

# Introduction

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Justifiably, education has always received wide acclaim as an important engine for the development of human potential. Today, persons and organizations that are interested in developing human capabilities consider knowledge, skills and attitudes, whether obtained through formal, non-formal and incidental learning, as assets. However, it is not just what people know or learn that matters. How they learn, whether or not they are able to learn, and who teaches what, to whom, matters too. Clearly, then, no education(al activity) can be politically neutral, because there is no value-free education (Hooks 1984; Blackburn 1996; Ferrero 2005). The goals and purpose of education, the content, the entire process of education and the procedures chosen for evaluation in education are value-laden. The traditional or indigenous education systems in Nigeria, which covered (and still cover) physical training, development of character, respect for elders and peers, development of intellectual skills, specific vocational trainings, developing a sense of belonging and participation in community affairs, and understanding, appreciating and promoting the cultural heritage of the community (Fafunwa 1974) were, and are, not value-free.

When the Muslim missionaries came with the skills of reading and writing in the Arabic script through the northern part of Nigeria in the 14th century, and the Christian missionaries came with literacy skills, first, in the Portuguese language in the 15th century, and then in the English language in the middle of the 19th century through the southern parts of Nigeria, the goal was to spread the two religions (Fafunwa 1974). When the British colonialists came to Nigeria, they discovered that they could better exploit the colony if they built schools and provided out-of-school education. Their education, they reasoned, would make the task of governing Africans easy. This goal of formal and non-formal education during colonial rule was clear in Frederick Lugard's mind, because at some point during his indirect rule, he was exasperated by what he perceived to be the 'evils' that western education had sown in the southern part of Nigeria, where men were bold enough to challenge the colonial administration (Odi 1983, cited in Fasokun and Mejiuni 1991).

At the point that Lugard was showing frustration with how to deal with those he called the 'educated natives', it was clear that education was becoming somewhat

mutually beneficial to both the governor and the governed. Nigerians (men at first) craved for and sought education for many reasons, which included, but were not limited to, having access to the white man's job, which was a badge of superior status, and a means of putting an end to colonialism.

For the colonial era, and for now, Berggren and Berggren's view that 'education was, and still is, a badge of superior status; literacy and schooling served, and still serves, the powerful classes; it is a symbol and justification of privilege and a safeguard for authority and self-interest' (1975:6), is true. Given the exploitative and patriarchal (read exploitative again) character of colonialism, Nigerian women were largely deprived of access to education because, according to Denzer (cited in Mama 1996), 'Nigerian and British attitudes concerning female roles had much in common' (p. 14), and when women started formal schooling, their incorporation into very restricted areas of government service was slow. In this respect, Afonja and Aina (1995) observed that 'the constraints to women's education in the country since the colonial era have cumulatively affected the development of women' (p. 23). They indicated that socio-cultural factors such as child marriage, female seclusion and social prejudices against the education of the female child have consistently caused differentials in male/female education. The 2002 and 2004 UNDP Human Development Reports attest to this. The combined primary, secondary and tertiary institutions gross enrolment ratio for Nigeria in 1999 was 41 per cent of the total number for females and 49 per cent for males; while the adult literacy rate (age 15 and above) was 55.7 per cent for women, and 72.4 per cent for men in year 2000, and 59.4 per cent for women and 74.4 per cent for men in year 2002 (UNDP 2002:22, 2004:219).

An important point that Aina (1995) made was that there is a correlation between educational qualification and competence, and employment in the labour market, and so 'gender disparity in education implies unequal job opportunities' (p. 101). The correlation between wage employment and educational qualification is, in the circumstance, both logical and understandable. The fact on ground in Nigeria today is that while a large number of Nigerian women work in the informal sector of the economy, increasingly, many women are visible in the formal sector, especially in the service sector. Eighty-seven per cent (87%) of employed women are in the service sector. This, to my mind, is a reflection of an increase in the number of women who have access to education. I take a cue from the university. Although a Federal Government of Nigeria publication showed that the average ratio of female to male students in universities was 1:3 between 1980 and 1992 (Federal Government of Nigeria 1997), it is thought that the ratio of female to male students in universities is higher now. If we were to go by equitable distribution of access to resources, and take on board the distribution of the population of Nigeria by sex, there ought to be more girls and women than boys and men enrolled in formal education and

adult literacy training. Even then, I still think that we should keep in view that there appears to be more women now, than in the past, in formal education.

