west.”*

Judging the effects of western education on the society from both content and cultural points of view, some teachers feel that the British did not intend to help Nigeria through their education and claimed that:

*“They gave us half hearted education. Western education opposes our culture.”*

It should however be mentioned that there were some undesirable aspects of our culture which were got rid of through western education. These included human sacrifice, twin murder, the untold suffering inflicted on women accused of multiple birth, ill treatment of the untouchables etc.

Significantly, there are some male teachers in Imo State who are primarily concerned about the effects of western education on Nigeria, in terms of male/female relationship. They feel disappointed and argue that western education has betrayed Nigerian men. They worry that owing to western education now Nigerian:

*“women claim equality with men and therefore there is not much respect and regards for men folk.”*

This could be interpreted to mean that western education is gradually but systematically eroding male superiority in the Nigerian society.

**Has school education enhanced or jeopardised the status of Nigerian women?****Table: 33**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>1</b>	36	15	51	29	22	51	90%
<b>2</b>	2	-	2	3	2	5	
<b>3</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>0</b>	3	-	3	1	-	1	

1 - enhanced                      3 - don't know  
 2 - jeopardised  
 Male teachers 88%  
 Female teachers 95%

The most striking feature of this particular table is the overwhelming recognition and agreement among teachers that western education has enhanced the status of women in Nigeria. For example, most of the teachers in the sample, (90%), think that far from jeopardising the status of women in Nigeria, western education has given an unprecedented boost to the image of womanhood in Nigeria. The fact that 88% of the male teachers hold the view that western education has actually enhanced the status of women all over the country is significant. Nearly all the female teachers, (95%), have no doubt what so ever regarding western education in terms of what it has done for them especially their pride and dignity. Another remarkable aspect of the above table is that number 3, (don't know), has no figure recorded against it, which means that not even a single teacher has any doubt about what western education has done for women in Nigeria.

This could partly explain why some of the male teachers feel bitter about western education and think it has betrayed the men folk.

**Explain briefly why you think that school education has enhanced or jeopardised the status of Nigerian women.**

**Table: 34**

	U			R		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>idp</b>	7	3	10	6	3	9
<b>wnr</b>	6	1	7	8	5	13
<b>cmp</b>	2	1	3	1	2	3
<b>wmp</b>	-	2	2	-	-	-
<b>wbp</b>	5	-	5	6	-	6
<b>0</b>	21	8	29	12	14	26

idp - independence

wnr - women now know their rights

cmp - competitive

wmp - women have more political awareness

wbp - women have become proud

It is important at this stage to examine the reasons why Imo State teachers have overwhelmingly indicated that school education has enhanced the status of women in Nigeria. It would be recalled that before the introduction of western education, other forms of education including traditional education existed within the Nigerian society, (see Chapter 2). It is therefore worth noting that by conceding that western education has enhanced the status of women in Nigeria, one obvious implication is that those other forms of education that existed long before the emergence of formal education, did nothing in terms of enhancing the status of Nigerian women. It inevitably raises the question regarding why western education succeeded where those ones failed.

However, it is worth finding out first and foremost why Imo State teachers think that western education has enhanced the status of the female members of the society. Some male teachers have argued that as a result of western education Nigerian women can now be seen in every profession including medicine and law. They hold the view that the role of women

in Nigeria today is no longer seen by the society as exclusively domestic because western education has made it possible for:

*“women to be exposed to different occupations, and to contribute to the educational, social, political and economic aspects of Nigerian society.”*

Some of the male teachers whose own reappraisal of western education was largely politically motivated, feel that women in Nigeria have even made tremendous break through in political terms. One was quick to point out that:

*“Women can now hold posts like ‘DG’, Deputy Governor.”*

There are some male teachers who, having compared what women in Nigeria today are capable of doing, as opposed to their counterparts in the traditional society, have come to the conclusion that:

*“Women are now realising their potentialities because of their education.”*

Significantly, some of the male teachers, while conceding the fact that western education has enhanced the status of Nigerian women, hold the view that by so doing, school education has done more harm than good. As one of them put it:

*“School education has really enhanced their status of creating awareness, but some of them misused the opportunity. This has brought about broken homes which has adversely affected the children who are members of the Nigerian society.”*

The issue raised above is one that should be taken seriously given that in every situation, the possibility of extremists exploiting the whole issue for their own selfish ends can not be ruled out.

Having noted some of the reasons why male teachers are convinced that western education has enhanced the status of Nigerian women, the views of their female counterparts must not be ignored. The fact that, 95%, (see Table: 33), of the female teachers indicated that western education has enhanced the status of women in Nigeria undoubtedly means that as women they are happy with school education. Some of them have stressed the fact that:



*“Women are now seen and heard unlike during the period when women did not go to school.”*

This would suggest that women in the traditional Nigerian society were worse off in social terms than their counterparts in Victorian England; given that the latter could be seen but not heard. There are some female teachers who are of the opinion that western education has completely transformed the Nigerian society especially in terms of women’s inferiority, (many women may dispute this). As one of them explained:

*“Nowadays women are no more looked down upon, since they have proved they can attain the same heights just as their male counterparts unlike before when they were regarded as low achievers and even not sent to school.”*

With this type of response, it is hard to deny the fact that western education has enhanced the status of women in Nigeria. This is why it will be very difficult, if not impossible for the teachers, (9%, see Table: 32), who indicated that western education has only had negative effects on the Nigerian society, to convince everyone.

### **In which society have women fared better?**

**Table: 35**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>1</b>	11	-	11	3	1	4	13%
<b>2</b>	24	15	39	29	19	48	77%
<b>3</b>	4	-	4	-	-	-	4%
<b>4</b>	2	-	2	1	4	5	

1 - Traditional society      2 - Western society      3 - Islamic society

What is also remarkable and most striking in this table is the huge support for western society which in the Nigerian context means the present day Nigerian society which is - inextricably linked with western-type education as opposed to the one that existed before the emergence of school education, (traditional society). A glance at the above table reveals that 77% of the teachers believe that western society is the one in which women in Nigeria and arguably all over the world, have comparatively fared better. 13% disagree with this view

and think that the traditional society is the one that has offered women the best opportunities in life. But 4% hold the view that women have actually fared better, in the Islamic Society.

Perhaps what is very significant is the fact that of all the teachers that hold the traditional society in esteem, only one is a woman as the table shows. She teaches in the village. The male teachers may be traditionalists, (conservatives), who abhor change and possibly resent the fact that western education has enhanced the status of Nigerian women. The lady teacher that supports them is based in the rural area which has always been the stronghold of traditional ethos, as well as social norms. It is also equally significant that no lady teacher indicated that women have fared better in the Islamic society.

It is interesting to note that some of the male teachers who think that in Nigeria, women have fared better in the traditional society, feel that certain ceremonies were better performed in the traditional society, than they are today and that in some cases the ceremonies have completely disappeared, in the wake of school education. In responding to the question as to which society women have fared better, one of them unequivocally indicated:

*“Traditional, especially some ceremonies like marriage.”*

It is noteworthy that after the introduction of western education, certain ceremonies including traditional wedding ceremony were abandoned. Church wedding replaced the traditional one. But recently the traditional wedding ceremony has reappeared. It now precedes every church wedding in Imo State and is being increasingly seen as equally important and in some cases even more important than a church wedding. The fact that traditional wedding has reappeared after many years only shows that there must be certain things about it, which the Nigerian people hold very dear, notably the Igbo.

There is no doubt that the most important of those things, the Igbo hold very dear, which necessitated the reintroduction of traditional wedding, is the unique Igbo dance, the mainstay of traditional wedding. Leith-Ross, (1939), who lived for many years among the

Igbo was enchanted by the very nature of the dance. Lord Lugard, (in Leith-Ross, 1939), who wrote the foreword in Leith-Ross' book about Igbo women, was equally captivated by the terminology used by Leith-Ross in her description of the Igbo dance:

*“Our author’s appreciation of what the dance means to the African is expressed in terms more understanding and more vivid than I have ever read elsewhere. No one who has watched the intense description, the almost hypnotic oblivion to fatigue or any other distraction, can fail to agree with her that, there is no European equivalent which gathers up to a single activity every possible range of thought and emotion. It is ... as integral a part of the African’s existence as the air he breathes.”* p. 8.

This proves beyond doubt that when church wedding replaced traditional wedding some Igbo people felt as if part of their very life no longer existed. This can partly explain why some of the male teachers in Imo State deeply resent the contemporary society and feel that women fared better in the traditional society particularly in terms of certain ceremonies like traditional wedding. To such people the change was intolerable and unacceptable. Hence, they yearn relentlessly for the old way of life.

It is possible that the pace of change proved too much for the traditionalists. Like any other event in life, the slower the pace of change, the less traumatic especially for the more conservative elements of the society. It is noteworthy that Lord Lugard himself did comment on the sweeping nature of the change with regard to the Igbo:

*“They share an indifference towards old customs and beliefs...The alacrity with which they will abandon old ways for new is evident in the popularity of the hospitals, courts of law, schools and post offices...”* p. 7.

What may prove very hard to believe is the claim by some of the male teachers that:

*“Women have fared better in the traditional society all over the country.”*

Some male teachers probably out of jealousy regarding the way women in Nigeria are responding to western education have uneasily remarked:

*“The so called liberation movement spreading from the West has made Nigerian women to be aware of their rights and emancipate themselves.”*

Some people will surely dispute the idea that Nigerian women have achieved full

emancipation. However, from the female point of view, some of the lady teachers have dismissed both the Islamic and traditional societies claiming that:

*“The traditional and Islamic societies relegated women to the background and did not give them the opportunities to make useful contributions towards the enhancement of the Nigerian society.”*

Some of the lady teachers having compared both the Islamic and the traditional societies with the present day Nigerian society, seem to have doubts about the validity of the first two societies and are certainly more critical of them. One lady teacher for example, pointed out:

*“In the traditional society women were looked down upon, while in the Islamic society, they were suppressed and not allowed to mix up or expose themselves.”*

Examining the issue from political point of view a lady teacher with many years of teaching experience behind her, has argued that western society (like Britain) is the only society in which women do not suffer discrimination especially in political terms. She holds the view that unlike the traditional and Islamic societies:

*“Western society does not discriminate against women. They have to rule and exercise their legitimate rights.”*

It is important to note that some teachers feel that women have fared better in the western society because of western culture, which they claim guaranteed equal rights to both sexes.

### How do you see the future of secondary school teachers?

**Table: 36**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>br</b>	1	6	7	-	4	4	10%
<b>bl</b>	12	-	12	10	6	16	
<b>vbr</b>	1	4	5	-	5	5	9%
<b>vbl</b>	1	-	1	10	-	10	
<b>bu</b>	6	3	9	1	3	4	
<b>unc</b>	-	1	1	6	-	6	
<b>vbu</b>	7	-	7	2	-	2	
<b>0</b>	13	1	14	4	6	10	

br - bright  
bl - bleak  
vbr - very bright  
vbl - very bleak  
bu - bleak unless government acts  
unc - uncertain  
vbu - very bleak unless government does something quickly

Since the role of teachers in terms of school education is indispensable, therefore how they see their future is of paramount importance. It should also be noted that the teachers have a special role in addition, namely, the promotion of school education of girls and women. The above figures are not encouraging as teachers see their future variously as bleak, very bleak, etc. Only a few consider their future as bright or very bright and even so, it is conditional - dependent on the government acting quickly.

It must however be noted that some teachers have dismissed outright a future for secondary school teachers in Imo State (it could have implication for teachers nationwide). They see it as very bleak, uncertain, confused etc. One teacher has even dared to forecast mass abandonment of the teaching profession by teachers and stresses the fact that secondary school teachers:

*“have no enviable future, I see many leaving the system.”*

Assessing the future of secondary school teachers from an economic point of view, some teachers strongly feel that:

*“There will hardly be any change due to the economic situation.”*

Distinguishing between the economic and the academic predicament of teachers in Imo State notably in terms of their future, some teachers have come to the conclusion that as far as they are concerned:

*“Academically their future is bright, financially their future is bleak.”*

Significantly, there are some teachers who have suggested a way of overcoming the economic predicament. They hold the view that their future will be inevitably:

*“bleak unless one engages in some other business to supplement.”*

This, without doubt accounts for why in Imo State, (and perhaps all over the country) a teacher may have several jobs in addition to the teaching career, (see Students Questionnaires Table: 41). It is one of the reasons often given for poor academic performance by students notably in the West African School Certificate Examinations, (which is the equivalent of GCSE in Britain). It is reckoned that more women than men belong to this category of teachers. A lady teacher for instance, can at the same time be a petty trader, a farmer, a business woman, etc. She is rarely seen in the class room. The situation is not helped by the teachers' condition of service, (see Tables: 4 and 28). This could have far reaching effects on the quality of secondary education in the State, (and perhaps in the rest of the country). This is more worrying if one considers the predictions of a male teacher in connection with the future of secondary school teachers. He is convinced that teaching in the secondary school:

*“is becoming entirely women's job. In future women will definitely outnumber men.”*

This does confirm the fact that currently, men are stronger than women in the secondary schools in numerical terms.

It is worth noting that some teachers would not risk any predictions with regard to their future from political point of view. They insist that they:

*“cannot predict because of the instability of government and its policies.”*

They must have borne in mind the fact that successive governments make different educational policies. If one considers deeply the various responses from teachers in Imo State concerning their future, one might justifiably assume that there is no future for them as far as the teaching profession is concerned. But there are few lady teachers who are hopeful, if only the government can intervene timely. As one of them has pointed out:

*“The future of secondary school teachers will be bright if government feels teaching is a profession.”*

But one of her colleagues thinks that the task of improving the lot of teachers is not a matter for the government only, but also the society at large. She is convinced beyond all reasonable doubts that the future of secondary school teachers:

*“Will be bright if the society and the government, the parents and students appreciate their efforts, and hold them in high esteem like other professions.”*

**How do you see the future of girls’ formal education in Nigeria?**

**Table: 37**

	U			R			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	
<b>br</b>	16	9	25	15	11	26	45%
<b>brg</b>	2	1	3	1	2	3	
<b>skt</b>	1	-	1	1	2	3	
<b>vbr</b>	5	3	8	3	2	5	
<b>vg</b>	-	2	2	3	4	7	
<b>rsy</b>	1	-	1	1	2	3	
<b>pro</b>	10	-	10	5	1	6	
<b>0</b>	6	-	6	4	-	4	

br - bright  
 brg - bright but government must act  
 skt - sky is the limit  
 vbr - very bright  
 vg - very good  
 rsy - rosy  
 pro - promising

It is quite easy to see the huge contrast between the above table and the preceding one, (Table: 36). It is interesting to note that unlike the future of secondary school teachers; the future of girls’ education in Nigeria has been described as promising, bright, very bright, rosy, very good, some teachers even think that the sky is the limit. It is worth noting that where as only 9% of the teachers think there is a future for secondary school teachers in the society, many feel strongly that the future of girls’ education in Nigeria is wonderfully bright and secure.

It is however important to know the reasons why some teachers do not see any future in terms of girls’ education in Nigeria of which Imo State is a part. In fact, these teachers think that girls’ education is:

*“very bad now, not to talk of the future.”*

Having compared girls' education with that of their male counterparts, some of the teachers came to the conclusion that the future of girls' education in the country is:

*"as bleak as that of boys, no difference."*

Arguably one of the most discouraging predictions was made by a long serving male teacher who probably does not believe in girls' and women's education.

*"I see it as being useless, they will end up in the kitchen."*

Without doubt, the most devastating predictions regarding the future of girls' education in particular and female education in general have come from an embittered male teacher.

According to him:

*"Education of a woman does not change her. As women were from the beginning so shall they be till the ending of the world, rather more education of a woman brings laziness and hunger to any nation. Look at our country now women's education has contributed to family breaks and 'I don't care system', in families, so the future of educated girls should be looked into by our government. Their education in future will run this country down and cause multiplicity of strikes."*

One wonders what may happen to the education of girls and women in Nigeria, should the number of people holding similar views grow with the passage of time. Although some of the issues he has raised might be genuine, like negligence on the part of some women and break up of families, personally he would prefer the traditional society when women neither knew their rights nor questioned the social norms and the traditional ethos. They were also expected to feed their families single-handedly, relying solely on what they could get from the farms.

It is however encouraging that the overwhelming majority of teachers in Imo State are quite positive about the future of girls' education in the Nigerian society. Some think that it:

*"will be like that of boys."*



They have in effect conceded the fact that girls' education is lagging behind that of boys. Interestingly, some teachers hold the view that in some educational institutions women are performing better. They insist that:

*"women are dominating in most schools because the male counterparts are chasing money."*

This is one of the issues raised in Table: 18 and which is also responsible for the drop out of some male students. Although many teachers see the future of girls' education as looking increasingly bright, and predicting that with the passage of time more and more girls will pass through the school system, there are some doubts about the genuineness on the part of some girls with regard to school education. Some teachers for example, have linked girls' education with marriage. One teacher for instance, is of the opinion that:

*"If you educate a woman you educate a nation. Presumably the girls see education as the sure way to better married life. It then means that more boys than girls are likely to drop out of school in the near future."*

Perhaps the fact that prospective husbands are increasingly turning their backs on illiterate girls has convinced some teachers that there is a future for girls' education in the country. As one teacher put it:

*"Nobody today can go out to marry an uneducated girl."*

But this will inevitably raise the question in terms of the real aim or aims of school education.

It is however important to note that there are some teachers in Imo State who strongly hold the view that the future of girls' education in Nigeria will be undoubtedly very bright due to the increasing number of literate parents in the society who appreciate the advantages of school education. As one teacher convincingly put it:

*"The future is edifying because many parents are literate. They understand that if their daughters are educated they will be able to take care of themselves even if they do not marry. Many of them too will be loyally married."*

This not only raises hope for the future in terms of girls' education, it also questions the validity of the claims of critics of female education that educated girls - among other things do not make good housewives, because they are proud, uncompromising, disrespectful to husband, headstrong etc.

Significantly, assessing the future of girls' education from the point of view of employment and position of girls in the society especially when they leave school, some teachers believe that girls can reach any academic height if they are encouraged. They claim girls:

*“will be bright if they are encouraged to reach any height academically and are given employment and positions of honour after they leave school.”*

Unquestionably, employment is a very important issue with regard to school education in developing nations because of poverty, and the existence of large families. Besides, in developing countries, the social security system which helps the unemployed in most developed nations is non-existent because their governments cannot afford it. No one can therefore realistically divorce employment from school education in the developing world. In actual fact, the prospect of not being employed after school, can result in some students dropping out of the school system, (see Table: 18). On the contrary, good job prospects will be a big boost with regard to the future of school education generally in Nigeria and that of girls and women in particular. This is because girls are less confident of getting jobs when they leave school than boys. This is not unique with Nigeria, because employers seem to prefer male employees to their female counterparts.

### **SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

Unquestionably, the fieldwork in Imo State highlighted socio-economic issues, which over the years have affected the formal education of girls and women, and jeopardised their political aspirations. Without doubt marriage and domestic chores are the most serious. Taking marriage for example, because the society sees it as a duty, which every girl owes to

her family and to the society at large, child marriage was introduced. And because marriage is also regarded as the only purpose for which the female members of the society were created, in some cases girls had to be affianced right from the moment of birth. Consequently when formal education was introduced in Nigeria girls' education was regarded as irrelevant and unnecessary. Although the empirical study has proved that child marriage has stopped in Imo State, there are still parents who are bringing pressure to bear on their teenage daughters to leave school and marry. In a society where unmarried women undergo untold suffering, it is not surprising that there are girls who want to abandon the school system for marriage.

Poverty is affecting school education seriously in Imo State, especially girls'. Many families are desperately poor. Children who are orphans do not go to school because there is no one to pay their fees. As the empirical study shows, some very large families live in one or two rooms and children have no space to study. In some homes, parents are so poor that their sons and daughters lack basic facilities including lights, tables and stationery. In despair some appealed to the writer for help, it was very moving.

