



EDUCATION: A SOCIALIZING AGENT

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BOOK OF READINGS
IN HONOUR OF
FESTUS AWOSIKA AKINLAYE (Ph.D)

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Edited by:
PROF. SORIN C. NWABOKU
DR. BIODUN AKINPELU
DR. S. O. MAKINDE

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AN APPRAISAL OF FEMALE EDUCATIONAL ENROLMENT IN NIGERIA

Oluwatobi Pemedé,
Lagos State University, Ojo
Faculty of Education,
Department Of Educational Foundations
E-mail: pemedeseee@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the poor enrolment figures of females in Nigerian Schools. In doing this, various available data illustrates this phenomenon of gender gaps in the educational sector. To this end, the paper proffers that for developing nations to compete effectively now that the world is being referred to as global village, that there is need to address gender inequalities in the educational sector. The paper reveals that in terms of development, human resources becomes important and as a result, gender inequalities, marginalisation of females and gender gaps should be curbed. The paper, therefore, concludes that access to education should be given to every Nigerian child to enjoy educational opportunity.

INTRODUCTION

In the recent past, the concepts 'gender' and educational opportunity gives much concern to researchers and educationists. Today, however, the study gender studies have become topical issues in the education industry in the nation. Such studies include inequality, differences, oppression, discrimination, careers and so on.

The term sex means biological or anatomical difference between women and men. In other words, it is the physical differences of the body while gender is the psychological, social and cultural differences between male and female (Giddens, 1991: 192; Andrew, 2002: 2). Similarly, Yassine (1999: 1) defines gender as social dynamics that characterizes the way men and women relate to each other on a given historical time frame through social identities, power and production relations. The distinction between sex and gender becomes fundamental, since, many variations between males and females are not biological in origin. In this

study, the context gender is restricted to human race in terms of being male or female, man or woman, boy or girl. In view of this, the study of gender focuses on female and male, man and woman, girl and boy. Educational opportunity and social identity on the other hand, explains the chance or opportunity as well as identification to both sexes especially the females in the educational industry for national development.

Piwuna (2000: 64) advanced the argument that, the issue of girls opportunities for education is becoming problematic; in view of this, UNICEF (1994) maintains that girls education becomes important as well as an investment that every nation should be embarked on for the future development of the citizenry and as a result, the education of girls should be regarded as an important indicator for the development of every nation (Piwuna, 2000). To this end, Pan African conference on the education of girls held in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso in 1993, Jomtien conference, International Conference on Education (1990), International Conference on assistance to African Children (ICAAC) in 1995, UNESCO/UNICEF in 1993 stress the importance of girls education, ensuring access as well as improvement in the quality of female education as a goal for development of nation which will assist to reduce the disparity or discrimination between male and female in every sphere of life.

Gender Inequalities as operational Reality?

Giddens (1991: 200) observes that the question of gender inequalities is a reality. He observes that gender learning by infants is almost certainly unconscious. At this stage, children label themselves as either 'a boy' or 'girl'. To advance this, biologically, Giddens observes that adults handled gender issues differently. From this point of view, it shows that the concept 'gender' emphasizes inequalities in forms of education, social, cultural, political and so on.

The gender inequalities have been a problem for a very long time; girls education was not as important as boys in Rome (Bolarin, 1998: 25). This, however, indicates that gender educational opportunity for girls, has not been given much priority as boys. Education becomes a valuable tool to a girl-child and for centuries the denial of girl-child education has been popularized and as such, parents, society as well as the tradition believe that, it is better to invest in male education than female education (Piwuna, 2000: 64).

The development of every nation involves every man and woman in the society. In view of this, the education of female and male should be treated equally and gender difference should be eradicated.

