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## **Gender Equity and Empowerment in Nigeria: Implications for Educational Management** (Pp. 302-312)

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### **Abstract**

*Despite the tremendous efforts by the Nigeria government over the past three decades to increase educational opportunities for males and females, gender challenges still lie ahead if the goal of Education for All is to be achieved. The paper, therefore, set to discuss the significant persistent gender gap in the educational system, even at the management level and how gender equality will empower girls/women and develop the family and educational system at large. It will also allow for female participation in allocation of administrative posts in the educational and other sectors of the economy. The education of the female will bring about a micro and macro benefits of development. The paper also presents an overview of the social-cultural and economic factors that affect schooling. To help bridge the gap of gender disparity, some strategies, programmes and projects are being recommended to promote female participation in education and management positions in Nigeria in order to move the country forward from underdevelopment to developed nation.*

## **Introduction**

Gender is about the behaviours, attitudes, roles and status assigned to an individual in a social-cultural setting. The status of individuals and the power they use to rule in any society are culturally determined, as all cultures are gender sensitive. Gender relationship is a vital practice that influences the lives of men and women in any society. It is so important that it affects the roles we play, and the relative power we wield. It determines the opportunities and privileges we have. In Africa generally, and Nigeria particularly, gender relations are always patriarchal in nature and therefore, dominated by the male. Women are subjected to subordinate status by men. Although gender issues have a global phenomenon, sub-Saharan Africa is most affected. The gender gap favouring male has remained persistent itself in all factors of development in Africa.

Historically, African women proved themselves to be astute managers of the home and local economies capable of playing important management roles in war and peace. In the educational sector, findings show little or no sex differences in terms of behaviour and achievement of females in management. For instance, Wexley and Hunt (1975) found no differences between males and females in management task skills and human relation. In another study, Day and Stogdill as cited by Emetarom and Ogbonna (2006) found that men and women managers, who occupied parallel positions performed similar functions, showed similar types of behaviour and effectiveness when described by their subordinates. Maduabum (1991) in measures of overage overall ability and achievement in males and females found little difference in means, although in the performance of specific management tasks, quite marked differences are found. However, Eister (1987) suggests that there can be a society in which difference is not necessarily equated with inferiority or superiority.

These studies suggest that women managers possess superior attributes and skills in some area related to management effectiveness. The leadership style of women is such that would serve to increase the probability of women functioning well as managers. Indeed, researches show that women exhibit managerial attributes like problem – solving, (Donnel and Hall, 1980) communication style (Birdshall, 1980). Ferrario (1991) stress the need to acknowledge the fact that many women possess desirable management attributes and can therefore be effective.

According to UNESCO (2003), women represent over half of the world's out of school population over 113 million children, 60% of whom are girls have no opportunity to basic education. Furthermore, 145 million children aged six to eleven (6-11) in developing countries lack educational opportunities. In Nigeria about 7.2 million children do not go to school of which 62 per cent are girls. The main problem of female education is accessibility to education, retention, and academic achievement.

In most societies of the world, especially African countries, gender gap is persistent. This common phenomenon constitutes a larger percentage of disadvantaged female education which includes reduced infant and maternal mortality, greater input in family and community decision – making and increased agricultural productivity (Utulu, 2000). Furthermore, education empowers girl and women in respect to basic knowledge of their individual and political right at large. Also, according to Okoro (2006), education is a fundamental human right which provides knowledge and skill to both male and female. It involves the bringing up of a child in the community and constantly training him to adjust and fit into the changing world. Hence, these benefits bring about the basis for equal placement of girls with their male counterparts.

Literacy is globally recognized as one of the principal goals of education. The ability to read and write is achieved through schooling. Hence, schooling is a tool used to achieve social mobility. The implication of this assumption is that the level of educational attainment of a person depends on his/her intellectual ability. Consequently equal levels of education produce equal levels of reinforcement like reward, pay and social status. However, the inputs and outputs of education have been observed to vary. These variations in education far from being randomly distributed have a negative impact and persistently affect certain groups of the populace especially the rural, the poor and women. The educational levels of women determine their position in the society. Therefore, it is through education that women will become knowledgeable enough to become self- reliant, self-sufficient and develop the ability to solve societal problems.

In 2003, UNICEF analyzed the literacy situation in Nigeria and came up with following findings:

1. The overall literacy rate declined from 57% in 1990 to 49% in 2001.

2. Literacy among women declined from 44% to 41% during the same period.
3. There are striking geographical discrepancies, urban areas 67%, and rural area 42%.
4. There are also striking regional (or geo – political) differences both in overall literacy rates and in women’s literacy rates on as given in Table 1 below:

Table 1 shows the regional and gender differences in adult literacy rate in the year 2003 which is in favour of men in all the regions. The literacy rate of women and men in the south East are 60% and 74% respectively. In the south – West, the literacy rates are 55% and 74% for women and men respectively, North –West has 22% and 40% for women and men respectively, which North – east has 21% and 42% literacy rates for women and men respectively.

