Review Article

Challenges Faced by Women Attending Continuing Education in North-West Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper discuss the meaning and origin of continuing Education and highlighting the challenges Faced by Women Attending Continuing Education in North-West Nigeria, Continuing education is meant for those who had left early the formal school system. It is aimed at helping these sets of people to continue their education in a less rigid formation than what formal school system provides, and probably help them to go further In Nigeria presently, the practice of continuing education has been broadened to include the provision of educational activities that will meet the needs of illiterates, the drop-out. The underprivileged. Educationally disadvantaged, oppressed, the unnerved different categories of professionals, the down-trodden and the backwards. Thus, continuing education offers a wide range of training or education meeting needs of all shades of people. It therefore serves as the best means or instrument of democratizing education or equalizing access to education irrespective of age sex or social affiliation. Women education faced the following challenges even as they continuing the Education: Cost of schooling Marital instability, Children/husband, Gender discrimination, Conflict and crisis, Class struggle, Cultural and religious Imitations, Povertty, Illiteracy. The paper suggested among other that other obstacles, like social cost to education, personal interest and commitment to education distance-related barriers to education, re-entry policies for young mothers, and hygiene management in schools.
Keywords: Challenges, Women and Girls Continuing Education.

INTRODUCTION

Inequalities in education for girls and women are complex: women and girls face explicit barriers to entry to school, for example, violence against women or prohibitions of girls from going to school, while other problems are more systematic and less explicit, like their inability to go back to school and complete school, even when they are in school continuing their education. While in school women still faced challenges in school due to their various task and responsibilities.

Nigeria has expressed a commitment to education with the belief that overcoming illiteracy and ignorance will form the basis for accelerated national development. Regardless of the incontrovertible evidence that education is crucial to the development of the citizenry and the nation, inequalities in access to education still exist, and this led to women facing a lot of challenges in the society. Millions of hapless people in Nigeria including children are excluded from the processes and outcomes of education for Nigeria to move forward as a nation, she must remove all forms of discrimination against women and the girl-child in education. Equal educational opportunities should be created for both men and women. On the 18 December, 1979, the convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by United Nations General Assembly. This convention becomes an international treaty on 3rd September, 1981, after twenty-one countries had ratified it. About ten years after, more than one hundred countries of the world, perhaps including Nigeria, have agreed to be bound by the provisions of this convention. For all practical purposes, the twenty seven articles of this convention provide straight forward blue prints for removing all forms of discrimination against women in the Nigerian educational system. Nigeria must therefore, sincerely implement the provisions of the convention.

It should be stated that the Nigerian federal Government is doing a lot to improve women's

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education as a separate Ministry for Women has been established at federal and state levels. In September 1986, the Federal Government convened a workshop specifically to prepare a blue print on women education in Nigeria. The blue print prepared by the workshop was adopted by the National Council on Education in 1987 some of the recommendations are:

Legislation on Women Education:
There should be a legislation that girls should remain in school, this is in line with the 1989 UNICEF's convention on the right of the child, which called for national legislation that set 18 years as the minimum age for marriage. This would defeat early marriage prejudices and child bearing, which are factors that cut short the education of girls and women.

a. Any socio-cultural religious and superstitions belief which inhibit women and prevent them from self-actualization, thus place them in a perpetual subordinate position must also be abandon.
b. Women in modern technological societies, should be educated in order that they in turn would bring up the future leaders of their countries to meet the expectation of tomorrow.
c. Career guidance and counseling: in order that the education of women in the developing countries be directed towards the right path, more women should be trained as career guidance counselors, to advice female students at the various institutions.
d. Women centre and Early Child Care Development (ECCD): these serve as avenues for women to earn income generating skills to give them a firm economic base.
e. Parents are to give equal opportunity to children irrespective of sex.
f. Government to discourage withdrawal of girls from primary school
g. Government to enforce laws prohibiting hawking and street trading by young girls of school age.
h. Government to establish more single sex boarding schools for girls.
i. Positive discrimination towards women such that more of them should be admitted into higher institutions.
j. The curriculum of non-formal education for women to cater for both rural and urban women, and secondary school drop-outs.
k. Education of women with special needs to be encouraged that is nomadic women, women in pudah, women in rural areas, drop out women, widows, single families and career women.
l. Government is to encourage special education for women who are specially gifted or handicapped (Sarkinfada & Hussaini 2019).

