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# No Longer in the Dark

- An essay about becoming literate



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# Abstract

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## Purpose and questions

Our purpose with this project is to explore the knowledge about the effects of education on society and the individual (in our case illiterate women). With this we also want to increase the understanding for the teacher profession and our important mission.

We will fulfil this purpose through investigating what previous research has said about the importance of education in general and what education does for a woman's life in Nigeria in particular. We will explore the effects of education for women in their cultural context.

- What has been said about the importance of education for the development of the society and the individual?
- How does education affect a Nigerian woman's view of herself?
- What happens in a woman's life and mind when she goes from being an illiterate person to a reading and writing person?

## Method

We have made six qualitative interviews with Nigerian women who did not get the opportunity to a basic education as children. They are now attending a Christian adult school in Jos, Nigeria to learn how to read and write.

## Findings

The women feel that the education has changed their view of themselves in many aspects. They have developed a higher confidence and are more independent than before. They feel more included in society when they have become literate. They have also got a more significant female consciousness through the education. The school's Christian approach permeates all the education and the students' subjective identity strengthens in accordance with the Christian values. We have noticed a difference in how long the women have attended the school and how much they have strengthened their identity through their way of answering our questions.

Even though the women have increased their confidence, independence and female consciousness we have also seen a limit for how far this development can proceed. Their view of womanhood is within the frames of patriarchy and therefore the effects of education for these women are also within patriarchy.

A conclusion we can draw is that education and the effects of education are highly connected to the context and the culture where it operates. Education's role in society becomes clearer when investigating it in a society where it is not obvious for all. This has given us a new perspective on education's role in a society. We have a clearer image about how a society's values are related to education and reproduced in school. Our expectations are that this essay will make the reader reflect about these processes as well. We believe that the outcome of this essay will help us remember how important our tasks as teachers are.

# Preface

This essay is written in two purposes. On first hand as a final project at the teacher training program at University of Gothenburg. On second hand it is an essay for SIDA, The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. SIDA requires an essay written in English. The research for this project was made in Jos, Nigeria.

The authors of this examination essay are Anina Lindmark and Karolina Möller. We are both teachers in the Swedish language and have a joint interest for pedagogic activity, literature and languages. We are very fond of travelling and experiencing new places and cultures which is why we wanted to write this essay in an unfamiliar environment. We have a genuine curiosity to discover new things and obtain new knowledge.

Except for our joint interests we have individual second subjects. Anina is a teacher in social studies and Karolina has studied the English language and is specialized in children with special needs. Our different perspectives have worked complementary when elaborating this essay.

During these ten weeks of working on this essay it has been a joined process. We have done all the different stages in the work together, even though we have had some different areas of responsibility.

We would like to thank the staff and the students at the adult school for women; The Movement for Christian Community Service of Nigeria (MCCSN) for their help, kindness and hospitality. We are also deeply grateful to SIDA and all the people who have made it possible for us to go to Nigeria. Writing this essay in Nigeria has been an incredible experience that we will keep with us for the rest of our lives.



# Table of content

Abstract

Preface

Table of content

<b>1. Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Purpose and Questions</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Theoretical Framework and Account of Literature</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 An Introduction about Nigeria	3
3.2 The City of Jos	4
3.3 Jos - through Our Eyes	5
3.4 The Educational Situation in Nigeria	6
3.4. 1 Women's Educational Situation in Nigeria	7
3.4. 2 Further development	8
3.5 The View of Womanhood in Nigeria	9
3.6 What does Education do for Society and for the Individual?	9
3.6.1 Educational Effects for Nigerian Women	10
3.7 Keywords	171
3.7. 1 Education	11
3.7. 2 Basic Education	11
3.7. 3 Literacy/Illiteracy	12
<b>4. Method</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1 Where and When?	193
4.2 How?	13
4.3 With whom?	204
4.4 The Validity of the Research	14
4.5 The Reliability of the Research	215
4.5. 1 Work with an Interpreter	15
4.6 Method of Analyzing	16
4.7 Ethical Considerations	226
4.8 Field Study Experiences	17
<b>5. Empirical Work</b>	<b>248</b>
5.1 The Movement for Christian Community Service of Nigeria (MCCSN)	
Women's education and development	18
5.1. 1 Background	18
5.1. 2 The School's Economy	19
5.1. 3 The Board and the Principal	19
5.1. 4 Student Population	19
5.1. 5 MCCSN's Approach	19
5.1. 6 The School's Programs	20
5.2 Findings	21
5.2. 1 Description of the Interviewed Women	21
5.2. 2 Reasons for not Attending School as Children	22
5.2. 3 Religion - the Substance of Life?	22
5.2. 4 "No man is an island" - the Importance of the Collectivity	23

5.2. 5 The Value of Being Paid Attention _____	25
5.2. 6 Productivity, the Way of Becoming a Good Person? _____	25
5.2. 7 Independence through Education? _____	26
5.2. 8 Does the World Expand when Knowledge Increases? _____	27
<b>6. Discussion _____</b>	<b>359</b>
6.1 Increasing of the Subjective Identity _____	359
6.2 Does Education lead to Gender Equality? _____	30
6.3 Does Increased Confidence Create Power? _____	371
6.4 Inclusion through Education _____	382
6.5 How does Education Affect a Nigerian Woman's View of Herself? _____	382
6.6 Concluding Words _____	393
6.6. 1 The Effects of this research - for Ourselves and for the Public _____	33
6.6. 2 Who are We to Judge? _____	34
6.6. 3 Further Research _____	34

## References

- Attachment A** Structure of the Nigerian education system  
**Attachment B** UN, The Convention of the child: §2 and §28  
**Attachment C** UN, The Convention of the child: §29  
**Attachment D** MCCSN News, Volume 9 Number 1, May 2007

# 1. Background

We are now at the end of our teacher training programme and we are soon to be teachers in the “real world”. We have learnt a lot during our education and we will probably realise that we learnt even more when we start working. Our thoughts about education have changed and developed during our schooling and we have created our own view of what education is. The current official view of education and the teacher training programme in Sweden is permeated by the socio-cultural perspective (Säljö, 2000). Our view of education is influenced by this perspective and therefore also this essay. However, in our country we take basic education for granted and it is hard to make the effects and importance of education visible for ourselves and for our students. As future teachers we believe that the foundation of our profession is the awareness of what education does for an individual and for society. One of the missions of our profession is to promote the importance of education. We believe that to be able to do so we have to reflect about education as a phenomenon.

We have received a scholarship that has given us the opportunity to do a field study in a country where basic education is not for granted. The scholarship is called Minor Field Studies and is financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, SIDA. The purpose of the scholarship is described as follows:

The aim of these scholarships is to raise the level of knowledge and interests of Swedish students in international development and give them the opportunity to learn about other countries, thus promoting international understanding and cooperation (Christer Ågren, head of division for capacity building and exchange programmes)

The base of our study is to increase the awareness of the effects of a basic education for both ourselves and the readers of our essay. We will try to accomplish this through a field study in Nigeria. We have spent eight weeks in Jos, Nigeria where we have been interviewing women. The women did not get a basic education as children and are now as adults attending school to learn how to read and write.

In Swedish culture, education is very important and we identify ourselves with our knowledge and degree of education. In what way does a person identify herself without educational knowledge? Is education important to her or are other things such as religion, number of children and getting married more central? How does the view of herself change when the educational knowledge increases? We believe that talking to these women can enlarge our perspective on education. The women have first hand experience of what illiteracy and lack of formal education mean but they also have the experience of being reading and writing people human beings. This experience that they possess gives us a unique opportunity to investigate the effects of education for an individual.

Lars-Åke Kernell (2002) maintains that when you can see the motive of why you are learning you will find education more meaningful. We believe that this research will make us see the motive more concrete. The effects of education will through this research have more connection to reality. The outcome of this research will hopefully be that we can motivate and inspire our students more and that their education feels more meaningful for them. Our aim with this essay is also to increase the knowledge of the public about developing countries' problems, in particular Nigeria in an educational context.

## 2. Purpose and Questions

In our country we take basic education for granted and it is hard to make the effects and importance of education visible for ourselves and for our students. As future teachers we believe that the foundation of our profession is the awareness of what education does for an individual and for society. With this as a background we formulate our main purpose of this study in the following way: Our purpose with this project is to explore the knowledge about the effects of education on society and the individual (in our case illiterate women). With this we also want to increase the understanding for the teacher profession and our important mission.

We will fulfil this purpose through investigating what previous research has said about the importance of education in general and what education does for a woman's life in Nigeria in particular. We will explore the effects of education for women in their cultural context.

On the basis of this we formulate three major research questions:

- 1 What has been said about the importance of education for the development of the society and the individual?
- 1 How does education affect a Nigerian woman's view of herself?
- 2 What happens in a woman's life and mind when she goes from being an illiterate person to a reading and writing person?

The first question will primarily be answered through the literature study and the second and the third through our interviews with a selected number of Nigerian women who as adults start to master the art of reading and writing. Some of the answers on the first question are presented in the next chapter and form a background to our own field research. We try to answer the second and third question in the chapter called "Discussion". These findings also form the basis for our comments and reflections in our concluding chapter, including the role of education and of our future profession as teachers.

### 3. Theoretical Framework and Account of Literature

The results presented in this essay exist in a special cultural context. Without any knowledge of this context we believe that the reader of this essay may find it difficult to relate to and understand our results. Peretomode (1995: 20) is a professor at the Department of Educational Administration and Policy studies in Abraka, Nigeria. He claims that education cannot be separated from the culture where it operates. Säljö (2000) agrees with this statement through a socio-cultural perspective and maintains that all people are a product of the society and culture they live in. A person's learning and development can not be separated from its environment. Our culture decides how we understand a phenomenon, not only what we think is important to learn but also how and why we should learn it. The Swedish view on education is based and influenced by our educational situation and our culture. In the same way is the interviewed women's view of education based on Nigeria's educational situation but also their society's culture. Therefore, we will give the reader a short introduction to Nigeria as a country and the city of Jos, where we made our field study. We have chosen to give a formal description of Jos to explain the situation. This is followed by a more informal description to create an atmosphere for the reader. We believe it is important for the reader to understand the context in which the interviewed women live their lives. After that we present a description of the educational situation in Nigeria and discuss the general view of women and womanhood in the country. We will look at statistics about women and illiteracy in Nigeria so the reader can form a picture of the situation. We will also present a few theories about education and what education does for an individual and society. Finally, we will define and discuss our essay's keywords. The words are *Education, Basic education, Literacy and Illiteracy*. These words will be used many times in our study and it is of great importance that we explain what we mean with these terms as thoroughly as possible. By doing so we hope to make the context more understandable and avoid misunderstandings.

