
**INCREASING INVESTMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION
FOR WOMEN AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The paper focuses on increasing the investment in Higher education for women and socio-economic development in Nigeria. It has become a general truism to believe that if the women are given unrestricted access to higher education and government and educational stakeholders increase their investment in higher education for the girl child, rapid socio-economic development will be achievable in Nigeria. Higher education is a veritable instrument which helps women to rise to their responsibility to assert their God given rights in contributing to the poverty. Higher education is a capital-intensive social service which requires increased and proper financial investment from the government for successful implementation of educational policies and programmes. Therefore, this paper seeks to present an overview of investment in Higher education, Benefits of increased investment in higher education for women, families and society as a whole, the notion of socio-economic development and Higher education in Nigeria. It highlights the challenges that may be encountered in investing in Higher Education. The paper further shows the statistics of investment in higher education by Government.

Key words: Increasing investment, Higher education, women, socio-economic development and Nigeria.

Increasing investment in Higher education for women will not only bring about a long term benefit of empowering them, but is generally considered as a portent and veritable improvement in a country's socio-economic development. Practical steps have been taken severally by Nigerian government to improve investment in higher education by establishing a full-fledged women's Education section under federal ministry of Education in 1986 (Ojobo, 2008). Investment in higher education has to do with the Government and private bodies' commitment and effort on providing financial, material and human resources for the educational training of women in higher education or tertiary institutions in a bid to empowering them to improve and sustain socio-economic development. Increased investment for the girl-child in higher education is a precursor to women empowerment which has been considered as a veritable lifting women and the girl-child out of poverty. According to Alao and Ajayi (1989:8), after more than two decades of the existence of The Women's Education in Nigeria, women's higher education still remains significantly low. Nigeria s a nation has tried to rise to the challenge of the ordeal of women's education by providing for improvement in women's participation in socio-economic improvement of their society.

Despite the effort of Nigerian government toward increasing investment in higher education for women, girls access to basic education as well as higher education has remained low. The 2006 National School Census (NSC) revealed that less than half of the population of women in Nigeria is literate. This mismatch has informed the central purview of this paper. This paper therefore, seeks to achieve the following objectives among others:-

- To highlight the reasons for increased investment on women education in Nigeria.
- To present the notion of socio-economic development in Nigeria.
- To highlight the future (prospects) of investment in higher education as it relates to socio-economic development.
- To unveil the challenges of investing in female/women education.

Unveiling Concepts

Knowledge of Womanhood

The question of who a woman is has been surrounded by the challenge of "anarchy of perspectivism". There are diverse notions and idiosyncrasies on who really can be considered to be a woman. The child marriage proponents declared that any girl who is married automatically becomes a woman. However, Eseyin, Okafor and Uchendu (2014) define a woman as a human species that belongs to the female class and has

attained the age of puberty. In the same vein, Wikipedia (2013) noted that the term “woman” is reserved for adult females while a young female is a girl. A woman can simply therefore, be referred to as any female who is matured enough to handle matters that pertain to livelihood. When a female has grown to the level of exercising independent thinking, she can be considered as a woman. In other words, for a person to be referred to as a woman, she needs to be a female who can handle the challenges of life and take appropriate decisions. She may or may not be married since a female who is advanced in age would not be addressed as a girl but rather a woman.

Higher Education in Nigeria

Higher education or tertiary education is the type of education offered at post-secondary school level, in universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and so on. Higher education can also be considered a knowledge-production centres and the largest repositories of certified knowledge, hence the highest concentration of professionals in different fields of study required for socio-economic advancement and development of the society are engaged in it. Higher education plays direct role in development. The first is that higher education produces graduates/labour with requisite skills to support the knowledge intensive economy. The second is that it produces knowledge through research and publications. There are studies that show that in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, with the addition of 1 year of tertiary education, the Gross Domestic product increased by 0.25% points and 0.40% in terms of productivity (Bloom, 2006). Andreas Blom, the World Bank Lead Education Economist, in September 2012, recognized the role that higher education could play in the production of graduates with skills and knowledge needed in Africa and announced the World Bank’s commitment of \$800millin USD for institutional strengthening for skills development and centers of excellence. In view of the fact that higher institutions are meant to produce high-level manpower, they are charged with responsibilities as enshrined in the Nigeria Policy on Education. These responsibilities are:

- Developing and inculcating functional literacy.
- Developing and intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.
- Contributing to national development through high-level relevant manpower training.
- Proper values for the survival of the individual and the society.
- Giving the physical and intellectual skills, to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
- Promoting and encouraging scholarship and community service.
- Forging and cementing national unity.
- Promoting national and international understanding and interaction.