Farming and domestic chores have also affected school education of Imo State boys and girls particularly those in the rural areas. It is important to note that girls' education is more adversely affected than the boys'. As a result of social attitudes and expectations there is no flexibility in terms of domestic chores; girls and women do everything. This is mainly why many male students indicated that girls should only have vocational training when they leave school. In some homes, girls are not allowed to do any school homework or private studies, so that they can devote all their time to domestic chores. Some girls' ordeal begins the moment they come back from school. Stereotyping by teachers has also put girls' education in jeopardy especially in scientific terms. From the investigations, one can easily assess the scale of damage that has been done to rural education in Imo State, notably in science subjects.

Without doubt, one of the highlights of the fieldwork was the inextricable linking of female political leadership with formal education by the young secondary school students. It is therefore quite obvious that unless Imo State women become political leaders at one point in the future, their school education will mean nothing, at least from the point of view of the young people in Imo State. Interestingly, from the empirical study, one can also read the minds of those that uphold the customs and the social ethos, notably the Chiefs, the natural leaders and the local politicians. For instance, one can establish their stance regarding crucial issues like school education, domestic chores, female political leadership etc.

In sum, the empirical study has revealed serious facts about the school education of girls and women in Nigeria generally, and in Imo State in particular. It also revealed the realities with regard to the teaching profession in Imo State, which may well reflect the situation nationwide. The society has humiliated teachers and made them feel very bad about their profession. But no society can prosper or progress especially in educational terms without good contribution from its teachers given that the education of the future generation is in their hands.

### **SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEWS**

Although while analysing the data from the teachers' and the students' questionnaires, references were made to the response made by some of the respondents during the interview; on certain specific issues, some of the information gathered is so crucial that it has been summarised. For instance, when some of the members of the NCWS were interviewed - they told the writer that they were deeply worried about the plight of widows in the Nigerian society. They stressed that they are not treated as human beings. They referred to the National Concord of Wednesday, 12-5-93, (No. 2591, p.7), in which Okolo tried to highlight the untold suffering which widows are made to undergo. In his article entitled "The Pathetic Face of Widowhood". Okolo points out that:

*“There are certain traditional practices and customs still sticking their heads out in modern Nigeria and under a much more civilized society ... The harrowing plight of widows in very many communities in this country is one such anachronistic practice.”*

Okolo argues that the loss of a woman's life partner is in itself melancholy and excruciating pain, and asks why there should be additional mental and physical torture, by the society. He questions the social validity of prolonged mourning, shaving of the head to the scalp, surrounding the woman with undignifying objects and making her drink the water with which her husband's corpse has been washed.

The members of the NCWS emphasised the fact that they have decided to maintain a very strong presence when a woman's husband dies, in order to ensure that she is not subjected to a harrowing ordeal, and also to prevent inhuman treatment being meted out to her. They pointed out that when a man's wife dies, nothing is done to him. They feel that for too long, women in the Nigerian society have been on the receiving end socially, politically, economically, educationally etc. They emphasised the need for Nigerian girls and women to have unlimited access to all levels of education.

### The Clergy

#### Equal Educational Opportunity for Boys and Girls

A clergyman indicated that initially people used to think that women should be in the kitchen, rear children and bring them up. He warned that the times have changed and the circumstances of our time, require that both boys and girls should be given equal opportunity to study as much as possible. A woman cleric also stressed the need for equal opportunity in education, since men and women now compete in most things.

#### Biblical Basis for Women's Status

The priest recalled that in the old Jewish society *“men accorded women a nonentity kind of status.”* He pointed out that when Christ came, He tried to put right the wrong deeds done to women hence the projection of women like Mary Magdalene, in the Scriptures. But

the woman cleric said that it was good that the status of women was undermined in the old biblical times. She claimed that women are talkative and domineering, and would have overshadowed men. She insisted that women should keep quiet and listen.

### The Ordination of Women

The clergyman is opposed to women's ordination because there is no biblical example of women ordained as priests. But the cleric approves of women's ordination. She claimed it could be an incentive to girls and women in the State, and that for the same reason, many women should be made chiefs.

### Coeducation

One of the men in the sacred ministry has no doubts that coeducation is an ideal - but warned that the inherent moral dangers are grave, unless there is tight control and discipline on the part of school authorities. He pointed out that the teenage years are usually the period of sexual experiment for some children. A nun said that coeducation is not worth the trouble and indicated that some boys are corrupt and that the scale of moral decadence in coeducational institutions is a cause for concern.

### Illiteracy Rate

The clergyman indicated that it is quite obvious that illiteracy rate among women in the State is higher than that of men. But he pointed out that the problem is far worse in the northern part of Nigeria. He holds the view that the Church could do nothing to help but suggested that the federal government with its vast resources, should confront the problem. But the woman cleric thinks that the Church can help by providing free literacy classes for adults, particularly women.

### Control of Education

The clergy men and the nuns feel that the Church should control education. One of the clergy recalled that in the days when missions controlled education - especially in Imo State, the quality of education was very high, the standards were equally high, there was discipline including moral discipline. He said *“what we have now is quantity and not quality.”* He emphasised the fact that in the days of mission education, there were jobs for everyone, but today, unemployment has reached a worrying level. He also thinks that it is partly due to the poor quality of education which children are now receiving. The priest also stressed that because education today is devoid of morality, *“we now live in a crime ridden society.”*

### Free and Compulsory Education

The priest very strongly indicated that free and compulsory education will not work. He is of the opinion that for such a programme to succeed, parents must be first educated, because many of them are not aware of the validity of school education. He insisted that because some parents are illiterates - from an illiterate background, they are ignorant of what school education is all about. Consequently, their own children have adopted a complacent attitude towards formal education. He warned that unless parents are educated - made aware of what education is, so that they in turn would explain to their children why they should go to school, the programme of free and compulsory education may achieve no useful purpose.

### Women and Social Status

The cleric accused Nigerian women of asking for too much, by seeking equality with men. She holds the view that however highly placed a woman may be, she should obey and submit to her husband. She referred to the Bible and indicated that she likes the word - submission, insisting that women should submit to their husbands. The humble

Church woman praised the Nigerian society in general, and Imo State in particular, for upholding the dignity of men and the subjugation of women.

### Domestic Chores

The female cleric speaking on the sensitive issue of domestic chores, (her voice subdued but defiant), made it clear that women should do all the domestic work in the family. She pointed out that there is no obligation on men to participate in domestic chores, but if a man is kind enough to help his wife, (perhaps secretly), the woman should be rather grateful. She did stress that due to the scarcity of maids and servants, as a result of school education, some measure of flexibility in terms of division of labour within the family system would be good. Her subdued voice highlights the sensitive nature of domestic chores.

### School Education and Poverty

A priest made it quite clear that many families are facing abject poverty, and that school education of many children is suffering. He explained that in many homes parents are no longer capable of feeding their children let alone sending them to school. He did however reveal that in some cases the children themselves may refuse to go to school. He pointed out that coincidentally in the morning of that very day he was being interviewed, a parishioner came to him to complain that her son refused to go to school. Asked whether the Church could help with the education of the children in the poverty stricken families, he said that the Church is not different from the community, and that if the community is poor the Church will also be poor. But the woman cleric claimed that the Church could do a lot to help by:

1. awarding scholarships
2. establishing at least small scale industries whereby the poor could be employed, so that they could earn money to educate their children.



### Positive Effects of Western Education

One of the nuns commenting on the merits of western education, pointed out that the Nigerian society has gained a lot from school education. She cited some examples including modern houses, fashion, roads, means of travelling etc. The nun explained that due to the modern means of transport man's horizons in Nigeria are no longer limited in geographical terms.

### Negative Effects of Western Education

The nun in a calm reflective mood, (almost bordering on sadness), pointed out that the abandonment of rich Nigerian culture by Nigerians, is one of the things she regrets most about western education. She stressed that Nigerians have very rich culture, but that in the process of imbibing western education, they have gone over the top, by copying everything about the white man's culture, without thinking - even those aspects that do not suit Nigerians. She regretted that today's school children have lost moral consciousness and even some have taken to drugs - things unheard of in the traditional society.

### Woman Head of State

Regarding women and political leadership in Nigeria, the woman cleric said that she is confident that women would make good rulers if given the opportunity. She also pointed out that women are great administrators and would make great Stateswomen. It would be recalled that female teachers made similar claim in the questionnaires. The cleric strenuously dismissed the claim that women might not get the support and cooperation they need from the society. She said that people would be more willing to vote for a woman in a presidential election because "*she would not eat as much money as a man.*" She also strongly rejected the idea that in a presidential campaign where there is a male candidate - it is very unlikely that a woman could defeat him. The confident cleric said, "*if she is able to pull down her male opponent, (meaning defeating him on the ballot box), why can't she win?*" She also

confidently indicated that having a woman Head of State would change the lot of women, not just in Imo State but in the country as a whole, beyond imagination. Understandably, she thinks that school education of girls and women is crucial if they must achieve their political ambition. It should be recalled that secondary school pupils linked female political leadership in Nigeria inextricably with formal education of girls and women.

### Education Officers

#### Free and Compulsory Education

One of the education officers in Imo State revealed that the State would not be able to sustain the above programme at any level, without massive support from the federal government.

#### Control of Education

The officer indicated that the federal government should control education but not the curriculum. He holds the view that since the various States know what they are looking for, they are in a better position to control the curriculum. But one of his female counterparts thinks that a body of experts would handle the curriculum better. She is of the opinion that parents should have nothing to do with the curriculum given that:

1. Many parents are illiterates.
2. Some of the parents themselves need to be educated since they are not interested in the school education of their daughters, on the contrary, they want them to marry and abandon school education.
3. Some women do not like to reason, they like to form pressure groups and oppose everything.

## The NDP

One of the providers of education disclosed that there is a National Development Programme for the less academically gifted, where the accent is on practical things including pottery.

## Illiteracy Rate

The officer conceded that there is a high illiteracy rate in the State and in the country as a whole, but that the exact rate is not known because it is hard to get hold of statistics. He declined to say whether the rate is higher among women.

## The Libyan and Cuban Literacy Revolutions

He made it clear that he did not know about the above revolutions, but that illiteracy, (especially among women), was being tackled in the following ways:

1. Through a programme called 'Teach one, teach one', - the aim of which is to ensure that everyone gets some measure of education, or at least learn a trade or a skill.
2. There are numerous adult education classes all over the State, which to a large extent help to sustain the 'Teach one, teach one' programme.
3. Some Churches in the State hold literacy Sunday evening classes.

## Domestic Chores

The officer conceded the fact that flexibility in terms of division of labour within the family system is important, because these days women are increasingly making good contributions both at the family and national levels. A woman education officer said that more and more women, (she might be referring to the members of the NCWS), are speaking out against the fact that women do all the domestic chores, and that it might die out. She also holds the view that with an increasing number of educated parents, the practice may disappear completely with the passage of time.

## Women and Professions

The woman officer, (visibly frustrated) unequivocally stated that there are too many nurses and teachers in the State, and that she would like to see numerous women as soon as possible in the scientific disciplines and many also in politics. She emphasised the fact that limitless number of women should now go into politics, so that *“we can have our own share of the national cake.”* Significantly, one of her male counterparts thinks that the society should be held accountable for what has happened to women not only in Imo State but all over the country, regarding certain professions. The officer recalled how he once met a woman surveyor, no sooner had she stepped out of her car than people surrounded her, jeering and laughing openly at her. Contemptuously, they asked her *“why are you a surveyor?”*

## Age of Marriage for Girls

The officer approves of marriage from the early 20s - so girls at least would be undergraduates. He revealed that he told his daughters not to think about marriage, until they became university students. He conceded that early marriage would disrupt girls' school education; notably higher education.

## Women and Higher Education

A female education officer bitterly spoke of her disappointment with regard to what is happening to the education of girls at the higher level. She attributed it to a number of problems:

1. The complacency of the society.
2. The attitude of parents. The lady stressed that the higher the educational level, the fewer the women and girls. She claimed that there are relatively many girls in the secondary sector, but thereafter they drop out and do not proceed to the university.

3. Marriage. The concerned officer spoke at length about lack of ambition on the part of some girls, who think only about marriage. She said *“Nobody asks why is this happening to girls?”* On the contrary, boys stream to the universities. It would be recalled that in the teachers’ questionnaire, it was revealed that some girls could not wait to get married.
4. Poverty Stricken Families. She revealed that some families are large and also very poor. She explained that some parents may have eight or more children, and because they are in abject poverty they cannot provide primary and secondary education for them let alone university education. She did also say that even if their fortune changes a bit, they just send the boys only. She then angrily remarked:

*“some girls are so stupid that they voluntarily step back to let their brothers go to school and to the university - thinking that it is the right thing.”*

A male officer indicated that nationally, university admission standards had to be lowered for girls, especially in areas like science and mathematics. This very issue was raised by the two highly educated Nigerian ladies, (a medical doctor and a lawyer), during the pilot study. The two ladies were worried, fearing that it would create the wrong impression regarding the educational ability of girls and women in Nigeria. It was put to the officer that lowering university admission standards for girls and women, is a way of showing that they are inferior to their male counterparts in educational terms. He defended the practice very vigorously and claimed that it is rather a way of encouraging the brave few girls and women who register for courses in the male dominated disciplines. According to the officer, many girls run away from science and mathematics and some see them as boys’ subjects. This confirms:

1. The findings of the Lagos University woman lecturer interviewed by the writer.
2. The revelations in the teachers' questionnaire regarding girls and science.
3. The social attitude in terms of career with regard to girls and women.

The lady officer also sadly indicated that nothing is happening as far as girls are concerned in terms of technical education. She did however point out that within the State some people, (both men and women), have developed the attitude of - *"let me just go to the university and get any degree."*

### Village and Urban Schools

Speaking with great concern the lady officer revealed that very highly qualified teachers like to teach in urban schools due to the availability of better facilities including electricity. She indicated that they resent going to rural schools - for apart from facilities, they feel that schools in the urban centres are better equipped than those located in rural areas. The officer strongly stressed that from her experience, urban areas produce better pupils due to high quality education - which in turn is dependent on better educational facilities and well-trained teachers. She also disclosed with worried countenance that owing to lack of teachers, especially in science and mathematics, and lack of school equipment, some school children in rural areas do not receive lessons in the above mentioned subjects. This very fact was highlighted in the secondary schools' questionnaires by some respondents.

### Women and Financial Independence

A male education officer said that financial independence for women should be given strong support. He argued that a man does not live forever, and should he die suddenly, if his wife is not used to managing money, the family could collapse. The female officer (with great concern for women's education) said that women's financial independence is not a luxury but a necessity. She made it absolutely clear that the times have changed and that in the contemporary society, there are too many problems, with the result that women would get

nowhere if they were to rely on men completely and helplessly for financial support. She explains *“women are now bread winners, they go out and make the money. In most families women are the bread winners.”* She dismissed the claim that financial independence will make women proud, stubborn, and disobedient to their husbands. She holds the view that a husband should rather be grateful and appreciative of the fact that his wife - in addition to looking after the family, is capable of working and bringing in more money to help the family. She stressed that in a family, especially a Christian family, where there is love as well as trust she could:

*“not see how the little money the woman is bringing in can make her proud. How can the money she is bringing in which is supposed to help the family and make it happier, be what will destroy it?”*

### Woman Head of State

On the question of whether or not Nigeria can ever be ruled by a woman, a male education officer said it would be very difficult for a woman to control Nigeria, because Nigeria is a chivalristic society. He compared Nigerians with Americans in political terms, and pointed out that there has never been a woman at the White House and there is no likelihood of there being any. His pessimism is reminiscent of the views held by many Imo State male teachers and male students on the issue of female political leadership as revealed in the questionnaires.

### Future of Girls' Education

Speaking on the future of girls' education in Nigeria, the officer hoped that it would be bright as long as it is not like in America. He claimed that in the United States of America education has more or less replaced family life. According to the officer everyone, (male and female alike), wants to acquire as much education as possible, sit in the office and have nothing to do with family life.

## Chiefs, Natural Leaders, Local Politicians

### The Chiefs - Formal Education of Girls and Women

Amazingly, one of the local male chiefs indicated that formal education of girls and women should be taken very seriously in Imo State, and stressed that there is a great deal of difference between a family where the woman is educated, and one with an illiterate female. He disclosed (in a very happy mood) that what has helped his rank in the chieftaincy hierarchy, is the fact that his wife is an educated woman, (his wife runs a nursery school). Because the wives of chiefs, (especially his own order of chieftaincy, based on heredity), are usually illiterates, the community is fascinated by his wife. She is very much admired and the local inhabitants are eager to bring their pre-school age children to her nursery, because no traditional chief's wife has ever been to school let alone run an educational institution. People see it as a great privilege as well as an honour to have their children taught by the wife of their own chief. Because his wife is educated, and he has some education himself, the chief is being seen as an enlightened leader of his community.

### Financial Pressure and Children's Education

The chief did indicate that in Imo State today, when financial problems threaten the education of children in the family parents do not necessarily think in terms of gender only but do take into consideration factors such as intelligence. It should be recalled that 'Lolo Odi Uko' (woman chief) during her interview said that parents would prefer to train boys if the financial pressure is such that education could not be provided for all the children.

### Women's Status in the Society

The chief revealed (somewhat uneasily) that highly educated women are given more respect within certain circles. He did not specify the circles and obviously this cannot be taken to mean that the Imo society respects women. Besides, the respect seems to be limited



to only highly educated women. The uneasiness suggests that he does not want to reveal all the facts.

### Women 'Eze'

On the question of why women chiefs cannot become 'Eze', (the highest rank in chieftaincy, paramount chief), the chief quickly pointed out in a roaring voice that in the northern part of the country, the Moslems do not have a woman 'Emir' and have never had one. He also emphasised the fact that among the Yoruba in Western Nigeria, there has never been a woman 'Oba' and that the Igbo would be the exception by having a woman 'Eze'. He stressed that it has nothing to do with gender discrimination. He looked uncompromisingly serious as he spoke. But it would be recalled that Lolo Odi Uko - the woman chief, sees it as a gender issue.

### Women and Domestic Chores

The chief preferred to call domestic chores household work. He conceded the fact that some measure of flexibility in terms of division of labour within the family system, might be necessary. But he laughed loudly at the suggestion that Imo State men should start cooking and serving meals. With sad but defiant countenance and in a subdued voice the enlightened chief criticised foreign culture, claiming that men tend to worship women. He recalled when as a young man he served a European couple - the man would go to the kitchen immediately he came back from work to prepare the meal, while his wife would be sleeping in bed. As soon as the food was ready he would call the woman to come and eat. With a mockery smile, the chief warned that African women must never be allowed to enjoy such privileges, because it would destroy the very foundation of the African culture.

It is noteworthy that during her own interview Lolo Odi Uko accused Igbo men of arrogance and claimed that they are too proud to participate in domestic chores. Lolo, (now visibly angry), explained that when she visited her daughter in Great Britain her son-in-law

was helping in shopping and domestic chores. Lolo did however stress quite strongly that when they return to Nigeria, the man will never lift a finger to help his wife. It would be recalled that the moslem man who helped his wife when they were resident in Britain continued to do so when they returned to Nigeria. When his father found out he warned him of the grave consequences and he stopped. Lolo emphasised the fact that because it is very difficult to find maids or servants at the present time owing to school education, men should start helping their wives. She pointed out that few very good men try to help their wives secretly and said doubtfully that it could mark the beginning of a change.