#### 3.1 An Introduction to Nigeria

The facts in this part are collected from the following sources; Utrikespolitiska Institutet (2002), Amnesty International (2006) and Williams (2005). The historical parts are from Omolewa (1986).

Nigeria is a country twice the size of Sweden, situated in West Africa. The capital of Nigeria is, since 1991, Abuja. Lagos was previously the capital and it still remains the biggest city and the commercial centre of West Africa with its 19 millions inhabitants. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with approximately 143 million inhabitants and the population continues to increase. Today, 2007, 40 % of the population is under 14 years old.

Among this huge population there are many different ethnic groups, languages and religions. There are more than 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria, each with its own language and cultural heritage. The country's official language is English and it is spoken in all public schools. Around 50 % of the population speaks English fluently and the so called Pidgin English is known by even more Nigerians. Other big languages are Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo; they are

also accepted by the government. Many Nigerians speak at least three languages; English, one of the other big languages and their mother tongue. There are in total more than 500 languages spoken in modern Nigeria. The two largest religions in the country are Christianity and Islam. There are also indigenous beliefs among 10 % of the population. Religion is a very important part of most Nigerian's daily life. Religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians have arisen both in historical and recent times. This divides the north and the south part of the country religiously, politically and socially. In the northern parts Islam is the dominant religion and in the southern parts Christianity is widely spread.

As for many African countries the region that today is Nigeria used to be a place where European countries traded slaves in the period of 1400-1800. After this era Nigeria became a British colony in 1914 and remained British until the independence in 1960. The Federation of Nigeria was created by the British Empire in 1914 and the borders they created remain today. That can explain the many different languages and ethnic groups in modern Nigeria. The heritage of the British colony is visible in many levels of the society, for example the educational system (see attached document: A). After the independence Nigeria has had both civilian and military governments and its history after independence includes military coups and civil war. Since 1999 Nigeria is a federal democracy with a civilian government.

The country is the world's fourth largest oil exporter and has in that sense no reason to be poor. Still, the average Nigerian standard of living has fallen sharply in recent decades. Nigeria is one of the world's poorest countries. According to Amnesty International (2006) 70% of the population suffers from poverty (less than 1 \$/day) while the oil has made just a few extremely rich. The country's economy is depending on the oil at the expense of other domains such as farming and manufacturing. This has led to massive unemployment and high inflation. There are few jobs in the public sector, hardly any jobs in the industry and the farming sector barely exists. There are not many formal jobs and the most common way to make a living is to work as a trader on streets and markets, as a driver or a local service provider.

Access to water and electricity is a daily problem. The National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) is therefore commonly referred to as "Never Expect Power Again". 10% of rural households and 40% of Nigeria's total have access to electricity, but only sporadically. 38% of the population has access to safe drinking water.

Nigeria is, next to South Africa, leading in English written literature in Africa. The first African who received the Nobel Prize was the Nigerian author Wole Soyinka, in 1986. Another famous Nigerian author is Chinua Achebe. He originates from the Igbo people and has in his most famous novel; *Things Fall Apart*, described the meeting between the Igbo culture and European culture in the last century's Africa.

## 3.2 The City of Jos

The following facts about Jos are from Awofeso (2003) and Williams (2005). The information about a conflict that arose in Jos 2001 is from a report written by Human Rights Watch (2001).

Jos is the capital city in the Plateau State. The city was established in 1915 as a tin mining centre built by the British. The tin industry is still in use but much less than before the oil

findings. The Plateau state is situated on a higher level than other states in Nigeria which provides a cooler and more comfortable climate. The climate contributes to better conditions for growing crops than in other parts of the country. The city of Jos has approximately one million inhabitants and you can find people from a lot of different backgrounds, ethnic groups and religions. The city is very segregated, and a religious crisis between Muslims and Christians in September 2001 conducted to this segregation. The crisis lasted between the 7 and the 13 of September, 2001. It resulted in killing and destruction of many people and homes. There is no definite number of victims that were killed in the conflict, but according to Human Rights Watch at least more than 1000 people were killed (Human Rights Watch 2001: 2). The origin and cause of this conflict is still up for debate. The debate is very polarized and Christians and Muslims tend to blame each other. According to Human Rights Watch the causes were more political and economical than religious, even though religion made many people emotionally involved in the conflict. "It stemmed of a longstanding battle for control over political power and economic rivalry between different ethnic groups and between those labelled "indigenous" and "non-indigenous" inhabitants of the area" (Human Rights Watch 2001: 2). In Jos these different ethnic groups are treated differently by the authorities. For example the "non-indigenous" people pay more taxes and do not have the same political rights as the ones labelled "indigenous". These labels go way back to when many people immigrated to the area. A family which has lived in the Plateau State for generations can still be referred to as "non-indigenous". Similar conflicts have occurred in other cities in Nigeria in recent decades. Today Jos is still very segregated and there are tensions between Muslims and Christians. They live in different parts of the city and do usually not interact more than necessary.

### **3.3 Jos - through Our Eyes**

The first impressions we got from Jos were the chaotic traffic, the mountains of garbage, the lack of proper shops and the overwhelming religious presence. Cars, mopeds and people are everywhere. In our eyes there is no organisation, even if everybody knows exactly where they are going. People do not seem to care where they put their rubbish, and wherever there is an available piece of land it is covered with garbage. The first days in Jos we where desperately seeking for a proper supermarket or at least a little convenience store but these do not exist. Instead, you can buy your groceries in a "wardrobe-look-a-like" or in the street. Jos is far from a modern city with block buildings etc, and finding the town centre is sort of a mission. However, there are no problems finding the nearest church or mosque. There are a lot of them and wherever you look you can see signs of religion. People are expressing their religious beliefs through stickers on their cars, on t-shirts, key rings and bags. Companies are called things like; Pray Harder Hairdresser, Vote for Jesus Motors, Praise the Lord Optical Services and Thank the Lord Bakery. Even on the bins at the state university religion is present: "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." The city is permeated by religious conviction.

When we had adjusted to all the new and confusing things and accepted the differences we also saw the women's beautiful and colourful dresses, tasted the spicy and delicious street food and enjoyed the cheap and fresh fruits. There is always a smell of newly made food where ever you go. The sound level is high and it takes a while for your ears to catch anything else than the sounds of the traffic, but as soon as you leave the crowded main streets there are new more comfortable sounds around. In the neighbourhoods you can hear cocks crowing, dogs barking and people's greetings: "Welcome Bature" which means white person in Hausa. We also discovered the people's friendly behaviour and their everyday spontaneous chitchat in the street. We were amazed of how everybody was related to each other and also the

generosity the society consists of. It can be quite strange for a Swedish person to be offered to eat from a stranger's plate but it can also be a good practise for us frozen Scandinavians. Never before have we met a bank man who wants to give us domestic pineapple vine just to let us taste something really Nigerian. The fact that people we did not know brought food to us just to be friendly and to welcome us to their country was also a new experience.

### 3.4 The Educational Situation in Nigeria

Many facts in the parts; the Educational Situation in Nigeria and educational effects for Nigerian women, are from an UNESCO report published 2001 in Abuja, Nigeria. We found the report trustworthy even though UNESCO themselves maintains that statistics about the country and its inhabitants are not very reliable. There is no exact data over the population and therefore it is not any fully reliable data about education. We will still present the statistics we have found on women, education and literacy. To give the reader a chance to have an opinion about the report we here present what UNESCO writes about it:

This study resulted from a large collaborative effort led by the National Planning Commission (NPC) and UNICEF and involving inputs from numerous other Government ministries and parastatals, non governmental organizations, UN agencies and academic institutions. (UNESCO 2001: 3)

In 1990 a World Conference on Education for All was held in Jomtien, Thailand. There was affirmed the following: "Every person – child, youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs" (UNESCO, 2001; Article 1). It was also affirmed that this aim should be obtained by the year 2000.

According to UNESCO (2001: 142) curriculum analyses show that Nigerian children, in theory get education of good quality. It will make the children well prepared for their future. The Nigerian curriculum is well regarded and in many cases better than other West African countries' curriculum. It is comparable to those from the developed world. However, it is a huge gap between Nigeria's curriculum and what people actually learn in formal schools. Even though the curriculum is well regarded the country's performance on access to primary education and the quality of the education is very reduced compared to other countries in Africa. There is a concern in Nigeria about the failure in enlarging educational access and to reverse the negative trend of declining quality in the country's schools (UNESCO, 2001: 147).

In 1999 the government decided to make primary and junior secondary levels free and compulsory to all Nigerian children. However, attending school is not the only thing that matters. How well the child progresses in school and the quality of education is equally important. In 1996 Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Education conducted a nationwide study, finding that most children in primary school are being denied the right to a quality education. Their skills are insufficient compared to the knowledge they ought to have at that level. The reasons for the low quality of the state school education can be explained in many ways but the major cause is the lack of teachers. With a population where 40% are under 14 years old and the teacher profession is low rated and low paid it is hard to find enough qualified teachers to educate the younger population. In the rural areas there is also lack of school buildings and some children must have their schooling under a tree. The lack of school

material such as books, pencils and other learning material is also a reason for the low quality (UNESCO, 2001: 154-155).

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### **3.4. 1 Women's Educational Situation in Nigeria**

We have studied Nigeria's official policy about women's education. The country is a member of the UN and have signed The Convention of the child (§2 and §28 are about discrimination and education, see attached document: B). Nigeria has also, together with 170 other countries, ratified CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women). One of the members of Nigeria's government must report every fourth year on what the country does to improve the women's situation. Nigeria's Constitution Section 18 says that the government shall:

Direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels without discrimination. (Federal Government of Nigeria. 1999: section 18 p. 13)

However, Nigeria's government writes in its own report to CEDAW that there are no clear legal measures to ensure equal access to education for men and women in Nigeria. As we understand this, the government of Nigeria officially wants to change the women's situation when it comes to education but the country still has a long way to go.