No doubt, a lot of benefits accrue to women from education, especially formal schooling. It is clear, however, that women are yet to benefit from investment in formal education the way men have benefited. Afonja and Aina (1995) citing Rosenzweig and Schultz, indicated that women's education is not only a determinant of labour force participation, but that it directly influences the age of marriage, fertility, improved health and better nutrition for women and their families. These appear to be the areas where education has been most beneficial to women, and there seems to be a connection between these observed benefits (salaried employment/better-paying jobs and healthier households) and the social position of Nigerian women. The inference that I am drawing from this is that education has helped women to meet their practical gender needs, and has therefore improved women's condition, but not their social status. We should not forget that women's practical gender needs are derived from their identity – the natural (relating to the entire reproductive system that is present at birth, and which matures as the woman matures) and the constructed (acquired through nurturing). Apart from salaried employment and healthier households (these are important too), there are no indications of benefits to women in the area of political participation. I-IDEA (2000) notes that:

... despite a comparatively large pool of well trained and able women, their absence in major institutions of power and decision making processes is particularly striking (p. 3).

I-IDEA further observed that there were only twelve women in the 360-member House of Representatives and three in the Senate of 109 members after the 1999 general elections, while there were proportionately even fewer women in executive positions in the public and private sectors. The 2003 general elections produced two female deputy governors (out of thirty-six) as against one that the 1999 general elections produced. Women thus constituted: 2.7 per cent (3) of the total membership (109) of the senate; 5.83 per cent (21) of the 360-member House of Representatives; and 3.84 per cent of the state Houses of Assembly (Akiyode-Afolabi and Arogundade 2003). Violence against women, both in private and public, persists; and there are no indications that more illiterate than literate girls and women are victims of violence and overt sexism and discrimination. Equally important is the fact that many men (and women), boys and girls (even in educational institutions) are still uncomfortable with the campaigns around a fair share of rights and resources between men and women. For instance, during a workshop that deliberated on human rights in tertiary institutions, a male respondent who was a leader of a students' organization, in response to the presentation on women's human rights said: 'in African tradition, women are

expected to be submissive. It is not right for women to be claiming that they have equal rights with men. It is not done' (Fashina 2001:112).

Yet, the consensus among opinion moulders (at public talks and in newspapers) and discussants in non-formal education settings (workshops and seminars) is that access to formal education and literacy training for girls and women will ensure more active involvement of women in politics. This suggestion, and the suggestion that economic power will help women's active involvement in party politics, usually tops the list of recommendations from such forums.

Concerned about the contradiction inherent in what those who have education have not been able to achieve, in spite of their education, and the continued suggestion that education is the key to ensuring that more women are active in politics; reducing violence against women and improving the position of women in society, the question that keeps coming to mind is: why has the social, political and cultural status of highly literate Nigerian women not improved in spite of their education when their status is compared with that of men? This is the key question that I tried to answer in this book. To answer this question, I raised an issue, in form of a proposition, and it is that:

Contrary to the position, often taken for granted, that formal education sufficiently empowers Nigerian women, the combined pull of the teaching-learning process in schools, 'magic consciousness' (in schools and the larger society) and the 'hidden curriculum' (in schools), which constructs the identities of Nigerian women and so disempowers many educated Nigerian women, challenges this claim.

Concerning the teaching-learning process in schools, Freire (1993) in his objection to what he called the banking concept of education, said 'in the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance unto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry' (p. 72). In the Nigerian higher education system, memorization of facts as presented by the lecturer, a form of non-reflective learning (Jarvis 1995), epitomizes the banking system of education that Freire describes above. Freire (1973) also considered magic consciousness to be non-rational consciousness, which 'simply apprehends facts and attributes to them a superior power by which it is controlled and to which it must therefore submit' (p. 44). This consciousness appears to be the dominant mode in the practice of the major religions in Nigeria today. According to Freire, magic consciousness is characterized by fatalism, which leads persons to fold their arms and resign themselves to the impossibility of resisting the power of facts. Concerning the hidden curriculum, Byrne (cited in Garret 1987) apprehended it as values, attitudes, and behaviours that are not part of the official curriculum, but which are nevertheless communicated to pupils and students in educational institutions as informal education/socialization in classrooms.