The implication of these is that universities are intellectual factories for turning out that most precious product of all, which is the functional individual. To attain these

charged responsibilities, higher education institutions especially the universities have to engage in teaching, research, community service and entrepreneurial development.

Socio-Economic Development

When all productive sectors of an economy witness a qualitative increase in output, the nation can be said to have experienced socio-economic development. Socio-economic development is a state in which the various sectors of the economy are operating at full capacity to provide the greatest happiness of the greatest number for the citizens. Be that as it may, sustainable economic development goes beyond the qualitative and quantitative increase in output from all sectors of the economy. According to Wikipedia (n.d.), sustainable socio-economic development has to do with human development in which resources are used to sustain socio-economic development and to meet human existential needs while ensuring the sustainability of natural systems and the environment.

In as much as economic development has to do with qualitative and quantitative increase in output from various sectors of a nation's economy, its foundational elements should be justice, equity, values education, respect to human sacredness, gender mainstreaming, egalitarianism and so on. Sustainable economic development therefore goes beyond meeting the immediate needs of the present generation; it also deals with securing a comfortable future for the future generation. On their part, the International Institute of Sustainable Development (IISD) (2013) defines sustainable economic development as development that meets the needs of the present without engendering the capacity of posterity to meet their own needs.

Development is manifest and sustainable when the level of qualitative and quantitative output from various sectors of the economy when it has maximum impact on both the present and future generation according to their needs. The function of women in sustaining socio-economic development in the country cannot be over emphasized. Socio-economic development in a country ought to be a product of synergy of effort of the productive members of the country. This role can be adequately achieved when there is increased investment in higher education for the women and also be given equal leverage to contribute to the standard of the economy like their male counterparts.

Benefits of increased investment in Female/women education

On a general note, the benefits that can be traceable to education include the following: emancipation from vicious poverty, improvement of the standard of living-food, housing, health, clothing, transport and other basic physiological needs. If the greater percentage of the women is educated, their overall standard of living will be enhanced remarkably. The entire household and the society also will stand to enjoy tremendously. Their capacity to contribute to the socio-economic development of the nation will easily come by. Specifically these benefits include the following:

Empowerment for Socialization: The intellectual enhancement of the women fold will tend to bring about dramatic turn-around in the society. The 1978 General Conference of UNESCO meeting has this to say:

Increasing educational opportunities for women boosts equity and foster national development. The potential contribution of educated and trained women to labour force and the importance of their education in the improvement of family welfare and planning are factors still underestimated in national development.

It is imperative to surmise that the average impact of women with university qualification is more than double of women who have only primary education.

Economic Transformation: Increased investment in higher education for women will provide unlimited capacity for women to engage profitably in small and/or large scale business concerns. Such women become instruments for the progress of the society and support to their husbands as they partner with them to proffer useful advice to them. Educated women, if gainfully employed can help their husbands financially and in the education of their children.

Rebranding of National Heritage: Women of substance have emerged in Nigeria in several occasions to rebrand our National image. Such women like Professor (Mrs.) Grace Alele Williams First Female Vice Chancellor in Nigeria, the late Prof (Mrs.) Jadesola Akande, the Late Prof (Mrs.) Dora Akunyili Former Minister for information and Dr (Mrs.) Okonjo Iweala, Former Minister of Finance. Others are Queen Amina of Zaria, Idia of Benin, Moremi of Ile-Ife, (Mrs.) Olukilakpo Kuti to mention but a few.