Girls have historically been and are still being disadvantaged in the educational aspect. One of the main barriers holding back the advancement of women is the high level of illiteracy in Nigeria. Female illiteracy is far more common than illiteracy among men. According to UNESCO in 2003 31.9 % of the adult population was unable to read and write. 39% of the female population and 24.5% of the male population was at that time illiterate. These figures implies that a large number of Nigerian girls do not have the opportunity to get a basic education ( UNESCO, 2007).

According to UNESCO (2001: 164-167) the reasons for many women's lack of education are; poverty and cultural elements. Many families' economical situation makes it hard for them to afford the cost of sending their children to school. Even if primary and junior secondary school is free since 1999 the reality is quite different. The direct cost of sending a child to school are tuition fees, costs of uniform, food, examination fees, textbooks, learning material and cost of transport. There is also a hidden cost of the time that the child dedicates to school which could instead be time used to help the family earn money. If a family has to choose

who of the children they will send to school, old remained values make it easier to send the boys. It is also common that girls are getting pregnant or are getting married very young and by that their education stops naturally. The Nigerian school system does not accommodate pregnant girls and many people's attitudes are that married girls are in no need of education (UNESCO, 2001: 170). Liljeström (1994) is a professor at The Swedish Council for Research in Humanities and Social Science. She has made a research on teenage girls in Tanzania. She claims that reasons for many girls' low performances in schools in Sub-Saharan countries are socio-economic factors. For example girls are expected to do more work in the household which results in less time for school work. Another reason is that the school culture is male oriented and male dominated which can lead to girls feeling uncomfortable and not performing as good. Many young girls also think that to be female means not to be intelligent and intelligence makes women less feminine. These opinions about women and womanhood make young girls less interested in education (Liljeström and Tumba-Masabo, 1994: 60).

However, there is a big difference between the disadvantages of children and women in the South and the North of Nigeria. A child in the North has one third the chance of attending primary school than a child in the South. Less than one quarter of the girls in the north are attending primary school which is one of the lowest rates in the world. The amount of women illiterate in the North is two and a half times higher than in the South and even if the male illiteracy also is high the gender gap is much larger than in the South. The main reason for the low female educational enrolment in the North is early marriage which leads to early childbearing. The median age of female marriage is 15 years old which is five years younger than in the South. The level of poverty, child mortality and HIV/ AIDS rates are also much higher in the North. Lying behind many of the issues for women are deeply ingrained attitudes about the role of women. There is still a widely held belief that a woman's place is in the home and she is in no need to be educated. Women did not vote until 1976 in some of the Northern parts of Nigeria (Uche, 1998: 62).

There is also a big difference between the number of children attending school in the urban and rural areas. Children and women in the rural areas are disadvantaged to a higher extent and the quality of the education is often lower. On the other hand, there are many signs of modest progress. In certain parts of the country, mainly in the urban areas in the South states, the negative trend of girls lacking education is on its way to change. More girls are attending schools and in higher education girls are even overrepresented. The disadvantage of women in the rural areas is still a common phenomenon but it is getting better and the awareness of the importance of education is increasing (UNESCO, 2001: 277).

### **3.4. 2 Further Development**

To increase the rate of educated people in the country adult schools are being established to provide illiterates with a second chance to education. These schools are adjusting to be suitable for people who are working and have a family. The lessons are at times that do not clash with jobs and housework. Still, the number of these literacy programmes is extremely limited (UNESCO, 2001: 278).

UNESCO maintains that the only ways for Nigeria to increase the educational level is to convince people of the importance of education and emphasize the relevance to the need of labour market. This is yet unlikely to succeed if the country cannot solve the issues with access, quality and costs of education. Many young people also find it hard to understand the importance of education when they realise that it will not guarantee a job. Most of the

problems concerning women discussed in this essay are in one way or another related to poverty. The fundamental main issue is after all the huge poverty in the country (UNESCO, 2001: 279).

### **3.5 The View of Womanhood in Nigeria**

In our society you can find many different opinions about gender and the relation between masculinity and femininity. This is the case also in the diverse country of Nigeria. Even so we have found that people in general's opinion about gender relations differs from our view of womanhood. According to the Nigerian feminist Osita Ezenwanebe (2006) Nigerians have an intense female consciousness and women are ordinary appreciated for their special roles as daughter, wife and mother. However, the female essence is based on patriarchy and women are inferior to men. She also maintains that most Nigerian women are not feminist conscious despite their intense female consciousness. Many Nigerian women have not accepted the fact that they are being oppressed. They have not heard of feminism and those who have heard of it do not even understand it. According to Ezenwanebe the definition of feminist consciousness is the awareness of the social and cultural oppression of women and their consequent struggle for liberation (Ezenwanebe, 2006: 2-6). There is a lot of bias against feminism in Nigeria. Nigerian feminists have introduced a liberal form named "Womanism". This liberal form of feminism arose from African women feeling that their oppression differed from the oppression white women experienced. The white feminism has mainly focused on sexism and has ignored the oppression based on racism and class. "The womanisms" also emphasizes that they are committed to survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female, and they are not in any way separatist or adversarial to men. The "womanists" also underline women empowerment and they struggle for economical independence, education, participation in politics and a more equal family situation for women (Wikipedia, 2007).

### **3.6 What does Education do for Society and for the Individual?**

What is the purpose of education? Why do the United Nations together with so many countries and people value education so much that its is seen as a basic human right? We will here try to investigate theories about what education actually does for society and for the individual. After this we look into some research about effects of education in the Nigerian women's context.

According to UNESCO education is a basic need for a country as well as for an individual. An educated population is the key to the society's social and economic development. For an individual education improves his/her living conditions to a great extend (UNESCO, 2001: 24).The English aid organization Oxfam says the following about education:

Quality education can play a crucial role in reducing poverty and promoting gender equality. It is empowering to girls and boys and enables them to develop skills they need to help them overcome poverty, to make positive changes in their lives, and to make their voices heard. (Oxfam. 07-04-2007)

Peretomode (1995: 22-25) claims that education has a social function to help preserve the society's dominant culture. Formal education gives a joint knowledge and it unites the people

of a nation. The values, skills, habits and attitudes transmitted by the modern school in Africa differ in significant aspects from those of the traditional societies. The aim is to reduce stereotypical gender patterns and lessen age-old cultural bias. In that way the formal education is passing on the important things that society values and wants to preserve. In Nigeria many schools are religious and the Christian and Muslim values are transmitted by the schools. Religion is part of the culture and it forms cultural values (Peretomode, 1995: 22-25). The Nigerian sociologist Uche (1998: 64) maintains that the schools' separation by religious beliefs, can make it hard to accomplish a united nation and there trough united values.

Peretomode(1995: 24) maintains that quality education leads to that the pupils seeing beyond their horizons and realizing the need and importance of others. This may lead to more respect for others views, ideas and norms. He also point out that education can many times help to improve the economic situation of the people who acquire it. There are many different theories of how economy and education affect each other. The educated people in a country are usually paid better than the rest of the population. This must not mean that the educated people are more productive to justify higher pay. If it is so an effect for the society of education is greater productivity (Peretomode, 1995: 24).

When discussing education and the effects for society, it is important to mention democracy. The National Stakeholder Consultation on Education in Abuja 2000; affirm as follows:

Education is the cornerstone to development and the bedrock of the democratic process. Sustainability of democracy and the promotion of the development agenda of Nigeria are largely dependent on the philosophy, policy, structure, management, delivery and the positive outcomes of education (UNESCO 2001 p.156).

According to UN: s Convention of the Child (§29, see attached document C), the purpose of education is among other things that the student should develop a respect for human rights and the basic liberties which include democracy values. Education and democracy is closely connected to each other, they are both depending on one another. According to Uche (1998: 60) the main factors that seem to be responsible for early development in political attitudes are the school and the home environment. An effect of this can be that children that do not attend school will not be a part of developing political attitudes. Effective political participation is what democracy is built on and the lack of it is a threat to the democracy. Uche (1998: 58) also claims that a wished effect for Nigerian women attending adult education is to create awareness among them on the importance of effective political participation.

### **3.6.1 Educational Effects for Nigerian Women**

Findings from an UNESCO report shows that educated youth are more aware of the risks in being sexually active and how to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS. In a country like Nigeria, where approximately 3.5 millions of the population has HIV/AIDS, this possible effect of education is of great importance. Data shows that knowledge about HIV/AIDS is lowest among women with no education. Overall better educated women look after their own health much better (UNESCO, 2001: 310). According to The World Bank's health research a number of factors make women at larger risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Women with HIV/AIDS also run a high risk of passing the virus to their newborns. These are important reasons to put effort to educate women (The World Bank, 1997: 18).

Statistics show that there is a strong relationship between a woman's level of education and how well she takes care of her children. Female illiteracy and under five years mortality are strongly connected. This connection can be explained by the fact that half the number of the non-educated women in Nigeria give birth far away from educated doctors and hospitals. This leads to high child mortality among the non-educated women. Woman's education has been found to be a key factor in reducing child illness and mortality. Children of educated women are to a larger extent immunized and it is also more common that children of women with no education are dying from diarrhoeal diseases (The World Bank, 1997: 21).

The statistics show that the higher a Nigerian woman's level of education is the more likely it will be that she marries later and plays a larger role in the decision making within the family, the community and the wider society. If she marries later she will more likely get fewer children, which effects her economic situation in a positive way. Many non-educated women in Nigeria give birth to many children and can not provide for them. Statistics show that the higher a Nigerian woman's level of education is, the fewer children she has. This relation between education and number of children is the same for Nigerian men (UNESCO, 2001: 322).

To conclude, according to our theoretical research, education and knowledge is the key to female economic advancement and health care for the woman herself and her children. For the individual education increases her self confidence and self-esteem. This gives women more power to fight for their own rights and to play a larger role in society (UNESCO, 2001: 299). According to the World Bank's health research, the effects of a life time of poverty, heavy work, child bearing and low self-esteem decrease a woman's health both psychically and mentally. This leads to a lower average age of life among women (The World Bank, 1997: 25). With these facts in mind we make the conclusion that education will not only raise the quality of a Nigerian woman's life, it can also extend it.

## **3.7 Keywords**

### **3.7.1 Education**

Oxfords Dictionary defines education as:

A process of teaching; training and learning; especially in schools

Education has many various definitions and sometimes they can disagree with each other. Education can be more than just the things you learn in school. However, in this essay we are defining education as the education you get from schooling, not the informal education that you get from parents, friends, living in society. The form of education we are referring to is a systematic procedure to achieve a certain result for example to learn how to read and write. The school is a tool to achieve this kind of formal education. Säljö (2000) claims that the main difference between institutionalized education and everyday (informal) education is the tradition of the written language which the educational system is based on.