For all these provision to be effective, government must go beyond paper works, appropriate legislations should be enacted to implement these provisions. Any parents, employer or educational authority found discriminating against women and the girl-child in educational system should be made to face the full weight of the law. Gender inequality is too deep into the Nigerian mind, that some drastic steps must be taken to curb it.

Women education is a global priority for UNESCO and is inextricably linked to UNESCO's efforts to promote the right to education and support the achievement of education and literacy showed that almost two-thirds of the world's 792 million illiterate adults are women. This situation has not changed and the latest projection indicate that this ratio will remain at this level by 2020 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics).

That means the world would miss out on a critical gender disparity which has been highlighted by both the Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Among the obstacles of women education is the ability to access the right to participate in and complete their education, without hindrances from poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early pregnancy, male dominance, and traditional attitudes. UNESCO (2021) indicated that the discrimination against girls and women exist in all educational institutions. An estimated 35 million girls of primary school age and 37 million girls of lower secondary school age were not enrolled in school in 2009 worldwide. The extent to which girls are disproportionately excluded from education is higher at the secondary level than in primary education and increases further from secondary school levels to tertiary institutions (Sarkinfada, & Hussaini (2019).

Women education has now become government priority, similarly, many non-governmental organizations have also paid so much attention to women development as well as increasing government commitment. Due to the low trend in girl-child education in the Northern states of Nigeria, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) initiated a programme known as Northern Education Initiative (NEI) in 2008 to facilitate the Girl child Education and Women Development. This organization decides to choose Sokoto and Bauchi as their area of jurisdiction due to the low women social and economic development. The NEI introduced literacy, numeracy, psychosocial skills, and vocational training in twelve selected Local Government Areas of these states as a means of increasing women literacy in order to facilitate their development (NEI, 2012). With all these efforts, there has been very little to show that much has been achieved towards the women empowerment

Statement of the Problem
In fact, the statistics consistently released by UNESCO has continued to show a frightening increase in the number of illiterate women particularly in sub-

Saharan African countries, from a global rate of 58% in 1970, 63% in 1980, 65% in 1990, and 70% in 2000. (UNESCO, 2021). In UNESCO (1991) report between 1960 and 1985 the number of illiterate women grew by 86(%) percent. With a global total of $54 million development grant for African continent, there was almost 50 percent increase in the number of illiterate persons (from 68 million to 98 million) for 25 years between 1960 to 1985 showing that more than two third of the group were females in the 2001 human index report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).This trend has been attributed to the dwindled economic fortunes, general corruption by government and inconsistent official government policies (UNESCO, 2012).

Women inability to significantly contribute to national development and their unprogressive prominence in the national scheme of affairs has to a large extent hindered their socio-economic development (Babalola & Akor, 2013). National Bureau of Statistics (2013) indicated that North-west States have the highest percent of female aged between 15-24 who are presently not contributing to socio-economic development of the State even with their acquired qualification. Observed that Sarkinfada, (2011). Women in the North-western States suffer a lot of constraints in their ability to contribute to socio-economic development due to cultural and religious inclinations of the North-western people. In this regard asserted that Sani (2011) though Islam being the dominant religion in the North-west Nigeria favours and encourages education among males and females, but propagate that women should be in seclusion. Thus it appears that the religion and cultural beliefs of the people has cause inconvenience in women socio-economic development (Sarkinfada, 2011).

There is a general cultural disdain for working class women in the North-western States of Nigeria. Women who are empowered with skills are often not allowed to work and contribute to family income are being handicapped financially leading to vicious circle of poverty. On the other hand the inability to get the required knowledge to enable women to work and earn income allows the circle of poverty to continue. World Bank (2014) stated that countries that invest in promoting the social and economic states of women tend to have lower poverty rates. Evidence has also shown that resources in women hand result in household expenditure and benefit children that is why the literate women could use the skills acquired to generate income, while illiteracy has handicapped others.