Health: Good education empowers our women to gain much insight into how to secure perfect health for the children and themselves and by so doing for the entire locality and the nation at large. For instance, she knows and takes what constituted balanced diet. IF women are well literate, they will be empowered to gain access to vital information about unwholesome drugs, and actions that are detrimental to the health of the foetus.

Matrimonial Responsibility: The woman is regarded as a home maker who is expected to take good care of her husband and children. Educational empowerment of women broadens their knowledge and techniques on how to train their children, clean and organize their household. There is no doubt that a literate woman who can read about nutrition, body changes, modern household equipment and so on will carry out efficiently her God-ordained responsibility to the home and society at large.

The diagram below seeks to unveil the benefits of increased investment in Higher education and how it can bring about gender equality, access to market and overall social-re-engineering.

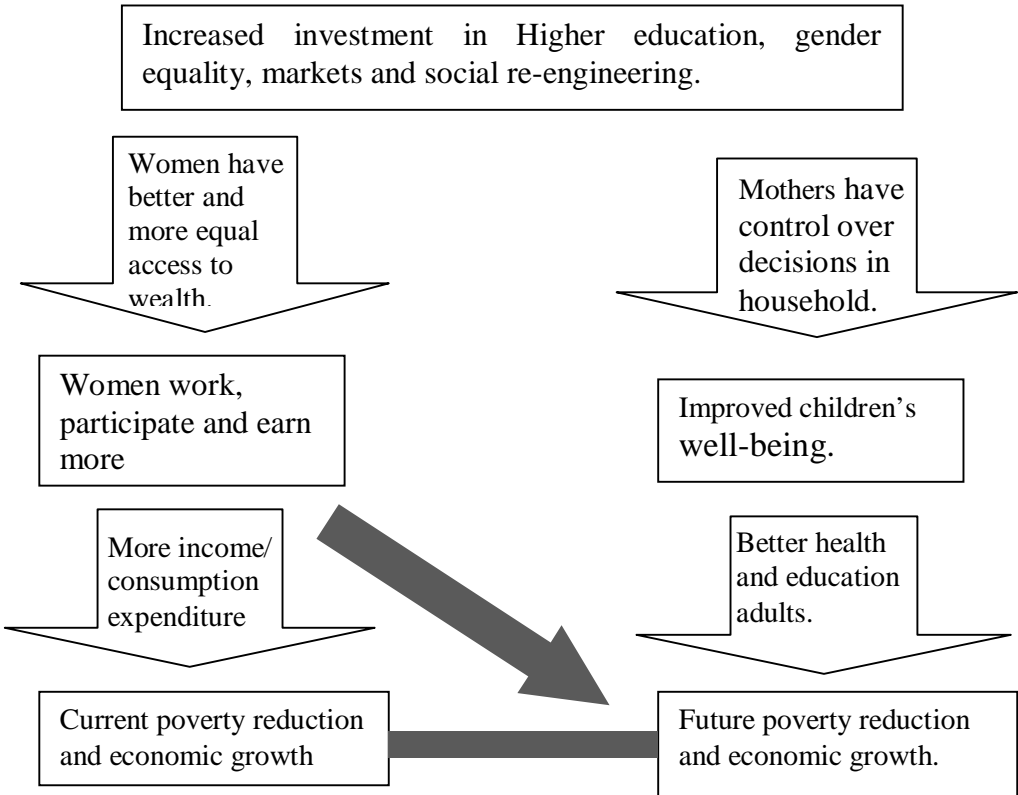


Figure 1: The women empowerment-growth-poverty eradication cycle
Source: Morrison et al (2007:2).

Educational stakeholders, parents and society will contribute to poverty reduction if they commit to promoting greater educational opportunity for making a change in the lives of girls and women. An educated girl and woman is an asset and a step in overcoming poverty and ensuring socio-economic development in any society. To Aja-Okorie (2013), an empowered woman is more marketable in terms of employment. Men ought to realize presently that if the income of the household is a one-dimensional one, the children's wellbeing and much-desired academic attainment in life may not be achievable owing to the unpredictable economic weather of our societies. In other words, quality investment in education for women helps them to take advantage of opportunities that could benefit them and their families, preparing women for the labour force and enabling them understand their legal as well as their reproductive rights. In the same vein, qualitative higher education for women provides them with better knowledge of primary health care, diet and proper family coordination, giving their alternatives and

the right to decide over their own lives and bodies. As investment in education increases, population growth, child mortality and malnutrition will be reduced.

