

Girl-Child Education in Kano

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Introduction

Women studies understandably tended to focus attention on issues of access and expressions of opportunity especially in the work-place. Prejudice against women has been so long ingrained in the human psyche that it has become an institutionalized process: less girls and women attend schools not because of their dwindling number in the population, but because of the futility of their education. It is clear that only institutionalized interventionist processes can reverse the trend. Traditional parents in all cultural settings are more concerned with ensuring their daughters "get settled", which in most cases meant marriage immediately after the secondary school years. Accusations at the government for not doing enough, or not employing enough women might have led to re-thinking on the part of policy makers about the strategies to be employed to encourage greater participation of girls in the educational process. A specific strategy adopted by the Kano State government is in the area of provision of science education for girls in the State. To understand what makes the strategy significant, we have to look at the nature of science and scientific activities, and how it affects the learning of girls in at least the secondary stage of their learning processes.

Women in Nigeria face the same sociological problems as women elsewhere: gender disparity and discrimination. To this effect, Lewis (1980) claims that "today, many African women are calling for a radical break with the sexism of the past. They are calling upon their governments to establish departments that address the concerns of women. They feel that they, and their countries, would benefit directly from a policy aimed at upgrading the basic knowledge of the thousands of women who toil in the rural area and live in the urban areas but because of illiteracy and lack of skills never reach their full potentials. These women assert that the integration of women into national development should not be based on former myths, for it can, they realize, mean that co-option may still become part of the established order and, therefore, controlled by it...The critical point here is whether the new developmental thrust in Africa and the integration of women into the economy will restrict instead of enhance or harm instead of benefit, women" (Lewis 1980 p.45)

Such points were brought out forcefully in a survey by Adisa and Nwankwo (1984) who conclude that the austere times in the country compels some housewives to search for jobs (one area where women are wanting). Women formerly left at home to cope with their motherly roles and ensure proper upbringing of children now troop out of their homes for employments "to make ends meet."

Equality of opportunities of course begin with the educational system the society operates, and as far as the western form of education is concerned, this is also likely to remain a big problem in Northern Nigeria — especially as the problem has deep roots. For instance as far back as late 1950s, Congleton (1958) claimed in an interview that “people in Northern Nigeria attach great importance to the discipline which children learn in the home, and many of the men feel that if girls stay away from home at a boarding school too long they will never be able to control them when they are their wives. They know that once a girl is beyond the age of 14, she has more ideas and a will of her own, and she may not be submissive to her husband in the way they would wish her to be” (Congleton 1958, p.73).

The fear of independence from the men by women who are educated is seen as a stumbling block by the women themselves — as reflected in a survey by Hackett and O’Connell (1976). The respondents in their sample indicated that the main obstacle to girls education in their home area was the fear that education will spoil girls. The researchers claim that “other research has singled out this factor as being most important among Hausa communities where *yar bako* or “schoolgirl” has often been made synonymous with a girl who will deteriorate morally” (Beckett and O’Connell 1976, p. 251).

Government and Girl-Child Education in Kano

Modern education (i.e. education with roots in Nigeria's colonial past) has never been fully accepted in Kano because of the historical antecedents which linked the development of education with Christian missionary activities in Nigeria. This was brought about by the Islamic nature of Kano State (Kano State 1976, 1983). As a Kano State government Committee (*Galadanchi Committee*) set up to analyze the problems of education generally in Kano observed,

There is still, in our society, the lingering suspicion of Western education as an agent of Christianity. As a result of this suspicion, it is difficult to convince a great number of our people of the desirability of sending boys to school, let alone girls. The proliferation of Islamiyya Schools (mixed schools with strong Islamic influence) shows conclusively that when Western education is mixed with Arabic and Islamic religious teaching, it is readily acceptable. (Kano State 1976:35)

The gravity of the situation *as it affects girls* the most sacrificial group of learners—is reflected in Table I which shows the number of girls in Kano State post-primary schools in 1960s.