Illiteracy has been the greatest enemy of mankind, especially for women. It has for long time kept women as subordinates, ignorant of their social situation, and in great confusion. High level of illiteracy has made a lot of countries under developed especially in African countries to which Nigeria belongs. Illiteracy would not become markedly reduced for years, because a large proportion of those who could neither read nor write in the North-west are women. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report of 2012 indicated that there is still insufficient increase in Women social economic development in North-western States of Nigeria. Statistics of the Federal Ministry of Education (2012) indicated that only 20 percent of women are contributing to income generation and family sustenance in the North-western States of Nigeria.. A survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (2010) in Nigeria estimated that Women in gainful employment was 56.3% with huge variations between states (Lagos 92.1% and Zamfara 14.5%) and regions (urban74.8% and rural 48.6%). (Sarkinfada, 2019) mentioned that a cursory look at the pattern of women's involvement in social and community activities in Nigeria reveals abysmal low levels. In spite of all the laudable goals and objectives of education, Nigerian women, especially in the Northern part of the country still suffer a lot of constraints and inhibitions which militate against their personal and communal development. Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since 1948 Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Conceptual Clarification

Education is the key element in the development of any nation whether politically, socially, economically, culturally, and technologically. Development can only take place when citizens are equipped with the right skills and knowledge. Continuing education according to Akanji (2012) is the education that adds to or prolongs the education already received. It is the education that reinforces the knowledge one had earlier received (Egunyomi, 2001) Sarkinfada (2017) also asserted that continuing education is meant for those who had left early the formal school system. It is aimed at helping these sets of people to continue their education in a less rigid formation than what formal school system provides, and probably help them to go further. It also makes educational opportunities easily available to individuals who, though might not have dropped out of the formal school system, are never the less unable to continue their learning after their initial education on a full time basis especially those who want to combine work with study.

According to Sarkinfada (2017) continuing education connotes a subset of adult education seek to positively link the needs and aspirations of individuals with educational activities, for the development of their potentialities and for the socio-economic and political development of a nation state. Furthermore, it is a process of adoption of the worker-trainee to technological changes and the resultant increase in the minimum knowledge required (Sarkinfada, 2020).

Continuing education is therefore, essentially a part-time rather than a full time learning activity. The idea behind continuing education is premised on the fact

that regardless of one's work or the extent of schooling, learning has not and cannot stop with the end of schooling because new concept, new skills, new tools and new knowledge keeps growing and emerging. However, education based on knowledge of yesterday will be inadequate to cope with challenges and changes of tomorrow.

Hence, Akinpelu (2002) believed that one cannot do today's job with yesterday's tool and hope to be in business tomorrow. This is why Sarkinfada (2017) expressed that continuing education is a response to the constantly changing conditions of modern life, it must lead to the systematic acquisition, renewal upgrading and completion of knowledge, skills and attitudes required by changes. The vast majority of programmes of continuing education are organized for clients/learners who have occupation, or jobs other than studying. Such participants attend evening night weekend, summer-vacation classes or even study on their own in their homesteads (as in distance education) moreover, they normally have other occupational or professional duties which constitute their major pre-occupation.

Education programs are designed to meet identified or expressed adult leaning needs. The world today is now a "global village" and education is required for man to function effectively in an ever changing world. (Sarkinfada, 2020). Education serves as an acquisition of skills. Many of the continuing education centres found in the North-west are all funded by the government and non-governmental organizations with the aim of providing continuing education for interested member of the public who wish to avail themselves with the privilege of furthering their education. These continuing education centres cater for different categories of clienteles ranging from dropouts from formal school system, workers and adults who intends to improve on their qualification and upgrade their skills in order to be abreast with changes in the world of work and society in general.

There is the tendency to associate combining education with vocational, occupational or professional skills development. This is apparently the cause most of the continuing education centers are known to have something to do with such vocational or professional skills such as learning computers, remedial program for Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) University and Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) attending conferences, seminars, and workshops (Sarkinfada, 2020). The major focus of continuing education is the provision of educational opportunities for all categories of individuals irrespective of whatever failure that was earlier recorded thereby ensuring community relevance of the individuals in the society, enhancing the provision or access to education for all citizens and helping retrieve the economic wastage that early-school learners would have constituted.

In Nigeria presently, the practice of continuing education has been broadened to include the provision of educational activities that will meet the needs of illiterates, the drop-out the underprivileged, educationally disadvantaged, oppressed, the unnerved different categories of professionals, the down-trodden and the backwards. Thus, continuing education offers a wide range of training or education meeting needs of all shades of people. It therefore serves as the best means or instrument of democratizing education or equalizing access to education irrespective of age sex or social affiliation.