Governmental Efforts at Increasing investment in Women education in Nigeria

Various schemes have been adopted by the Nigerian government to improve women's adult and non-formal education. The following are some of these schemes:

Women's Education Programme: This target on women education was inaugurated in Nigeria in 1986 followed by the setting up of women unit of federal and state ministries of education. The responsibility of these units is to take care of women who desire to further their education. This scheme also provided for women with special needs such as nomadic and riverine women, women in purdah, dropouts of all categories despite their age, locality, creed or social status.

Mass Literacy Programme: In 1991, the National Commission for Mass Literacy and Non-formal Education (NMEC) were charged with the responsibility of eradicating illiteracy in the country. Religious organizations are on top of the challenge also in offering adult and non-formal education opportunities to women, such as Christian and Muslim women's groups. Furthermore, several NGO's like Officers Wives Association of the Nigerian Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Air Force), UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP and other Donor Agencies have tried to uplift the educational advancement for women most especially in higher education. For instance in the UNICEF/FGN Master plan of operation for the 1991-1995 programme of Co-operation, the education of women identified as one of the areas of UNICEF's intervention. However, despite the increased effort in investment in women education, Nigeria has not been able to meet up with the UNESCO's approved 26% budget allocation to this sector. The Nigerian budgeting process has been characterized as inefficient, wasteful and heavily flooded with lopsided estimates because no one takes the budget seriously.

The Table below reveals statistics of the various allocation to the education sector (women education inclusive) in Nigeria both recurrent and capital investment for 6 years.

Years	Total Recurrent	Total	Education	% of Total Recurrent	Transfer
2004	182,542	21976	13928.3	(2.7)	96,756.8
2005	221,199.3	37718.0	23.047.2	(4.0)	56852.0
2006	353,126.5	64697	44,225.5	(3.3)	155.433
2007	579,329.1	79634	39.886	(4.2)	265873
2008	867,336.5	689431	100240.2	(5.8)	280,258
2009	984,268	102565	64755.9	(3.4)	477,821
2010	1,062.691	765529	76.527.7	(3.20)	546,751

Table 1: Federal Government Budget Estimate (recurrent expenditure)

Source: CBN Statistical Bulletin, Abuja (December, 2010).

Years	Total Recurrent	Total	Education	% of Total Recurrent	Transfer
2004	185375	35865	12793.0	(6.3)	69719.2
2005	136,984.2	17253	8516.6	(6.2)	15472.2
2006	311,608.8	379,93	23342.6	(7.5)	53484.8
2007	438,696.5	5336	1986.0	(4.5)	76,347.8
2008	321398.1	32467.3	9215.0	(2.9)	-
2009	241,688.6	55736.3	14680.2	(6.1)	11.3
2010	314,649.9	30032.6	9053.1	(2.9)	15729.8

Table 2: Federal Government Budget Estimate

Source: CBN Statistical Bulletin Abuja (December, 2010).

The table I shows the total federal recurrent expenditure in 2004,2005 and 2006 were N13,928.3million and N44,225.5 million respectively. In other words, 2.7% was allocated to education in 2004 which increased to 4.0% in 2005 and declined to 3.3% in 2000. In table I, in 2009 and 2010, the estimate (expenditure) were only 3.4% and 3.2% and this is in contrary to the 25% approved by world Bank, through its programme of Education For All (EFA). In table 2; capital expenditure in 2004, 6.3% was allocated to education which increased to 7.5% in 2006, but reduced drastically to 2.9% in 2010.