Table 2 shows the gender difference in enrolment in primary and post-primary schools from 1991 to 1995. In 1991, the total enrolment of pupils in primary schools was 13,776,854, out of which 56.19% were male and 43.81% were female. In 1992, 55.88% were male pupils, and 44.12% female pupils enrolled out of a total enrolment of 14,805,937. In 1993, 56.27% and 43.73% male and female pupils enrolled in the primary school. In 1994, 55.94% and 44.06% male and female pupils were admitted. In 1995, 55.46% and 44.46% boys and girls were enrolled respectively.

In the secondary schools, the same trend of enrolment occurred with boys’ enrolment being higher than girls’ enrolment. In 1992, male and female enrolment was 55% and 45% respectively. In 1993, male and female percentage enrolment was 54.1% and 45.9%. In 1994, the male and female and enrolment was 54.4% and 45.6% respectively. 1995, the percentage enrolment for male and female was 52.9% and 47.1% respectively.

The burning issue of universalization of education is echoed all over the world. It is against this background that international conferences were organized in order to address the issue of female education. Some of the conferences include the 1975 Mexico World Conference on the status of women, 1985 United Nations (UN) Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of women, 1990 World Conference on Education for All and 1995 World Summit on Social Development.

Furthermore, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA) was held in Jomtien, Thailand, from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1990. Also in 2000, the Millennium Declaration Goals (MDGs) was signed by 188 Heads of State in the world in Dakar, Senegal. The emphasis was on the importance of female educational development through the elimination of gender disparities in primary education by the year 2005 and to achieve gender equality in education by 2015 with the view of focusing and ensuring full and equal access as well as achievement in basic education. The conference declared that education for all is necessary for human development by every nation according to its environmental needs.

The Jomtien Conference of 1990 and Dakar Summit of 2000 called for increase in funding of education and provision of educational facilities. In spite of these laudable conferences, Africa, including Nigeria, majority of children is still not in school while most of those who enroll in school drop out before the completion of basic education. The levels of poverty and population growth are the main causes of high level of inaccessibility to education (World Bank, 1996). Thus the close gender gap was reaffirmed as the central objectives of the conference, hence, Article 3.3 of the World Declaration of Education for All, states that, the most urgent priority is to ensure access to and improve the quality of education of girls and women and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereo-typing in education should be elimination

Table 3, shows the gender difference in enrolment in primary and post-primary and secondary schools. Generally, the rate of male enrolment is higher than female. In 1999, 10,058,434 males pupils enrolled in primary schools while 7,848,894 female pupils were enrolled. In 2000, 10,739,029 male were admitted while 8,413,413 female enrolled. In 2001 male enrolment was 10,583,411 while female was 8,457,812. In 2002, the enrolment of boys was 11,015,011, while 8,791,071 female pupils were enrolled. In 2003, 14,366,513 male pupils and 11,338,280 female pupils were enrolled. In 2004, 11,824,494 males and 11,338,280 female pupils were admitted. In 2005, 12,189,073 and 9,926,359 males and female pupils were enrolled respectively.

In the secondary school, the same trend in enrolment was witnessed having the rate of male enrolment being higher than that of female enrolment from 1999 and 2005 (Olaleye, 2008), Osokoya (2008), and UNICEF (2001) stated that the reasons for educational disparity which include the threat of

female chastity, control over women's productive and reproductive life, women's economic value through high bride price and the apprehension that educated girls will not make controllable, obedient and subservient wives. There is also a widely held belief that to educate a girl is a waste of money as she would leave home on marriage and not contribute to the maintenance of her natal home.

### **Importance of Women Education in Economic and Social Development**

For any meaningful development to take place in any country, education must be accorded its place of priority in all facets of life. This view is in line with the axiom which says that if you educate a man, you educate a person, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation. Stormquist (1995) stated keenly that it is only when you educate women that their hidden talents will be manifested. They are first teachers of their children, and so the nation gain economically and socially in educating her female population. The youths are leaders of tomorrow and their first contact in life comes through women (mothers).

The United Nation Organization since 1975 has revealed many findings of valuable assets about women which are worth while and should be considered if any meaningful programme of development can be achieved, especially in third world countries. These valuable facts include the following as put by Egunjobi (1991)

- (i) Women head up to 30% of the world's household.
- (ii) Women head between 25% to 66% of rural households worldwide
- (iii) Women contribute two thirds of world's working hours.
- (iv) Women grow 50% of world food, but
- (v) Women receive only one tenth of world's total income.