It must be noted however, that, the world has become unipolar or a global village and as it were, a marginalisation or disparity between male and female could be seen as a fundamental problem to every nation. Gender inequality has become a fundamental issue to be addressed. The reasons advanced for this is that: the world has become a globalized world in such a way that development is becoming rapid and the danger to this development is the impact of education: as well as the fact that there is a group of people that have been excluded from meaningful participation in the economic, education, politics, cultural and the social life of the communities. In other words, inequalities in the educational sector will affect the development of a nation. Lending credence to this, Hussein (1999) maintains that the increase in global illiteracy across continents, gender and countries particular from the developing and least developed nations, is alarming. He noted that, in 1995 out of 885 million illiterates (15 years of age above and below 60%) are women and girls. Also, among 145 million children aged 6 to 11 who receive no education, 85 million (62.7%) are female. To buttress this fact, the table below presents the global illiteracy rate by gender statistics of the African Continents.

TABLE 1

Pattern Global Illiteracy by Continent And Gender (Estimated Illiterate Population 15 Years And Above Number And Percentage For 1980 And 1995

| Groups of Countries | Illiterate Populations in Millions | | | | Percentage of Illiterate | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------|------|--------|--------------------------|------|--------|
| | Year | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| Developing Countries | 1980 | 843 | 318 | 531 | 42.0 | 31.1 | 53.2 |
| | 1995 | 872 | 315 | 557 | 29.6 | 21.1 | 38.3 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 1980 | 126 | 50 | 76 | 59.8 | 48.2 | 70.8 |
| | 1995 | 141 | 53 | 87 | 43.2 | 33.4 | 52.7 |

Source: UNESCO, 1998 UNESCO Statistical Year book cited in Hussein 1999.

The table above statistically illustrates the gender gaps in educational enrolment as well as school attendance of the world total in Africa / Developing countries and Sub-Saharan Africa in 1980 and 1995. The argument for the presentation of this table is that though this study lays emphasis on Nigeria but it is also observed that gender inequalities in the educational sector is not peculiar to Nigeria-that is, it is a global phenomenon which must be addressed, because the gender gaps in educational sectors according to Hussein, (1999) has become bad in several countries, especially in the developing countries. For instance, the table 1 indicate 53.2% of illiterate girls / women in 1980 and 38.2% in 1995 for the developing

countries. Although, the percentage of 1995 reveals an improvement yet the fundamental issue is that gender inequalities must be curtailed otherwise it will affect every system (such as education, politics, family, legal, economy and so on) in the society.

In enhancing development of every nation, which involve both male and female, Nyerere (1979) argues that:

If we use these resources in a spirit of self-reliance as the basis for development, then we shall make progress slowly but surely. And it will then be real progress, affecting the lives of the masses, not just having spectacular show-pieces in the towns while the rest of the people of Tanzania live in their present poverty.

A cursory look at the statement of Nyerere and school statistics on enrolment in Nigerian primary schools which adversely affects secondary and tertiary institutions will serve as an indicator of gender inequalities in the field of education.

TABLE 2

School Statistics on Enrolment in Nigerian Primary Schools by States (2000, June).

| S/N | STATE | PUPIL ENROLMENT | | TOTAL |
|-----|-------------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| | | | MALE | FEMALE |
| 1. | Abia | 214,099 | 213,543 | 427,642 |
| 2. | Abuja (FCT) | 88,845 | 73,797 | 162,642 |
| 3. | Adamawa | 570,014 | 360,963 | 930,977 |
| 4. | Akwa Ibom | 368,324 | 376,068 | 744,392 |
| 5. | Anambra | 184,727 | 183,805 | 368,532 |
| 6. | Bauchi | 269,591 | 168,359 | 437,950 |
| 7. | Bayelsa | 209,584 | 200,495 | 410,079 |
| 8. | Benue | 519,977 | 366,631 | 886,008 |
| 9. | Borno | 431,155 | 302,744 | 730,899 |
| 10. | Cross River | 199,278 | 187,019 | 386,297 |
| 11. | Delta | 288,698 | 285,249 | 573,942 |
| 12. | Ebonyi | 242,099 | 226,250 | 468,349 |