History of Continuing Education:
To understand the importance of any subject especially i.e. relation to education, it's critically to take a cursory look at where it started and go all the way back to the beginning. CE is not different. While the exact start of the practice and the idea of continuing education can be difficult to ascertain, the first academic institution to provide education to adult learners who had completed undergraduate degree programmes was the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1907. Following the University Wisconsin Madison programmes, which targeted past students, the New school for Social Research was the first American school designed specifically for adult learners looking for key subject matter, though it was not clearly designated as continuing education students did not have to have a degree to partake. This school was founded in 1919 (EstateCE, 2014).

Eventually, other programmes began to spring up such as the Empire State Colleges a suburb unit of the State University of New York which was founded in 1969. The school was the first institution in the United States to provide higher education to adult learners who had completed degree-programmes. Empire State College was unlike the University of Wisconsin-Madison's programmes which blended university and post graduate degrees and the New School for Social Research which had blended course offerings. On the contrary, Empire State College focused exclusively on providing continuing education in the form that is recognized today.

It became apparent that continuing education was difficult for working professional to fit into already busy schedules. With this in mind, the University of Florida created an entire department-the Division of Continuing Education which offered courses during evening hours and on weekends to accommodate working and professional students. Started in 1976, the modern mode of advanced course offerings on flexible schedules was born. As time passed during the 1990s, the number of available CE programmes and course offerings skyrocketed as the number of professionals enrolled in the programmes. At that point, over 50 universities offered industry-specific continuing education programmes (EstateCE, 2014). Today, whether mandated or by force, more individuals than

ever are pursuing CE courses from professionals who understand the importance of continuing education to X-ray technologists and other medical fields to those looking for an edge in the downturn of the economy. CE provide a boost to their careers as it paves the way for many working adults to go back to school (EstateCE, 2014).

Theoretical frame Work
There are four main types of feminist theory that attempt to explain the societal differences between men and women (Thorne, 2006).
a. Gender Differences
b. Gender Inequality
c. Gender Oppression
d. Structural Oppression

Gender Differences:
The gender difference perspective examines how women's' location and experience of social situations differ from men's. For example cultural feminist look at the different values associated with womanhood and feminity as a reason why men and women experience the social world differently. Other feminist theorists believe that the different roles assigned to women and men within institutions better explain gender difference including the sexual division of labour in the household. Existential and Phenomenological feminists focus on how women have been marginalized and defined as the other in patriarchal societies women are thus seen as objects and are denied the opportunity for self-realization. To learn more about how this perspective translates to research and applies to current events.

Gender Inequality:
Gender inequality theories recognize that women's location in and experience of social situations are not only different but also unequal to men's reasoning and agency, but that patriarchy, particularly the sexist patterning of the division of labour, has historically denied women the opportunity; to express and practice this reasoning. Women have been isolated to the private spheres, they are still expected to manage the private sphere and take care of household duties and child rearing. Liberal feminists point out that marriage is a sites of gender inequality and that women do not benefit from being marred as men do, indeed, married men. According to liberal feminists, the sexual division of labour in bothe the public and private spheres needs to the altered in order for women to achieve equality. To learn more about how sociologists study gender inequality and why it remains an important area of study.

Gender Oppression:
Theories of gender oppression go further than theories of gender difference and gender inequality, by arguing that not only are women different from or unequal to men, but that they are actively oppressed subordinated, and even abused by men. Power is the key variable in the two main theories of gender oppression psychoanalytic feminist attempt to explain power relations between men and women by reformulation Feud's theories of the subconscious and unconscious human emotions, and childhood development. They feel that conscious calculation cannot fully explain the production and reproduction of patriarchy. Radical feminist acknowledged in patriarchal societies where women are oppressed. They identify physical violence as being at the base on patriarchy but they think that patriarchy can be defeated if women recognize their own value and strength, establish a sisterhood of trust with other women confront oppression critically, and form female separatist network in the private and public spheres.

Structural Oppression:
Structural oppression theories, posit that women's oppression and inequality are as a result of capitalism, patriarchy, and cultural and traditional beliefs, Sociologist feminist agree with Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels that the working class is exploited as a consequence of the capitalist mode of production, but they seek to extend this exploitation not just to class but also to gender intersectionality. Dorothy R, Smith, Sandra Harding and Patricia Hill Collins theorists seek to explain oppression and inequality across a variety of variables, including, class gender, ethnicity, and age. They make their important insight that not all women experience oppression in the same way. White women and black women, for example, face different form of discrimination in the workplace.