### **3.7.2 Basic Education**

The women whom we have interviewed in this research have not had the opportunity to gain a basic education as children. To be able to understand what they have missed, we have to have knowledge of what basic education in Nigeria is. The term "basic education" has no standard

definition because the forms vary from country to country. Since 1999 basic education in Nigeria is defined as six year of primary school and three years of junior secondary school (UNESCO, 2001: 142). The aim of basic education in Nigeria is as follows:

Developing the individuals personality as fully as possible to enable him to live fully, satisfying life and participate actively in, and make an effective contribution to the life of the society and the nation (Commission for colleges of education ( in Okafor 1998) p. 169)

This is the type of basic education we are discussing in our essay.

### **3.7.3 Literacy/Illiteracy**

The traditional definition of illiteracy is: “Lack of knowledge of how to read and write” (Oxfords Dictionary, 2000). The traditional definition of a literate person is someone who has: “the ability to read and write” (Oxfords Dictionary, 2000). Functional literacy is a definition that states that literacy is about something more than the definition above. This was written about functional literacy in a newsletter of the African Association for Literacy & Adult Education;

To be literate is to become liberated from the constraints of dependency--- To be literate is to gain self-confidence and to become self-assertive. To be literate is to become politically conscious and critically aware--- Literacy enables people to read their own world and to write history--- Literacy provides access to written knowledge and knowledge is power.  
(The Newsletter of The International Task Force on Literacy  
Vol. 2. No 1. Jan. 1988. p.4).

With these two various definitions we can see that the term literacy is more complex than you first imagine. Our perspective on this matter is that the first definition can result in the second definition of literacy. You cannot accomplish the second one without the first one. However, the first one is becoming meaningless if you are not able to make use of it, which means that you are using your new skills in your context.

### **3. Method**

We consider qualitative interviews to be the best way to accomplish our purpose. This method is, according to Kvale (1997) the best way to find out about the interviewed people's life and living conditions. Since our purpose is to understand what education does for a Nigerian woman's life qualitative interviews are the best method to fulfill this purpose. This gives us the most exact information in proportion to our purpose.

#### **4.1 Where and When?**

The field study was carried out at a Christian adult school for women in Jos, Nigeria. We have performed qualitative interviews with women, who are now attending the adult school to become literate. The interviews have been made during two weeks time, at five different occasions. The meetings with the women have been approximately one hour long. The interviews have been made in a group room at the school during class time.

When you do a research in an unfamiliar culture, Kvale (1997: 36) claims that it is important to spend time in the environment before you start the interviews. We have done as recommend. This made us better prepared for the interviews and we think that we understood the interviewed women's answers better after getting familiar with their culture. Our first thought was to spend time with the women before we started the interviews. This was not possible since they were on Easter break when we arrived to Nigeria.

#### **4.2 How?**

We have performed six qualitative interviews with semi-structured interview questions. We have divided the interview questions into three parts and three themes which are past tense, present tense and future tense. In past tense we have asked the women questions about their background and childhood. In present tense we have asked the women questions about their life situation at the moment and their schooling. In future tense we have asked questions concerning their wishes for the future and the wishes they have for their children. These questions have been followed up by questions that were suitable for the specific interview situation.

Two of our questions are to investigate how education affects a woman's view of herself and what happens in a woman's life and mind when she goes from being an illiterate person to a reading and writing person. To be able to answer these two questions our interview questions must generate answers that give us the interviewed women's own perspective on their life situation. We have chosen these questions because we believe that the answers would give us relevant information in relation to our purpose. According to Stukat (2005: 39) this semi structured method makes you come deeper in to the subject of investigation. By making room for spontaneous questions more detailed information can be visible. We are aware of that this

method can make the interviews very different and maybe therefore hard to analyze. Kvale (1997: 82) maintains that the less structured an interview is and the more spontaneous questions you ask, the greater is the chance that you will get spontaneous and vivid answers. He also says that the more structured an interview is, the easier it is to analyze. Our aim was to get spontaneous and vivid answers but also be able to analyze the interviews. Therefore we have tried to find a balance with the same main questions to all of the women and individual follow up questions.

One of us has been responsible for the interview and asked the majority of the questions. The passive interviewer has observed the interview and written down what she has seen but also important parts of the conversation. In the end of the interview the passive interviewer has been given time to ask questions that arose during the interview. We have used a digital recorder. According to Kvale (1997: 147) the use of a recorder will make the interviewer more focused on the subject and the dynamic in the interview.

We have had the need to use an interpreter since the women speak Hausa. We made a deliberate choice to have a female interpreter since we believe that the interviewed women would feel more comfortable with someone from their own gender. The interpreter has also been used as a kind of a “cultural interpreter” which has been very useful. There have been situations when she has helped us to modify the questions to make them more suitable. She has given us advice on how to express our questions and how to behave. For example people have high respect for the elderly in Nigeria. Since the women were older than us our interpreter explained how we should greet the women to show respect and gain their respect.

### **4.3 With whom?**

We made a deliberate choice to use volunteers to participate in our investigation. We think this made the respondents more positive and comfortable. The women we have interviewed are between 35-50 years old. We have also made one interview with the principal of the adult school. This was an information interview to obtain information about the school and their education. This was necessary to be able to put the interviews with the women in their proper context.

Since we only interviewed the women and the principal of the school, we answer our questions from their point of view. We can therefore not claim to answer our questions in any other perspectives, for instance the society's or the women's family members perspective.

### **4.4 The Validity of the Research**

Validity means that you measure what you are suppose to measure. According to Stukat (2005: 128) the validity of a qualitative interview research like ours, is affected by to what extent the interviewed people are honest or not in their answers. The interviewed women seemed very thankful for the opportunity to go to the adult school. The consequence of this might be that they tried to answer our questions in the same spirit as the school's approach. If this is the case it has decreased the validity of the research in the sense that the women wanted to be loyal towards the school and therefore not been completely honest. The advice Stukat

(2005: 128) gives to avoid the problem with dishonest answers, is to create a trustful atmosphere. We have tried to do so but the language barrier has made it hard.. However, the interview answers are true within this context. If we had made the interviews in another context the answers would probably been different, but had they been more truthful? We believe that the degree of truth in our answers is high within the context.

The title of this essay; “No Longer in the Dark.” gives a good picture of the language many people use in Nigeria. “In the dark” is a metaphor used by one of the women to explain her feeling of being illiterate. We have got the impression that many Nigerians have a very “commercialised language” that differ a lot from the way we express ourselves in our part of the world. By “commercialised language” we mean that people are talking as if they are advertising for what they talk about. People are using a lot of proverbs, metaphors and, what we consider, clichés. They are not afraid of exaggerating and being “cheesy”. This has been evident not just through the interview answers but also from the school’s newsletters and from everyday conversations with people. In the famous classic novel “Things fall apart” by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe you can also read:

Among the Ibo people the art of conversation is regarded very highly,  
and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten (Achebe 1958: 6).

As we have experienced this is also the case among the Hausa people. Maybe it is a general phenomenon in Nigeria? This gives us the impression that we do not always get the most trustful answers and that some quotes originate from other sources than the women themselves. However, it can also be just another way of speaking that we are unfamiliar with. Do we not all use a language that is not originally from ourselves? It might not mean that what you say is less truthful.

## **4.5 The Reliability of the Research**

The women we have interviewed are from a culture that is unfamiliar to us which might have caused misunderstandings. It is possible that we have understood some things differently than the intention. We are aware of that it is hard for us to give an objective version with our western perspective as modern educated Swedish women. However, we believe that it is impossible to avoid this problem. We have tried to be inter-subjective and always have the cultural aspect in mind through our interviews and the analyzing process.

### **4.5.1 Work with an Interpreter**

Another problem that may have affected the reliability is the language barriers. English is the official language in Nigeria but it is also the language for the educated people. Uneducated people do not speak English and therefore the teaching in the women’s school is in Hausa. Hausa is the most spoken language in the Northern part of Nigeria. All of the women have another language as their mother-tongue since there are more than 500 languages in Nigeria. Therefore we needed an interpreter, something that probably has affected both the reliability and the validity of the research. The interpreter may have expressed the questions and the answers in a different way than the intention. We have tried to construct some questions of a more controlling nature, which means that we have asked the same question in a different way to control if the answers were similar. Furthermore, it is possible that the interpreter has reduced information that could have been of value or added things that affected our findings. We have tried to instruct the interpreter as precisely as possible to avoid this. Although the

issues with the language and the interpreter are hard to totally avoid. It has been a learning process to work with an interpreter and we have learned during the way how to deal with it. It would have been good for the research to have conducted the first interviews as pilot interviews, just to get to know the interpreter and find a good way to work together. As we were lacking time this was not possible. However, we believe that we developed during the working process. The new knowledge made the last interviews better and we developed a good understanding for the final result.

## **4.6 Method of Analyzing**

After typing our recorded interviews we had a lot of material to work with. We have divided the answers into different categories to make it easier to handle. This is what Kvale (1997: 171) has named as; categorizing of meaning. In the discussion part of this essay we have discussed the relevance of the results in relation to our main questions. We have used our literature studies and relevant literature to support and compare the result.

## **4.7 Ethical Considerations**

When we made our interviews we asked for volunteers to participate in our investigation. Stukat (2005: 131) maintains that participators in an investigation have the right to choose if they want to participate or not. The interviewed women have been informed about who we are, what we are doing, the purpose of the research and what kind of questions we will ask them. They have also been informed about how and where this essay will be published and that their identity will be confidential. The interview questions have been of private matters and therefore we have been particularly aware of the importance of keeping the women's privacy.

We found it quite hard to know what to ask the women and how to ask it. We did not want to offend anyone and we wanted to give a serious and respectable impression. At the same time we wanted the women to feel relaxed and talk freely. In this area our interpreter has been of great importance. In a culture so different from ours, it is hard to know what is appropriate to ask. We have listened carefully to our interpreter's advice but we have also put a high confidence upon our own common sense. Some of our questions sounded strange to the women and the questions might not be what you commonly ask a woman in Nigeria. One example of this was when we asked the women about their age, which is rather inappropriate in Nigerian culture. However, we got the feeling that these questions were amusing to the women and they had a good laugh.