| | | | | |
|-----|----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| 13. | Edo | 467,469 | 431,510 | 898,979 |
| 14. | Ekiti | 125,650 | 187,191 | 362,841 |
| 15. | Enugu | 135,149 | 143,925 | 279,074 |
| 16. | Gombe | 226,956 | 153,249 | 380,205 |
| 17. | Imo | 184,079 | 178,028 | 362,107 |
| 18. | Jigawa | 639,344 | 299,522 | 938,866 |
| 19. | Kaduna | 474,925 | 324,273 | 799,198 |
| 20. | Kano | 769,233 | 519,764 | 1,288,997 |
| 21. | Katsina | 298,431 | 131,942 | 430,373 |
| 22. | Kebsi | 171,713 | 91,967 | 263,680 |
| 23. | Kogi | 269,492 | 253,720 | 523,212 |
| 24. | Kwara | 140,177 | 165,433 | 305,610 |
| 25. | Lagos | 296,378 | 313,440 | 609,818 |
| 26. | Nasarawa | 226,014 | 147,926 | 373,940 |
| 27. | Niger | 205,499 | 104,695 | 310,194 |
| 28. | Ogun | * | * | 437,662 |
| 29. | Ondo | 283,425 | 282,759 | 566,184 |
| 30. | Osun | 267,272 | 269,153 | 536,425 |
| 31. | Oyo | 446,361 | 435,777 | 882,138 |
| 32. | Plateau | 291,920 | 248,673 | 542,593 |
| 33. | Rivers | 244,654 | 246,747 | 491,401 |
| 34. | Sokoto | 797,402 | 111,971 | 909,373 |
| 35. | Taraba | 535,470 | 330,463 | 855,933 |
| 36. | Yobe | 483,778 | 241,388 | 725,166 |
| 37. | Zamfara | 215,699 | 71,474 | 287,173 |
| | Total | 11,832,876 | 8,629,913 | 20,462,789 |

* Not Available

Source: National Press Briefing on the UBE (Universal basic Education) programme (Obanya, 2000)

TABLE 3

Simulation of Access To Schooling By Income, Gender, Zone And Geographical Location.

| North West | | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
|---------------|-------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
| | Urban | 34.9 | 27.6 | 45.6 | 37.3 | 51.9 | 43.4 | 59.7 | 51.4 | 58.2 | 49.8 |
| | Rural | 24.6 | 18.9 | 33.8 | 26.7 | 39.7 | 31.9 | 47.5 | 39.2 | 46.0 | 37.7 |
| North East | Urban | 57.8 | 49.4 | 68.2 | 60.4 | 73.4 | 66.3 | 79.2 | 73.0 | 78.1 | 71.7 |
| | Rural | 45.6 | 37.3 | 56.7 | 48.2 | 62.7 | 54.5 | 69.9 | 62.3 | 68.9 | 60.8 |
| North Central | Urban | 84.6 | 79.6 | 89.6 | 85.9 | 91.7 | 88.7 | 93.8 | 91.5 | 93.9 | 91.0 |
| | Rural | 77.0 | 70.5 | 84.0 | 78.8 | 87.1 | 82.7 | 90.3 | 86.9 | 89.7 | 86.1 |
| South East | Urban | 88.6 | 84.7 | 92.4 | 89.6 | 94.0 | 91.8 | 95.6 | 93.9 | 95.3 | 93.5 |
| | Rural | 82.6 | 77.2 | 88.1 | 84.1 | 90.5 | 87.2 | 92.9 | 90.4 | 92.5 | 89.8 |
| South West | Urban | 85.9 | 81.3 | 90.5 | 87.1 | 92.5 | 89.7 | 94.4 | 92.3 | 94.1 | 91.9 |
| | Rural | 78.8 | 72.6 | 85.3 | 80.5 | 88.2 | 84.2 | 91.1 | 88.0 | 90.6 | 87.3 |
| South South | Urban | 82.4 | 77.0 | 88.0 | 83.9 | 90.4 | 87.0 | 92.9 | 90.2 | 92.4 | 89.7 |
| | Rural | 74.1 | 77.1 | 81.7 | 76.1 | 85.2 | 80.4 | 88.8 | 85.0 | 88.2 | 84.1 |

Source: Derived from MICS 1999 (Human Development Sector Africa Region. The World Bank)

Table 2 and 3 shows the difference between male and female education in all states in Nigeria. In other words, there is gender inequalities of education whereby the figures on the part of male are favourable than those of females in many States as well as geographical locations. This also shows that what is stipulated in the National Policy on Education (1998) section 1 sub-section 4 clause (c), which state that there is need for equality of educational opportunities to all Nigerian children, irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability; has not been fulfilled.