Thus, different groups of women come to view the world through a shared standpoint of 'heterogeneous commodity. Patricia Hill Collins made attempts to reduce the oppression against the black woman, she showed the importance of African women culture. Efforts to redefine and explain the importance of black woman African culture; Uncovered new black female experience; and identify social relations where women pass on essentials' to coping with oppression.

Challenges faced by Girls and Women in the Education System
Women in Nigeria have had various challenges in order to obtain equal education and creation of awareness and rights for women. Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since the 1948 when Education of women has been reorganized as a disposition for a lifelong acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes, competence and skills. (Shehu & Sarkinfada, 2022). Sarkinfada, (2020) observed that women are informally trained especially in preparation for their marital life. While Women with some formal education are more likely to seek medical care, ensure their children are immunized, be better informed about their children's nutritional requirements, and adopt improved sanitation practices. Education thus ensure that their infants and children have higher survival rates and

tends to be healthier and better nourished Women in Nigeria has faced a lot of challenges in trying to acquire basic education in order to become relevant in the society. They faced various challenges in all aspect of human endeavour, ranging from:

a. Family
b. Community
c. Work Place,
d. School and
e. Health

These challenges faced from these aspect of life can be categorize in the following:

f. Cost of schooling
g. Marital instability
h. Children/husband
i. Gender discrimination
j. Conflict and crisis
k. Class struggle
l. Cultural and religious Imitations
m. Povertty
n. Illiteracy (Sarkinfada, 2020: 14)

Challenges Faced by Women in Continuing Education

Challenges of women Continuing Education according to Sarkinfada (2017) are inherent in the spheres of the programme which include the following:

a. No clear goals as to what constitute continuing education in the National policy of Education. The document has some lapses, it had not provided in clear terms what continuing education is expected to achieve. It is even more glaring in the section on technical education, should continuing education be remedial, developmental or cultural? Or should it be both of them and what point in time could it be provided?

b. Roles of various agencies were not defined. Specific roles between various government and non-governmental agencies need to be defined to avoid confusions and over lapping of duties like. What are the roles of the National Board for Technical Education (NABTEB), the National Teachers Institute (NTI), the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC). the National Universities Commission, Centre for Management Development (CMD), the Administration Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and the private organization in the accreditation of the continuing education.

c. Funding is a serious issue when it comes to continuing education because even the governments higher institutions that are supposed to carry the mandate are relatively poor funded to cope with the ever increasing demand of continuing education of the present times? It is said that workers education is better funded in the private sector than in the public sector.

d. Lack of regulatory body to protect the interest of the learner. However the costs of such programme(s) keep on increasing which ordinarily effect the learners. Therefore the call for the establishment of a regulatory body that will reasonably protect the interest of the learners is imperative.

CONCLUSION

Addressing the challenges that serve as impediment to women education, would assist the women folk to play their role effectively in the home. This becomes necessary that women are educated to acquire knowledge of health care for them to impact the right information to members of their family. Whatever the mother teaches the children are carried about by the children albeit modified as they grow and interact with other members of the society. Though the paper is in the view that challenges are inevitable but the need to tackle them and progress for national development becomes very paramount.

Way Forward

Women Education can be enhance and gender discrimination eliminated if the following are measures are implemented by the community and the government at large

a. Stakeholders should address various issues on gender discrimination and avoid harmful practices that deny girls access to school and quality education.

b. Governments to ensure that budgets are gender-responsive and that national education plans and policies prioritize women education and putting in place certain modalities, such as allowing girls to continue their education even with teenage pregnancy.

c. Schools and Governments use assessment data to eradicate gender gaps in teaching and learning as faced by teachers and students.

d. Need for social protection measures, which including availability of funds in internet banking, to improve girls' transition to and retention and assimilation n in secondary school.

b. Increase teacher training and professional development on gender-responsive as applicable teaching strategies

c. Removes gender stereotypes from teaching and learning and providing easy access to learning materials.

d. Finance other obstacles, like social cost to education, personal interest and commitment to education distance-related barriers to education, re-entry policies for young mothers, and hygiene management in schools. (Sarkinfada & Rabo, 2022)

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