### Women and Politics

In a surprising revelation the enlightened chief strongly indicated that the time has come, and is even long overdue, for women to assume political leadership of the country. In a loud voice and with heavy countenance, the clever chief emphasised the fact that Nigerian women would do better than men because they are more honest, more God fearing and more Christian like in behaviour, than their male counterparts (a fact strongly emphasised by the woman cleric). Then in a subdued but very confident tone the chief said:

*“I am a very experienced man and a member of the Igbo people. The moment a woman becomes a political leader in Nigeria most of our ills will vanish... The sooner our men realise that women should now take up the mantle of government the better.”*

The chief then swore (with his right index finger pointing heavenwards), that if elections were to be held that very moment, and among the presidential candidates is a woman, he must unwaveringly give her hundred percent support. Among the Igbo, the chief's gestures are an indication of unwavering support regarding something one strongly believes in.

### The Local Politicians

#### Fund Raising Activities to Help the Gifted Poor

On the question of raising money for the school education of children in Imo State who are academically quite clever, but could not continue with their school education

because their parents are very poor, (many of these could be girls given the tendency on the part of some parents to discontinue the education of their daughters at the first sign of financial pressure), one of the local politicians, (he detests corruption), conceded the fact that needy children have been neglected. He regretted that the plight of gifted children from desperate homes has not been taken into consideration and laid the blame on the nation's elite. The much admired politician identified the following problems:

1. Corruption of the elite.
2. Selfishness of the leaders. He coolly explained that the leaders of the nation have failed to recognise the humanitarian nature of their duty, because of selfishness. He accused them of insensitivity and inordinate ambition, claiming that contracts were being awarded just to line their pockets and that money was being indiscriminately spent. It would be recalled that an education officer did say that there was enough money in the country for free education at all levels but that money was being wasted on the wrong things.
3. Poverty of Individuals. Significantly, the local politician stressed the fact that there are many educational institutions in the country, including the universities and colleges of technology, yet illiteracy is on the increase, because individual families are desperately poor. He said that some people are homeless and cannot afford to provide shelter for their families because of high costs of building materials. He asked:

*“how can a man who has no roof over his head and cannot even afford to feed his family send his children to school?”*

4. The Twisted Minds of Some Africans. The politician emphasised the fact that some Africans, including some Nigerians have twisted minds in that they are vain-glorious and would prefer a flamboyant and ostentatious lifestyle to the responsibility of school education. He claimed that some men - even if they were

given money for the education of their children would not hesitate to spend it on expensive cars and ignore their children's education, thereby denying them a decent future and preparing them for a bleak one. Significantly, this was one of the issues highlighted in the social –cultural changes (see Chapter 3).

5. **The Behaviour of Some Educated Africans.** He pointed out that some educated individuals behave so badly that some people from time to time question the validity of school education. This was highlighted in the empirical study.
6. **Creation of Jobs and Unemployment.** In a roaring voice, (and frustrated mood), the local politician stood up and strongly stressed the fact that unemployment has cast doubts in the minds of some people, regarding the validity of school education. He explained that people expect to find jobs at the end of their school education which includes university education, but when they do not find them, they become disillusioned. He did also disclose that some well educated young men in the community, (married with children), could not find jobs and so compelled by circumstances, they have to eventually rely on their original families. And because their parents in the course of bringing them up and educating them, were already over stretched, resented having to support them and their grandchildren. He claimed that such incidents have not only caused rifts and divisions in families, but have also led some people to ask whether it is at all worth it, for one to suffer to provide school education for one's children. This may be partly why some youngsters (especially boys), with the support of their parents leave the school system in order "to make money". It is important to recall that this is one of the most serious educational problems revealed by the empirical study.

7. Loss of Sense of Purpose and Direction. The politician, (now sitting down), in a calmer reflective mood said *"The African man is going totally astray. We have missed the way and have to retrace it."* He warned that unless this is done, the consequences could be dire, particularly in educational terms.

#### Who Should Control Education - The State, The Church or The Government?

Without hesitation the experienced statesman suggested that the Church should control education because under the Mission:

1. People received high quality education.
2. There were scholarships for the gifted poor.
3. There was discipline both among the teachers and pupils.
4. Moral standards and behaviour were exemplary.
5. There were jobs for people when they left school.

He criticised the current educational system whereby some educational institutions were controlled by the federal government, some by the state governments and some by private individuals and said that it does not make sense. He holds the view that since the federal government controls a vast revenue, it should bear the responsibility for most of the nation's educational costs. He said that ideally education should be free at all levels given the enormous wealth in the country. He also pointed out that apart from oil, Nigeria is blessed with very rich numerous natural resources including limestone and other minerals that can be used in the production of building materials, which in turn could dramatically reduce building costs; and thereby enable the poor to provide shelter for himself and for his family. He claimed that heavy concentration on oil revenue has meant the abandonment of other sources of income. He stressed the fact that even though the Missionaries in their time had no revenues to rely on, yet they provided high quality education.

## Women and Professions

On the question of the professions he would like to see more women, (in a high pitched voice and with stern countenance) he said, in all walks of life depending on qualifications. He pointed out that women should go to wherever they think they are talented, and that there should be no discrimination. He is of the opinion that if a woman has the ability, she should choose any profession. He made it clear that women have diversity of talents, just like men. He argued that if:

*“women were to be excluded from certain things it means people have not considered certain barometers.”*

He stressed that personally, he would not rule anything out for women including military service. He cited Israel as an example where women feature quite strongly in the army, and explained that some women are big and strong like men, and could even carry heavy weapons. Suddenly, (with clenched fists and roaring voice), he said:

*“where a woman is talented let her go there, if she meets discrimination she should report it so that it becomes a matter for public discussion, which will be dealt with very seriously. But a woman should not say because I am a woman I must do this or get that, because it means turning the table round and discriminating against men. There should be nothing like better life for women but no better life for men.”*

## Natural Leaders

### Child Marriage

On the sensitive issue of child marriage one natural leader claimed that the only place it is still happening is in the northern part of the country where parents push their young daughters to marry before they reach puberty. The leader said that it is inherent in their culture. Significantly, he stressed that the ‘Better Life Programme’, initiated by Mrs. Babangida, with strong emphasis on school education of women and girls, *“is beginning to crack the culture by making some parents aware of the validity of school education.”*

The local leader, in a calm advisory mood, (with his head bowed), stated that children all over the country, both boys and girls, must stand firm against child marriage any time. He emphasised the fact that it is not only girls that are at risk but also boys. He then recalled his own childhood many years ago, when as a very young school boy, his parents wanted him to abandon his school education and marry. He spoke movingly of his horror, his fears and disappointment, when his parents brought enormous pressure to bear on him. When he refused to give in to their demand, his parents brought four girls for him to marry.

The resilient leader spoke with fury, (quite visibly reliving the events of far off days), and explained how he used to beat up the girls when his parents were away until they ran away. Then in an uncompromising confrontation, he told his parents that he was too young to marry and that he would never give up his school education. The leader, (now smiling broadly), happily stated that years later, he chose a wife and married after he had acquired good education. He proudly indicated that he has been living happily with his wife, but stressed that his experience should serve as both a warning and a lesson to youngsters, at all times in the nation and in Imo State in particular. Finally, the resilient leader in a joyful mood pointed out that he sent all his children both boys and girls to foreign universities to study as an example to the local community. He said that if he sent only the boys abroad, people might think it is only boys that deserve to study overseas.

### Woman Head of State

Regarding the question of female political leadership, the natural leader is of the opinion that part of the problem lies with women themselves. He thinks that Nigerian women feel inferior to their male counterparts, and insists that unless they shake off the inferiority complex it could be very difficult to see a woman emerge as a political leader in the country. He strongly and unequivocally stated that women must be strong and competitive because people would like to see action, results and achievement and not whether

or not a leader is a man or a woman. He cited an author as an example and said that if someone has written a good book, people would be very eager to buy it and read, not because it was written by a man or a woman, but simply because it is a good book. He stressed that politicians can justifiably be likened to authors.

Inferiority complex of Nigerian women was the main problem identified by the UK based Nigerian businessman during the pilot study. But it could be argued that the society conditioned her female members to feel inferior. The need for a prospective woman head of state to be strong and competitive - which the local leader highlighted – was also identified by some male and some female students as a serious political issue in their questionnaires.

Visibly sad and moody, the leader said that his main worry about women going into politics is corruption. He claimed that politics corrupts and that when a woman decides to go into politics, it becomes a family matter. He emphasised the fact that in as much as they, (the natural leaders), would like to encourage women to go into politics, women themselves must make up their mind regarding what they intend to achieve. He holds the view that if a Nigerian woman wants to become a president she must have an agenda, a manifesto indicating what she intends to do and that as the mother of the nation, she must have seen so many ills and must therefore ask herself:

*“What am I going to bring into politics? What things shall I stop? What are the ills of the society that I am going to correct?”*

He insisted that if a woman is going into politics to worsen things, she should not go because she has no sense of purpose or direction. The leader claimed that if a person has no sense of direction, he would reach his destination and pass it, because he does not know where he is going.

He conceded the fact that Nigerian women are more loyal, more dedicated and more committed to duty than their male counterparts. He however gave the impression that Nigerian politics is ridden with corruption just like in several parts of the world, claiming that



some politicians would even take money from people, promising to do certain things but never deliver. In a worried voice, the leader stressed the fact that a woman going into politics must be determined to stand firm against temptations regarding corruption when they come, and be strong enough to resist them. He also suggested that a woman whose husband is already a politician, must think again before going into politics since men easily corrupt women, so that the woman does not bring the disease of corruption into the family. He pointed out that both of them could be bringing in money into the family through corrupt means. Suddenly, the natural leader in a thunder like voice roared:

*“When the man is corrupt, the woman is corrupt, the family is corrupt, then everyone is corrupt and the nation is corrupt inside out.”*

It is quite obvious that a lot is expected of Nigerian women. They are affectionately seen as the mothers of the nation, and so not surprisingly what could be overlooked with regard to men, would be viewed quite differently if done by a woman.

Another natural leader also indicated that when a woman decides to go into politics it automatically becomes a family issue. The leader stressed that apart from the corrupting effects of politics - there must be detailed, honest and serious discussions about the family so that children do not suffer neglect.

### Domestic Chores

Speaking on domestic chores the resilient natural leader uncompromisingly stated that household work is a woman's God assigned duty, and that she has to make provisions for the family. He warned that should a woman decide to leave that role, it means she has relinquished her duty. He did suggest that a woman could do all the household work and still have time to go out and attend to her private needs. In conclusion the firm leader warned, *“if a man wants a woman to do everything and not to go out at all, that man is sick.”*

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS RESEARCH**

The empirical study in Imo State highlighted serious educational, social, economic and political issues, it is therefore important at this stage to see how they compare and contrast with the findings of earlier researchers. Consequently, this chapter will not necessarily deal with the findings that relate directly or exclusively to Nigeria only. It will also consider those that focus on vital educational issues in the developing nations of the world generally, depending on the issues involved, given that they might have implications for the Nigerian situation. Of special significance are those that relate to the education of girls and women: Kelly (1987) and her team for example, have carried out extensive research on various aspects of education, notably education of girls and women in several parts of the world including America and the developing countries. King (1987), has examined the role of world religions regarding the education of girls and women.

However, any attempt to reappraise, compare or contrast the findings of previous researchers in the light of the empirical study in Imo State should take into account the following: the peer group, home, school, society, the individual etc.

#### 1. Home

##### a. Domestic Chores.

It is worthy of note that the enormity of the threat posed by domestic chores to the education of girls and women was revealed by Kelly and her team (1987), as a result of their research especially in America, Asia and Africa. Kelly stressed the fact that in some developing countries like Burkina Faso the gravity of the situation is such that girls and women do not have time to go to school regardless of how school time is scheduled, particularly in the rural areas.

Following an extensive empirical study in Imo State the writer can authoritatively argue that of all the factors that militate against female education in Nigeria, domestic chores are among the most trying. Although the Nigerian situation has not, (and may probably never), reached the alarming proportion Kelly discovered in Burkina Faso, it is important to note that those aspects of domestic chores which she identified as the most time consuming in Burkino Faso are today, (in the closing years of the twentieth century), still threatening the education of girls and women in Nigeria. They include fetching of water, gathering of firewood for cooking and arduous food preparation.

Distinction must however be made between girls in the urban centres and those that dwell in the rural areas, because the writer found that it is the school education of the latter that is being more adversely affected. Given the facilities and the advantages that are inherent in urban life the students that live in the towns and cities do not suffer as much. The empirical study revealed the fears, worries and anxieties of many village girls because they do not have time for private studies or homework.

#### b. Parental Attitude

Arguably no reappraisal of parental attitude with regard to children's education can be complete without reference to Musgrave (1965), who identified the family as the first and the most important of the four agents in the life cycle of a person. The implication is that the way parents see or regard education is bound to have profound effect on the educational performance of their children. Okonjo (1976), indicated that some parents in Nigeria have negative attitude towards the education of girls and see it as unnecessary. Three years later, Dubey, Eden and Thakor (1979), claimed that in Nigeria many parents send their children to school as a

means of climbing the social ladder. And in 1987, Kelly discovered that in Asia and Africa the higher the educational level the fewer the girls.

Today in Imo State, (which may be a true reflection of some sections of the Nigerian society), parents have positive attitude towards the education of their sons and daughters, hence they regard it as important, (see Empirical Study). It is however true to say that parents, (notably the very poor ones), see the education of their children as a means of overcoming poverty and rising above squalid existence. There is also no doubt that the higher the educational level, the fewer the girls and women. But Kelly and her team seem to suggest that parents are solely to blame. Surprisingly, in Imo State, the writer discovered that in some cases the girls themselves regard higher education as a waste of time. Some of the girls in the older age range, (especially the over 20s), do not want to study beyond the secondary school.

### c. Upbringing

In the course of their case studies, Jones and her team found that the way parents bring up their children is an important factor with regard to girls' academic performance at school. They claim that there is a widespread view that girls should be brought up in a manner that reflects nurturing, obedience and responsibility, while boys are encouraged to be self reliant and achieving from a very early stage in life. It should be recalled that the question of upbringing of children by parents, how it affects their outlook, their views of life and ultimately their schooling and subsequent achievement, was also highlighted by some of the respondents during the pilot study.

In Imo State, (possibly throughout Nigeria), nothing has changed since the traditional days in terms of upbringing of children. For instance, the way girls are brought up within the family system is governed by the ideology that they would eventually marry, have children, care for the family etc., whereas in the case of male

offspring, parents bear in mind that they are bringing up would-be bread winners., despite the fact that the so called bread-winning male role no longer applies in some circumstances in today's society. For example, during the empirical study, the writer discovered that in some cases women support their families including the financial responsibility of children's school education at all levels. The women concerned do so for various reasons including husbands' retirement, redundancy, poor health etc. It must however be stressed that the different methodology in bringing up children within the family system, and the very fact that boys are essentially brought up as bread winners and heads of family, may have profound effect on girls' education, in the sense that some of them may see their role in the family, (and arguably in the wider society), as merely secondary and consequently conclude that minimal education would do.

#### d. Marriage

Marriage is one of the factors that have posed the greatest threat to girls' and women's education in Nigeria over the years. It is worthy of note that in the course of her research in Nigeria, (especially in relation to girls' education and marriage), Csapo, (1981), noted that in cases of abject poverty or financial constraints, parents give away their daughters in marriage and use the bride price (dowry) to fund their sons' education. However the writer did find that this practice is no longer popular particularly in Imo State. The parents who resort to this measure are now very much in the minority. Besides, child marriage is out of the question since the girls involved are within a reasonable age, (from the late teens). This may be due to the fact that in Imo State parents are now deeply worried about the enormous shame child marriage can bring to a family. Undoubtedly, they are finding it increasingly hard to endure or

live with the innuendo the gossips and loss of dignity which inevitably stem from child marriage, (see Empirical Study).

Significantly during her research in Nigeria, Csapo, made the following discoveries in respect of the northern section of the country which is predominantly Moslem:-

- i. Child marriage is fairly widespread, in some cases by the age of five some girls are already married.
- ii. Parents tend to withdraw their daughters before the age of 9 from schools, (before they reach puberty).
- iii. Some girls are deliberately withdrawn from school to help women in seclusion, (purdah).

During her own research in Nigeria, which focused on women in northern Nigeria, Simmons (1976), found that very young girls of school age were left at home to run errands for the women in purdah. This might have led her to conclude that the errand girls are the only link between the secluded women and the outside world. Although the writer did not verify these claims, (primarily because northern Nigeria is outside the scope of this study), some of the respondents did say during the interview that child marriage is still going on in the northern part of the country.

It is important to note that during the investigation, the writer discovered a new trend regarding girls and marriage in Imo State which previous researchers missed out - that is, marriage obsession of the older school girls who cannot wait to get married. Their main objective of going to secondary school is to enhance their chances with regard to marriage and not necessarily to embark upon any higher educational programme, (see Empirical Study). These are mostly girls that are over the age of twenty. Interestingly, the writer discovered that men no longer marry

illiterate girls in Imo State. This would partly explain why some girls want to obtain minimum education - to make them marriageable. It could be argued that this new trend may lead to discontinuation of the infamous practice of child marriage all over Nigeria.

e. Parental Worries and Fears

Csapo (1981), found that Nigerian parents worry about their daughters becoming pregnant. They fear and dread such a situation. In Csapo's view the fear is not only borne out of academic considerations - like the possibility of pregnancy spelling the end of the girls' school education, parents also worry about the economic consequences of pregnancy. Not surprisingly some of them unequivocally indicated that once a girl is pregnant, she becomes useless and all the money already spent on her education becomes a waste. Csapo has explained that this is partly why some parents are not keen on girls' education in Nigeria.

The writer noticed during the empirical study that parents still fear and worry about their daughters becoming pregnant. Some of the parents the writer spoke to stressed the fact that when a girl becomes pregnant the following situations inevitably arise:

- i. Her school education stops.
- ii. Her parents in particular face the shame, the gossips and the public ridicule brought about by the pregnancy. And because pregnancy of an unmarried girl is regarded as an abomination, for the parents therefore it is a very humiliating experience.
- iii. Socially, the girl may suffer the consequences for the rest of her life, given that the pregnancy will jeopardise her chances of marriage since eligible bachelors are not interested in pregnant

girls or girls that have had children. Out of despair, such girls may end up marrying much older illiterate men that already have families.

- iv. Economically, parents worry a lot because the girls cannot get good jobs and well educated men cannot marry them and pay befitting bride price.
- v. Very poor parents find the situation too burdensome because suddenly they find themselves looking after a pregnant daughter, their other children and ultimately grandchild/or children.

It is quite clear that Csapo's own research did not go beyond the fears and worries of parents in economic terms, since she did not mention the academic and the social consequences of school girls' becoming pregnant. It is worth noting that Okonjo (1976), and Csapo (1981), found that some Nigerian parents fear that girls' education is a complete waste of resources because they will ultimately get married.

The writer discovered during the empirical study that in today's Imo State many parents think that school education enhances a girl's eligibility for marriage especially to men of high social status. Some parents do however worry that when a girl marries, she leaves her parents and goes to live with her husband and changes her name. To some parents it looks as if the girl has never been a member of her original family. Above all she cannot guarantee the continuity of the family name in the way that a boy does. This is without doubt a very serious problem that has always militated against the school education of girls in Nigeria. The empirical study revealed that although it may not stop girls' school education in today's society, it does place them at a disadvantage in times of financial hardship. The writer found



that this is one of the main reasons why parents prefer to continue with their sons' education and stop that of their daughters.

f. Financial Constraints

Compared with the developed nations, more families in the developing ones are overwhelmed by financial crisis, which invariably affects the education of children every year. In Nigeria Akande (1987), found that financial problems within the family affect girls' education. In the same year, Moore indicated that there is a strong relationship between education and financial capability.