According to the Swedish Research Council (2007) it is important to reflect on how participation in a study can affect the participants. We believe that the women's participation in our study have not affected them in any negative ways. Before we left Nigeria, the school arranged a "goodbye ceremony". Some of the women whom we had interviewed gave speeches. They told us that they had appreciated the interviews and that they felt happy that we had observed their struggle. They also maintained that the conversations had given them new thoughts, and motivation to continue to develop their study abilities. We regard this as a confirmation of success. We found a good way of talking with these women which was valuable and meaningful both for the women and for us.

## 4.8 Field Study Experiences

The meeting with Nigeria was crazy. None of us had been to Africa before and Nigeria was nothing like our previous experiences. The first weeks were a constant rollercoaster and we wavered between fascination and confusion, happiness and desperation. The feelings of constant confusion and to not understand are frustrating. We wanted so badly, to make a good impression, but still we always seemed to make a fool out of ourselves. We ended up in strange situations that we could not handle and we were constantly puzzled. Two white young women are not a very common sight in Nigeria. Being different and deviant was difficult, but a good experience.

We soon realized that we could never know what to expect and we always needed a back-up plan. Time is not the same in Nigeria as in Sweden. We were looking at the watch when someone was five minutes late and the Nigerians were laughing. They told us about Nigerian time and that we should be happy if the person we expected turned up today at all. Another day we were hurrying, soaking wet, through heavy rain to be in time for an appointment. At arrival, we discovered that no one would turn up before the rain stopped.

Sometimes, we could spend an entire day searching for internet access, just to try to be in contact with our tutor in Sweden. The fact that NEPA (National Electric Power Authority) never worked became part of everyday life but that a stroke of lightning would destroy the connection on internet cafés with generators, was something we could not predict.

Anyway, even if there were many problems and obstacles making a field study in an unfamiliar culture, it was also incredibly exciting. Everything works, if you are patient and keenly alive to the world around you.

## 4. Empirical Work

Our empirical work starts with a presentation of the school where the women we have interviewed get their education. We believe that it is of great value for the reader to have knowledge about the aim and mission of the school but also the content of their education. Jos and the school is the foundation for our field study and our result must be understood in relation to its context. Finally, we introduce the result of our interviews. The result is presented categorically after the patterns we have discovered. We have used quotations from the interviews to emphasize these patterns.

### 5.1 The Movement for Christian Community Service of Nigeria (MCCSN) Women's education and development

The following information about MCCSN and their organisation is from an interview with the principal of the school (April, 10 2007, Jos, Nigeria).

MCCSN, adult school for women is situated in an urban neighbourhood. It is an active and peaceful community where people are struggling to have food on the table for their families. The school is surrounded by mango and avocado trees, and on your way there you can pick up any kind of fruits from two little boys trying to smart you into overprices. The school's nearest neighbour is a goat family who sometime pays a visit. The school is a white, newly built, stone building, that has been established by contributions from individuals and from national and international donations.

#### 5.1.1 Background

MCCSN was founded by four Nigerian Christian leaders in 1994. The founders wanted to create a service organisation, so that committed Nigerian Christians could have the opportunity and privilege to respond to the human needs around them. MCCSN is a non-denominational, non-profit Christian community service organization and is registered with both the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Plateau State Government. In 1995 the leadership of MCCSN decided to make Literacy its main focal point amongst women who had had no opportunity to go to formal school. Presently, the school has 46 students and four teachers. Every student pays an amount of 50 Naira when they start the school (50 Naira = 3 SwCr). However, they will get this money back in form of a Bible and a Hymnbook after three years, when they graduate.

The Mission Statement of the school is as following:

The Movement for Christian Community Service of Nigeria exists to help provide and improve quality of life for underprivileged Nigerians, with particular emphasis to women, through Literacy, income generation and community development activities, through efforts of committed Christians on short-term basis (Written by the MCCSN staff, Board and Annual General Meeting (AGM) 1999).

### **5.1.2 The School's Economy**

Some individuals and organizations in Nigeria and abroad donate money to the school. The teachers at the school also do something which they refer to as “community development by extension”. This means that they teach expatriate missionaries in the Hausa language. Then the missionaries will be able to communicate better with people in the northern part of Nigeria. (They can interact more freely and effectively with the people they work with.) The missionaries pay the school for this service. The school also gets some income by selling the literacy material that they produce.

### **5.1.3 The Board and the Principal**

MCCSN operates under and is accountable to a board of nine people (six men and three women) and to an Annual General Meeting, which is their constituency. On that meeting the school gives a report of what they do. They invite people to attend, for example people who support the school and the students' families and friends. They also inform the interested public through newsletters twice a year about the organisation.

The principal used to work as an accountant, but when she met the founders of the school in church she became curious of their activities. She came to visit and watched the teaching and that led her to be trained by the school staff to become a teacher. She is the principal of the school since six months. The school's direction says that a person can only be principal for two periods of five years. After five years the principal has to decide if she wants to continue her work and the board has to make a decision, if they are satisfied with her work and want to keep her. The reason for this arrangement is that the founders believe that you have to leave room for other people that as they express it “feel challenged to do some good”.

### **5.1.4 Student Population**

The students who are attending the MCCSN are of different ages. The youngest woman who has attended the school was 16 years old and the oldest are more than 70 years old. Many of the women walk several kilometres, some with babies on their backs, to get to school. Some of them come straight from a long day at the market selling food, grains, firewood and vegetables. They arrive tired and dusty, and after class they will return home to cook and care for their children. For three years these women will attend classes two hours a day, three times a week in the late afternoons. Some of them will continue with Bible study classes, income generation program and English classes.

### **5.1.5 MCCSN's Approach**

It is very important for MCCSN to be seen as a Christian school and to convey the Christian message. The advertisement for the school has always a very Christian approach and the school makes it very clear that Christianity is the main focus in all their programs. The newsletter that the school publishes twice a year has at all times a Christian message and quotes from the bible are a constant substance.

This is an example of part of a newsletter:

We thank God for your commitment too...for your prayers, words of encouragement, and financial support. May God continue to work through us to make a difference in the lives of the women He brings to our door (MCCSN News, volume 5, nr 1 May 2003).

The newsletters are also in many cases quoting the students and what they say about their schooling. The quotes have almost always a Christian meaning.

I used to be a Muslim. The best thing about my coming to this school is that as a result of my changed character and witness my husband has now become a Christian. All my children converted to Christianity (MCCSN News, volume 8, nr 2, November 2006).

The authors of the school material have got an offer to sell their material to nationwide adult education but on the condition that they will remove the Christian message. This was not an option for the authors even though the school would have made a profit. They think that they would betray their beliefs if they make the books religiously neutral.

The school's strong Christian approach permeates the school's education and the students have, both through their lessons and through newsletters, seen what the school values as important. As mentioned in our method, we think that this affects the validity of our research. We have seen a pattern between what the newsletters say and the women's answers. We are trying to have this in mind to increase the validity of our research.

### **5.1.6 The School's Programs**

The school's programs arise from women's own wishes and needs. The founder of the school asked women in church what their big present need was. Most of the women said that if someone could help them to learn how to read and write they would be very thankful. Some women said that they could read but they could not read the bible to understand what it said. They would like someone to help them understand the words of God. Several women said that they were finding it difficult to pay their children's school bills, medical bills and feed their family. If someone could give them a little amount to start a small business so they could make a profit they would appreciate that highly. It was on these needs that these programs became their main cardinal programs. In 1996, Income Generation, Bible Study and Literacy Teacher Training were added as part of MCCSN's cardinal programs. Nowadays English classes are also a part of the program.

#### Literacy Class

The first year when the women attend school it is basically about how to read and write. Literacy class is compulsory to start with for all the students. The school material for this class has been made by the founders and the present principal. At the beginning of the literacy project, the founders realized that the material available assume a non-Christian culture. They wanted their material to have a Christian approach therefore they decided to write a biblically-based literacy school book for adults. The result of this thought was the book *Zan lya Karatu da Rubutu* which means *I will be able to read and write*. The book begins with the mechanics of reading and writing. As basic skills are mastered, the message of salvation is systematically and gradually presented in story form. By the end of the book themes of the Bible are presented verbatim. Apart from learning to read and write the students also learn some basic health practises and basic math in this literacy class.

### Bible Studies

After the literacy class the women can choose to start Bible Studies. Here they have The Bible and a hymn book as material. The Bible Studies is a continuation course on the literacy class even though the women can choose not to attend it. Almost all the women attend it but for Muslim women, who are also welcome to attend the school, this is not an option. Nowadays no Muslims attend the school since the religious conflict between Muslims and Christians in Jos, 2001.

### Income Generation

Women who master basic literacy skills are then qualified to participate in the Income Generation Programme which teaches business principles and skills and utilizes a Revolving Loan program. Each woman is given a small amount of start-up money, which she repays throughout a period of two years. The Income Generation Program currently runs for two years, three hours, once a month.

### English Class

English class is the highest level on MCCSN's program. This class aims to give the women a basic knowledge in English so that they will be able to speak to people who are not speaking Hausa. The class will also give them the opportunity to read and participate more in the society as English is the official language.

### Literacy Teacher Training

Literacy Teacher Training is a class to train students how to teach people to read and write. People from churches all around Jos are attending these classes to be able to help their members. It is also common that students who have graduated the schools cardinal programs also want to learn how to teach others what they have been taught.

## **5.2 Findings**

Our result summary starts with a description of the women we have interviewed and a background of why the women concerned did not get a basic education as children. We have then selected the central themes in the interview answers and divided them into six different categories. The categories are discussed in relation to our literature studies and relevant literature. We have deliberately decided to let our presentation of the findings be guided by the findings from other research efforts. We believe that this will help us to enrich the presentation of our findings.

### **5.2.1 Description of the Interviewed Women**

The interviewed women are between 35-50 years old. They have all grown up in strained circumstances and their parents are all illiterate. Most of the women have lived in the countryside during their childhood, but two of them have grown up in the urban areas. At the present time all of the women live in the city of Jos. They have all married young and have between three to five children. One of the women was only 13 years old at her wedding day and gave birth to her first child at 14 years old. Their husbands are in most cases not higher educated than secondary school. Two of the women's husbands have university education. The children of the women are or have all attended primary and secondary school but only two have children that have a university degree. However, they all want their children to attend university and hope to be able to support them to do so. The names of the women are

assumed by us but we have used names that are common in the Nigerian society to make it related to reality.