From the foregoing, it is evident that women are very important in every sphere of life, and constitute a greater percentage of the population and if left uneducated will spell doom to the future of the world at large, and Africa in particular.

### **Gender Imperative in Educational Management**

Education management is a function of organization and structure, proprietorship and control, inspection and supervision (FRN 2004). In line with the National Policy on Education (NPE), Nwaoku (2005) noted the essence of educational management to include ensuring adequate and effective planning of all educational services, providing qualitative administrative and management control through regular and continuous supervision.

Women are grossly misrepresented in senior posts in education and managerial positions in other occupations. In secondary schools, for example, in 1991, out of 48 percent of all teachers, only 21 percent of the head teachers were women (Coleman, 1994b) parallel to this study, Inyang (2008), observed that of the 227 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, only 68 were headed by female principals. Besides, less than 100 vice principals in the State were females out of 568 vice principals in the state service.

Male domination of educational management is evident in Nigeria where school administration evolved into largely male profession disconnected from mainly female occupation of teaching. Mac-Fadden (1998) reflects that this led to discrimination in the allocation of administrative posts. This means that abilities and values of women are passed over, as career in school administration are driven by male sponsorship than merit and open competition.

Al-Khalifo (2009) claims that women adopt management styles, with much greater emphasis on collaboration, cooperation and other 'feminine' behaviours. These styles are compatible with 'masculine' aspects of management. Coleman (2004) presents evidence that women managers in education tend to be more democratic than men, demonstrating qualities of warmth empathy and cooperation. The dynamic, transforming women have much to offer in educational management for sustainable development of the nation. To ensure women education and empowerment, Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs), and women professional groups have also initiated programmes for women empowerment", and "gender equality". Most of these programmes are short term based because they meet the immediate needs of women. It is only when significant number of women holds public and legislative functions that there can be total development. Such educational policies have however, not been able to streamline the gender parity in education. Percentage of girls who enroll in all levels of education

continues to lag behind that of boys. (Stromquist, 1995; Olaleye, 2008; UNICEF, 2003, 2005 and Osokoya, 2005, 2008).

### **Conclusion**

It is evident from this paper that efforts have been made by world bodies and the Nigerian government to bridge educational gaps between males and females yet the imbalance persists. It has also been observed from the managerial view point that the females are not carried along by the males. This leaves a challenge to the government to do more to ensure balance in this sensitive area of co-existence.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are put forward:

1. Government should adequately fund the programmes designed to redress the gender imbalance.
2. More women should be encouraged by government to hold high public offices in education, economy and politics in all the states of the federation
3. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should be properly funded by the government, corporate, and private individuals, in order to introduce the gender friendly programme to communities
4. Early pregnancy could make teenage girls to terminate her education career. Therefore, the government and NGOs should endeavor to assist girls to cope with their baby and continue with their schooling.
5. Parents should be educated by the government on the benefit of female education and the emotional attachment of female to her natal home, as girls are naturally inclined to taking care their parents in old age.

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**Table 1: Nigeria Regional and Gender Differences in Adult Literacy Rate in 2003**

Zone	Women	Men	F+M
South-East	60%	74%	67%
South – west	55%	74%	64%
North-West	22%	40%	31%
North-East	21%	42%	32%

**Table 2: National Summary of Primary and Post Primary Schools' Statistic (1991-1995)**

Primary	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
<b>Total Pupils</b>	13,776,854	14,805,937	15,870,280	16,190,947	59,941,078
<b>% Male</b>	56.19	55.88	56.27	55.94	55.46
<b>% Female</b>	43.81.	44.12	43.73	44.06	44.56
<b>Post Primary</b>					
<b>Total Enrolment</b>	3,123,277	3,600,620	4,032,083	4,451,329	4,448,991
<b>% Male</b>	58.3	55	54.1	54.4	52.9
<b>% Female</b>	41.7	45	45.9	45.6	47.1

Source: Statistics Branch, Federal Ministry of Education, 1995

**Table 3: National Summary of Primary and Post Primary Schools Statistics (1999-2005).**

Primary	1991	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total pupil	17,907,388	19,151,442	19,041,223	19,806,082	25,704,793	21,395,510	22,115,432
Total male	10,058,434	10,738,029	10,583,411	11,015,011	14,366,513	11,824,494	12,189,073
Total female	7,848,894	8,413,413	8,457,812	8,791,071	11,338,280	9,571,016	9,926,359
Post primary							
Total enrolment	3,844,585	4,104,345	4,610,105	4,897,048	6,509,772	6,279,562	6,397,581
Total male	2,046,608	2,262,130	2,546,993	2,720,906	3,662,451	3,539,648	3,543,648
Total female	1,797,977	1,842,215	2,054,112	2,176,143	2,847,321	2,739,914	2,854,156

*Source: Statistics Branch, Federal Ministry of Education 2005*