Both findings are true. But financial hardship does not always affect the education of girls only in Nigeria. In Imo State for example, the investigation revealed that in many families parents could not cope with the financial burden of both sons and daughters, with regard to school education. When it comes to choice parents would prefer to have their daughters' education discontinued while the boys get on with theirs. Csapo (1981), rightly discovered this fact when she indicated that in times of financial crisis Nigerian parents are more likely to send the boys to school than the girls. It is worthy of note that Csapo did also find that in Nigeria, financial constraints affect rural girls' education more adversely than that of their urban counterparts. The Imo empirical study revealed that this situation can be largely attributed to the harsh economic predicament in which most rural parents find themselves. This is why Mrs. Babangida's programme - 'Better Life Programme' is meant to address the needs of rural women in particular.

It appears that earlier researchers did not distinguish between literate and illiterate parents, in terms of children's education. For instance, in Imo State, the writer found that educated parents make no distinction between male and female offspring with regard to formal education. On the contrary, some parents are prepared

to make enormous personal sacrifices to ensure that their daughters acquire as much education as they possibly can, (see students data analysis table 31).

## 2. School

### a. Schools and Gender Inequality

The findings of Gerner (1988), are very crucial because they led her to believe that schools encourage gender inequality, which becomes firmly established by the time girls leave school. She warned about its damaging educational implications and argued that attitudes, expectations, lack of stimulus etc. all play their part in depriving girls of access to educational measures which lead to later achievement. There is hardly any doubt that this is true of most educational systems. It emerged during the investigation in Imo State that the problem is greater in mixed schools than in the single sex or all girls' institutions.

### b. The Curriculum and the Disparity in Nigeria's Urban and Rural Schools

During his research Akande (1987), discovered that the curriculum in urban institutions in Nigeria is superior to the curriculum in the village schools. He claimed that for rural dwellers the disparity has meant poor quality education. Akande is also convinced that the situation has affected rural girls more because they have low academic aspirations.

In Imo State of Nigeria, (which arguably reflects the situation nationwide), the empirical study showed that educational standards are higher in the urban schools than in the village based ones. But the difference is not attributable to the curriculum. There was even no evidence to suggest that there is one curriculum for the urban schools and another for the rural educational institutions. Many factors however are responsible for lowering the quality of education in the rural areas, including lack of resources, too much farming and domestic chores especially on the part of rural girls.

The fact that village girls do not have the same educational advantages, (see Empirical Study), as their urban counterparts does not necessarily mean that they have low academic aspirations. Some of the girls in the rural educational institutions are ambitious, and some could perform well. However, the writer found that some rural students lack basic - but very important facilities like good light, space, reading tables etc.

c. Teachers' Attitude Towards Girls' Academic Achievement, (especially in Science).

The findings of Kelly and her team (1988), notably in America, have important educational implications for every educational system, including that of Nigeria. For example, as a result of their findings, Kelly has accused teachers of sex bias, and of being responsible for girls' under achievement in school, she claims that teachers prefer girls' dependence to boys' aggression. Kelly and her team also discovered that teachers encourage boys to choose subjects which will ensure that they fulfil their bread winning role in life. They noted that girls perform badly in science because the teachers are perpetuating stereotypes in science. Kelly has stressed that teachers are a reflection of the values and expectations of society and it is therefore not surprising that they are perpetuating stereotypes in science.

The attitudes of teachers in Imo State are reminiscent of those of their counterparts in America. For example, it emerged during the empirical study that teachers have very low expectations in terms of girls' academic achievement, particularly in science. Some of them unequivocally stated that female students are not expected to do well in science because it is a male discipline. They stressed the fact that girls do well in subjects like domestic science and the liberal arts. Consequently, girls are not encouraged to do well in science. Some of the teachers

even went as far as pointing out that “in this part of the world girls are not expected to study science”. Ironically many female students indicated that they like science. The writer also found that the number of girls that is interested in science is higher than the number that is actually studying science. This shows the scale of the girls’ predicament in the so called male discipline, and at the same time highlights the teachers’ negative attitude regarding girls and science, (see Empirical Study). Not surprisingly some of the teachers hold the view that only boys should be motivated since they would ultimately become bread winners.

d. Discrimination

Research has also shown that not only girls suffer discrimination at school. For instance, Migniuola and De Lyon (1989), found that in England and Wales, school senior posts were being dominated by men. They also discovered that at times women teachers do not receive the same pay as their male counterparts with similar teaching qualifications. Consequently, women teachers formed their own union to protect their interests.

Although previous researchers in Nigeria made no such findings, the writer discovered that in Imo State schools, senior management posts were occupied mainly by male teachers. There was no evidence to suggest that male teachers were paid more than their female counterparts with similar qualifications and teaching experience. But female teachers are discriminated against when it comes to the question of Child Allowance Free Tax (which could be the equivalent of Child Benefit in Britain). Men are paid the benefits while female teachers receive nothing, whereas ideally they ought to receive the benefits, given that among other things, they bring up the children. Besides, in today’s Imo society women are the bread winners

in some families. The discrimination has caused resentment among female teachers which in turn - could affect their performance as teachers.

e. Examination

It is worthy of note that Charlton (1984), revealed that some girls are scared of examinations and would prefer to keep away from school rather than face school examinations. Unger (1980), stressed that examinations are necessary especially for certificates and claimed that the desire for certificates is worse in the developing nations.

Earlier researchers in Nigerian education, seem to have avoided issues like examinations. There is evidence to support the view that some girls do not like examinations. In Imo State, (which could reflect the situation in other parts of the country), the writer found that more girls than boys dislike school examinations. Fear of school examinations, as well as inability to pass them, is partly responsible for the high wastage rate in schools. The empirical study for example, proved that those who fail school examinations may out of frustration drop out, especially if they have taken them twice or more. Repeaters become worried of staying in the same class year after year.

3. Social (Society)

Amechi (1979), found that social attitude has had adverse effect on women's status, and school education, in Nigeria over the years. Her findings point to the fact that social attitude towards women is reflected on their role in the society. She argues that to understand the situation more clearly one has to look at women's traditional role within the family system in terms of all the things they do including:

- a. Rearing and upbringing of children (regarded as their primary role in the society).
- b. Farming - as they have to feed the family.

- c. Collecting firewood and fetching water; (in some cases it could involve enormous distance).
- d. Petty trading - to sell excess farm produce like vegetables which is a means of getting hard needed cash.
- e. Arduous preparation of meals for all the family.

The existence of inflexible division of labour is thought to make women's predicament worse. Besides, all the work they do is not recognised.

It is worthy of note that even today, (in the closing years of the 20th century), women in Nigeria go through the same arduous daily ritual. In Imo State for example, domestic chores affect girls' education particularly those in the rural areas. In some cases the girls' ordeal begins the very moment they come back from school, leaving them no time to rest, eat, let alone do their home work, (see Empirical Study). The writer did however find a few cases where schoolboys have had to make enormous sacrifices for their respective families. This included the boy who decided against boarding education so that he could be near his father to help him, because his sight was failing. And the boy who has to undertake a lot of domestic chores to relieve his mother as he 'could not bear to see his mother suffer so much'.

#### 4. The Individual Female and Lack of Confidence

Byrne (1987), discovered what she referred to as a world wide problem in terms of women's personality as individuals. It emerged during her research that there is a strong tendency on the part of girls and women to choose courses that lead to the study of humanities. She laid the blame on gender roles and expectations within all societies. Not surprisingly, Byrne found that the most affected subjects are Biology, Physics and Chemistry. It is important to note that research conducted by Kelly and her team in single sex institutions revealed that both genders believe that science is essentially a man's discipline. Pilcher

(1989), claims that her own research confirms the fact that women's problems are mainly due to the way women see themselves.

There is evidence in the Nigerian context to support the view that women's problems lie to some extent within themselves. It must however be stressed that some of the responsibility must be borne by the society. It seems that the individual female is pushed to a situation where she does not have an identity as an individual - let alone confidence which actually comes with the individual being able to know who they are. Taking the institution of marriage for example - owing to the way the Nigerian society regards marriage, the unmarried woman has no respect. She is ridiculed and humiliated. On her part, she feels insecure, unprotected and rejected by her own people. Consequently most girls feel they must marry in order to be protected, respected and above all, recognised as someone. The writer found that more or less every girl now regards marriage as a duty which the individual female owes to her family and the society at large. In other words, a Nigerian woman has no identity of her own. She has to be seen in the light of her husband's own personal identity as Mrs. Egbo, Mrs. Ama, etc.

##### 5. The Peer Group

Musgrave (1965), indicated that a child can gain certain experiences from his peer which cannot be got elsewhere. When Kelly and her research team visited American schools, they discovered that girls' choice of subjects is influenced by their male peer groups. Consequently girls fear that if they show talent in science, they will be disliked or socially ostracised. The girls' fear that they would be disliked by the boys, if they were to show their true talent, does remind one of the findings of the Nigerian university lecturer, in a case study which focused on girls and the so called male dominated subjects like science and mathematics.

It is however important to note that although the empirical study in Imo State revealed that in most cases boys perform better than girls in science and mathematics there was no conclusive evidence to prove that:

- a. girls are under pressure, (like their American counterparts), with regard to choice of subjects.
- b. they have deliberately shown little or no talent in science and mathematics in order to ensure that they are not seen to be more talented than the boys, thus jeopardising their future relationship - especially with regard to marriage.

It must be stressed that if the girls feel like that in terms of science and mathematics it is not overtly discernible. What was quite obvious from the empirical study is that peer pressure affects boys more than girls and more often than not, the effect is negative. For instance boys, are more easily influenced by their peers, in terms of truancy or abandonment of school education in pursuit of money, than girls.

## 6. Women's Organisations and Unity

It is worth noting that a research carried out in the developing countries by Davies with regard to gender dilemma and the management of education revealed that lack of unity is hindering the efforts of women's organisations, in the struggle to achieve equal opportunity and access to education. She cited the 1975 World Conference held in Mexico during which women from the developed parts of the world clashed with their counterparts from the developing countries. They disagreed over all issues including economic ones.

In 1984 Charlton's research proved that where women are united a lot could be achieved as demonstrated by the Nicaraguan and the Libyan Literacy Revolutions as well as Cuba's Literacy Experience, (McCall 1986), which turned out to be a huge success, (see Chapter 1). The Belhachmi research of 1987 showed that the Moroccan women's own



Literacy Movement failed because of disunity among the women - culminating in urban women discriminating against their counterparts in the rural areas, (see Chapter 1).

The empirical study in Imo State revealed that lack of unity is undermining women's struggle against social, educational and political discrimination, as well as their fight for economic survival. The problem was highlighted by the members of the NCWS, and even by young female students, (see Empirical Study). It must be noted that forces of disunity tend to be much more destructive when they come from within than when they are externally based.

### 7. Geographical Factors and Girls' Education

Studies including those undertaken by Brock and Cammish (1997), which involved many countries including those in the developing parts of the world have shown that in some cases, distance, location, route and transport with regard to educational institutions can determine whether or not a girl should go to school - notably in the developing nations.

The empirical study has however proved that in Imo State, the geographical barriers which once constituted a threat to education, (especially girls' education), no longer exist. The main reason is that since the state took over the control of education from the Missionaries, the number of educational institutions in Nigeria has increased tremendously. Many schools are within walking distance from more or less every home in the land. As a result:-

- a. Youngsters whose parents are too poor to send to boarding schools can now attend school as day students.
- b. Parents who would have been worried with regard to their daughters' moral welfare in the boarding house, are relaxed and happy to see them go to school from home.
- c. Transport fare is hardly an issue these days given the proximity of educational institutions in relation to students' homes.

## 8. Economy

### a. Employment and Female Education

It must be stressed that there is a close link between education and jobs, especially female education in the developing countries. This is due mainly to the role women play within the family system and in the society at large. For instance, women have to feed their families. Research carried out by Szechy (1987), and Pilcher (1989), has revealed that women in every culture are discriminated against in the job market in the sense that:-

- i. They do most of the unskilled labour.
- ii. They constitute most of the work force with regard to part time jobs.
- iii. Employers prefer male workers to their female counterparts.
- iv. Women are more likely to be made redundant than men.
- v. In some cases, women receive less pay than men in the same job.

Significantly the above findings have led researchers like Kelly to conclude that women's educational outcome is not the same as men's.

Dubey, Eden and Thakor (1987), found that in most developing countries, including Nigeria education is inextricably linked with job opportunity. The above findings are true of the Nigerian situation, except the fact that the writer discovered no evidence that could prove that women workers, (say teachers), are paid less than their male counterparts, with the same qualification and teaching experience, in terms of years of service. It is important to distinguish between teachers' monthly salaries and the Child Allowance Free Tax which women teachers are denied.

### b. Nigerian Girls and Job Aspirations

In his research, Akande (1987), found that:-

- i. Nigerian girls in the rural areas have low job aspirations, (nursing

and teaching), and see nurses and teachers as role models. He attributed this to the fact that nursing and teaching are the ultimate in terms of rural employment.

- ii. Rural girls do not have good academic qualifications like their urban counterparts for jobs in the medical and legal professions or as accountants.

The empirical study in Imo State could only give the above findings partial confirmation. Taking the first finding for example. Not all the rural girls have low job aspiration. Some of the village students, indicated that they would like to be doctors and lawyers when they leave school, although they are in the minority. Many girls seem to be interested in teaching, nursing and typing. In the case of teaching, the girls' love for the profession can, in some cases be attributed to the fact that girls do admire female teachers especially in the villages. It is worth noting that - with several hospitals now located in the heart of villages, and women doctors featuring among the medical teams in some hospitals, nursing and teaching can no longer be regarded as the ultimate in terms of rural employment, especially for female employees.

On the issue of rural girls' low academic qualifications, what the empirical study has highlighted is the fact that not all village girls are under achievers, when it comes to the question of school performance and academic qualifications. For instance, some of the girls in the rural areas are quite ambitious and academically brilliant. But one of the major problems which rural girls face is access to higher education - which can guarantee good academic qualifications and ultimately well paid job. Besides, rural girls do an enormous amount of domestic chores as opposed to their male counterparts or their fellow girls in the urban centres. Inevitably the village girls' school performance is affected by too many domestic chores. Financial

constraints do also militate against the school education of girls in the rural areas, more adversely than for their brothers. For instance, if a village girl's parents are very poor, or if they choose to discontinue her own education in favour of her brother's, there is absolutely nothing she can do about the situation.

### c. Nigerian Women and Financial Independence

Earlier researchers seem to have carefully avoided the highly sensitive issue of women's need to manage their own economic affairs. Judging from the Imo State empirical study it is quite obvious that women see it as crucial in their struggle to enhance their social status, as well as in their fight for economic survival. With the exception of very few women who indicated that for the purpose of family unity, peace and harmony, they would like to maintain joint accounts with their husbands, the overwhelming majority of women have no doubt that managing their own money would give them confidence, greater independence, make them less vulnerable and less dependent on their husband, boost their self image, restore their personal identity and above all help them prepare for any eventuality like divorce, when the relationship becomes untenable.

The Imo women's feelings with regard to financial independence is reminiscent of those of their counterparts in East Africa (Obbo 1980), who have stressed that managing their own financial affairs will among other things enable them to take quick decisions when the occasion demands it. Just as in East Africa Obbo discovered that the men are bitterly opposed to women being financially independent, because they fear it will challenge the women's traditional roles as wives, child rearers, house keepers etc., some Nigerian men are vehemently against even the very idea of women in Nigeria being in charge of their own financial affairs, because they fear it will undermine their authority within the family system and make

their wives proud, disrespectful, disobedient etc., (see Empirical Study). Judging from Lolo Odi Uko's views on the issue, the need for Nigerian women to be in control of their own economic affairs cannot be over emphasised.

d. Nigerian Girls' Education and Economic Motivation

Amechi's research (1979), showed that girls' school education in Nigeria has a lot to do with economic considerations. The empirical study in Imo State confirmed this to a certain extent. For instance, most well educated parents send their daughters to school because they believe in school education. But the same cannot be said of their illiterate counterparts or parents who are very poor. Some parents even see girls' education as a kind of old age security. One woman, for example, unequivocally stated that she is happy with her daughters' school education because they are the ones that will look after her and support her financially in her old age.

There is an increasing awareness in the Nigerian society that boys do not care about the welfare of their old parents when they grow up and marry. This apparent act of negligence on the part of the boys is said to be due to the enormous demand made on them by their wives and in-laws. Girls on the other hand never abandon their parents both before and after marriage. They always support them financially and otherwise. It must be stressed that this is the background against which most parents now send their daughters to school in Imo State, (arguably the same may apply to the rest of the country).

e. Nigerian Girls and Choice of Career

A close link between financial gains and choice of career has been identified with regard to Nigerian girls. For example, Akande (1987), found that because women and young girls in Nigeria are paid while training as nurses, they are attracted

more to the nursing profession. Akande thinks that this explains why many girls, (notably rural girls), choose nursing as a career.

Although it has always been the practice in Nigeria to give financial assistance to trainee nurses, there is nothing in the investigation carried out in Imo State to support Akande's findings - in particular the claim that money given to nurses while still in training is the reason why many applicants seek for admission to the nursing schools every year.

## 10. Politics

### a. African Policy Makers and Female Education

As a result of very extensive research Kelly and her team discovered that:-

- i. Policy makers in Africa discriminate against girls and women, especially in terms of access and participation in education.
- ii. Women's enrolment lagged behind that of men.
- iii. Lack of educational policy aimed at educating women has meant that - women who were quite successful in the traditional society as farmers and petty traders have become less productive as the modernisation process progresses.

It must however be unequivocally stated that in the case of Nigeria the first finding does not apply. The Imo empirical study did not discover even the remotest evidence of discrimination on the part of policy makers and providers of education against girls and women. On the contrary, successive Nigerian governments have always encouraged female education. The present administration has even gone as far as establishing women's departments in all the Ministries of Education throughout the States and also in the federal capital in order to monitor, and promote women's education, (see Empirical Study). Besides, Mrs. Babangida's 'Better Life

Programme' has done a lot in raising awareness regarding the need for female education, particularly those in the rural areas.

Kelly's findings regarding low female enrolment in the higher educational institutions are confirmed by the empirical study in Imo State. It seems that the common trend in most developing countries is that - the higher the educational level, the fewer the girls and women. The empirical study showed that in the primary schools, girls even outnumber boys. But as they go to secondary schools the number begins to dwindle, the dwindling becomes more conspicuous at the university level. The tables below support this fact:

Nigerian Primary School Enrolment

Enrolment by Gender

Year	No. of Schools	Male	Female
1984-85	35,101	5,768,792	7,256,296

Federal Ministry of Education Statistics Section, p. 12.

Nigerian Secondary School Enrolment

Year	Male	Female
1984-85	1,759,241	1,228,933
1985-86	1,758,866	1,329,845
1987-88	1,669,213	1,219,475

Federal Ministry of Education Statistics Section, p. 12.

Nigerian Universities

Year	Male	Female
1984-85	97,546	28,739
1985-86	103,243	32,540
1986-87	114,478	37,489
1987-88	119,236	41,531

National Universities Commission, p. 15.

But whether the blame should be laid solely on policy makers is another matter. It could, for example, be argued that if parents have money and can educate all their offspring, boys and girls alike, to any educational level nobody can stop them. It could also be argued on the other hand that the education of citizens, (at least up to a certain level), is the responsibility of the State.

There is evidence to support Kelly's agrarian findings in the developing nations. In Nigeria for instance, one of the criticisms often levelled against western education is its over concentration on the classics. The early British administrators on their part taught Nigerian men the modern methods of farming, encouraged them and in some cases gave them seeds for planting, but ignored women - showing no consideration for their traditional role of feeding their families. The situation made women's daily sustenance of their respective families indescribably difficult. The empirical study uncovered no evidence to suggest that in the present day society women farmers are getting any assistance. The abject poverty in which many rural families live speaks for itself. Many women can no longer feed their families.

#### b. Education in Nigeria and Political Change

Akande's research (1987), led him to conclude that the people at the top in the Nigerian society always resist change, by ensuring that others do not get to the top. But it seems that Akande is mainly concerned about politics, and has not made any discernible link between education and politics. Obviously, the natural tendency for those who find themselves at the top is to remain there for as long as it takes. Understandably they would resist any move that might reverse the situation.