The women are in different stages of their schooling. Dorcas and Cora have studied at the school for one year; Esther is in her second year. These women are in the literacy program which is three years. Amina, Peace and Joy have finished the literacy program and are now attending Bible studies.

### **5.2.2 Reasons for not Attending School as Children**

The women have different stories to tell us about why they stopped or did not attend school as children. Poverty seems to be the main reason together with the fact that they are females. The women growing up in the rural areas were in a higher extent prevented from education because of their gender. Their parents were also less aware of the importance of education. Their gender has prevented them from getting an education both in the aspect that people did not believe in sending a female child to school but also in the sense that female children are expected to care for the older generation. Joy was forced to stop school because she had to take care for her ill grandmother. Esther's parents did not see the point of educating a female child.

Back in those days people believed in sending boys to school rather than girls, because the girls would get married anyway. So that's why I didn't go to school, I just didn't have the opportunity because nobody was interested in sending a female child to school so I went ahead and got married. (Esther)

Attitudes towards women and education are about to change (UNESCO, 2001: 277). This is visible in our research. All of the interviewed women regard education to be very important for both their male and female children. Esther emphasizes that her biggest wish for her daughters is that they get a good education. Early marriage though, as we mentioned in the account of literature is still frequent, especially in the North and this often leads to interrupted education.

Cora's story differs from the others in the sense that it was her own decision to stop schooling. This decision was based on bad results and the feeling of lacking behind. Cora's parents were not happy about her decision and tried to convince her to change her mind. (We found this story notable because it seems odd that she could take this decision by herself at that age.) As stated in our literature studies, Liljeström and Tumba-Masabo claim that reasons for many girls' low performances in schools in Sub-Saharan countries are related to gender roles and a male oriented school. This makes young girls less interested in education (Liljeström and Tumba-Masabo, 1994: 60). With this knowledge in mind the reason for Cora's own decision to stop her education might be connected to ingrained culture beliefs of the female gender.

### **5.2.3 Religion – the Substance of Life**

All the women are Christians and religion is a central part of their life. They are active in church related activities and go to church regularly. To be able to understand these women, it is important to understand the different religious context in which they become literate. Wellros (1998: 102) discusses religion in Sweden compared to certain other cultures in a way that can help us understand how religion is different in Nigeria. Most people in Sweden follow ingrained rituals without relating them to our Christian cultural inheritance. Religious belonging is rather an objective identity and a way of naming groups of people. In some other

cultures, religious belonging is a subjective identity and people are identifying with it to a much higher extent (Wellros, 1998: 102). Nigeria is a country where religion is a dominant part of culture. This can be emphasized with Joy's reply on the question what she appreciates about Nigeria:

I am grateful that our country has a high regard for God's word.  
Religion is taken very seriously in Nigeria. (Joy)

Religion is a very important part of the women's subjective identity in a way that differs from the main relation to religion in Sweden. They all say that the main reason for them to enrol at the school was to learn how to read the Bible. They all find it very important to live after the Bible's guiding principles and to be literate makes them more likely to do so. Peace expresses this when she talks about how schooling has changed her life:

This schooling has helped me a lot. I used to say things without considering but now I am able to speak better and relate better with people. It has changed my way of thinking, I think before I speak.  
The knowledge I get from reading the Bible makes me interact better with people and this makes me a better person. (Peace)

The women who have reached further in the education progress are all talking about how they can relate better with other people now. This is directly connected to the fact that they can now read God's words and understand how God wants them to act and interact with other people. On the question: What is the most important thing you learned in this school? Joy replies:

What has been of importance to me is my ability to read the books of the Bible. The book of Ruth and the book of Esther have learned me a lot. They are about women like me, and how they live their life. The book of Ruth has taught me how to relate with my in laws and relatives.  
The book of Esther has taught me how to act as a woman, with wisdom.  
(Joy)

In the Bible study class the students are reading and discussing the Bible. They are focusing especially on the book of Esther and the book of Ruth. According to the principal the purpose with this focus is to emphasize women's position. Many of the women are not aware of that they have an important position as a mother and as a wife. The principal maintains that this is a way to strengthen the women's self-esteem and make them more confident in their gender.

#### **5.2.4 "No man is an Island" - the Importance of the Collectivity**

Esther feels that her biggest problem in life has been that she during several years did not give birth to a male child. She maintains that in her culture a male child is accepted, but not always a female child. Her mother-in-law and other in-laws gave her a hard time and were spiteful and hateful toward her. Her major wish was to get peace with her mother-in-law and get accepted by her in-laws. This could only happen if she gave birth to a male child. At last, after given birth to four daughters, she became the mother of a boy. She describes this as the end of her problems and she was accepted. This story tells us a lot about the importance of the collective and that the relations within the extended family are decisive for a person's well being. The phenomenon of being accepted by the extended family but also by neighbours and the community is an important fact in people's lives. When we asked Esther what she wished for her children's future she replied as follows:

I feel that they will be happy if they are happy in their homes and accepted in their families; with their husbands and in-laws. (Esther)

The women have had difficulties in answering questions that have been focusing on the woman as an individual. This is especially for the women that have recently started the school. The women who are further along in the education found it easier to focus on themselves in their answers. However, their answers have always included their family or other people in their close environment. The women seem to have difficulties in seeing themselves through their own eyes and are always referring to other people's views. An example of this is Esther's answer to the question: Do you have more respect for yourself since you became literate?

Yes, before I was literate, I wasn't regarded with respect because I couldn't read and write. Now I am regarded with more respect and I interact more with people. (Esther)

The quotation shows that she answers the question by referring to other people's view of her. She is accepted by other people and this makes her have more respect for herself than she had before.

The interviews have shown that it seems hard for the women to make decisions by themselves. A decision can not only come from the woman herself, it has to have the support of her family or religious beliefs. This is Amina's explanation of what made her enrol:

I thought the knowledge of how to read and write just comes to you, so I prayed for it. I didn't know you have to make effort to learn how to read and write. I had a dream where my son said to me: "Mummy I will teach you how to read." He told me that I need to go and look for an opportunity so I can learn. I can not just sit at home and expect it to come to me. (Amina)

Amina seemed to consider this dream as a sign that her enrolling to the school would be supported by her family. She might see it as a reason for her to do what she wanted for a long time, to become literate. Our understanding is that she could not enrol only because of her own wish.

In the women's life the collective has a position in front of the individual. The individual is seen through the collective and it is hard to separate them from each other.

### **5.2.5 The Value of Being Paid Attention**

Through our interviews we have seen that the women feel encouraged when attention has been paid to them. When they talk about concrete situations and feel they have been noticed they show excitement and pride. It is also notable that some of the women brought this up spontaneously without us asking specifically about it. Peace did so and describes her experience with excitement:

I did not know that I was going to get a prize. I was so surprised, happy and excited when I got the prize. I got a *rappa* (skirt) and I keep it at home. I got the prize for the best reader amongst the other women. It has really encouraged me. I did not know that somebody recognized me in my struggle. I did not know that somebody saw my effort. It has encouraged me a lot to put more effort. (Peace)

Amina did also express her pleasure and pride of the attention she was paid even though this attention was in another context among her neighbours and family:

I got a prize from the school last year because I was doing well. The neighbours and family saw me come home with the prize looking so happy and they were so happy and they all got around me and encouraged me. They were pleased to see that I got a prize through hard work. (Amina)

Human beings have the need of being paid attention and to be confirmed as individuals. According to Inga Andersson (1999: 56-60), specialist on education for children with special needs, both attention and confirmation stimulate the pleasure and urge to want to learn. What a person accomplishes gets another meaning when he/she shares it with other people. A person's motivation increases if someone else sees and appreciates what you do. An example of this is that the women remember and are pointing out occasions when they have been observed. Andersson also maintains that if you pay attention to a person, that person experiences that someone cares and believes in them and that will encourage them.

### **5.2.6 Productivity, the Way of Becoming a Good Person?**

The women all mention that it is important to feel productive and useful and that the literacy has helped them to feel more meaningful. The majority of the women say that if they have had the opportunity to go to school as children they think they would have been more productive in life. Productive in terms of that they would have had better jobs and been able to support their family to a higher extend. In the same sentence several of the women say that they would have been better persons if they got education earlier. Is being a good person the same as being productive?

I feel that I would have been a better person, more productive if I was educated. I would probably be working now. I feel it is very important to be productive because I would like to support my husband and other needs in the home. (Cora)

Cora shows in this quotation that she relates education to productivity. Productivity seems for her to be related with being a good person. Peretomode (1995: 24) maintains that education can lead to that the pupils see beyond their horizons and realize the need and importance of others. Joy talks about education and productivity in these terms and seems to share Peretomode's theory:

Education brings production. If you are educated you are able to work and improve the life of other people and also the life of yourself. I could have worked at an office with the government, as a teacher or even as a nurse at a private hospital. With education you can help other people but also yourself. Business wouldn't help me as much as education would to be productive. (Joy)

Joy thinks that she has missed a lot not being educated earlier which results in limited possibilities to compete on the labour market. However, she now sees herself as part of the educated even if she does not have a higher education. Being educated means being literate for many people, it is not necessary to have a university degree to belong to the educated people. Joy believes it is a big difference between a person without education and a person with basic education:

If you are an educated person you will be sensitive for the needs of people around you. But an uneducated person would not have the ability to be as sensitive for the needs of other people as an educated person. It is a difference between educated and uneducated. An educated person is more aware of the needs of people around her rather than an uneducated person. They may all have good qualities but the educated person will be wiser in applying himself or herself to help people. (Joy)

The quotation shows that Joy believes education leads to what Peretomode (1995: 24) states: realizing the needs and importance of others. The women seem to share the opinion that education makes you more productive. Being more productive makes you more useful to the society and people around you and this makes you a better person.

### **5.2.7 Independence through Education?**

For all the women education is also linked to independence. They all think they had been more independent at present time if they had attended school as children. Amina expresses the link between education and independence when we ask her about her wishes for her children's future:

Education is the best we can do for our children because then they will be independent. They can help themselves later on. (Amina)

They all mention the economical aspect and that education makes you more capable of providing for yourself and your family. However, they also point out the joy in not having to rely on other people in the sense of helping them with their everyday life.

