

# WOMEN EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

*Dr. J. O. Ukwungwu and S. O. Onyishi*

## **Abstract**

Education has been described as an agent of social mobilization. Educating a woman means educating a nation. An educated nation is a fertile ground for development. Hence the quest for women education cannot be over emphasized. This paper looked at women education and some of the factors that hinder and are still hindering women education in Nigeria. It x - rays the progress so far made with special focus on women education in Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

Education has proved to be one of the most potent instruments for social reconstruction. It is a crucial instrument for the development of both the individual and the nation. In the typical traditional setting, emphasis has been heavily placed on the role of gender in the education of children. For example, boys are given education that would make them play the role of fathers and family bread winners in future while girls are trained to become mothers and good house keepers in future.

In our different societies, children are conditioned and shaped to fill and tit the concept of gender, (Ukwungwu, 2002). This state of the mind has become engraved in the minds through many social agents. This has put the women to the disadvantage especially educationally where she may not choose the career of her choice and ability, because it is believed socially and culturally that some careers are not meant for females. Hopefully, this ugly socio-cultural trend was meant to be checked by the National Policy on Education. The third edition of the National Policy on Education, (1998) stipulates equal educational opportunities to every Nigerian child irrespective of tribe, sex, religion etc.

Regrettably, this objective is yet to be fully realized, irrespective of the significant progress in favour of the women and women education in Nigeria. This progress can be seen in the establishment of more girls' secondary schools than boys. For instance, the establishment of one girls and one mixed Federal Government Colleges in each state of the Federation is to give the females the required attention. The enrolment of students in Colleges of Education indicates that more females than males are admitted into Colleges of Education nationwide. Also there is an indication that females outnumber their male counterparts in the admission into Universities in some faculties such as Arts, Law, and Education. These are the results of the positive objectives of the National Policy on Education and the Nigerian constitution which stipulates equal opportunities for everybody to excel irrespective of tribe, sex etc.

## **Women Education in Nigeria**

Education is the never ending process of acquiring knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes, sentiments and values which will enable those who acquire them to be able to deal with their day - to - day problems in their various societies, (Ijoma ,1992). This embraces all conscious efforts that can be brought under rule and deliberately arranged with the aim of securing some desired result. Therefore whatever helps to make individuals what they are and prevent them from being what they are not supposed to be is education. Hence education and infact women education involves self-realisation including self- awareness and the constant changing of the environment in order to create the type of surroundings that people need for their survival. Therefore education equips and enables an individual to function effectively in any environment he or she finds him or herself. Everybody, male or female, young or old, physically fit or the handicapped, all need education for optimum survival in the society.

Women education generally and Nigeria in particular has suffered neglect for some time now. In the typical traditional setting in Nigeria, the role of gender in education of children is heavily emphasized. For instance, in such setting, boys are given education that would make them play the role of father and family bread winners in future. Similarly, the girls are trained in such a way that will enable them to be good mothers in future that is, to be able to look after the children and the home.

Different societies have different means through which young ones are educated for their survival.

Children are educated along areas of comparative advantage. For example, the society with good area of farmland train their children in farming, people with plenty of palm trees train their children in wine tapping, rearing domestic animals, trading, pottery, weaving etc. Also children are trained to fill and fit the concept of gender. Any deviation from the gender role normally attracts condemnation and rejection by the society. This state of consciousness according to Udengwu (2000) has been instilled in the minds, stamped with indelible ink in the psyche through so many social agents. Ikejiani - Clark (2000) observed that gender bias is greatest in families with low parental education. She suggested that poverty and gender inequality are self-perpetuating.

However, this gender stereotyping has been checked in National Policy on Education. The third edition of the National Policy on Education (1998) emphasized need for equality of educational opportunities to all Nigerians irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities, each according to his or her ability. Nigerian's philosophy of education is therefore based on the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. This is a step in the right direction for women and women education where every Nigerian male or female has the right for qualitative and quantitative education.

In order to favour women education and close the gender gaps in education of Nigerian children, people have been responding to Government deliberate policies of preferential treatment of females in schools. For example, females are favoured more in the establishment of Federal Unity School (Federal Government Colleges). This has reflected in the establishment of one girls and one mixed unity schools in each state of the federation. There is also policy of having lower cut - off marks for females in the admission of males and females into the Federal government colleges. These measures are to increase the access of females to secondary education, which is hoped to increase women education in Nigeria.

Government has also extended these good gestures of promoting women education where the gap is still very conspicuous. For example lowering the cut - off scores for females for the purpose of admission into tertiary institutions by JAMB. Although this effect of lowering cut - off scores for females admission is yet to manifest, there is significant progress in admission of more females than males in Arts, Education and Law in the Universities.

### **Factors Affecting Women Education in Nigeria**

The above progress and successes of women education in Nigeria notwithstanding, there are still some factors militating against women education in Nigeria. These factors include, biological factors, socio-cultural factors, religious factors and school factors.

**Biological factors:** Generally it is believed that men are superior to women with regard to genetic and hormonal factor as well as intellectual ability. This suggests that these defects in women make them ill equipped to pursue some careers of their choice like their male counterparts. According to a report by UNESCO (1980) women are intellectually poorer in the business world and are found to be less committed and devoted to their jobs especially those jobs that are more stressful and brain tasking when compared to their male counterparts. But Cohen (1983) is of the view that these observations concerning the physiological constitution of women have no direct relationship on their ability. However one can agree with Olorude (1990) that men are only superior to women in terms of physical strength. This weakness leads to stereotyping in career.