Table I: Kano State Post-Primary Students, 1962-1970

Year	Total	Girls	% Girls
1962	1,998	480	24
1963	2,465	622	25
1964	2,746	452	16
1965	3,310	788	23
1966	3,512	863	24
1967	3,404	771	22
1968	3,999	864	21
1969	4,707	804	17
1970	6,159	939	15
Mean	3,588	731	20

Source: Kano State, 1970

Table I suggests a small number of girls in relation to the number of boys who attend post primary schools. For instance, the highest percentage of girls in schools was in 1963 when girls constituted 25% of the post-primary school population in Kano. And even then, girls are not found in all post secondary institutions, such as Craft and Technical Colleges.

The significance of the educational under-representation of girls in Kano in Table I is more so when the total population of girls of post-primary age in Kano, is taken into consideration. According to the 1963 census figures (the most reliable in Nigeria), the 10-14 female population (the bulk of the post primary population) in Kano was 268,933—out of which, for instance in 1962 only 480 were in post-primary schools.

The problem of low enrollment of girls in western type of schools in Kano State was not confined to the 1960s. It persisted well into the early 1980s making the problem almost permanent to the social structure of Kano State. This is indicated by Table II which shows the transition rate of girls from last year of Primary school to the first year of Post Primary school the following year.

Table II: Female Transition Rate From Primary To Post Primary Institutions In Kano State, 1976-1983

Year	Primary 7	Year	Number	%
1976	5,128	1977	1261	24
1977	5,103	1978	1030	20
1978	4,806	1979	1124	23
1979	5,589	1980	2402	42
1980	9,466	1981	2351	24
1981	56,258	1982	2387	4
1982	30,641	1983	3586	12

Source: Kano State, 1983

Thus even after the advantages of education in both national and personal advancement have become obvious the rate at which girls continue their education after primary schooling in Kano remains quite small, as Table II shows.

And in all analysis of the situation the consequences of Tables I and II are often seen by observers as well as the Kano State government to be caused by parents who do not wish to see their daughters continue with education beyond a certain level (mainly primary school). For instance, in a survey of various works on girls' education in Northern Nigeria, Csapo (1981) discovered most of the findings place significant emphasis on the religious, social and economic factors hindering the education of girls in Northern Nigeria. Csapo blames the Northern Nigerian politicians for this situation by arguing,

Northern politicians might consider the education of every Nigerian citizen desirable, but they are confronted with the reality of prevalent religious and social practices. In a democratic system the majority rules, and until the majority is convinced of the value of and the need for changing social practices, a politician seeking election has to be aware and respectful of the feelings of the voters. The government might make schooling compulsory for both sexes...However, this decision will probably have to be postponed until sufficient classrooms are built, teachers are trained and methods of enforcing the law can be found.' (Csapo 1981:315)

Similarly, in a further analysis of the impediments to women education in Kano, the *Galadanchi Committee* observed,

It is regrettable that even though there has been a continuous awareness of women's education over the years' our educational leaders have only succeeded in paying 'lip service' to it. So far no positive action had been taken to show society the importance of women's education. The education authorities should first of all convince themselves on this important issue before convincing others. If the system of women and girls education is to be carried out on successful lines, the wives and daughters of the educated class must first be educated. (Kano State 1976:36)

And yet the Galadanchi Committee did not pay adequate attention to the efforts the Kano State government should make to encourage girls education in Kano, and the evidence shows clearly the government does not seem to do much in alleviating the situation. This is partly reflected in Table III which shows the number of post-primary girls institutions in Kano from 1947 to 1984.

Table III: *Girls Post Primary Institutions in Kano State, 1947-1984*

Institution	Year
1. Women Teachers' College	1947
2. Government Girls College, Dala (GGC)	1961
3. Women Teachers' College, Gezawa	1973
4. Government Girls' Secondary School, Kura	1975
5. Government Girls' Secondary School, Kwa	1977
6. Women Arabic Teachers' College, Gwauron Dutse	1977
7. Government Girls' School Secondary, Shekara	1979
8. Women Teachers' College, Mallam Madori *	1979
9. Government Girls' Secondary School, Kabo	1979
10. Government Girls' Arabic Secondary School, T/Wada	1980
11. Government Girls' Secondary School, Jogana	1980
12. Girls Science Secondary School, Taura *	1981
13. Government Girls' Arabic Secondary School, Dambatta	1982
14. Government Girls' Arabic Secondary School, Babura *	1983
15. Government Girls' Arabic Secondary School, Birniwa	1984
16. Government Girls' Secondary School, Kachako	1984

Source: Kano State, 1985; Schools marked * are now in Jigawa State.