I never used to document any earnings and things like that. Now I write everything down and I have more control over my economy. Now I spend a lot better and it makes life easier for me. Before people were borrowing money from me and didn't return the right amount. I am not being cheated anymore, because I write everything down and I am also better with maths. No one has to help me. (Peace)

### 5.2.8 Does the World Expand when Knowledge Increases?

The women have in different terms expressed thoughts about that they feel they are part of something bigger now when they are literate in Hausa. The women seem to have felt left out of something as former illiterate people. The literacy makes them now being able to read the codes that were part of something diffuse earlier. Amina describes this transformation from an illiterate to a literate person in an expressive way:

I am no longer in the dark. Now that I am educated I am a better thinker. I think before I take action and before I speak. Before I wouldn't think through issues. I think deeper. I use to see people with education as being better of than me. Now I feel like one of them. I feel that I belong to their group. I am able to join them in discussions and be in their meets because I see myself as one of them. I am able to identify words and read so I feel like part of them. I didn't feel like I belonged to their group before. (Amina)

Many of the women want to go on and learn English after they have finished their literacy programs in Hausa language. They seem to see this as the way of becoming a part of a larger community.

English is the general language, for the larger community. I want to be a part if this community, and interact and communicate more. To be a part of the society and feel more involved in the society. (Amina)

Amina speaks about being part of a larger community and being more involved in society. Many of the women have talked about their educational effects in these terms. The women seem to feel that that their education has made them more active members of society.

I was reserved before, not free. Now I can interact with people more freely. When I am in the meets of people and there is a discussion, before I would not interact and I was just quite. Now I speak with more confidence. It has changed me a lot, I speak a lot more. (Esther)

As stated in our literature studies democracy and education are closely related to each other. The feeling of participation in the society the women describes can be related to democracy in the sense that active participation in the society is what democracy is built on. The women seem to see themselves as more active members of the society than before they were literate. A question that arose through our research is how far this active participation in the society can go for these women? We asked Joy about her opinion about women and political participation:

I feel women shouldn't be involved in politics because it means they often have to leave their families and go on campaign trips and be involved in far away things, sometimes for weeks and days. I feel that it is irresponsible of them to leave their children and husbands. Sometimes I feel that they are just taking time off to be on their own instead of staying with their families. I think men should be more involved in that. (Joy)

Joy expresses an opinion that is in accordance with what the Nigerian feminist Osita Ezenwanebe (2006: 2) claims is a common view of womanhood and femininity in Nigeria. We can here see that the effects of education are connected to the concept of womanhood. The women's approach towards their gender affects their relation to and expectations of

education. Uche (1998: 60) maintains that no serious attempts have been made in Nigeria in both formal and non formal education to focus attention on the socio-cultural values, attitudes, taboos and believes hindering Nigerian women's effective political participation for national development. The world might expand for the women through this education but the world has also a lot of limitations.

These women are in one sense very different from the people we usually meet in our everyday life. They are very religious and find being able to read the Bible the most satisfying thing with being literate. Their world is based on a collective thinking unlike our individual thinking. However, exactly like us, they have the basic needs of being seen and appreciated. They need to feel that they are of great use and they all have a desire to belong to something bigger.

## 6. Discussion

Do women need to be educated? It might sound like an odd question but during history a lot of people have asked that question, or even worse have not asked it at all because they already assume that the answer is no. The terrible truth is that the statement “Women need education in the same extent as men” is still not a fact taken for granted in all cultures. The traditional belief is that women are inferior to men and that their rightful place in society is in the kitchen. In some cultures and parts of Nigeria this is still the case and women are being disadvantaged. We believe that the status of women in any society decides, at least to some degree, the kind of opportunities which will be provided for them. The adult education programs for women that are established throughout the country is a way to elevate women’s status and make women participate more in the public society.

However, the way education is formed is decisive for the effects of education. It is a major discussion of what themes education should include and not include. Maybe the most important thing of all is to realize, that education forms people, and that the varieties of education that a country has decide what kind of citizens it gets. In Nigeria though all people do not have the opportunity to go to school and some are attending it as adults. Our interviewed women are getting their education as adults but this education does also shape them. The effect of their education is related to the school’s teaching. A very important aspect is the religious presence in the content of the education. Even if most of the women were Christians when they attended the school their religious belief grew even stronger through their education. The women are raised into a particular way of seeing the world.

Another important aspect that we have observed is the consequences of gender. The women’s views on the expectations, responsibilities and commitments of a woman differ from our view influenced by the Western feminism. Together with their strong religious consciousness this affects their relation to and expectations of education. You can never separate the effects of an education from its context. Peretomode (1995: 20) maintains “you can not separate education from culture”. The effects of education are as much related to the culture as the education itself.

### 6.1 Increasing of the Subjective Identity

Education makes the women, in one sense, to withdraw from the collective. They are more productive which in many cases leads to more independence. They have also developed a more personal Christian faith. On the other hand literacy makes them, play a larger role in the collective as they can lead devotions and help other people. All the women feel satisfaction when they can help and support their children and people around them through their new skills. Literacy makes them contribute in another way than before. This strengthens Andersson’s (1999: 56-60) theory that a person’s accomplishment gets another meaning when shared with other people. The women realize the use of their new skills when it is visible to the collective. Anyhow, in both cases there is a bigger focus on the individual and the individual has a more distinct role in the collective. The women are developing an increased subjective identity, which is shown in the way they practise their faith and also in a higher confidence in the meetings with other people. The foundation for this conclusion is, that the

women who have reached further in the education are more aware of their progress and of themselves. They can put words to their feelings and how they have developed. The women who are in the beginning of their education differ in the sense that they found it hard to answer some of our questions and showed less confidence in the interview situation. The women who are further in the education could reflect more on their schooling and showed a wider understanding for how the education affects them. They can also separate themselves from the collective to a higher extent. By that we mean that the woman can see herself as an individual and how the schooling has affected her personally. We believe that all human beings are becoming a person in relation to others. What these women have developed is to see themselves as individuals in the collective and not as just part of the collective. This phenomenon was also observed by our interpreter.

The women who have reached further in their education also showed willingness to continue their education process. They seem to have developed a will to continue developing. For example they all want to attend the continuing English program and seem to regard this as a way to be part of the larger community. An effect of these women's education is therefore a willingness to learn and develop more. Can this be an effect of the confirmation they get from the education? Andersson (1999:56-60) maintains that being confirmed stimulates the pleasure and urge to want to learn more. We see this as related to their increased subjective identity since this gives them the tool to reflect on their own personal process of development.

## **6.2 Does Education lead to Gender Equality?**

The education has given the women an increased female consciousness. The women who are attending Bible studies all maintain that they are now more aware of their gender and the responsibilities of it. The education has also strengthened their confidence in their gender status. The Bible advocates in many ways the traditional gender roles which cement the women's view of their gender. According to Ezenwanebe, many Nigerian women want to preserve the traditional gender roles and feel threatened by women who want to challenge the patriarchal structure of society (Ezenwanebe 2006:22). Does the study of the Bible strengthen this belief and how free is the interpretation? Is it possible that when the female consciousness is increasing the patriarchy is increasing as well? We believe it cements the gender roles. On the other hand the women feel more free and confident but only inside the borders of the patriarchy. The society's view of womanhood limits the women's development. However, this is our view of their developing. The women themselves experience a big difference when they can take part in discussions and interact in society to a higher extent than before. It is hard to take a definite position in this matter. The personal development and the need of feeling satisfied with your life is a very important aspect. The right to decide what makes you happy in your own context is of course the most important thing for an individual. However, if you have not experienced anything else do you not have the right to explore your options? On the other hand the framework of society is hard to penetrate, and like the Nigerian women are limited, Swedish women too are limited within the frame of the Swedish society. There is always a limit for a woman's development in all societies. The Nigerian women's limited situation is perhaps connected to the fact that Nigerian people have more limited options than we have in the West? Education leads to gender equality according to the English aid organization Oxfam (2007). This is an effect we can not completely agree with based on our research. In one sense the gender equality improves but on the other hand it also strengthens the patriarchy.

## 6.3 Does Increased Confidence Create Power?

All people have a need of being confirmed as persons (Andersson, 2001:57), and this collective society is no exception. The fact that these women have become literate makes them feel confirmed in another aspect than being mothers, wives and daughters. They are being confirmed for their knowledge and their skills. The confirmation that they receive affects their self-belief and they all maintain that they feel more confident since they became literate. The reason for their increased confidence is based on the fact that they are literate but also that they can now read the Bible themselves. These factors make them more aware of the society around them and how to behave in the meetings with other people. There is a connection between being confident and being independent. The fact that the women now are literate makes them less dependent on other people and they can find confidence in themselves. Being independent in the sense of reading the Bible by themselves without help strengthens their confidence, but also things as simple as to find the direction by means of reading signs is creating confidence.

The English aid organization Oxfam (2007) considers education to be empowering and we maintain that for these women education is. Their empowerment has increased to a great extent when they can act independently in many aspects of life. They all feel more confident in the meetings with other people and are to a higher extent active in discussions. But how far does this empowerment reach? Women in Nigeria are attending school to a higher extent than before and are getting more education. They are more active in discussions and take more part in society. Yet, it is very unusual that women attend politics and women's interest for politics is limited. According to Uche (1998: 60) the school and the home environment are the main factors creating political attitudes. If the school fails to do this or if a person lack education the responsibility for developing political attitudes lies on the home. When the general view of women is that they are not supposed to be politically active the political awareness within women is not developing. Our women's school is not focusing any attention to female political participation and this is a common approach in both formal and informal schools (Uche, 1998: 58). Is a country where only a few women are participating in the democratic process a democratic society? In this aspect education has failed to increase the empowerment. On the other hand this is not the direct purpose of this school's education.

The education that the interviewed women have got has improved their lives a lot, even if they will not be active political participants. Important to add to this discussion is that Nigeria is a young democratic nation. The country has had democracy for only eight years and their view of democracy is different from ours in the sense that these years of democracy have been filled with problems. With this in mind, it is likely that political participation also means something else for these women. To summarize, education is empowering but in different degrees depending on a lot of aspects such as the context, the individual, and also what perspective you have on the meaning of empowerment.