The objectives of the research were: first, to explore the influence of religion, socialization (within and outside the classroom) and formal teaching-learning interactions on women's understanding of who they are and what they believe (their identity); second, to interrogate women's understanding of who they are, and what they believe affect their view of: (a) their roles in the public and private spheres of life, (b) all forms of violence against women and what they advise that women do when they experience such, and (c) the participation of women in political and community life; and third, to examine, in the light of the above, whether formal education has empowered women who have it.

### **The Nigerian Tertiary Education Context**

In an earlier work, I took the position that in the context of the poor funding of university education and the long history of military rule in Nigeria, the poor and degrading conditions under which teachers and students teach and learn, respectively, do not motivate them to challenge one another to take a wider, more liberal and serious view of knowledge dissemination and knowledge acquisition. I reasoned that the growing intolerance of others' views and actions, which political, religious and social groups on campuses exhibit, is symptomatic of the poor school environment. I also stated that faculty and students on campuses exhibit parochial notions of their own and others' status as human beings, the rights of individuals and groups, and the limits of freedom (Fashina 2001). Those observations are still relevant here. In that work, I explored the role of the 'hidden curriculum' in the violation of, and disrespect for, women's human rights in tertiary institutions.

What I did not explore is the lethargy (or the seeming lethargy) that women display concerning the violation of their rights. I approach this from my experience as a volunteer for a non-governmental organization that helps girls and women to prevent sexual violence and abuse, and also to cope with sexual violence and abuse, through education programmes. What our experiences of working with women in tertiary institutions have shown is that: (a) if an education programme (symposium or intensive training workshop) has the backing of the authority of the institution (and the school more or less compels the students to attend), there is high attendance and, usually, we hold lively discussions, after which many try to become volunteers for the NGO; (b) where attendance is totally voluntary, attendance is usually low, and (wait for it), more men than women attend such education programmes; and, (c) for every education programme that we hold, there will be at least two women, who will meet with us after, and express support for our efforts, and also express a wish to work with us. Many explanations can be advanced for a, b and c above, but the explanation that I think is relevant here is that female students have internalized oppression, and are therefore making little or no efforts to seek knowledge outside the classroom.

I need to state that while symposia, seminars and workshops on campuses do not attract many students and faculty, the religious gatherings – prayer meetings, fellowships and revivalist gatherings – attract hundreds.

Also important is the hierarchical structure of relationships in schools, including tertiary education which ensures that faculty are thought to be all-knowing, and so they are to bestow knowledge to those who are considered to know nothing (Freire 1993). Faculty identifies the subject matter that will be taught, and how it is going to be taught. They also set the criteria for assessing how well students have learned the subject matter. Unfortunately, it appears students are used to being told what to learn, how to learn and how they will be assessed. This is because when they had the opportunity to suggest what to learn in a course, bring in resource persons who are not faculty, and indicate how they want to be assessed, they did not seize the opportunity. In fact, the suggestion that they should partake in the decision-making process of teaching and learning was particularly strange to the group of students in question. The students were used to the relations of power that allow lecturers to go to class with particular beliefs/values which they pass across to the students in the process of teaching or omitting to teach particular subject matters, whether knowingly or otherwise. Given that a lecturers occupy a position of power relative to the persons that they teach, the beliefs/values that they pass on by teaching, omitting to teach or teaching subject matters in particular ways, usually go unchallenged. This is more so with respect to issues that border on and have implications for questions of dominance, oppression, equity and justice. Usually, also, most of the lecturers in tertiary institutions are men.