However, it is important to note that it emerged in the course of the empirical study that many people, (mostly women), now believe that massive education of girls and women in Nigeria, especially at higher educational level, can guarantee political



change in the country. It is believed that the change will ultimately make it possible for Nigerian women to take over political leadership from men. The advocates of this scheme strongly believe that a woman head of state can among other things:

- i. boost the image of women within the society.
- ii. encourage self determination in women in the sense that - they will begin to see themselves in a new light, as they realise what a woman can achieve in educational and political terms.
- iii. reinforce the need for school education of girls and women, thereby acting as an incentive.

Surprisingly, while in Lao, (Kenya), Perdita (1979), found that some of the people felt exactly the same - believing that education can bring about political changes which would enable the women to assume the reins of government. Even an elderly woman told her that it is very necessary that girls go to school, so that one day from among them a good leader would emerge to help their country.

## 11. Religion

As a result of her research, King (1987), claimed that every religion including Christianity has undermined girls' and women's education all over the world. The empirical study in Imo State does not confirm this finding. But what is not in doubt is that in the early days of the Church, (Western Church), the then ministers of the church were not supportive of female education. However, in Imo State today the Church is against any form of gender discrimination - be it in education, politics or social matters. It is also obvious that the Church in Imo State has not been able to assist educational institutions financially, particularly primary and secondary schools, because it lacks the funds.

## 12. The Future of Female Education in Nigeria

Dore (1980), forecast that the future of education in the developing countries is in dilemma due to very serious economic constraints. Dore's research and forecast based mainly on the survey and the assessment of the economy of the developing nations of the world, by the World Bank - can hardly be refuted by any developing country. One important fact that should be borne in mind is that whenever the economy of any developing nation is in serious trouble, it is the education of girls and women that is more adversely affected. This is because if financially stretched, parents are likely to stop the education of their daughters while they allow their sons to continue.

However, the empirical study revealed that at the national level, Nigeria cannot be counted among the poorest nations in the world, due mainly to the oil revenue. In fact, some people feel strongly that Nigeria is rich enough to declare universal education at all levels, (see Empirical Study). At the individual level many people are poor, some very poor. In Imo State for example, the investigation showed that some parents are too poor to provide primary education for their children (see Empirical Study). It is therefore obvious that economic factors are threatening the future education of many children.

Significantly, the Imo investigation highlighted other factors that pose a threat to the future of education - arguably not only in Imo State but also in the rest of the country. These include:

- a. The poor conditions of service in which teachers claim they work. They feel very bitter and resentful, (see Empirical Study), and it is hard to see how they can work satisfactorily under such conditions, year after year.
- b. Some teachers try to do too many jobs at the same time. As a result of the said conditions of service, some teachers, (mostly women), combine teaching with other jobs to supplement, the family income, (see Empirical Study). But by so

doing, their primary duty as teachers, is neglected thereby jeopardising the academic performance as well as achievement of the boys and girls in their care. It is not just the future of education at the primary and secondary sectors that is at risk, the empirical study revealed that there is genuine concern about education at all levels including the University, following the prolonged strike by the University dons and the fact that some have actually left the teaching profession in search of more lucrative jobs.

- c. Lack of resources, (both human and material), is also threatening the quality of education in Imo State, (and probably in the rest of the country). For instance, many schools lack science equipment, and well qualified teachers. The most affected schools are those located in the rural areas. In some cases students are not taught science because the schools do not have laboratories.
- d. Some people think that political instability is undermining the future of education in the Nigerian society. They stressed the fact that every new administration, (including military governments), brings with it a new educational systems, which in turn means a new set of values, new approach, new expectations, hopes and aspirations - all of which will be swept away when that particular regime ceases to exist.

### 13. Csapo's Special Finding: -About Nigerian Parents and Girls' Education

Csapo's research (1981), revealed that many Nigerian parents are opposed to formal education of girls. In Imo State, the empirical study discovered no evidence that can support the above claim. For example, all the students male and female alike, indicated that their parents regard school education as important, (see Empirical Study). Besides, none of the parents the writer spoke to considered girls' education unimportant or expressed any

opposition to it. Some did however admit that in times of financial hardship they might withdraw the girls from school and allow the boys to continue.

### The Imo Situation: The Realities

It is worth noting that the reality of the Imo situation is as follows:

- a. In an ideal economic situation, all parents would like to educate all their offspring - gender notwithstanding.
- b. Those parents who in the past might have resented girls' school education now send their daughters to school on purely economic grounds. That is, they see their girls' education essentially as an old age security. In other words, they believe that when they grow old their daughters will look after them and support them financially. This means that their daughters' education is economically motivated as already indicated.
- c. When financial constraints become unbearable and it comes to choice, parents would prefer to continue with their sons' school education and discontinue that of their daughters. This is particularly true of higher education. It is worthy of note that some people feel that parents should not educate girls beyond the secondary school, and that there after, it should be the responsibility of the would-be husband. This partly explains why the higher the educational level, the fewer the females.
- d. Most well educated parents do not make any distinction in gender terms, but try very hard to give their sons and daughters equal educational opportunity at all levels.
- e. Parents from illiterate backgrounds are less supportive of girls' education than their counterparts from enlightened homes. Parents in the rural areas tend to

overburden their daughters with domestic work, which distracts them from their school work, often adversely.

#### 14. Unique Cases

Unquestionably, the empirical study highlighted several unique cases which previous researchers failed to uncover, including the hidden side of poverty and financial constraints. For instance, whenever reference is made to poverty in the developing world especially in connection with families and school education of children, it is associated straight away with inability on the part of parents to pay school fees for their children. No one, for example, thinks in terms of educational facilities - not necessarily school facilities, but educational facilities in the home. This is quite vividly illustrated by the case of the boy who loves school education so much and is always eager to do his school assignments, but unfortunately he cannot. because he has no table. Obviously without a table writing will be extremely difficult, but his parents are too poor to afford a table. Consequently, his progress at school has been adversely affected. Rural students are worse affected by the hidden aspect of poverty. Some lack reading lights and some do not have space to study in their homes, due to over crowding. Some very large families may have only one or two rooms, (see Empirical Study). In despair some of the students appealed to the writer for help. The writer was deeply moved.

The investigation also revealed the unique and incredible extent to which some girls now appreciate school education, especially girls' education, (perhaps conscious of the enormous damage done to it over the years). Some girls for instance, now regard school education as very important and indispensable in life. The case of a particular girl is worth mentioning. She has a message for all parents who are financially incapable of educating their children - which is, to do everything humanly possible even if it means borrowing money, because education enriches the mind and develops a whole person. She is prepared to

go on an educational crusade and preach the indispensability of formal education, especially to those who have some doubts regarding the validity of school education, notably girls'. She stressed the fact that she would personally reassure parents that they would never regret going through untold suffering in the course of their daughters' school education. Another important revelation was the fact that in some cases boys could come under enormous pressure to marry like those that are the only child or the only male issue in the family. In some cases parents may want them to abandon their school education and marry as in the case of the natural leader whose parents brought him four girls to marry.

It is quite obvious that the empirical study in Imo State has revealed the wonderful way some girls regard formal education and the need for its acquisition. Further research is therefore necessary especially in the other states of Nigeria, notably the Northern States. This will among other things provide invaluable insight into girls' school education in the North especially at the secondary phase.

### **FURTHER RESEARCH**

In the light of the findings that emerged as a result of the extensive empirical study in Imo State of Nigeria, the need for further research cannot be over emphasised. The study should also focus on secondary education because it is a very strategic sector in every educational system. This is more apparent when one considers the fact that secondary education is a link between the initial or primary education and higher education. For example, it is inconceivable that one can go to the university straight from the primary school without attending secondary school, which is where the foundation for further and more advanced studies is laid, (and by implication - career prospects and aspirations). This undoubtedly explains why secondary school under achievers do not make much progress in academic terms, especially when it comes to the question of high level education.

The first chapter of this study highlighted the global situation, regarding the school education of girls and women which is absolutely vital, because among other things, it put the Nigerian situation in better perspective, by enabling the writer to know what is happening in other parts of the world, and comparing it with the educational situation in Nigeria, in general and more specifically in Imo State. The first chapter of a subsequent research should therefore be about the general state of education in Nigeria, with more emphasis on girls' secondary education. The latter chapters should focus on the Northern States with special reference to one State which should be representative of the States in northern Nigeria - just as Imo State is representative of the Southern States, (see Field Work Design).

### **Why the Next Educational Research Should Focus on Northern Nigeria**

1. Since the focal point of this study is Imo State - a southern State, ideally, the next research should be in a northern State. This will help to highlight the geographical, historical, social, economic, political, religious and educational situations in the north, and see how they compare and contrast with those in the south; and their implication for school education generally and that of girls and women in particular, in the northern States.
2. Educationally, a northern based research will be more beneficial to the nation as a whole, but more particularly to the North. For instance, if a subsequent research in education focuses on another State in the South - the educational impact or outcome may be quite negligible. For instance one of the States in the South - Anambra, was initially part of Imo State, (both Imo and Anambra used to be 'East Central State', before it was split into two - Anambra and Imo, see the Field Work Design). (It is worthy of note that in the course of this study, each of the two States has again been split). Even if one considers another major ethnic group in the South, namely, 'the Yoruba', in the South-west, an educational research there could produce results strikingly similar to those from Imo State, given

among other things - similar religious influences and attitude towards western education. (see Chapter 2).

3. But research in education based in the North could, apart from highlighting the state of education generally, reveal the true situation of girls' and women's school education, especially at the secondary phase.
4. Such a revelation will facilitate the assessment of school education in the North and its comparison with the situation in the South. This is very important since both sections came under different but very strong religious influences. For example, the North are mostly moslems, while the South are predominantly Christians.
5. The educational and social implications of research in education carried out in northern Nigeria cannot be over emphasised, because it will reveal the current situation in several crucial educational issues like 'Child Marriage', social and parental attitudes towards formal education generally, and education of girls and women of northern Nigeria in particular. In the case of child marriage, the findings will put to the test the claims by previous researchers like Csapo by establishing:-
  - a. Whether child marriage is still going on in northern Nigeria?
  - b. If so to what extent? For example, is the practice widespread, or has it stopped in some parts?
  - c. The age of girls, for instance, are some of them as young as five, as Csapo claimed?
6. The research will also reveal the attitude of northern people in general and of girls and women in particular, in terms of higher education, as well as job aspirations and expectations.



7. The study can also assess the impact of the 'Better Life Programme', especially in terms of formal and informal education, on rural girls and women in northern Nigeria, especially the nomadic Fulani.
8. The research, above all, will reveal the extent to which western education has been accepted in northern Nigeria, and at the same time help in the reappraisal of the girls' educational progress in relation to the boys'.

The findings and recommendations could prove invaluable. This claim is supported by the following recommendations which have been made in connection with this study – as a result of the crucial findings that emerged in the course of the empirical study in Imo State.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY

In the light of the crucial issues that have emerged from this study, (notably from the field work), the following recommendations have been made, for the attention of all those concerned.

#### 1. Providers of Education

##### a. Teachers' Condition of Service.

Given the deep resentment, as well as the bitter feeling among Imo State teachers which strongly and unequivocally reflected in their response to the questionnaires regarding their condition of service, it would be advisable if negotiations were to start without delay between teachers' representatives and the providers of education. This should be given due consideration if educational crisis of unimaginable proportion were to be averted. There is little doubt that the Imo State situation would have wider implications with regard to the whole nation. The need for quick action cannot be over emphasised since well qualified and dedicated teachers are now abandoning the teaching profession.

One of the most worrying facts highlighted during the empirical study is that in every educational crisis, girls and women suffer more. It is however, important to note that the plight of teachers and their grievances go back many years. For example, in the "Report on the Review of The Educational System in Eastern Nigeria (1962)", reference was made to teachers and the teaching profession. The Committee for the Review did actually concede that the questions raised by their enquiry were among the most difficult they had had to examine. Significantly the Committee stressed:

*"Witness after witness has told us that the teaching field must be made more attractive, that conditions of service must be better, and that the education and training of the teacher must be improved and extended over a longer period of time."* p. 66.

It is very important that the issue is resolved as quickly as possible. It must be borne in mind that most of the teachers embraced the teaching profession genuinely with high hopes and expectations, only to find that it is the only profession “with nothing attached to it”.

b. Universal Education.

Since education in Imo State is inextricably linked with the financial status of parents, free education at least up to the secondary level is indispensable. This is more so when one considers the fact that many parents are poor and when faced with financial crisis would prefer to educate their sons only. Parents are eager to give their male offspring good education including university education - even if it means getting their daughters to marry early and using their dowry to finance their brothers' school education. To be of real significance the universal education should not be confined to the primary sector. This is because for many youngsters, primary school will be the end of their educational aspirations, especially girls, as their parents may not be financially capable of paying their secondary school fees, and with only primary education the future particularly in terms of job is unquestionably bleak. Given therefore the significance of universal education, federal and state governments should meet and discuss the best way of financing the programme.

c. Scholarship Awards.

The scholarships that are awarded annually to prospective Nigerian university students should be reappraised so that girls and women could benefit more. This is worth considering bearing in mind the usual educational trend in the developing countries of the world which is the higher the educational level, the fewer the female members of the society. If therefore more scholarships are awarded to qualified female applicants the current practice of lowering university admission standards for women can then be abolished. The fact that women see it as a humiliating experience

both educationally and socially should not be ignored. They feel that the practice confirms the erroneous assumption that the female gender is mentally inferior to the opposite gender. This is an issue which those responsible for the provision of education in Imo State cannot afford to overlook.

d. The Wastage Question and School Examination.

As school examination is one of the main causes of wastage in Imo State schools, notably on the part of girls, it is time that other options were explored including:

- i. Continuous Assessment, a system whereby teachers assess and monitor their students' progress regularly, so that pass or failure does not have to depend solely on written examination at the end of the academic year.
- ii. The British System of Course Work and Written Examination, the former accounts for a certain percentage with regard to the final examination. This is worth considering since the course work is done in a relaxed tension-free atmosphere.
- iii. Automatic Promotion, is practised in most developed countries as well as in some developing ones including Asian countries. Students move on to the next class every academic year and so no one repeats a class. This system can reduce wastage rate drastically in Imo State and should therefore be given due consideration. This urgently deserves the attention of the providers of education because the students who cannot pass their examinations and repeat the same class year after year, get frustrated and leave the school system after several attempts. Besides, most parents cannot financially cope with paying school fees for their children who keep repeating the same class. The possibility that most of the repeaters are girls should be taken into account, after all domestic chores and farming leave

them little or no time for homework, private studies and examination revision.

iv. Wastage through pregnancy

Education of schoolgirls should not come to an abrupt end if they become pregnant. There will be no shortage of relatives to look after the babies, so that girls can go back to full time education. Under the extended family system grandparents, especially grandmothers should help. Therefore the advice of the woman interviewed during the pilot study should be heeded. She looked after her own grandchild and so her daughter was able to go back to her studies. The pilot study has been very useful, in this study. Researchers should not use pilot studies, only to test instruments. They should be part of the study.

e. Curriculum Reappraisal.

The curriculum should be reviewed from time to time to ensure that school education reflects the needs of the individual as well as the wider society. It is also of crucial importance that students, notably girls, are encouraged to study science. This point cannot be over emphasised given the negative attitude of teachers towards girls with regard to science, a fact proved beyond doubt during the empirical study. The providers of education should always strive to ensure that the consumers are given balanced education. For instance, the current practice whereby girls are taught domestic science including needlework and cookery, while their male counterparts learn carpentry, crafts etc. should be reorganised so that all students irrespective of gender can be taught exactly the same thing, because we live in a fast changing world. The new method is also a way of showing that domestic chores are not necessarily confined to the female members of the society.

f. More Single Sex Schools.

The building of more non coeducational institutions is absolutely necessary since research after research including the Imo empirical study has shown that academically, girls study better and make more remarkable progress in single sex schools, especially in science and mathematics. Boys too, perform brilliantly in non mixed schools. As girls' and women's education has not been given the same attention as that of their male counterparts anything that can enhance or promote female education in Imo State should be given top priority.

Apart from the academic implications of single sex schools the enormity of the moral problems inherent in coeducational institutions which the empirical study uncovered must not be ignored. Without doubt, the provision of separate schools for boys and girls is one of the most effective ways of solving the problems particularly during the secondary phase of education. Arguably, this is the most difficult because in the primary sector most children are very young and by the time they go to the university they may be a bit mature. But between the two is the secondary phase - a period of adolescence, often marked by rebellion and experimentation. Those in charge of education should think very carefully about this trying phase.

g. School Equipment and Rural Institutions.

One of the most significant discoveries made in the course of the empirical study was the huge disparity between rural and urban schools in terms of learning facilities and equipment. The village schools were so ill-equipped that in some cases science subjects were not taught due to lack of school laboratory. The plight of rural institutions was unequivocally highlighted by an education officer during the interview. This partly accounts for lack of academic progress on the part of rural students. It is therefore very important that those responsible for the provision of education in Imo State should look into this problem with the urgency it deserves.

Failure to address this issue could mean that rural school boys and girls will always be educationally disadvantaged. Unlike their urban counterparts, their hopes and aspirations may remain elusive for no fault of theirs.

#### h. Science Teachers.

Since the empirical study revealed an acute shortage of science teachers in Imo State, there should be special financial help, (perhaps by way of special scholarship) for those who intend to teach science in schools after their university education. More consideration should be given to women as there are only very few female science teachers. The providers of education should consider various practical means of solving this problem including:

- i. offering of incentives to attract science teachers,
- ii. improving teachers' conditions of service so that the few science teachers still in schools, do not abandon the profession for more lucrative jobs.

#### j. The Plight of Female Teachers.

Female teachers in Imo State should not be discriminated against in any way, either by their male counterparts or by the providers of education. There should also be no sexual harassment. The providers of education should reconsider the current practice whereby female teachers are denied Child Allowance Tax Free Benefits. The British system should be adopted. This implies paying mothers Child Benefit unless in a case where a man is solely responsible for the upbringing of the children.

## 2. Chiefs and Natural Leaders

This study will break from the age-long practice whereby researchers in education, at the end of their study only make recommendations for the policy makers or providers of education. This issue is worth giving due consideration because all the problems in a given educational system may not be the fault of the people responsible for the provision of education. In this study for example, it is quite obvious that some of the factors that have

militated against female education over the years are outside the jurisdiction of those who control the educational system. Consequently if recommendations were made for their attention regarding those specific factors, inevitably they would be incapable of implementing them. For instance, the current social perception of the female members of the society in Imo State should change. In fact, all other issues depend on it. Unless there is a remarkable change of attitude in the way the society at large regards girls and women, their lot may never improve. Obviously, the right people to spearhead this social revolution are chiefs and natural leaders. People look up to them because their position in the society is unique. If they want, they can effect a change overnight. This is more so when one considers the fact that they make the laws of the land that affect everyone.

a. Domestic Chores and Female Education.

Chiefs and natural leaders should now wake up to the awful realities of household work in terms of what it has done to female education in Imo State, and try and do something about it. It is worth noting that some of the most worrying discoveries made during the empirical study in Imo State relate to domestic chores with regard to female education. For example, many girls are struggling with their school work as a result of heavy domestic chores especially those in the rural areas. And because it is happening in a society where division of labour is inflexible in structure, no one seems to notice. But the gravity of the situation was uncovered as a result of the empirical study. Unless chiefs and natural leaders introduce at least some measure of flexibility, female education in Imo State can only deteriorate with the passage of time, (see the empirical study).

b. The banning of child marriage

Since child marriage has adversely affected girls' and women's education over the years, it should be banned. At the moment parents are only concerned about gossips and innuendoes surrounding child marriage. On the other hand those parents



who are not bothered about gossips and innuendoes will still force their little girls to marry at an early age.