### **Socio-cultural Factors**

Certain roles are assigned along gender line such that children are trained from infancy to assume roles expected of them. Because of this, women education has emphasized household activities which according to Dopemu and Igwe (1997) include child rearing, food preparation, clothing and household work. Thus a woman is passive, subjective and remains under a man and is unable to exercise her rights and capabilities.

There is also negative belief among many men that the more educated a woman is, the less useful she becomes at home. They normally fear that highly educated women might not be able to have children and might not be submissive to their husbands. This results in some men being reluctant to marry educated women. Because these highly educated women are not easily married in some areas and in order not to remain unmarried, they might prefer marriage to education. This wrong idea should be discouraged since education makes a person to function more effectively.

## Religious Factors

Religious teaching generally in Nigeria especially both Christianity and Islam emphasize teaching that encourage women to be taught more on areas that make them good mothers and wives and to be submissive to their husbands. In Islamic religion, there is extreme case of Purdah system where women are secluded and the opportunity of giving them formal education becomes very difficult. This condition does not encourage basic education especially women education.

## School Factors

Educational institutions have been known to provide situation for gender disparity between male and female students. One of the ways through which gender stereotype is reinforced in schools according to Obura (1991) is through curriculum materials covertly mould the consciousness of students to identify with a particular sex. Also Erinsho (1994) observed that textbooks and other curriculum materials reflect gender prejudice. They incorporate values and assumptions, which down grade and devalue women's experience. They also, demean women by patronizing languages etc. All these discourage females, the women folk from active participation in education and education processes.

## Women Education in Colleges of Education

The issue of discrimination against women is as old as creation itself. This discrimination is found in all aspects of human life. But modern education has expressed the potentialities of women. In this modern time, self-determination to excel has placed women in positions above men and their capabilities are no longer in doubt.

Regrettably, gender imbalances in education are prevalent in Nigeria. It is interesting to note that this gender imbalance, that is favouring men more than women, has taken different shapes in different parts of Nigeria. In some institutions more females are in schools. The case in Colleges of Education buttresses this assertion. In Colleges of Education in Nigeria, there are more females than males showing that more women are becoming more educated than the men in that level. On the table below shows the enrolment of students in all Colleges of Education in Nigeria and the six geopolitical zones of the country for a four-year period.

Geopolitical Zone	1997/1998		1998/1999		1999/2000		2000/2001	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
North Central	13501	10456	14084	12731	16005	12154	13282	14875
North East	6627	2537	7455	3310	10400	4903	11783	684
North West	8106	2695	6461	2010	12509	4860	12734	1484
South East	4085	11101	3808	14629	2676	12159	2731	13556
South South	5397	9492	4611	9747	7128	11335	11590	15047
South West	8491	15145	10105	15075	12721	19011	13248	23452
Total	46297	54436	47124	59332	61539	64391	70381	80628

Source: NCCE Statistical Digest Vol. 5 and 6.

The above table shows that there are more females than males in Colleges of Education in for four academic sessions under consideration. The breakdown shows that females are greater than males in three zones in the Southeast while the reverse is the case in the three zones in the North. In the Southeast zone, there are four times more females in Colleges of Education than males. The reverse is the case in Northwest geographical zone. The trend has not changed till date.

## Conclusion

Women education has taken a drastic turn in the recent past from the passive participation to active participation in education and education process in Nigeria. More women now enroll in school than their male counterparts. This will result in the nearest future to a situation where there will be more educated women than men in our society.

This situation although a welcome development poses a big threat to the society because this will bring disequilibrium in the family as well as in the society. Therefore the Government, well-meaning individuals and other organizations should check this trend of imbalance in the education of citizens in order to raise a vibrant society where equal opportunities are made available to all as enshrined in the National Policy on Education

and our constitution.

### Reference

- Cohen (1983). A Comparison of the Effect of Two types of Students Behaviour with Manipulative of the Development of Projective Spatial Structures. *Journal of Research, In Science Teaching* 20. 875-883.
- Dopemu, E. and Igwe, I. O. (1997). Gender Disparity. In Education: Causes and Solution. *Bichi Journal of Education* 1.(1),97- 106
- Erinosho, S. Y. (1994). Girls and Science Education. In Nigeria. Report of the Study Sponsored by Rockefeller Foundation. *Monograph Series*. Anglo International Press.
- Ikejiani - Clark, M. (2000). Gender and Culture in Nigeria. Paper Presented at the International Conference on Gender Discrimination in the 21st Century. University of Nigeria, Nsukka 12th - 15th September
- NCCE (2002). *Statistical Digest and Colleges of Education in Nigeria*. Kaduna: National Commission for Colleges of Education.
- Federal Ministry of Education, (1998). National Policy on Education 3rd Edition. Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Obuora, A. P. (1991). *Changing Images: Portrayal of Girls and Women in Kenya* Nairobi: Act Press.
- Okoro, I. J. (1992). *African Humanities*. Awka: Mekslink Publishers (Nig.).
- Olorude, L. (1990). *Women and Social Change in Nigeria*. Lagos: Unity Publication and Research.
- Udengwu, N. N. (2000). Gender Discrimination in the 21st Century: Heroic Imperative and the Domestic instinct .In Women. International Conference. University of Nigeria, Nsukka. 12th-15th September.
- Ukwungwu, J. O. (2002). Gender Issues on STM and Poverty Eradication: *Tlie Science Teacher Today*. Pp. 1. (2), 92-105.
- UNESCO(1980). *SexBiasin Training and Labour Force*. Pans: UNESCO.