Some studies by Nigerian women are relevant here. In a study titled, 'Stooping to Conquer? Women Bargaining with Religion and Patriarchy in Ile-Ife, Nigeria', Dipo-Salami (2002) went to the field with the assumption that the possession of assets such as education, salaried employment and productive and social capital would help women to resist patriarchal control. She, however, found out that, while the possession of the assets 'improves women's fall-back position and increases their bargaining power to some extent, a wide range of other factors operate to restrict their active agency'. It is instructive that most of Dipo-Salami's respondents had some education. Actually, half of them had higher education. She concluded that given the influence of religion (Christianity and Islam), 'economic independence and possession of other assets are not sufficient for the improvement of women's citizenship status and their functioning within and beyond the household'. Dipo-Salami's study somewhat confirms the position I had earlier taken that the benefits that accrue to highly literate women from education are low.

In another study that investigated the extent to which university education and salaried employment serve as predictors for women empowerment in the

public and private sectors, Ogunrin (2004) found out that salaried employment had more influence on the level of women's participation in decision-making processes than university education. Ogunrin also went to the field with the assumption that education is a means to the social and political empowerment of human beings.

In a study carried out by the Female Leadership Forum, the view that tertiary institutions perpetuate a culture of female subordination was highlighted. Some of the interesting responses given by male participants during focus group discussions as reasons why women cannot take up leadership positions in tertiary institutions include: the factor of religion, domestic work, women's flexibility, and women's belief that they are subordinate to men. The report identified, amongst others, the following as being responsible for the failure of female students to take up leadership positions: women's lack of interest in leadership culture, and women's fear, timidity and lack of confidence. Others are violence, corruption, and high financial demands (Irinoye and Idika-Ogunye 2003).

My current study was therefore informed by the observations and conclusions of four previous studies discussed above. First, was my observation that female students seemed lethargic about the violation of their rights; that they would rather attend prayer meetings, fellowships and revivalist gatherings on campuses than attend non-formal education programmes that focused on women's rights; and my other observation about the hierarchical structure of relationships in higher institutions, its implications for power (what is taught, how, by whom and to whom?). Second, was Dipo-Salami's conclusions that religion was a factor that limited women's (including highly literate women's) citizenship status. Third, was the study carried out by the Female Leadership Forum in higher institutions, which indicated that male participants identified religion as one of the reasons why women could not take up leadership positions. Fourth, was Ogunrin's study that found out that salaried employment had more influence on the level of women's participation in decision-making processes than university education. Given these observations and conclusions, I decided to explore how religion (present in formal institutions as formal, non-formal and informal education/learning) interfaces with the processes of teaching-learning in formal education contexts, and socialization/informal learning inside and outside formal schools, to shape the kinds of persons that women become in formal schools, and when they have finished formal schooling, especially higher education. I also decided to interrogate the (limits of) power of women who have emerged from these processes.

Clearly, an awareness of what religious leaders actually teach women and how they teach women about who they are, their interests and their expected roles in society, would throw some light on the processes that shape women's identities in the school environment and in the teaching-learning transaction. We

do not want to presume, for instance, that all religious leaders preach (read teach) the subordination of women all the time and in all contexts. And if they do, we ought not to assume that women (and also men) will take their messages to heart, internalize them, and then behave according to their precepts. We note that Stacey (1998) found that evangelical Christians among white working people in the Silicon Valley, California, are not monolithically antifeminist, nor are their family relationships uniformly patriarchal. Similarly, Dipo-Salami (2002), quoting Saadallah, also said that Muslim feminists, 'being aware of the level of oppression directed against women, resort to Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and positive aspects of the Hadiths to validate their discourse on equality between the sexes in attempting to reconcile Islam with the universal principles of human rights' (p. 19).