### 3 Local Politicians

#### a. Women and Politics in Imo State.

The empirical study highlighted disturbing facts about Imo State, in terms of women's participation in politics. Just as it is within the jurisdiction of chiefs and natural leaders to bring about a change of attitude regarding the way the society perceives women and their role including domestic chores, local politicians can do a lot to encourage female participation in politics. Living locally among their own people is an advantage because local politicians can meet women both formally and informally, in meetings, rallies and home visits. They should encourage women to participate in politics, and also talk to their husbands - notably husbands of aspirant women politicians; so that they can support their wives, and develop the right attitude towards female politicians. This approach will make husbands feel good and happy, instead of feeling bitter or threatened when their wives ultimately become prominent politicians. This issue was strongly stressed during the empirical study by the NCWS. Chiefs and natural leaders should help local politicians by supporting women political candidates, a point vividly and unequivocally emphasised by one of the chiefs during the empirical study.

#### b. Urban Migration and Rural Life.

As people's representatives, the local politicians should ensure that at least basic amenities are available in the villages. For instance, pipe borne water and electricity can transform the harsh realities of rural life. Locating some factories, industries, youth centres, public libraries etc. in the rural areas, can generate jobs. When people, especially youngsters, realise that some of the exclusive attractions that

characterise urban life are also available within their own immediate environment the rush to the towns and cities may become unnecessary.

As much as possible, the example of the people of Ezeoke village should be emulated. They have managed to provide themselves certain amenities, through levies and voluntary contributions. It is praiseworthy that Umuduru village is currently raising money to install electricity.

#### 4. The Clergy (for the Church)

##### a. Home Visit and Christian Organisations.

Since they are highly regarded and respected in the society, the clergy should endeavour to visit homes and talk to parents about the need to give their sons and daughters equal educational opportunity. Some of the Christian organisations introduced by the expatriate missionaries before the Civil War which effectively reduced juvenile crime should be reintroduced. This is worthy of consideration because they aim to inculcate in the young, good habits. Those for adults (including parents) should not be ignored since some of the discussions relate to upbringing of children. As home is the mainstay of society if parents try hard and bring up their children well, the wider society will be a better place than it is today.

##### b. School Education of the Destitute.

The Church in Imo State may not be financially capable of supporting the education of children of destitute parents, but it can organise fund raising activities. This was strongly suggested by a Church minister during the empirical study. The Church can also appeal for overseas aid. It should be recalled that during the pilot study one of the clergy men explained in great detail, the elaborate programme undertaken by his church to aid school education in northern Nigeria, and stressed the fact that the Church in the west has a moral obligation to support in financial terms, education in the developing nations since many parents are desperately poor. Usually

with such parents their daughters' education is the first to be scrapped, so overseas aid in such circumstances will be invaluable.

## 5. National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS)

### a. The Voice of the Female Members of the Society.

As the only voice of the female members of the society, the organisation should continue with its various activities. However, the campaign against heavy domestic chores, child marriage, (notably in the communities where it is still practised), should be stepped up. Due consideration should be given to the Cuban Literary Experience, (McCall 1987), planned and executed by Cuban Women's Organisations which wiped out illiteracy in Cuba, particularly female illiteracy.

### b. The NCWS and the Extremists.

The empirical study revealed the existence of fanatical elements within the NCWS. They hold extreme views about feminism and women's rights. Although they are in the minority, they are the ones that are undermining the good work of the organisation, notably by attracting negative criticism and publicity, including the responsibility for the disintegration of the traditional family system. The organisation ought to fight extremism and promote unity among its members, if it must achieve its objectives. Although the radical elements are currently in the minority the possibility of their numerical strength increasing with the passage of time must never be ignored. It is also worth bearing in mind that people who hold fanatical views may stop at nothing in pursuit of their objectives.

### c. The NCWS and Girls' Science Education.

Given the negative attitude of Imo State teachers regarding girls and science subjects, the NCWS should, like their British counterpart the 'Minerva Educational Trust', ensure that girls in the secondary schools are given the same opportunity as boys to study science. The girls' progress should be monitored with the help of

teachers. This will make it possible, (just as the members of the Minerva discovered), for girls who are good in physics, chemistry and biology to study confidently, knowing fully well that they have the support of their teachers and the wider society. The NCWS should also explore the possibility of girls being taught maths and science separately in the case of mixed schools to avoid intimidation from their male counterparts. This was suggested by a leading member of the Minerva, during the pilot study although it is yet to be put into practice in Britain.

## 6. Teachers

Given the significance of their role in the society, as teachers and custodians of tomorrow's leaders of the States and the nation, teachers should exercise more patience and not abandon their teaching profession for better paid jobs. However, they ought to be commended for their patience so far stretching over many years. If negotiation with their employers is deadlocked they can seek mediation.

### a. Teachers and Girls' Science Education.

The attitude of Imo State teachers towards girls and science, should change because of the worrying negative views they hold about girls and science subjects. These views were uncovered in the course of the empirical study and if teachers were to hold on to them, girls' scientific knowledge in Imo State will at best, be mediocre and at worst non existent. Consequently there will be an imbalance in their overall education. In the long term the society as a whole is bound to suffer from the aftermath of such an incalculable waste of human resources, given that some of the girls may be more scientifically gifted than the boys.

### b. Teachers and Parents' Evenings.

Parents' evening which is organised by teachers in British schools is worthy of emulation. Apart from providing a social forum whereby parents and teachers meet, (in most cases parents in Imo State never get to know their children's teachers), the

educational significance is invaluable. For example, it is a unique opportunity in terms of assessing students' school performance. Parents are able to see for themselves how their sons and daughters are progressing. The parents who are illiterates, will hear directly from the teachers how well or otherwise their children are doing. For the backward children, the meeting may help both their parents and teachers to identify the cause or causes of under achievement, and jointly find a solution. This is important since the problems may be school or home based, or both. It could also be a good venue for discussing issues like truancy, bullying, punctuality etc.

c. Differential Treatment.

Imo State teachers who believe in treating boys and girls differently at school, because they differ biologically, should think carefully. As long as boys are taught carpentry, craft, etc. and girls learn cookery, ironing, needlework etc. teachers may be unaware of the fact that they are indirectly promoting gender inequality. The same is the case when boys are asked to work in the school farms during the time for manual labour and girls engage in toilet and bathroom cleaning. In addition to promoting and perpetuating gender inequality, both sexes are not being well equipped for life after school in today's fast changing world.

d. Teachers in Boarding Schools.

As some of the most worrying findings of the empirical study concern teachers in the boarding schools, Imo State teachers should rededicate themselves to duty and be watchful. The need for vigilance cannot be over emphasised, given that teachers in boarding institutions, (especially boys' boarding houses), were found to be lax and complacent. They were rarely seen in the boarding houses. Consequently the big boys resorted to ruthless bullying, drug pushing and even formed secret societies.

Inevitably, life became hell for the weak as well as the junior students. Stealing also became rampant.

Teachers in Imo State should consider seriously the methods of some of their British counterparts. In some of the British boys' boarding schools for instance, young male teachers live with the youngsters in the dormitories. The result is very high discipline. It is obvious that under such an arrangement the chances of boys misbehaving are greatly reduced.

e. Stealing and Poor Feeding.

Since the empirical study proved that there is a strong link between stealing and poor (and inadequate) food in the boarding houses, the need for the teachers in charge of the boarding institutions to be competent cannot be over emphasised. Teachers should see to it that the boarders are well fed. This means that good supervision on the part of teachers is indispensable. For example, if students are supervised at meal times, teachers will then be in a good position to judge both the quality as well as the quantity of food in Imo State boarding houses, which students strongly and unequivocally criticised.

f. Teachers in Mixed Schools.

Imo State teachers in coeducational institutions, like their counterparts in boarding schools, must be vigilant given the disturbing reports that emerged in the course of the empirical study, especially with regard to intimidation and sexual harassment of girls by boys. Allegations should not be ignored or dismissed outright without proper and thorough investigation. As some of the boys were said to be extremely violent, teachers could organise social clubs including boxing, drama, football, etc. where boys might channel their strength and energy in a positive manner. But incorrigible male students ought to be suspended or expelled depending on the gravity of their offence.

## 7. Parents

### a. Financial Pressure and Educational Criteria.

Considering the fact that the empirical study and previous research including that of Kelly (1987), and Akande (1987), proved that there is an inextricable link between parental financial status and school education in the developing countries, Imo State parents ought to think carefully in terms of what should be the right criteria when faced with financial crisis. The present practice of stopping their daughters' education in favour of their sons' is discriminatory to say the least. Other factors including intelligence, and the right of the first born should be carefully assessed. It is note worthy that some respondents suggested strongly that parents in the developing nations could use the right of the first born as a criterion when deciding who should be sent to school in times of financial hardship, and not simply gender.

In homes where children lack essential facilities like tables, space, light, etc, they should make use of the school facilities in the evenings as boarders do. Some Aba students have found that going back to the school in the evening offers them wonderful advantages with regard to their school assignments and private studies. Many of them use the opportunity to escape from too much domestic work.

### b. The Problems of Village Students, (notably girls)

The disturbing problems of Imo State students in the rural areas call for urgent attention on the part of parents. As the youngsters keep away from school for long periods of time especially during the farming seasons, academically they lag behind their counterparts in the urban centres. Inevitably, girls fare worse than boys because in addition to farm work, they have to do a lot of domestic chores, which more often than not include fetching firewood and water from distant places, buying and selling of food items in the local markets and in the streets etc. It is worthy of note that some of the local markets are located far away from the girls' homes, thereby involving a

great deal of trekking. Instead of encroaching upon the limited school time parents should find alternative times for farming such as weekends, school breaks and holidays.

## 8. Boys in Mixed Schools

### a. Intimidation and Sexual Harassment of Girls.

In coeducational institutions, boys should not intimidate or sexually harass their female counterparts. The empirical study revealed that intimidation and sexual harassment are the biggest problems facing Imo State's non single sex schools. Girls who feel intimidated are not relaxed or comfortable in the classroom especially during maths and science. Some of the girls complained bitterly of relentless sexual harassment by the male students and would prefer to go to girls' institutions. Some claimed that some of the boys were so violent that they could kill. If boys in coeducational institutions were to behave decently, parents, including moslems who object vehemently to their daughters attending mixed schools could reconsider their stance, and the future of coeducational institutions in Imo State would no longer be in doubt.

## 9. Girls in Coeducational Institutions

### a. Sexy Dresses (School Uniform)

Female students in mixed schools should report all cases of intimidation and sexual harassment, so that teachers can discipline the offenders. In extreme cases teachers could seek the help of parents and the providers of education. Girls on their part should be modest in dressing, and avoid provocative outfits in school. This is important because the sexual harassment was partly due to the fact that some girls dress provocatively. This is why school uniform can be quite advantageous. Girls should reserve their sexy dresses for night clubs, the cinema and other appropriate places.



School uniform will also reduce the taunting and jeering of rural girls by their so called trendy urban counterparts. For instance, when students are in uniform everybody looks the same. The rich and the poor become indistinguishable. Ordinary dresses on the other hand, make the stigma of poverty more conspicuous on the part of the village students. They also lead to unhealthy rivalry among the urban girls as they compete among themselves in a bid to wear the latest trendy fashion. They become obsessed with fashion and think less of schoolwork. Given the fact that not all urban parents are rich, some urban girls may therefore be putting undue pressure on their parents in financial terms. The possibility of some of the girls trying to get money by any means including prostitution cannot be ruled out. This was highlighted in chapter 3. The trendy girls may be inclined to snub their lady teachers and not respect them. It is important to bear in mind that some lady teachers are neither trendy nor fashionable. They have families and children, and the financial demand on them at times is crushing. Therefore they cannot afford to waste money on clothes. It is quite obvious that school uniform has immense advantages and among other things it will help the village girls who already have a lot of pressure to relax and study in a calmer environment as they become less self-conscious.

## 10. The Society

### a. Social Attitude Towards Teachers.

Since Imo State teachers are deeply resentful of the way the society treats them, social attitude towards them and the teaching profession must change. This is necessary since the empirical study revealed that teachers feel bitter, humiliated, unloved, and also sad because their efforts and their profession are not appreciated. As long as the society continues to look down on teachers and ridicule the teaching profession, teachers will always feel bitter and resentful and their great work will be undermined to the detriment of the society in general and girls and women in

particular. School uniform indicated above will help, so that urban boys and girls do not continuously try to shame their teachers by wearing dresses that are far too trendy and too expensive and obviously beyond the means of those teaching them.

b. Imo Society and Its Female Members.

The empirical study highlighted the fact that girls and women in Imo State are not accorded any respect but are rather expected to respect and serve men, and also the fact that they are treated like second hand citizens. Inevitably one gets the impression that females in Imo State exist essentially for the service of their male counterparts. It is this negative social attitude that has not only affected women's image within the society but also their capability in every aspect of human endeavour, including politics. In fact, some men in Imo State hold women in such a low esteem that in political terms, they would prefer death to having a female head of state. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the society changes its attitude towards its female members. It is only this change that can guarantee full integration of all the members of the society gender notwithstanding. Consequently girls and women will be at liberty to pursue their personal interests academically, politically, socially, etc. without any inhibitions or limitations.

There is no doubt that if the above recommendations were to be implemented by all those concerned, the Imo society in general and its educational system in particular will be the envy of the rest of the country. The wider world, notably people in the developing nations, will learn from the Imo State experience as the education of girls and women enter a new era, full of hope and promise.

11. Long Time School Leavers

Those women in Imo State who left school a long time ago and who are currently doing nothing, should follow their UK counterparts and return to education by going to college. The writer visited several colleges in South Yorkshire and found that there are

numerous courses designed to help people whatever their age or academic situation. Through informal interview with some of the students and their teachers, the writer discovered that through the 'Access Course' a student can learn very useful skills that enhance job opportunities. Students can also prepare for 'A' level examinations through the 'Access Course' and thus qualify for university education. Some of the women left school twenty five years ago. Although some had jobs they abandoned them in the belief that better qualifications can guarantee them better job opportunities and security.

A male student whose wife is highly educated and has a high profile job is having to do all the domestic chores. He explained that his studies were suffering as a result of the domestic chores. He was not happy with his situation and referred to it as a 'reversal of roles'. This does show that all over the world, men tend to feel that domestic chores should be done by women.

Following the writer's advice, the teachers conceded that it would be a good idea to monitor carefully the number of Access Course students that gain university admission each year and also to monitor their progress in the university, at least some of them.

### **SUMMARY**

In global terms, there is hardly any educational system that has not at one time or the other discriminated against girls and women. The gravity varies from one part of the world to another and from nation to nation. Amazingly, within the same country incredible differences can still exist, owing to various factors. In developed countries like Britain, the existence of free and compulsory education up to the secondary phase has resulted in all youngsters going to school. But when it comes to higher education, notably university education, girls and women can be discriminated against, except probably in families where there are no financial constraints.

For developing nations the trend is different in that in most cases parents have to shoulder the burden of education at all levels. Consequently, many children do not go to school since their parents are very poor. Due to the priority given to male education, most of the youngsters that do not go to school are girls. Apart from financial constraints, factors relating to geography, religion, culture etc. can still affect female education adversely in a developing country. For example, in some countries if schools are located far away from home or in a place where it is thought girls will be vulnerable, girls may not be allowed to go to school. In countries with strong Islamic influence limitations are imposed on formal education of girls because of fear of pregnancy and the need for girls to marry in a state of chastity.

Within the Nigerian context the introduction of formal education in 1842 meant the existence of three types of education, given that traditional and Islamic education had already been firmly established, the latter had (and still has) its stronghold in the North. The primary objective of the pioneer missionaries was to evangelise the society but they could not do so without educating the people. Initially their activities were confined to the west coast of Nigeria with the help of newly freed slaves, (saros). Later they penetrated the interior and arrived in Igboland, stopping first at Onitsha on the eastern bank of the River Niger. Faced with enormous difficulties and obstacles including very low attendance and hostility of the natives, the missionaries never lost hope. It was particularly hard for them in certain parts of Igboland because the natives were suspicious of their motives, and at times mistook them for colonial officers. That suspicion made it impossible for people to send their children to school especially those of high social status. In some cases they sent their slaves or servants. It must be said that without the 'Osu' (outcasts) those regarded as the dregs of the society, the formal education programme might have collapsed within the first phase, at least in some places.

No account, of formal education in Nigeria can be complete without reference to the three phases it passed through. The first was that of pioneer missionaries who underwent untold suffering. Their task was made particularly hard by a number of factors including the very fact that some of the adherents of the new faith and some school children were outcasts ('Osu'). People wondered how they could be in the same learning environment as the children of the freeborn. The colonial government remained more or less unconcerned in the first phase - but was to dominate the second.

Sooner than later it was discovered that the colonial administration under Lord Frederick Lugard was not necessarily interested in providing good quality education for the natives. This was to ensure that highly educated Nigerians did not emerge to threaten the colonial government. Therefore, to perpetuate colonialism in Nigeria Lugard pursued an educational programme that produced poorly educated people who would only fill minor posts, notably clerical ones. But while the colonial government under Lugard was intent on providing poor quality education, the natives yearned for education of sublime quality.

The last phase saw the largest educational expansion in the history of education in Nigeria. It was the era of self determination when the natives took over the administration of education. The huge progress was confined to the South. Educational progress in the North was painfully slow as a result of the Islamic education that was already deeply entrenched in that part of the country long before the introduction of western-type education. But the educational expansion in the South was not trouble free in that it was to a large extent politically motivated. There was also inter denominational rivalry, plus the fact that once it was discovered that formal education conveyed power and status, the female members of the society were discriminated against.

The ensuing socio-cultural changes were better imagined than described. Undoubtedly the introduction of western-type education in 1842 was a land mark in the geographical unit that was to become Nigeria. In a sense it marked the end of the old

traditional society. What has captivated many people over the years was the pace of change, Lugard (1934) made reference to the alacrity with which the natives were prepared to abandon old customs and beliefs and to embrace new culture, while the Smythes (1960) described the change as sweeping. Although no aspect of life remained untouched, it was in clothing, food, communication and architecture that the change reached alarming proportions, culminating in loss of self identity on the part of many natives. In terms of urbanisation what formal education did was to increase the rate, given that towns and cities existed in Nigeria thousands of years before the Western influence. Unlike the South, the North remained more or less unaffected by the sweeping changes, due mainly to the strong Islamic presence.

Among Southerners it did not however seem as if the change was going far enough in certain respects especially, those aspects that relate to girls' and women's education. Within Imo State for example female school education was not considered as important as that of boys and men. A girl could be pushed into early marriage so that her dowry could be used to fund the education of her brothers. Males dissociated themselves from domestic chores. Girls and women had no say in the family. In the wider society, they were excluded from the village assembly and secret societies. Yet they continued to struggle to fulfil social expectations including family sustenance - often under very harsh conditions. These factors partly influenced the undertaking of the empirical study with regard to this study.

Given the compelling nature of the findings, it is important at this stage to reflect on some of the most contentious issues.

### Politics

Most men hold women in such a low esteem that they strongly feel that women must never be allowed to rule the country. But to some of the boys and girls in the secondary school (tomorrow's leaders) female political leadership is the crowning glory of formal education of girls and women. The possibility of such an event is being viewed with great expectations. They feel it is the answer to all the problems and predicaments of the female

members of the society including humiliation and bewildering social expectations. Consequently, the young students linked female head of state inextricably with formal education of girls and women. This unique magical link is summed up in the words of the young boy, whose response is quoted on pages 435-436, under 'Female Head of State.'