There were thus 7 conventional secondary schools, 4 teacher training colleges and 5 Arabic oriented secondary schools in the old Kano

And although from 1984 to 1986 three more schools were added with a total population of 12,594, it is still interesting that although the colonial government in Northern Nigeria set the unusual precedent of providing a formal system of secular western education which had Kano State as its starting point (Graham 1966), no attempts were made to ensure *proportionate provision* of educational facilities for both boys and girls in Kano State even after Nigerian independence in 1960.

The significance of Table III is further emphasized when the total number of post-primary schools in Kano is taken into consideration. For instance in 1983 there was a total of 181 secondary schools in Kano - out of which 12 were for girls. Similarly there were 27 Teacher Training Colleges out of which 4 girls'. And although there were 22 Technical Colleges, none was for girls (Kano State 1983). These figures are projected in the table below

Institution Type	Total	Girls	% Girls
Secondary Schools	181	12	21.72
Teacher Training Colleges	27	4	1.08
Technical Colleges	22	0	0
Totals	230	16	

Table III indicates a gap of 14 years between the establishment of the first post primary school for girls in Kano and the next one. And although the gap between setting up new girls schools has decreased over the years, nevertheless the number of the schools is inconsistent with the demand.

Pushed Out, or Edged Out?

Yet in an ironic twist of history, the 1980s witnessed a massive surge in demand for girls' education in Kano. This is for instance indicated in a report in the *New Nigerian* newspaper of 17th October 1986 (p.12) which stated,

Kano State has recorded a dramatic rise in the number of females seeking admission into post primary institutions. Few years ago the State government complained of poor response of females to western education. Over 17,000 sat for the common entrance examinations this year (1986) out of which 7,156 were recommended for admission into post primary institutions. The Commissioner for Education, Alhaji Ibrahim Isma'il, said it was only 4,000 of those recommended for admission were actually admitted. He described the sudden rise in the number of girls seeking for admission as very pathetic and appealed to Federal Government to come to the aid of the State Government in this regard.'

Often studies in the past have blamed parents for not allowing their daughters to attend western type of schools (e.g. Kano State 1976), yet the government, most likely aware of the overall ratio of male to female births in the State does not seem to make adequate provisions to cater for the greater demand for education by girls in the 1980s by providing more schools for girls in proportion to the demand. In this situation, without enough schools to go to, one wonders what happened to the 13,000 girls who would not be admitted to schools in 1986, as the newspaper report indicated.

Thus the State government has no means of coping with a surge in demand for education by girls; *an ironic situation, when in every report parental resistance to education was cited as the major cause of the problem*. This is indicated, for instance, by government officials in a report where the Governor of Kano State

"blamed the shortage of indigenous manpower in the state on parents who refused to allow their children to go to school." (*Sunday Triumph* 23 September 1984)

And because government is committed to programs of social transformation requiring educated manpower, the State government often had to resort to drastic measures to enforce parents to send their children to schools. In one instance, it was reported,

twenty six parents have been taken to courts in Kano State because they refused to send their children to school. The state government had only recently warned parents to either send their children to school or face 'unpleasant consequences'. The trail judge warned and discharged them on the understanding that they would send their children to school immediately. The parents were warned that if they continue to refuse to send their children to school, they would be sent to jail. Some traditional rulers have also been involved in the campaign to persuade unwilling parents to send their children to school. (*New Nigerian* Wednesday 4th July 1984 p.16)

It is interesting to note the persistence of this problem of getting parents to send their children to schools, long after it has become obviously clear there

was no longer any formal association between modern education and Christianity; and despite concessions such as the early introduction of Islamic Religious Knowledge in the school curriculum.

Worst hit by parental reluctance, which was heavily capitalized by the Government bureaucracy, were girls who were shut out in the general provisions for education. In the planning stages of western type of education in Kano, it was not deemed necessary, or politically expedient, to establish a school for girls. It was only later, in 1930, that a palace school for girls, *Gidan Makama Primary School* was established. As this was meant for children of the Emir and his courtiers, clearly the vast majority of girls of the "commoners" were excluded. This school later became the *Provisional Girls School* (Gidan Makama), in 1947, before converting to *Women Teacher's College* (WTC), in 1962.