### Locating the Study

The research study reported in this book took place in two locations in Nigeria – Lokoja, the administrative capital of Kogi State, located in the geo-political zone now referred to as the North-Central; and Ibadan, capital of Oyo State, located in the South-West of Nigeria. There are similarities and differences in the character of the two locations. They are both the administrative capitals of their states, although Ibadan is a huge city in comparison with Lokoja. They both have large numbers of adherents of the two major religions in Nigeria (Christianity and Islam), and adherents of traditional religion; although not many people (both literates and illiterates) admit to being adherents of the latter. However, while the majority of the people who inhabit Ibadan are Yoruba, the people in Lokoja are not homogeneous. Kogi State indigenes insist that there are at least twenty-one distinct ethnic groups in the state. And given that Lokoja is the administrative capital, it is thought that all the groups are represented there. Some of the ethnic groups that have been identified include: Egbira Koto/Musum, Kakanda, Nupe, Oworo, Egbira Okene, Ogori, and the Okun. The Okun are of Yoruba descent, and they speak a variation of the Yoruba language. Within the Okun too, at least three variations of the Okun language are spoken. Others are: Bassa-Nge, Bassa-Komo, Igala and Hausa. It also appears that in Lokoja, the languages of three groups (Igala, Okun and Egbira Okene) are widely spoken, and they are thought to be the three largest ethnic groups in the state. Understandably also, in Lokoja, many of the inhabitants, whether literate or illiterate, speak Pidgin English. The suggestion here therefore is that not all the respondents in Ibadan (Oyo State) and Lokoja (Kogi State) are indigenes of the two states. There were some respondents, especially among women in the informal economy, female apprentices and among students, who came from other parts of Nigeria, but were resident in Ibadan and Lokoja at the time of the study.

The majority of the respondents in this study were within the age range of 20 to 39 at the time of collection of data in 2004. A few were between ages 40 and 49, while a few were between 16 and 20. Only five were above 50. By the criteria of chronological age and the prescription of the Nigerian constitution, the majority of the respondents in the study were adults. While adulthood, in the minds of many people, is biologically determined, and represents the process of ageing, Hunt (2005a), citing Tenant and Pogson, indicated that additional factors such as psychological, social, and cultural factors and their dynamic interplay, coupled with the physical process of ageing, define adulthood. We note that at least half of the respondents in this study were earning a living and married, and possibly acting responsibly towards significant persons around them and members of their communities. The other half were not earning a living and married; apparently because they were still in school and in non-formal education programmes, preparing for a career, a vocation or profession. Although the point has been made that chronological age is not a good determinant of age; by the criteria of social responsibility and age, most of the respondents in this study were adults. As we had earlier indicated, the 'age of majority' in our country is 18, and so when we asked whether respondents had voted and or stood as candidates in elections: we must have assumed that most of the respondents had had the opportunity to vote, and perhaps also, to be voted for.

However, if we assumed the mid-ages of 25 and 35 respectively for the majority of respondents who were in the age brackets 21 to 30 and 31 to 40 in 2004, those in the age bracket of 21 to 30 had had the opportunity to vote during only two general elections in Nigeria, while those within 31 to 40 had had the opportunities thrice. If persons in this age group had voted during the 1993 elections, then their votes were discountenanced by the then military head of state, General Ibrahim Babangida, who annulled the results of the election. The point that is being made here is that although we asked the respondents in this study about their participation in civic-political matters, in terms of participating in the political process, except for union elections, which they may have had the opportunity to participate in while in school (for those who stayed long enough in the formal school system), there were not many opportunities to participate in electoral processes and the process of governance during significant years of their adult lives. This is because Nigeria was ruled by military dictators for much of the adult lives of participants who were in the age bracket of 30 to 39. But for military dictatorship, if they were in the mid-age for that group, they would have been ready to begin participation in elections by 1987 when they turned 18. So, depending on their age, the 1993, 1999 and 2003 elections and the elections that they had taken part in, in the different groups to which they belonged, would probably be for them the reference point as they

responded to the questions that they were asked about their civic-political participation.

There were other significant developments during the period of the transition from the military to civilian administration in 1999 and during the transition from civilian to another civilian administration in 2004. After the end of military rule and a long period of 'femocracy' (Mama 1997), when wives of heads of state put themselves forward as the voice of women and helped their husbands to appropriate feminist demands, voices of other women and women's groups began to be heard loud once again all over the country. There was a wave of demands around women's rights to: participate in the political processes in the country; stop all forms of violence against women; grant women rights that they were hitherto denied, *de facto* and *de jure*; and grant women access to power resources, especially formal education and literacy training. Many new not-for-profit organizations worked around these issues, while the existing ones which had hitherto been concerned about democracy started focusing on women's rights. The media picked and published more stories about the abuse of women than they ever did.