### Education

Although numerically speaking today, many girls go to school compared with the early years of school education for example, (see pp 128-130). In families when there are financial difficulties boys' education takes precedence. With the exception of well educated parents, in many families girls' formal education is seen from the point of view of its economic advantages, like providing for parents in old age. Teachers have negative attitude towards girls and science, which is bound to damage girls' education especially in scientific terms. The quality of education in the rural areas is very low to the extent that in some institutions science is not taught due to lack of school laboratory. There is also shortage of staff notably in science. In some cases teachers teach science subjects for which they are not qualified, particularly in the village schools. Consequently, academic aspirations and job expectations are relatively low in rural areas especially on the part of girls. Rural students suffer certain disadvantages, which include lack of modern educational facilities, scruffy appearance, inability to express themselves in good English etc. NCWS has helped many girls and women, especially with regard to science, by training female doctors in the universities including those abroad. There are doubts about boarding houses and coeducation because of the serious allegations that are surrounding them. There are no facilities to teach certain technical subjects, and as a result of negative social attitude towards certain jobs, women are hardly seen in the so called masculine jobs, including survey and aviation.

### Marriage and School Education

Although child marriage no longer exists in Imo State, parents, notably fathers, can still force their daughters to marry so that the dowry can be used to train their sons. In some

circumstances, boys can also come under very strong parental pressure to abandon school and marry early. This is fairly common in families where a boy is the only child ('Okpolu'), or the only male issue. Because of the way the Igbo regard marriage, single women are humiliated and young girls have come to believe that marriage is a duty which an individual girl owes to her family and the society at large.

#### Domestic Chores and Girls' Education

Household work is still weighing heavily on the female members of the society because it is seen as part and parcel of women's role within the family system. Any man who chooses to help his wife must do so secretly so that he does not become a laughing stock. But the reality is that men do not like to be involved in domestic chores. Although farming and domestic chores affect school education in Imo State, particularly in rural areas, girls' education suffers more. In some exceptional circumstances boys do make personal sacrifices like the boy who abandoned boarding education to be with his father because his vision was failing, and the boy who had to do a lot of household work and in his own words:

*"I cannot bear to see my mother suffer so much."*

#### Poverty and Women's Financial Independence

This study has revealed that in Imo State poverty is not simply about parents' inability to pay school fees for their children. In some cases, many strive to pay school fees, but may not be able to provide essential facilities like good light and table. Besides, many homes are so crowded that there is no space for children to study or do homework. Although many women feel that if they are financially independent, they can alleviate family poverty, most men are vehemently opposed to women becoming economically independent for selfish reasons including the subjugation of women. But 'Lolo Odi Uko' (the woman chief) warned that without financial independence women would continue to be in bondage. The passionate plea of the lady teacher sums up the thoughts and aspirations of most women on the issue:

*"It is very important for women to be financially independent, so that men will not continue to treat us anyhow in a society both of us own."*



## The Effects of School Education on Imo Society

One of the highlights of the empirical study was finding out people's views regarding formal education. In spite of the fact that some people indicated that formal education brought about undesirable practices including drug pushing, immorality, dishonesty, inordinate ambition, disregard for elders etc. the overwhelming indication was that it brought many positive things such as literacy, independence, discontinuation of human sacrifice and twin murder etc. There was very strong belief that school education has led to the emergence of an enlightened and civilised society, a fact crudely put by the young boy who said:

*“Without education, we would have been a bunch of uncivilized monkeys running around in bushes.”*

## Future of Female Education

Significantly, the future of female education in Imo State was variously described as edifying, rosy, promising etc. Some people even thought that the sky would be the limit. But that future is inextricably linked with the future of teachers. As long as their grievances, especially their conditions of service, and the negative social attitude towards them and the teaching profession remain unresolved, the future of female education in Imo State, (and arguably in the rest of the country), may not be secure. But what is not in doubt is the fact that a lot of progress has been made regarding girls' and women's education as opposed to the early days of school education. However, any realistic assessment of female education in the years that lie ahead must take into account:

### a. The Family

Parents need to see the education of their daughters in the same light as their sons. It is incumbent on them to attach equal importance to school education of their offspring irrespective of gender. This, above all means that girls' education should not be sustained by economic considerations, a kind of old age pension. In other words parents should not send their daughters to school simply because they are the ones that will provide for them in their old age, unlike their brothers.

b. The School

The future of female education in Imo State would be jeopardised irretrievably unless teachers develop a more positive attitude towards girls' education in general and scientific education in particular.

c. The Society

Imo State needs to reappraise its perception of the female members, and change its attitude towards the so called masculine subjects, courses and jobs; and also respect teachers and the teaching profession. This will make it possible for female education to progress with the passage of time in every branch of learning.

It is however important at this stage to reflect on the hypothesis for this study which is:

At best girls' and women's education has not received the same attention as that of boys and men, and at worst, it has been deliberately neglected, or both.

The empirical study was ultimately undertaken to put the above hypothesis to the test. In the event, it was discovered that the first part of the hypothesis can be justifiably upheld, given that the formal education of the female members of Imo State, has over the years been undermined both by the family and by the society at large. The second part can only be partially upheld because in the early days of school education, obstacles were deliberately placed in the way of female education, including the infamous child marriage. But there is no evidence which will convincingly prove that this is still the case today.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that female education in Imo State still has a long way to go. A great deal depends on the society, unless it changes, not much can be accomplished, progress if any, is bound to be painfully slow. As the woman interviewed informally put it:

*"There are signs which will herald the dawn of a brave new society, a new era, a new people..."*

The woman emphasised the fact that such positive signs must include:

- a. the breaking of kolanuts by women - up till now the prerogative of men.
- b. women chiefs becoming paramount chiefs ('Eze').
- c. the abolition of overt stigma including songs that epitomise as well as perpetuate gender inequality like:

iye-e-iye, nwoke bu Eze, iye, iye-e-iye, nwanyi bu aku, iye, iye-e-iye

(A male is a king, a female is wealth).

Wealth refers to the dowry which a girl's future husband must pay when he comes to marry her, (see chapter 4).

A change in terms of the way the society views its female members is unquestionably important, because it is bound to affect the future of female education in the State. Equally important is financial support, bearing in mind that many girls are desperate to go to school and many women are relentlessly aspiring to acquire higher education which will enable them get better paid jobs. Unfortunately many families are trapped in abject poverty. This is why universal education at least up to the secondary level is indispensable, but in the long term it should be ideally free at all levels - given the plight of orphans, and the fact that when financial crisis hits families, girls' education is the first to suffer. The fact that the higher the educational level, the fewer the females, should also always be borne in mind. Given the elaborate empirical study, the writer can authoritatively and unequivocally state that without universal education at all levels, school education of a large proportion of Imo State population will be seriously affected especially girls' and women's.

Meanwhile, Imo State parents should continue to struggle to support the formal education of their sons and daughters on an equal basis. The empirical study proved that school education is popular beyond imagination and has among other things - enormously enhanced the status of the female members of the society. It also showed that many girls and women are yearning for education at all levels.

In sum, it is true to say that the hopes, the yearnings and the aspirations of girls and women in Imo State in educational terms, are summed up in a young female student's passionate personal plea and pledge to Imo State parents. Deeply moved by the status of girls and women before the introduction of western-type education, she promised:

*"I will undertake an educational crusade to personally reassure parents that they will never regret sending their daughters to school and that girls' education is worth every pain and every trouble."*

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## **Imo State Secondary School Educational Statistical Information**

### **Teachers**

#### **Number of secondary school graduate teachers in 1993**

Male teachers	4,661
Female teachers	3,056
Total number of graduate teachers	7,717

#### **Higher National Diploma (HND)**

Male teachers	2,594
Female teachers	1,247
Total number of teachers with HND	3,841

#### **National Certificate of Education**

Male teachers	1,506
Female teachers	1,481
Total number of teachers with NCE	2,987

#### **Secondary School Graduate Teachers 1994**

Male teachers	4,308
Female teachers	3,147
Total number of graduate teachers	7,455

#### **Higher National Diploma (HND)**

Male teachers	2,471
Female teachers	1,387
Total number of teachers with HND	3,858

#### **National Certificate of Education (NCE)**

Male teachers	1,360
Female teachers	1,474
Total number of teachers with NCE	2,834

These are important points to note regarding the above statistics.

1. In Imo State secondary schools male teachers outnumber their female counterparts.
2. The higher the certificate of teaching, the greater the disparity, for example, in 1993 the difference between male and female graduate teachers is 1,605, but in the case of NCE teachers the difference is only 25.
3. It seems that with the passage of time more and more male teachers leave the teaching

profession while the numerical strength of the lady teachers increases. In 1994 for instance, of the 2,834 NCE teachers, women outnumber men by 114.

### Imo State School Statistical Information

#### Students

<u>Type of School</u>	<u>Mixed School</u>
Number of boys that took the examinations	119
Number of girls that took the examinations	79
Total number of students with 5 credits or more	106

#### School Z

<u>Type of School</u>	<u>Boys School</u>
Number of boys that took the examinations	211
Number of boys with 5 credits or above including mathematics	189

#### School O

<u>Type of School</u>	<u>Girls School</u>
Number of girls that took the examinations	295
Number of girls with 5 credits or above including mathematics	71

It is quite obvious that in the non coeducational institutions for boys the performance of the boys is remarkably high. In the girls' only school, performance is comparatively very low.

Unquestionably one reason is that many girls in the school dropped mathematics. It is also clear from the statistical evidence that the poorest results are recorded against the coeducational school. This raises a number of questions. For example, are the boys and girls diligent with regard to their studies?

TYPE OF SCHOOL

URBAN/RURAL

## QUESTIONNAIRE ONE

## SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

A Personal Information

- 1 Age (in years).
- 2 Indicate whether male or female. MALE/FEMALE

B General Questions.

- Draw a ring around the appropriate answer, for example: The month of June has.
- 28 days  
31 days  
30 days
- 3 In view of your future career, how important is school education to you. A little important  
Important  
Very important  
Not important
- 4 Do your parents see school education as important. YES/NO
- 5 Should all school-age boys go to school? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
- 6 If you have ticked "NO", give a brief explanation.
- 7 Should all school age girls go to school? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
- 8 If the answer is "NO", why not?
- 9 Do you know anyone who should be attending primary school but is not? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
- 10 Have you a friend who is not in the secondary school? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
- 11 Do you know why he or she is not attending the secondary school? If yes, give reasons below.
- 12 If parents do not have enough money to send all their children to primary school, what should they do?
- A They should send their sons only.
- B They should send their daughters only.
- C They should send some of the boys and some of the girls.
- D They should send neither.
- 13 If parents are financially incapable of providing secondary education for all their children, what do you think they can do?



- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 14 | If education could be provided free on one sector only, which of these should it be?   | PRIMARY/SECONDARY/<br>UNIVERSITY/NONE  |
| 15 | If education is free at the primary level, how will it affect school attendance?<br><br>A All children will go to school.<br>B Most children will go to school.<br>C Many children will go to school.<br>D Few children will go to school. |  |
| 16 | Would you like education to be free and compulsory at the primary level?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  |
| 17 | Do you study science?  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  |
| 18 | Do you like science?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  |
| 19 | If you have answered "YES", why do you like science?   |  |
| 20 | Who should study science?<br><br>A Boys only.<br>B Girls only.<br>C Some boys and some girls.<br>D Everyone.   |  |
| 21 | How do you usually go to school?<br>(State your own means if it is none of these).   | BY FOOT/BY BICYCLE/<br>BY CAR OR BUS/<br>BY TRAIN/BY BOAT                                      |
| 22 | Is transport to school easily available every day?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  |
| 23 | Can your parents afford your transport fare?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  |
| 24 | Has their inability to pay for your daily fare to school ever affected your school attendance?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  |
| 25 | If your answer is "NO", do you think that such inability is likely to affect your future school attendance?  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  |
| 26 | (For day pupils only)<br>Would you like to be a boarder?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  |
| 27 | Give a brief explanation for your answer.  |  |
| 28 | What post secondary education should girls have access to?<br>If none, please state briefly why not.   | UNIVERSITY/<br>TEACHER TRAINING<br>TECHNICAL<br>EDUCATION<br>VOCATIONAL<br>TRAINING eg Nursing |
| 29 | At what age do you think a girl should marry?  | YEARS  |
| 30 | Will you marry?  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  |
| 31 | Give a brief explanation for your answer.  |  |

32	If you were to choose between school and marriage, which would you choose?	SCHOOL/MARRIAGE
33	Should boys and girls have their own separate schools?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
34	Give a brief explanation for your answer.	
35	(For girls only) Does the presence of boys make you nervous?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
36	(For boys only) Does the presence of girls distract you?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
37	Do you think your friends influence you for the better or for the worse?	FOR THE BETTER/ FOR THE WORSE NEITHER
38	Do you find schoolwork boring?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
39	Do your teachers encourage you to learn?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
40	What would you like to do when you leave school?	
41	Give a brief explanation for your answer.	
42	Do you get any help or encouragement from your parents regarding your schooling?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
43	Explain briefly the type of help or encouragement you get from them.	
44	Which of these do you help with at home? (You may ring more than one.)	SWEEPING THE FLOOR/ MAKING THE BEDS/ COOKING WASHING DISHES WASHING CLOTHES
45	Who should help in the house with regard to the things listed above?	BOYS ONLY/ GIRLS ONLY/BOTH
46	(For village pupils only) Do you fetch water and firewood?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
47	Do you help your father?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
48	What type of help do you give him?	
49	How many children are there in your family?	
50	How many are girls?	
51	Do you have a room to yourself?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
52	Do you find it difficult to do your homework at home?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
53	If your answer is "YES", why is it difficult for you to study at home?	
54	Do you like examinations?	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
55	(For village pupils only) Given the facilities in the town, like electricity, video and television, bookshops, libraries etc.	YES/NO/DON'T KNOW

- Would you like to live in the town?
- 56 (For town pupils only) YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  
There is not as much noise in the village as there is in the town. Would you like to live in the village?
- 57 Can you say any good thing or things which schooling has brought to the Nigerian society? If so, please indicate briefly
- 58 Are there some bad things that you think schooling has brought about in Nigeria? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
- 59 If "YES", what are they? Mention a few
- 60 In the days of our forefathers there were no schools and so they did not go to school. Do you think we should have continued exactly like them? Give a brief explanation for your answer YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
- 61 Would you like to see a female Head of State in Nigeria? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  
Give a brief explanation
- 62 What job does your father do?
- 63 What job does your mother do?

Thank you for your assistance in completing this questionnaire

**QUESTIONNAIRE TWO****FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STAFF:****PRINCIPALS, VICE PRINCIPALS AND HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS****Personal Information**

Please indicate the following

- 1 Age (in years)
- 2 Sex: Male/Female
- 3 Type of School
- 4 What subject/subjects do you teach?
- 5 For how long have you been teaching (in years)?
- 6 Please state your qualifications
- 7 Do you enjoy teaching? YES/NO DON'T KNOW
- 8 Have you always wanted to be a teacher?
- 9 Please give a brief explanation

**B General Questions**

In each question, please draw a ring around the appropriate answer or write the answer in the space provided

- 10 Is your school adequately staffed? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
- 11 If you have ticked 'NO', which subjects have been most affected by staff shortage?
- 12 How many teachers are in your school?
- 13 Please indicate the total for female and male teachers respectively FEMALE/MALE
- 14 Does the Nigerian society discriminate against women? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
- 15 Should girls and women have formal education? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
- 16 Whose education should be given top priority? BOYS/GIRLS/BOTH  
NEITHER  
DON'T KNOW
- 17 At what level do you think girls should stop their formal education? PRIMARY  
SECONDARY  
TEACHER TRAINING  
UNIVERSITY
- 18 In which professions would you like to see more women?
- 19 In your own particular subject, how many pupils do you teach?
- 20 Indicate the number with regard to each gender FEMALE.....  
MALE.....

**Science teachers only should answer questions 21 and 22**

- |    |   |                          |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 21 | Which pupils are more keen on science subjects?<br>Please give a brief explanation  | FEMALE/MALE              |
| 22 | Is the school laboratory well equipped?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW        |
| 23 | Judging from school records as well as school examinations, whose performance is better with regard to the following subjects? (Please tick under the chosen sex) |                          |
|    |   | <u>Gender</u>            |
|    | <u>Subjects</u>   | <u>Boys</u> <u>Girls</u> |
|    | Mathematics   |                          |
|    | English   |                          |
|    | Chemistry   |                          |
|    | Biology   |                          |
|    | Physics   |                          |
|    | Religion  |                          |
|    | Igbo  |                          |
|    | Yoruba  |                          |
|    | Hausa   |                          |
|    | Needlework  |                          |
|    | Craft   |                          |
|    | Domestic Science  |                          |
|    | Comment Briefly   |                          |
| 24 | Do you think that boys and girls should have their own separate schools, or do you think they should be educated together?  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW        |
| 25 | Does the presence of boys make girls nervous?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW        |
| 26 | Does the presence of girls distract boys?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW        |
| 27 | Do you think pupils are influenced for the better or for the worse by their friends?  | BETTER/WORSE             |
| 28 | Is corporal punishment allowed in your school?  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW        |
| 29 | Do you think that pupils from the village behave differently from those pupils that live in the town?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW        |
| 30 | If you have answered 'YES' to question 29, then give at least one or two examples   |                          |
| 31 | Do the differences cause problems in the school?  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW        |
| 32 | As a teacher, how have you tried to deal with such problems?  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW        |
| 33 | In a school situation should boys and girls be treated differently? Give a brief explanation.   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW        |
| 34 | In terms of motivation, who should get greater  | BOYS/GIRLS/BOTH          |

- encouragement with regard to learning?
- 35 Do the boys regard girls as: SUPERIORS/  
INFERIORS/EQUALS/  
RIVALS/DON'T KNOW
- 36 From your experience as a teacher, are you aware of YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  
any learning difficulty that is experienced by pupils  
from the village only?
- 37 If 'YES' to Question 36, then state the  
difficulty/difficulties
- 38 As a teacher are you aware of any pupils that did YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  
not complete their secondary education?
- 39 Why do you think that those pupils failed to  
complete their secondary school education?
- 40 At times, financial problems may threaten the  
education of children both at the primary school and  
at the secondary levels. In such a situation, what do  
you think that parents should do? For example,  
should they send only the boys, only the girls, some  
of the boys and some of the girls or none?
- 41 Should women be financially independent? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  
Comment briefly
- 42 If education should be provided free in only one PRIMARY/  
sector, then which one should it be? SECONDARY/  
UNIVERSITY
- 43 Regardless of your answer to Question 42, should YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  
primary school education be free and compulsory?
- 44 Do you visit parents especially when it is important YES/NO/  
– like in the case of truancy or long absence from  
School?
- 45 If a pupil is not doing well academically, what do  
you do?
- 46 Do you think children should assist in household YES/NO/DON'T KNOW  
work?
- 47 Who should actually render the help? (Please ring BOYS/GIRLS/BOTH  
one)
- 48 At what age do you think girls should marry?  
(Indicate age in years)
- 49 Do you have parents' day, especially for the YES/NO/ DON'T KNOW  
discussion of pupils' school-work as well as  
problems?
- 50 Who should determine what children should learn  
at school
- 51 As a teacher, from whom do you get most HEAD TEACHER/  
encouragement? (Please ring one) FELLOW TEACHER/  
EDUCATION

OFFICERS  
GOVERNMENT  
PARENTS  
NONE

- |    |   |                                     |
|----|---|-------------------------------------|
| 52 | Are your conditions of service satisfactory?  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW                   |
| 53 | Are the conditions of service in your school different between male and female teachers   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW                   |
| 54 | Are conditions of service relevant to you as a teacher?   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW                   |
| 55 | Do you like the way the school is being run?  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW                   |
| 56 | Would you like to see any change in the school? If 'YES' please explain   | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW                   |
| 57 | Do you see Nigeria ever being ruled by a woman? Comment briefly.  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW                   |
| 58 | Would you like to see women in high political posts in Nigeria, including head of State?  | YES/NO/DON'T KNOW                   |
| 59 | The effects of Western education on the Nigerian society have been? (Please ring one of these)  | POSITIVE/NEGATIVE/<br>BOTH/NEITHER/ |
| 60 | Has school education enhanced or jeopardised the status of Nigerian women? (Please ring one) Give a brief explanation.  | ENHANCED/<br>JEOPARDISED            |
| 61 | In which society have women fared better? (Please ring one and explain) Comment briefly   | TRADITIONAL/<br>WESTERN/ISLAMIC     |
| 62 | As you know, our ancestors did not go to school. Indeed there were no schools. Do you think we should have lived exactly like them? (Please ring one and explain briefly) | YES/ NO/DON'T KNOW                  |
| 63 | Mention a few things which you consider positive with regard to Western education   |                                     |
| 64 | Mention a few things which you think are bad about Western education  |                                     |
| 65 | Are you married?  | YES/NO                              |
| 66 | Do you have children?   | YES/NO                              |
| 67 | What does your partner do?  |                                     |
| 68 | How do you see the future of secondary school teachers?   |                                     |
| 69 | How do you see the future of girls' education in Nigeria  |                                     |

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

**INTERVIEW GROUP A**  
**THE VIEWS OF SELECTED CLERGY ON THE**  
**EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN**

1. Personally, do you approve of formal education?
2. Should girls and boys have equal access and opportunity to education?
3. Does the Church as an organisation approve of women's education?
4. As far as you know, has the Church ever shown a dislike with regard to women's formal education?
5. Is there a biblical basis for the traditional status of women?
6. When people look back on the missionary work of Mary Slessor in Calabar, (southeast Nigeria) in the last century, they feel women should be ordained. What do you think about women priests in general, and in Imo State in particular.
7. Do you think that boys and girls should have their own separate schools, or do you feel that they should be educated together?
8. From your own experience, are you aware of any problems that have arisen because of coeducation here in Imo State?
9. Are you aware of the high illiteracy rate with regard to Nigerian women? How serious is the problem here in Imo State?
10. Should the Church help in any way?
11. Child marriage does not offer girls as much educational opportunity as boys. What can the Church do to put an end to it – particularly in Imo State?
12. At what age do you think a girl should consider marriage?
13. When the Church controlled most schools, employment was not a problem but since the State take-over of schools, more children have been able to go to school. How would you describe female education under the two systems?
14. Are there any educational institutions in Imo State currently managed by the Church?
15. Are you aware of any children whose school education has been affected by poverty?
16. Is there anything the Church can do to alleviate it?
17. What do you think about free and compulsory education – at least at the primary level?
18. Will it have any effect on child-marriage?
19. At what academic level do you think a girl's formal education should stop?