Women in Higher Education

At the onset of Higher education in Nigeria with the establishment of the University College Ibadan in 1948, Admission did not favour women. Of the 104 students admitted in that year, only 3 were women (Babalola, 2010). This colonial factor has been viewed as a major determinant of the status of women in terms of their placement in higher education today. Nevertheless, this situation has since changed with higher women enrolment in all disciplines in over 100 universities in the country. Women are to contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of their nation owing to the fact that they constitute a significant percentage of the Nigerian population. For women and socio-economic development, the acquisition of higher education is very imperative because higher education is the only veritable weapon for mental emancipation and entrepreneurial skill acquisition. Nigerian women still suffer a lot of constraints and inhibitions which work against their personal and national development despite all the laudable goals of higher education. Sanni (2001) observes that in 1965, 37.7% of pupils in primary schools were girls while only 9% of under-graduates were female students. The figure rose to 25.5% by 1974 and the students were mainly enrolled in such courses as Education and social sciences. The federal office of Statistics Annual reports (2006) indicates that the total full time enrolment of females in the university stood at 75,548 as against male population of 168,217 in 2005. Achime (2004) notes that the child care

educational curriculum was arranged to train women as clerks, nurses, and teachers. They were not in the medicine, politics, engineering, law and environmental studies. This obviously resulted in shortage of qualified women for top level leadership posts in these human endeavours. Odejide (2003) in agreeing to the foregoing observes on women enrolment in higher education in the country that a typical picture that can be seen in a number of Nigerian universities is that of higher female enrolment in the Arts, Humanities and decreased numbers in the Natural Sciences. In technology and engineering, female enrolment is minimal. On comparative basics, male-female enrolment is tilted in favour of the males in majority of disciplines.

Challenges of investing in female/women education

The Millennium Development Goals (MBGs) (2000) placed poverty alleviation as the first goal because of its fundamental importance. Two-thirds of total hours of the work performed largely in the informal sector of the economy lies on the female gender. However, women still earn just a stipend of the world's income and own a woeful percentage of global property. Women especially those in underdeveloped countries like Nigeria constitute the vast majority of people who live on less than two dollar (<\$2) a day (Briggs, 2007). Poverty is a major factor that badly affects women's lives, compromises their reproductive and sexual health to the extent that they cannot contribute meaningfully to sustainable socio-economic development. Gender disparity is still a common feature in all the sectors of Nigerian economy because of our chauvinistic social values. From the primary school to the university level gender inequality manifests. Several socio-economic and cultural factors have reinforced the gender inequality that often manifest itself in women enrolment in higher education and corresponding low accessibility to management positions. Such limitations like limited parental resources, early marriages, pregnancy, child bearing, sexual harassment and so on negatively affect women's participation higher education. International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions bane women from night work, underground work and stipulate maximum weight to be carried by women. Maternity protection and welfare facilities have been provided for women at work and as a result, most employers capitalize on this to discriminate against women and spend less on educating them. Wealthy men also tend to discourage their wives from improving themselves educationally and it has resulted to lukewarm attitude to education. According to Okeke (1990), many constraints encountered by the female gender in education include:

- Differential socialization patterns for boys and girls at early stages of life
- Lack of support from educational policy makers.
- Absence of career education
- Masculine image of education
- Limited access to education for girls.
- Sex difference in the quality of education experiences for boys and girls.
- Perceived irrelevance of school for girls.

The chauvinistic belief system in higher education management has succeeded in relegating women to second fiddle. However, in general terms, women have made steady advancement in all areas of formal education appreciatively like their contemporaries. . Eseyin, Okafor and Uchendu (2014) go ahead to list other factors that inhibit the involvement of women in public sector as well as socio-economic development as follow:

Cultural Beliefs: According to Shinaba (2008), cultural beliefs in the past suggest that training a woman was just a waste of time and resources. African culture over the years has relegated the position of women into that of a home tender.

Low Self-Esteem: According to Glover (2000), most women have failed to pick up science and technology related tasks even though they possess the needed intellectual ability. Women all over the world have passionately shied away from tasks and responsibilities which God has endowed them with the requisite capacity to bear and eventually succeed. It is worrisome that only few women are willing to break these limitations and compete with men in areas where they have comparative advantage.

Fear of Dominance: Another fact that has limited the time for the education of women in the country is the phobia of hegemony by their male counterpart. Anugwon (2009) stated that “men see themselves as the rightful owners of the formal economic sector and abundant socio-cultural practices support this”.