Individual women and women's organizations remembered and tried to draw lessons from: women's traditional method of protest in the Eastern part of Nigeria which pre-dated colonialism, which was called 'sitting-on-a man'; Queen Amina of Zazzau's exploits in wars; the Aba women's riots which began in 1929; the activism of Abeokuta Women's Forum in the 1940s and the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies (FNWS) in the 1940s and 1950s; the writings of Nigerian female scholar/activists, and the activism of Women in Nigeria (WIN) in the 1980s, among others (Mba 1982; WIN 1985; Perreira 2005). Women also drew inspiration from, appealed to, and keyed into international processes, recommendations and conventions that seek to improve women's status in all spheres of life. They include: the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976–1985); the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979; the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 – the section on the equal status and human rights of women; the World Conference to review and appraise the achievements of the UN Decade for Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, and the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995; and the preparations towards the ten-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – Beijing + 10 (UNHCHR 1996; Odah 2001; ABA-CEELI 2002). Within this context, there was some overt and covert backlash,

against activism around women's rights issues, especially in some sections of the media and religious institutions (Mejiuni 2005; Obilade and Mejiuni 2006).

Meanwhile, given the economic hardships that Nigerians experienced as a result of the Structural Adjustment Programmes that the military dictators who ruled Nigeria enforced in the 1980s, many more Nigerians moved to religion for succour. Although Nigerians practice a variety of religions, Christianity and Islam predominate. Traditional religions trail these two, and others follow. In many parts of Nigeria, Christianity and Islam have fused with traditional cultures, obliterating traditional religions in such places, with most adherents and custodians of traditional religions being openly Christian and/or Muslim. Religion pervades the private and public lives of Nigerians and scholars have drawn attention to the increasing phenomenon of Christian and Islamic fundamentalism (I-IDEA 2001), and increased politicization of religious differences. Apart from the spiritual benefits that people get from being religious, the practice of religion is one of the processes of socialization, and religions are cultural systems; they are therefore powerful educational agents. Religious leaders usually prescribe the ecclesiastical model of meaning-making (Hunt 2005), and would like adherents to understand their World through the sacred texts, the teachings of religious leaders, and the practices of the religions. The lessons from religious teachings and practices carry rewards and punishment for disobedience, rules are laid down according to the 'will and voice of God', and those rules are normalized, such that they become part of our cultures, the way things are. Bowker (1997) observed that religions 'are a constant force for change, despite the fact that they are also, as systems, necessarily conservative' (p. xxi). Concerning the negative and positive impact of religion, he said:

There is no doubt that one can point to many kinds of damage which religions have done, in terms, for example, of spiritual terrorization or the subordination of women, in most aspects of their lives, to the decisions and determinations of men. But religions also remain now as they have been in the past, the major resource for the transformation of life and the transformation of art ... (p. xxiii).

In Nigeria, amidst the need that women and men have to honour their spirituality through religion, and amidst a lot of religiosity, those who want to preserve dominant power, those who are looking for easy and lazy explanations, those who want to subordinate women to their will so that they can exploit them, appeal to 'the will of God'. According to this manner of thinking, a fatal accident, caused by a careless driver, and a building that collapsed and killed inhabitants because the builders had cut costs, were pre-destined, they were the will of God. This was what Freire (1973) referred to as magic consciousness. That is, non-rational consciousness, which 'simply apprehends facts and attributes to them a superior power by which it is controlled and to which it must therefore submit'.

Also in Nigeria, religious beliefs and practices are taught and learned through informal and non-formal education, and whether or not they appear in the curricula of formal educational provisions, they are almost always present as hidden curriculum. The question then, is not whether education practitioners are aware of the presence of religion within schools and classrooms. The question is whether they assume its positive impact all the time, because religions are thought to be about 'the will of God'.