## 6.4 Inclusion through Education

Many of the women expressed a feeling of belonging now when they are literate. The norm in society is to be educated and formerly they have felt excluded as illiterates. Now when they no longer differ from that norm they feel accepted. The feelings of belongingness and acceptance are decisive for the women's views of themselves. Not to be a deviant anymore makes them feel more confident. What does it mean to be included and literate for these women? Imagine, it is like a new world is opening up for them. Imagine all the things they can now be a part of that they were excluded from before. Signs with descriptions that before have been impossible to understand can help the women in their everyday lives. They are able to read the newspaper and in that way take part of the bigger society. Their literacy now makes it possible to read the codes which were part of something diffuse earlier. The fact that they are literate includes them in conditions which they were excluded from as illiterates. The literacy also makes them active to a higher extent. Many of the women have mentioned that they can now take part in the church's Bible study group and participate actively, which was not possible before.

The women now talk about illiterates like they are different from them in many ways. The educated people are aware and that is what makes them different from the uneducated. The effects of education for these women is not just that they see themselves as aware, they see themselves as belonging to the educated people. Peretomode (1995:23) maintains that education unites a nation and gives a joint knowledge. Does it have these effects on these women who attend an adult education? The fact that they now feel included as literate people, support these theories about education and united effects. They are now included in the norm. The education also unites the Christian society. The Christian values are transmitted through the education and unites the pupils. If this unites the Christians how does it affect the relations between the citizens in the segregated city of Jos? As stated earlier the women live in a city where the relations between Muslims and Christians are polarized. Maybe the education contributes to the polarization or at least to the segregation? In that case the education has the opposite effect for Jos as a whole. Instead of uniting education is separating.

## 6.5 How does Education Affect a Nigerian Woman's View of Herself?

Education can change a person's life significantly not just in material matters. Our main question is how education changes a woman's view of herself. Education can be many things but in our research it is about becoming literate. Does the process of becoming literate change a person's identity? It is a major question and we will perhaps never be able to answer it completely. Still, it is an important question and we have tried to approach it through our findings. Our findings have shown that education and becoming literate do affect a Nigerian woman's view of herself in several ways.

The women have developed a stronger self confidence, a stronger self-esteem and have a stronger female consciousness. The women's views of themselves have also changed through that they now see themselves as included in the society and belonging to the norm of educated/literate people. They have also developed an identity consciousness which is related to the fact that they now can read the Bible. Their identity consciousness is also connected to

the fact that they possess a personal security in being literate that is not directly related to them being part of the collective society. This has made them more aware of themselves and has increased their subjective identity.

As Amina expressed it, these women are “no longer in the dark”. The sentence contains a lot of aspects. The women are no longer deviant and see themselves as part of the educated people. “No longer in the dark” can also be connected to the women’s strong religious faith. The light has shown in the sense that they now can read “God’s words”. “No longer in the dark” stands for not being excluded anymore but being included, in the light of knowledge, belonging and a more distinct religious faith.

## **6.6 Concluding Words**

Lack of education is not the only problem that hinders women in their development and to participate in the society’s development. However, education and literacy are a good starting point and as earlier studies and also our research show, education improves a woman’s self esteem and will make her braver and prepared to have an active role in the society. It is important that educated women serve as role models for illiterate women. If educated women show a positive attitude and show that things are possible, then it is more likely that other women will feel encouraged and confident to progress. The female political participation would probably also increase if there were more female role models who could promote the importance of active participation in society.

### **6.6.1 The Effects of this Research – for Ourselves and for the Public**

We have worked with this essay in a culture very different from ours. The subject for our study, education, is well known for us after several years at the teachers training program. Even though, this experience has made us see education in a very different way. In this context education as a phenomenon and the effects of education have become clearer and we have been forced to view it from other angles. It has resulted in a lot of new thoughts and a new and wider perspective on education.

During the process of working with this essay we have developed a better understanding of the relationship between culture and education. It has given us perspectives on our own culture and has made our teaching’s actual consequences more visible to us. We have got a new perspective on the role of education in a society. This includes a clearer image about how a society’s values are related to school and reproduced in school. The essay shows how important the form of education is for its effects and its outcome. It shows how education shape people to a high extent and how values are transmitted through education. We have also improved a more distinct view of what education does for an individual and how it is connected to the development of a society.

In the same way as the women we have interviewed have gained an understanding and strength in their position and identity, we have through this research gained a greater understanding and a pride of our profession. Our expectations are that this essay will increase the understanding for the effects of education for the reader. We also hope that it will create new thoughts about education and the importance of it. We believe that discussing education as a phenomenon is something worth emphasizing both for teachers and students. It is a huge

and complex subject but it is important for all people working with education to view it as a whole and see how it is connected to so many other things.

The research is not in any way trying to embrace the total spectrum of the effects of education. The interviews with these women are a way to make the effects visible and to make them more related to reality. The specific findings in this research do not possess a high degree of generalization but the outcome of the research is of great importance for the understanding of education as a phenomenon.

### **6.6.2 Who Are We to Judge?**

The question that has permeated our entire research has been: Who are we to judge? We are investigating these women's lives with our Westernized eyes. How can we be humble and understanding at the same time as we should be critical and have a scientific attitude? This question has been very distinctive when we have reflected on the gender roles in relation to our research subject. How much can you renounce yourself and your values? When in Rome you must do as the Romans do but to what price? We have come to the conclusion that we must take our perspective and can not go beyond ourselves. However, we have tried to have a non-prejudicial attitude. Yet, this issue is a never ending discussion that will continue long after our work is finished.

### **6.6.3 Further Research**

Spending time in Nigeria and writing this essay have been challenging, exciting, and interesting. We have learned so much and realized how much we do not know. The feeling of lack of knowledge and the desire to want to learn more have inspired us to see lots of new areas for research in Nigeria. Among other things we would find it interesting to do a similar research as this one on Muslim women in a Muslim adult school. This would be an addition to our previous research and give us a wider perspective on the matter. We have been discussing the great interest in investigating educated women in Nigeria and their approach to education and the relation between gender and education. It would also be intriguing to investigate the Nigerian men's knowledge and opinions about the Nigerian women's situation. This is a task that we think would be difficult for us to accomplish, simply because we are women. We believe that a male researcher would succeed better since Nigerian men would easier identify with a man. This is a suggestion to male future teachers that has an interest in other cultures and the developing part of the world.

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Informative interview: The principal of MCCSN 10-04-2007, Jos, Nigeria.

**Respondent interviews:**

Esther 30-04-2007

Amina 03-05-2007

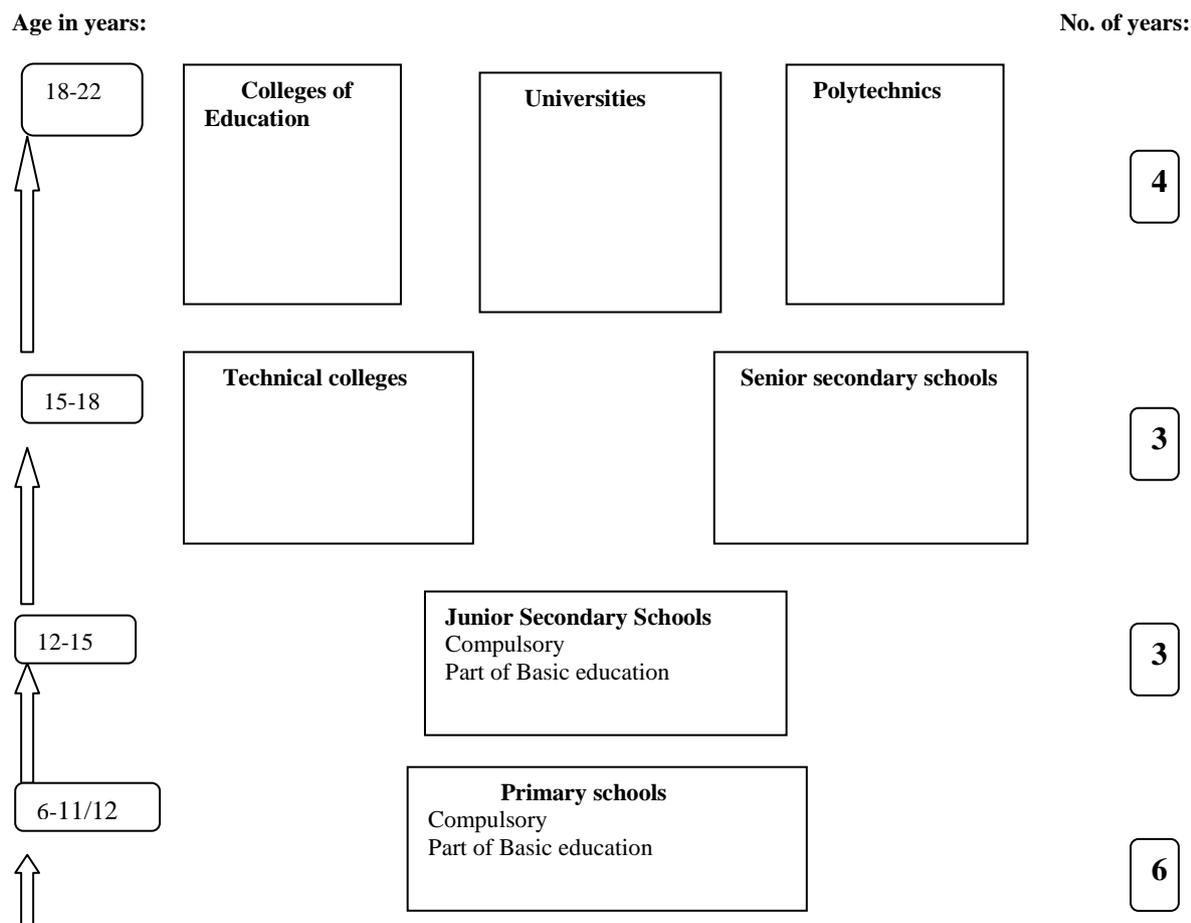
Peace 03-05-2007

Dorcas 04-05-2007

Cora 07-05-2007

Joy 10-05-2007

## Structure of the Nigerian education system (Excluding adult and non-formal education)



(Reference: UNESCO. (2001). *Chapter 4 Development rights (p. 144): Children's and women's rights in Nigeria – A wake-up Call – Situation Assessment and Analyses 2001*. Nigeria: The national planning commission UNICEF Nigeria.)

## **UN, The Convention of the child: §2 and §28**

### **Article 2**

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

### **Article 28**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:
  - (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
  - (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
  - (c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
  - (d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
  - (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.
3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

## UN, The Convention of the child: §29

### Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest

potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles

enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and

values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or

she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding,

peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious

groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of

individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance

of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by

the State.