Insufficient Infrastructures: Infrastructures are key avenues for provision of quality education in any nation. Similarly, there are relevant that need to be put in place in order for them to learn effectively in the school system. These can include sanitary facilities; management facilities, equipment for domestic entrepreneurial skills among others.

Insecurity: The level of insecurity in the nation has affected the education of women as a whole. Most parents would prefer their female children to attend schools where maximum security is guaranteed. According to Odebode (2013), insecurity in the north has led to the death of 70 teachers, 100 students with thousands of teachers fleeing for safety. More female students have therefore been deprived the opportunity of going to school for fear of insecurity around the country.

Sexual Harassment: The incidence of incessant sexual pervasion in the school system is highly pronounced among male teachers/lecturers and students. Women are therefore, exposed the most to sexual harassment both in school and at work. Leathwood (2005) noted that the preference for different job types contribute to sexual enticement in selected job types. With more male teachers in the educational sector, there is bound to be an increase in the level of sexual pervasion among male teachers and female students than the other way round.

The Consequences of failing to invest adequately on higher education for women

Women are considered to be the most vulnerable to negative political, economic, marital, educational, cultural and psychological conditions. There are leading threats to our national economic development if the girl child/woman is not supported and encouraged to further their education. Some of these threats or adverse consequences include:

Maternal Mortality: In the world over, 99% of all 530,00 estimated maternal deaths occur in developing countries mainly in South East Asia and Sub-saharan Africa (Ikimalo, 2013). The highest maternal mortality levels, 1,000/100,000 births, all come from developing countries. This reveals that low level of investment in education most especially for women which is a common feature of developing nations (Nigeria inclusive), is a colossal impediment to our socio-economic development.

Violence against women: During periods of conflict and violence, women are most vulnerable to diverse physical abuses like rape and sexual assault and as a result of vicious poverty; women and girls can be forced into sex work. Other dangerous consequences of non-investment in education for women are high incidence of HIV/AIDS, malaria, female genital mutilation, breast and cervical cancer, infertility, indiscriminate abortion. Failing to invest maximally in higher education for women by government is also presently the cause of “unfortunate parenthood”, female adult delinquency such as drug addiction, indiscriminate use of mind-bending substances, female cultism and gangstarism and all sorts of sexual perversion.

The future (Prospects) of investment in Higher education for women for socio-economic development.

Owing to the contributions made by Government, NGOs and public-spirited individuals to intensify investment in higher education for women, socio-economic development seems to have improved in Nigeria. In subsequent educational policy formulation, women must be given a pride of place because this will bring about policies that are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the plight of women. The participation of women in subsequent educational policy formation will stir socio-economic development of Nigeria because women constitute more than halve of Nigeria population. Financial assistance like special education subsidy for the girl child who desires to advance their education, scholarship award, soft tuition loan, in-training employment offer by universities and granting scholarships to women in order to reduce the drop-out rate of talented and endowed women. The scheme must be extended rural women and the vulnerable among them as well. Nigeria must plan to open Research centres for women studies to embark on consistent research into constraints often encountered by women. This project should be supported by relevant educational research organizations and government departments such as centres for gender studies and women empowerment in various National Universities. Extensive enlightenment campaign must be vigorously embarked on and pre-service and in-service education of teachers should be delved into, in order to combat stereotyping and raise consciousness

of the constraints that gender stereotyping imposes on the development of young girls and of society. The Universal Basic Education must be executed with all intent and vigour to challenge foundational status quo and the provisions in the Nigerian educational policy relating to gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities for all Nigerians should be thoughtfully driven.

Conclusion

Higher education has been considered as an instrument per-excellence for total emancipation of women from poverty, gender discrimination, infants and maternal mortality, sexual harassment and various gender-related abuses. There are empirical proofs that literate women tend to occupy their rightful position in the public and private sectors more than their illiterate counterparts. Tertiary education is a veritable weapon for women empowerment as well as mental emancipation. Owing to the above position, women will have greater self-fulfillment and able to contribute to the improvement of the society.

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