So, while persons who are concerned that Nigerian women should have an important power resource continue to advocate for increased access to formal education for Nigerian children, women, and persons with disabilities, including literacy training especially for women; religion, with its patriarchal norms and values, pervades the private and public spheres in Nigeria, including institutions of higher learning. Meanwhile, educators in the formal school system have focused on the implications of socialization for learning and for negative and deviant behaviour, ignoring the more insidious effect of socialization and informal learning, especially in higher education, except as it relates to cultism, examination malpractices and other deviant behaviours; apparently because cultism, for example, is disruptive and costs human lives. Adult educators who are best placed to apprehend informal learning as day-to-day experiences in non-formal education and in higher education, had their sight elsewhere. They focused on religious institutions as providers of non-formal adult education activities, not on the teaching and practices of religion as, themselves, educative activities.

This is hardly surprising. In Nigeria, the colonial experience resulted in the formalization of education, in a non-indigenous language (Obanya 2004). The result was that formal and, to a lesser extent non-formal education, have displaced the system of education where persons, young and old, acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes required for everyday living and that shaped their character (Fafunwa 1974) in informal ways, through intuition, observation, imitation, and socialization (Hrimech 2005), reflection on experiences, and through oral tradition. Marsick and Volpe (1999) described informal learning as 'learning that is predominantly unstructured, experiential, and non-institutional' (p. 4). It is 'the acquisition of new knowledge, understanding, skills or attitudes, which people do on their own and which has not been planned or organized in formal school settings' (Hrimech 2005:310), nor in non-formal education settings, and involves action and reflection on experiences (Larsson 1997; Marsick and Volpe 1999; English 2002).

The discourse of informal learning has focused on: the different types of informal learning that are observable – tacit and explicit informal learning (Evans 2003; Hrimech 2005), self-directed learning and auto-didactic learning (Hrimech 2005), and the hidden curriculum (Garret 1987); the settings where informal

learning takes place and activities that result in informal learning – income generating activities or work (Marsick and Volpe 1999; Marsick, Volpe and Watkins 1999); household, leisure, voluntary and community activities (English 2002; Finsden 2006); social movements (Hernandez 1997; Lander 2003); reading, travelling, exposure to the mass media, and socialization, and reflection on experience; the content of learning (English 2002), the theories of informal learning, the conditions that support and limit learning, and the role of intentionality in enhancing informal learning (Marsick, Volpe and Watkins 1999; English 2002).

Unfortunately, in Nigeria today, informal learning has become shadowy; it is unnamed, and seldom researched, even though it goes on within formal and non-formal educational institutions and teaching-learning contexts (as incidental and or explicit learning); and during teaching-learning interactions in formal and non-formal education (as hidden curriculum and incidental learning) (Fashina 2001).

I hope that I am able to show readers that the teaching-learning processes in higher education, and religion, taught and learned through formal, non-formal, and informal education/learning (or the hidden curriculum), and also socialization within and outside the formal school system, all interface to determine the persons that women become, that is, who they are; and how who they are, then enhances or limits their capabilities, whether in the civic-political sphere or in their attempts to resist violence. The research method that I adopted for this purpose spans both the interpretive and critical paradigms, given the feminist pedagogy framework that I chose to undergird the study and my research strategy, which was a phenomenological reading of the lived experiences of the women that I had targeted in the study. It seems clear from my framework that the study reported here is a feminist research. This book, then, is as much an academic pursuit as it is a project of the politics of identity.

In Chapter One, I describe the theoretical framework adopted for the research study, and provide detailed information about the procedure that was adopted for data collection. I also provide information about the participants in the research, and the strategy that I adopted for analyses of data. In Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five, I present female and male respondents' and religious leaders' views, beliefs, opinions and experiences on, and about, women's civic-political participation; the role of women in the private and public spheres of life; women's identities; and women's experience of violence, and what they should do when they have experienced violence. Also in all the four chapters, I examine women's analyses and their understanding of their roles in the public and private spheres, their experiences /others' experience of violence, who they believe themselves to be, and who others believe they are. I also interrogate

male respondents' views and religious leaders' positions about all the issues raised. In Chapter Six, I interrogate the impact of the identities of women that have emerged from the previous chapters on women's abilities to gain power, reorder unequal power relationships, and resist oppressive power. In Chapter Seven, I explore how formal education, religion and informal learning/socialization interact to construct the identities of women who have gone through formal education, especially higher education, and I try to determine whether the identities of women that have emerged from that process are empowering or disempowering.