It was clear, even from this politically correct attempt at providing education for the palace girls, that they were expected to become teachers — there were no facilities to enable them to learn other careers. It is thus from this beginning that the educational indoctrination of girl's education in Kano, and by extension, the Northern Cluster, started: with the view that the only career suitable for girls is teaching. In the meantime, no one has bothered to ask the girls themselves.

Tokenism and Girl-Child Education

However, Kano was not without tokenism with regards to girls' education. For instance, in 1987 the Kano State Government appointed four Committees to determine the final shape of a new Social Policy for Kano. The Committees were on The Destitutes, The Almajirai, Women Affairs, and Social Mobilization.

Each of these Committees was given specific terms of references to enable it to make recommendations that will lead to a brave new hope for citizens of Kano State. In the Women Affairs Committee, term of reference No. 6 was to

identify the vital areas where female labor/work is specifically required for the well being of the society (e.g. Nursing, Medicine, Teaching, Social Work etc) and to encourage women to pursue such careers.

It is significant that Engineering, Civil Service, Science, Media, etc were not considered important enough. A Government White Paper which contained the governments' reactions to the Committees' findings and recommendations was released in May 1988.

In responding to this Term of Reference, the Committee on Women Affairs noted that:

The Shari'ah recognizes the fact that women have a role in societal development through contributing to the upkeep of their homes, and public work such as Nursing and Midwifery provided that conducive atmosphere prevails in accordance with the Shari'ah. But today you find a situation in which male doctors and other medical professional attend to women in hospitals and vice versa. Women can do such work to help develop the Nation if given the necessary education. (Kano State 1988 p.10)

Based on this main observation, the Committee on Women Affairs made a series of recommendations, the main one being,

The government should emphasize the importance of female education. All encouragement ought to be given to female education. Also, female education should be free. (Kano State 1988 p.11)

But since modern education has been identified as necessary for modern nation-building, it became imperative for the Kano State government to find ways of making it more acceptable. The fundamental strategy adopted by the Kano State government to achieve this was to make education as free as possible for Kano State indigenes. This case was presented by the Governor of Kano who in interview in 1984 argued against fees or levies in education in Kano:

if we say we are going to impose a levy on education or school fees we must remember that in some areas we still have to chase people to go to school and even if they go you have no guarantee they will stay because once the rain season comes their parents will just withdraw them automatically. We are now battling to make them understand how important it is for them to acquire education. If you impose a levy you are jeopardizing your chances of getting children to go to school. " (*New Nigerian* Wednesday 25th April 1984 p.3)

This strategy, far more attractive than threats of incarcerating errant parents, became the basis for wider provisions in general education through a system of generous scholarship provisions for Kano State students, especially those wishing to study science and technological disciplines in institutes of higher learning.

Thus education among the populace in Kano has graduated from the stage of sullen acceptance to a nadir of indifference. It is no longer seen by a shell-shocked populace as any agency for individual transformation. This is essentially because over the years—indeed since the first schools in Kano in 1909/1910 — education has not felt its presence felt to the very large population of people in the State.

Since the creation of the state in 1968, countless committees had been set up under various shades of policy control and governance to find what is quaintly called "lasting solutions" to the problem of education in the State. All the committees produced neatly typed reports that made neatly stated recommendations whose results are still as neatly ineffective as before the committees started. Clearly, then, there is still a problem of making children of school-aged population *literate* in Kano. Arguments abound that by the virtue of attending *Islamiyya* schools, the vast majority of these population clusters *are* literate. Nevertheless that does not equip them with intellectual instruments necessary for integration in a contemporary society.

Thus many factors limit girls' access to education. There are many places where provision for schooling does not exist. Parents may be reluctant to send their daughters to school if their sons remain unemployed after completing formal education. Boys in poorer families may rely on the women and girls for their

upkeep whilst they are in school. The demands on girls may be such as to inhibit their performance in school and discourage them from continuing their education. The marriageability of girls may in some countries be impaired if it is known that they have been or are going to school. Early marriage and pregnancy may limit girls' access to education.