20. Do you think that having women in high political posts would improve the lot of women in Nigeria?
21. Can you see this country ever being ruled by a women? Would you like to see a woman Head of State?
22. What do you see as the major changes brought about by Western education with regard to the Nigerian society?
23. As far as women are concerned, would you say that Western education has enhanced or worsened their position in the society?
24. How would you sum up the effects of Western education on the Nigerian society as a whole?
25. How do you see the future of girls' education in the country in general and in Imo State in particular?

Thank you for answering the questions

**INTERVIEW GROUP B**  
**THE VIEWS OF SELECTED EDUCATION OFFICERS ON**  
**THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN**

1. Should girls and women have formal education?
2. Do you attach more importance to girls' or boys' education?
3. As a developing nation will Nigeria be worse or better off with educated female population?
4. Should Nigerian women play an active role in the task of nation building?
5. Do you know what the illiteracy rate in Nigeria is?
6. Do you know the male illiteracy rate?
7. Do you know the female illiteracy rate?
8. Which ethnic group has the highest illiteracy rate, with regard to both male and female?
9. Is anything being done to reduce the rate here in Imo State and in the country as a whole?
10. Here in Imo State – have you got plans for helping adult illiterate women?
11. Are you aware of the Cuban literacy experience? Do you know about the Libyan literacy revolution regarding female illiteracy?
12. Would you like to try any of these in Imo State?
13. Here in Imo State and in the country as a whole – as part of our culture women among other things are responsible for domestic chores as well as the upbringing of children. Do you think that this traditional practice should continue or should there be flexibility with regard to division of labour?
14. If this traditional practice continues in its present form, and considering that it does not offer girls as much educational opportunity as boys, and for a nation aspiring to quicken the pace of development, the presence of a large number of illiterate women in the population may only have an adverse effect – given the socio-economic role of our women; how can this problem be resolved?
15. From your experience (as someone in education), are you aware of any other problems affecting girls' education in Imo State?
16. The UNESCO Annual Report shows that poverty has affected education generally in Africa especially girls' education. Is poverty an educational issue in Imo State?
17. In the higher institutions of learning – taking the University of Imo State as an example, do you know the male/female ratio?

18. With regard to science and technology can you comment statistically on the male/female admission rates at least within the past 3-5 years?
19. Child marriage in Nigeria is as old as the society and considering that it does not offer girls as much educational opportunity as boys, what can you do in Imp State to ensure that it does not go on forever?
20. Can universal Primary (Compulsory) Education help prevent child marriage?
21. At what age do you think girls should consider marriage?
22. At what educational level do you feel girls' formal education should stop?
23. In what professions would you like to see more women – is it in Medicine, Law, Engineering, Teaching, Nursing, Trading, Farming/Agriculture, Politics etc?
24. Is there any remarkable difference between the academic performance of urban pupils and those pupils that live in rural areas?
25. Will the new 6.3.3.4 educational system not retard girls' education further?
26. Unemployment is usually regarded as the brainchild of the curriculum. How often is the curriculum reviewed or reappraised – both at State and National levels?
27. Given the worldwide depression and the rising unemployment in the country, are there training programmes which can help – particularly young people to get jobs?
28. How do you help boys and girls who are not academically gifted?
29. Why are there no women in very high academic posts – like Federal Commissioner for Education?
30. In most societies school education for the young is a top priority, in Imo State have you got enough resources (human and material) for this high ideal?
31. Should Imo State Government fund free and compulsory education at least up to the secondary school level?
32. Should girls have their own separate schools?
33. From your experience as an education officer, are you aware of any problems that have arisen regarding coeducation?
34. Who should control education in Nigeria, is it the Church, the State or the Federal Government?
35. Who should decide what children ought to be taught at school?
36. Are there religious problems in Imo State with regard to education?
37. What is the highest political office held by a woman in Imo State and in the country respectively?
38. Will Nigeria ever be ruled by a woman?
39. Would you like to see a female Head of State?

40. Would you like to see many female Ministers in politics?
41. Can Imo State have a woman Governor?
42. What do you see as the major social changes brought about by Western Education to the Nigerian society?
43. As far as women are concerned, has Western education enhanced or worsened their status?
44. How would you sum up the effects of Western education on the Nigerian society?
45. How do you see the future of female education in Nigeria?
46. Should women be financially independent?

Thank you for answering the questions.

**INTERVIEW GROUP C**  
**THE VIEWS OF SOME MEMBERS OF THE**  
**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S SOCIETIES**

1. What are the major objectives of NCWS?
2. Does the organisation still believe that formal education is crucial with regard to the emancipation of Nigerian women?
3. What led to this strong belief?
4. In which part/parts of the country are the members most active?
5. Does the NCWS have problems, if so what are they?
6. Illiteracy rate, (especially female illiteracy), is high in the country, how can it be reduced?
7. Domestic chores are partly responsible for female illiteracy in Nigeria, can NCWS effect a change?
8. Do you know about the literacy movements that took place in Cuba and in Libya?
9. Will you try them in Nigeria?
10. Can the NCWS help in the formal education of the nomadic Fulani – especially the girls?
11. In Imo State, for example, can the members mobilise young school leavers and send them to the North to teach the nomads as happened in Somalia?
12. Poverty has seriously affected education (especially female education) in the country, how is this problem being tackled by the NCWS in the various states?
13. Are you engaged in any money-raising activities?
14. Have you been responsible for the education of any children in Imo State, especially girls?
15. Child marriage is another problem facing women in Nigeria, especially with regard to education. What can you do about it?
16. From your experience, how young are some of the girls?
17. Do you think that free and compulsory primary education can help in the solution of the problem of child marriage?
18. From what age do you think a girl should consider marriage?
19. How do women in various states – especially Imo State, fare in employment?

20. From your experience, have girls and boys equal access and opportunity to education in the country?
21. Do you think that there should be separate schools for girls?
22. Is distance from school causing any educational problems, especially for girls in Imo State?
23. What subjects do you think girls should pay more attention to at the secondary level?
24. At what level do you think that girls' formal education should stop?
25. Should girls and women resort to prostitution in order to fund their education especially higher education on the grounds of financial constraint?
26. What do you say to those who say that formal education makes girls headstrong and does not really prepare them for marriage?
27. Do you think that boys and girls should study exactly the same subjects at the primary and the secondary levels?
28. Would you say that women in Nigeria are fully involved in the task of nation building?
29. What do you consider to be the most outstanding changes brought about by Western education to the Nigerian society?
30. Will the condition of women in Nigeria improve if women hold top political posts?
31. Do you think a woman will rule Nigeria?
32. Would you like to see a woman head of State?
33. How do you see the future of female education in the country?
34. Should women be financially independent?
35. Should women inherit property in the family of their birth – just like men?
36. How do you see the future of the NCWS?
37. As an organisation that is deeply committed to achieving female emancipation, how would you sum up your achievements so far?

Thank you for answering the questions.

## INTERVIEW GROUP D

### CHIEFS, NATURAL LEADERS, AND LOCAL POLITICIANS

1. Should girls and women have formal education?
2. Do you attach more importance to boys' or girls' education?
3. As a developing nation, will Nigeria be worse or better off with educated female population?
4. Should Nigerian women play an active role in the task of nation building?
5. Chieftaincy here in Imo state is an exclusive male institution, why is it so?
6. Could you imagine a female paramount chief?
7. Do you agree that a female paramount chief will do more to promote women's educational opportunities?
8. As part of our custom – women among other things are responsible for domestic chores, as well as the upbringing of children. Do you think that this traditional practice should continue, or do you think there should be flexibility with regard to division of labour?
9. If this traditional practice continues in its present form, it could mean that many women may never have the opportunity to read and write, and for a nation aspiring to quicken the pace of development, the presence of a large number of illiterate women in the population may only have an adverse effect given the socio-economic role of our women; how can this problem be resolved?
10. From your experienced as privileged members of the society, are you aware of any other problems affecting girls' education in Imo State?
11. The UNESCO Annual Reports show that poverty has affected education generally in Africa, especially girls' education. Is this the case here in Imo State?
12. Will you consider the communal programme of raising money for children's education introduced by Mbanjo people some time ago?
13. Are there any fund-raising programmes you can organise to ensure that Imo State children have access to education?
14. Child marriage in Nigeria is as old as the society and considering that it does not offer girls as much educational opportunity as boys, what can you do in Imo State to ensure that it does not go on forever?
15. Can Universal Primary (compulsory) education help prevent child marriage?
16. At what educational level do you think girls' formal education should stop?
17. At what age do you think a girl should consider marriage?

18. In what professions would you like to see more women – is it in Medicine, Law, Engineering, Teaching, Nursing, Trading, Farming/Agriculture Politics etc?
19. For girls to attain any of the above, they should not marry while they are still young children, will you support the National Union of Nigerian Students in their campaign against child marriage?
20. Who should control education in Nigeria – is it the Church, the State or the Federal Government?
21. Who should decide what children ought to be taught at school?
22. Are there religious problems in Imo State with regard to education?
23. What is the highest political office held by a woman in Imo State and the country respectively?
24. Will Nigeria ever be ruled by a woman?
25. Would you like to see a female Head of State?
26. Would you like to see many female Ministers in politics?
27. Can Imo State have a woman Governor?
28. What do you see as the major social changes brought about by Western education on the Nigerian society?
29. As far as women are concerned, has Western education enhanced or worsened their status?
30. How would you sum up the effects of Western education on the Nigerian society?
31. How do you see the future of female education in Nigeria?
32. Should women be financially independent?

### **SECTION B**

#### **FOR POLITICIANS ONLY**

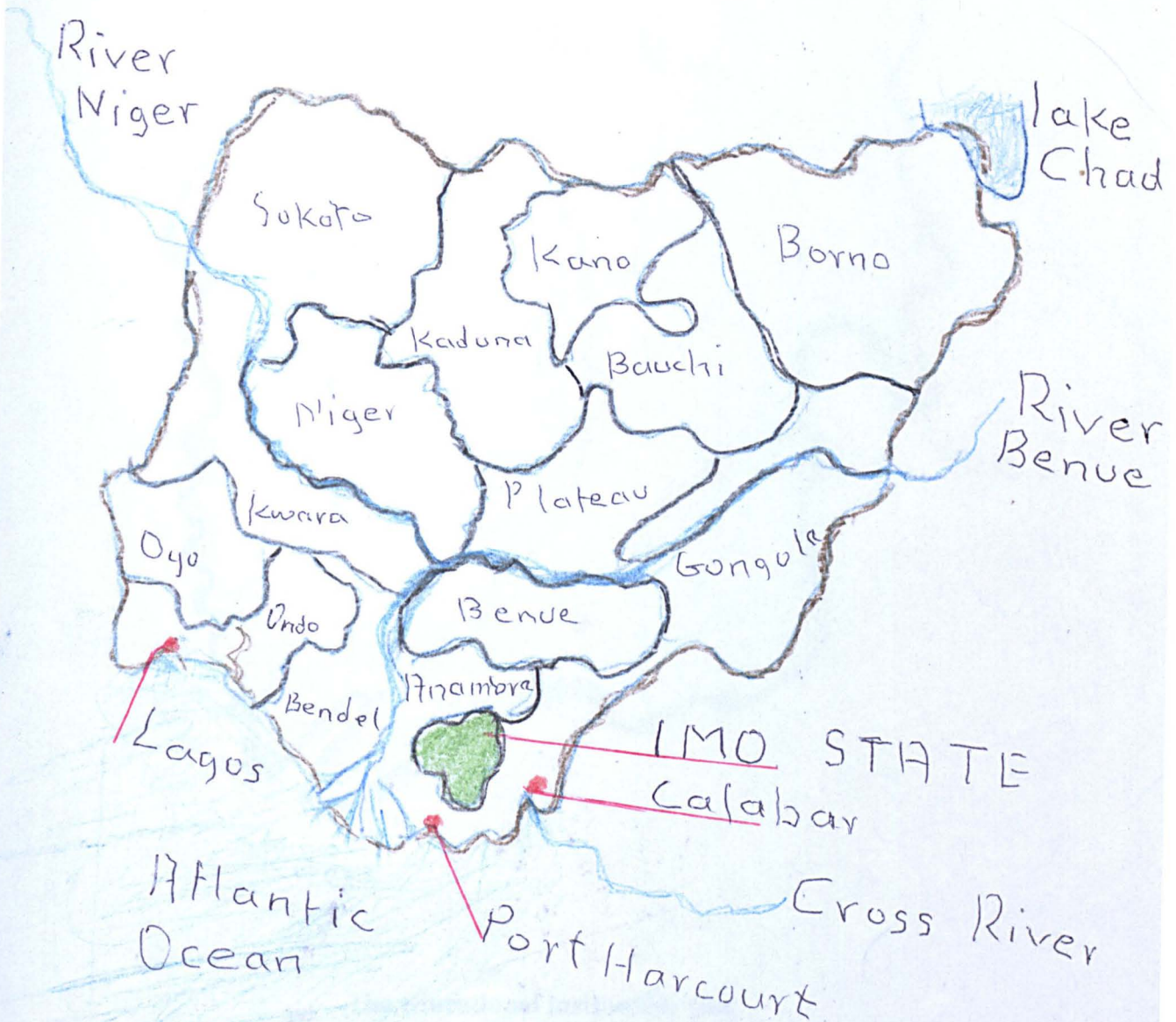
33. Is there any place for women in the Nigerian political system?
34. Why are there no women in the top political posts?
35. Would you like to lead the campaign here in Imo State to ensure that women get top political offices?

Thank you for answering the questions

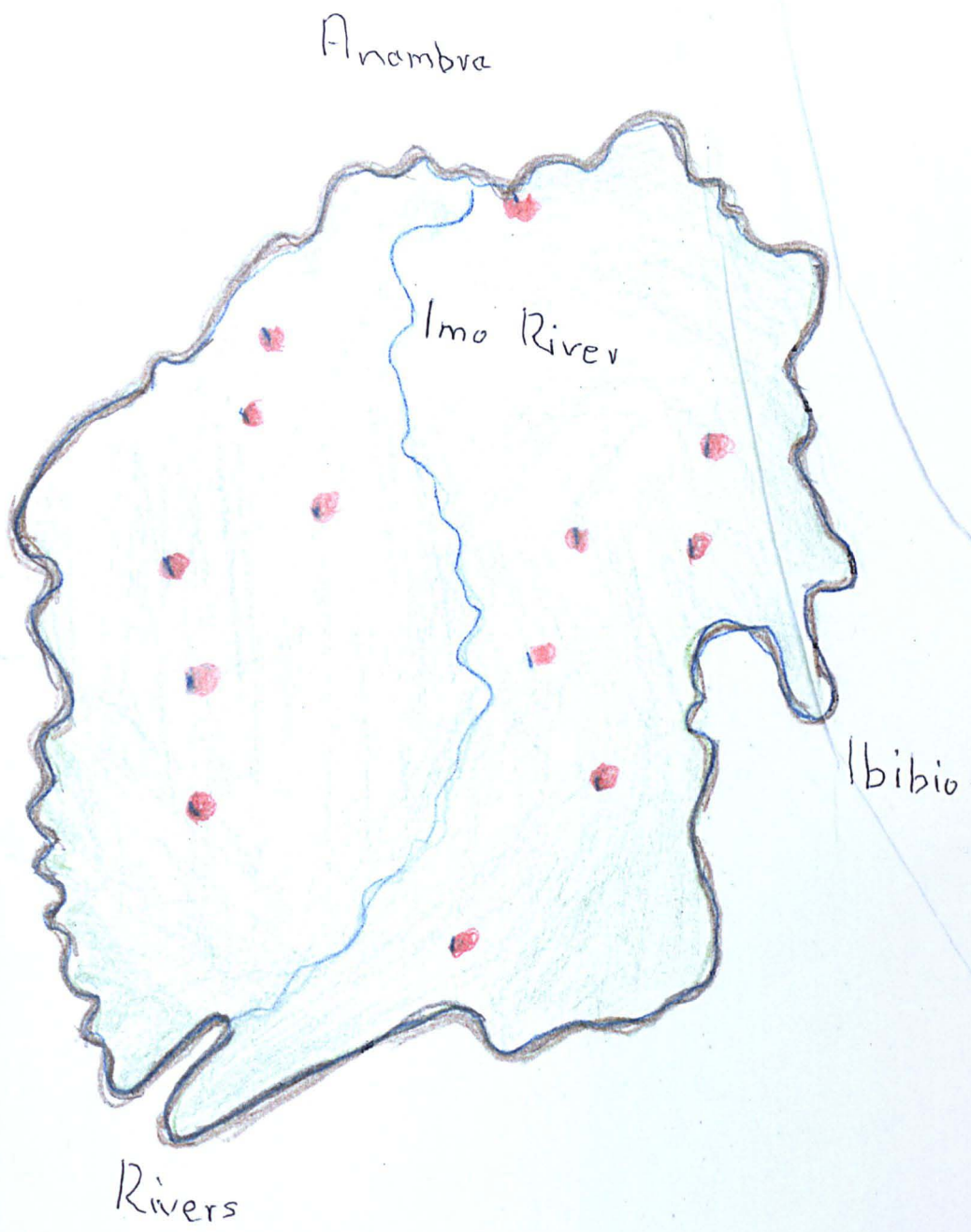



A MAP OF NIGERIA

(SHOWS THE LOCATION OF IMO STATE))



# A MAP OF IMO STATE



 The educational institutions that participated in the empirical study.