To increase the participation of girls in formal and non-formal education, the girls themselves must become self-aware and self-determined so as to recognize their potential role in society. Women need to be made aware of the valuable part that girls can play in society. Parents need to be motivated to accept new roles for girls at home and in the community. Development planners, teachers, employers and other male-dominated groups need to be motivated to act as local change agents, using their influence to develop community awareness of the potential of girls.

Non-formal education programs to enable girls to enter formal school and to complete interrupted education should be encouraged. The Meadow Schools of Maharashtra in India offer girls the possibility of entry into Grade Four. In Lesotho, those girls whose schooling is interrupted by pregnancy are able to complete it through a non-formal education program. In Bangladesh, mothers' clubs and women's co-operatives provide functional literacy opportunities for those who have some schooling but who are unable to maintain regular attendance. The Anganwadi (Courtyard) Program for mothers and children in India makes similar provision. In Kenya and Jamaica, girls with some formal education are able to maintain their literacy and their academic and practical interests through the use of village library schemes. Other programs are designed to improve the employment prospects of girls. In Kenya the national youth service offers a two- to three-year training course in a variety of trades. The Government assists in the eventual placement of girls in jobs. In some Commonwealth countries urban girls in employment meet for some learning sessions, although this kind of provision is very limited.

Frequently, girls who have some academic qualifications cannot successfully compete for employment with their male counterparts. This points to the need for programmes which increase the confidence of girls and prepare them better for successful job competition. Employers should be encouraged to adopt fairer recruitment practices which do not discriminate against girls.

Switched Off!

Thus the education of girls in Kano, and by extension the Northern Cluster, had always been a thorny and unresolved issue. Typically girls' education in the rural areas of the state follows a specific pattern — which ends with the girls' often being denied by *the system*, the chance to further their education beyond the primary school. This, of course, is mainly due to faulty government policy; there are insufficient secondary schools for girls which thus denies a large portion of girls who may wish to proceed the chance to do so — especially those from the rural areas.

Yet these girls are too young to be married off. Village communities are not immune to social progress. The barrage of doom-laden messages about VVF and other horrifying diseases associated with early marriages have started manifesting themselves in the increasingly large number of pubescent girls roaming around urbanized rural areas. They constitute a danger to society in

that they could fall in bad habits. They cannot continue with their education either because of earlier-level failure or simply because there is no further school to go to, or because there are funds to enable them to proceed.

A fundamental erroneous assumption for reluctance of girls education in the North that it is a rural phenomena. Surprisingly, this is not the case. Many people in inner city environments also provide a 'stiff' opposition to the education of girls. Whilst in the rural areas the problem is that of possible lack of schools to go beyond the primary schools for the girls, in the urban settings it is the perceived lack of relevance of the entire educational framework. Poverty alleviation in the inner-city is not seen as possible through regular or conventional education. Indeed a vast majority of the girls in the neighborhood shun the school to enable them to hawk various, mainly consumable/food items for their parents (groundnuts, eggs, Lola, regular prepared food etc).

In a similar way, the images of small children (mainly boys) hanging around the various motor parks and main streets of our *villages* haunts any educational planner. Often these children are given out the in the care of a "mallam" ostensibly for Islamic learning; but ending up as cheap, abused child Labour. Any interventionist strategy for this age group which requires credibility must take into consideration not only their vocational needs, but also its integration with their Islamic education, and thus address their needs as adolescents. This should enable them acquire technical skills which makes them self-sufficient and therefore takes them off the streets and restore their dignity as human beings - instead of providing cheap, abused labor.

Emergence of Non-Formal Education as a Development Strategy

Thus it is out of the reaction to these failures of the *mainstream conventional education* that the concept of *non-formal* education emerged in all countries of the world. The idea of 'non-formal education' (NFE) — as distinct from its practice — is a very recent phenomenon. For instance, at an important international conference on *Education, Employment and Rural Development* held at Kericho in Kenya in 1966 there was no mention of 'non-formal education'. And yet, only two years later, there were calls for much greater investment in *non-formal* education and this was followed in 1973 and 1974 by two influential studies of the type of education needed to combat rural poverty. These studies gave wide currency to the non-formal idea.

The non-formal idea is thus part of a widespread search for alternatives in education which is itself intimately bound up with changing conceptions of development.

The term *non-formal* was given currency by development planners rather than educators. Existing terminology was seen as too narrow (e.g. 'adult education' is often confined to literacy or university extramural classes) while many of the more important programs (e.g. farmer training schemes) were sometimes not seen as 'education' at all, even by practitioners themselves. What was needed was an all embracing term for what at the 1966 Kericho conference were called 'educative services' to rural adult producers. *As it gained currency, the term also came to include provision for the school-age drop-outs and left-outs of the formal system.*

In the context of new development strategies, *non-formal education is being*

viewed as more relevant to the needs of the population, especially for those in the rural areas working in the traditional sector, since it attempts to focus on teaching people to improve their basic level of subsistence and their standards of nutrition and general health. Because of this it is likely to make a more effective contribution than formal education in alleviating the real problems of the poor, especially the rural poor, who often make up 70-80 per cent of the population.

Further, since the non-formal education process usually requires the participation of its recipients, *the programs will always tend to focus on the needs and priorities of the communities.* In this way they will contribute more effectively towards helping participants to meet their development needs.

Finally, non-formal education is seen as more immediately productive since the *learners acquire knowledge and skills which can immediately be put into practice,* thus reducing the long gestation period which exists between formal education and productive employment.

However, this is the planner's view and it has yet to be generally accepted. It will be of little use to anybody if non-formal alternatives do not prove acceptable to the intended participants. And if they do prove acceptable, then those who feel comfortable with the status quo may well be made uneasy.

This is more so because *non-formal education feeds back into our societies a rather grim and explosive power process by assisting the poor and down-trodden majority of the people to organize themselves so as to end the state of injustice in which they have been forced to live.* We can call this 'dialog and action', 'conscientization', or, as in India, 'redistributive justice'. No matter what term we use, *non-formal education is people's power*—the power to change society and make it move towards the paths of justice, tolerance, understanding and charity.

And yet non-formal education will not succeed if its objective—stated or unstated—is to lower the occupational aspirations of the masses to a 'more realistic' level and make them satisfied with, or resigned to, allowing their children to earn their living in the low-wage traditional sector. Its only chance of acceptance is if it is offered concurrently with formal education which becomes increasingly open to their children.

So who are the main target beneficiaries of non-formal education? I would like to identify three major target groups among youth: Children outside the school, unemployed youth, and the main focus of attention, girls.

It is in the case of the girls that specific interventionist strategies are needed to cope with the situation. It is clear that these strategies could not be based on government initiatives, since as we have seen, Government does not seem to have the will to address the problem, despite well placed tokenism. This is where NGOs, operating outside political philosophies and aimed at impactful capacity building, could make a more effective penetration in areas where government structures are either not possible or not feasible.

Any interventionist strategy must combine two basic philosophies in one package:

1. **First** is the need to keep non-schooling adolescent children off the streets. There place should be in what I call **Life Shelters**— places where they go to learn skills and eventually earn self-respect.

2. *Second* is the need to provide them with a **functional** education which equips them for a more independent living outside the school environment.

Focus Outcomes

The girl-child interventionist strategy must be a program with a potential society-ranging benefits.

- *The first direct beneficiaries are the parents of the girls who are now relieved that their wards have a focused activity everyday.*
- *The second main beneficiaries are the girls themselves who are now trained to acquire functional skills in crafts and trade to enable them eke out a meaningful form of living within their parents/husbands homes. Indeed their ability to sustain themselves through such activities encourages other parents/pupils to come to the Centre to be enrolled.*

For the Indigent Girl-Almajirai

- *Attempt to draw attention of Qur'anic and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) with regards to needs for useful living in society especially in vocational skills.*
- *To provide such children with sufficient proficiency in craft skills. c) To provide the same pupils with a creative avenue to commercialize the fruits of their labor through the school.*

Thus overall emphasis of community-based strategies in Kano focus attention on the issue of *Poverty Alleviation* as an agency of social transformation through staggered interventionist strategies.

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