Imbalance of Educational Opportunity Between Male and Female

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2000:18) explains that special attention should be paid to the situation of women who do not enjoy the same access to resources as men, despite their considerable productive potential.

Furtherance of this, UNDP reports that in Africa, as in West and South Asia, over 70% of women are illiterates. The UNDP (2000:19) argues that:

Even in the six-to-eleven year age group, the proportion of girls not enrolled in school is over 25%, not counting those who drop out later. If their mothers work outside the home, girls have to miss school to take care of brothers and sisters, which perpetuates the cycle of low educational attainment and low income from one generation of women to the next.

The argument from the excerpt indicates current gender imbalance in terms of educational opportunity. This, however, will affect university enrolment which will also create imbalance in terms of access to and control over economically productive resources in the Nigerian society. To buttress this fact, table 4 explains the imbalances in educational opportunity of women education which adversely affects in terms of education, economy as well as political system in every country especially in Nigeria.

Table 4
Profile of women in some African Countries

| | % of women having an economic activity 1995 | Men's share of Adult labour force/Age 15 and above | Women's share of Adult labour force/Age 15 and above | Women's share of labour force by sector 1995 | % of female-headed households 1986 | Fertility rate 1995 | % use of contraceptives 1986-1995 | Maternal mortality rate (for 100,000 live births) 1986-1995 | School enrolment as % of age group 1993 | | | | Adult Literacy 1997 | | Women Administration and Managers 1990 | % of Seats in Parliament held by women 1996 | % of women in Government # 1996 |
|-------------------|---|--|--|--|------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|------|-------|------|---------------------|------|--|---|---------------------------------|
| | | | | Agriculture | Industry | Services | | | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Female | Male | | | |
| Mauritania | 64 | 87 | 44 | 82 | 4 | 14 | 5.2 | 930 | 62 | 76 | 11 | 39 | 26 | 50 | 8 | 1.3 | 5.4 |
| Mozambique | 83 | 91 | 49 | 57 | 1 | 2 | 6.2 | 1,500 | 51 | 69 | 6 | 9 | 23 | 58 | 11 | 25.2 | 12.8 |
| Namibia | 54 | 81 | 41 | 47 | 3 | 50 | 5.0 | 370 | 138 | 134 | 61 | 49 | 91 | 91 | 21 | 18.1 | 11.4 |
| Nigeria | 48 | 87 | 36 | 67 | 7 | 26 | 5.5 | 1,000 | 82 | 105 | 27 | 32 | 47 | 67 | 6 | n.a. | 6.2 |
| Uganda | 81 | 91 | 48 | 85 | 3 | 12 | 6.7 | 1,200 | 83 | 99 | 10 | 17 | 50 | 74 | n.a. | 18.1 | 8.9 |
| Cent. Afr. Rep. | 69 | 87 | 47 | 63 | 5 | 31 | 5.1 | 700 | n.a. | 92 | n.a. | n.a. | 52 | 68 | 9 | 3.5 | 4.9 |
| Rwanda | 83 | 94 | 48 | 98 | 1 | 2 | 6.2 | 1,300 | 76 | 78 | 9 | 11 | 52 | 70 | 8 | 17.1 | 10.7 |
| Sao Tome & Prici. | 37 | 77 | 34 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 42 | 73 | 9 | 7.3 | 7.7 |
| Senegal | 61 | 86 | 42 | 87 | 3 | 10 | 5.1 | 1,200 | 50 | 67 | 11 | 21 | 23 | 43 | 4 | 11.7 | 5.6 |
| Seychelles | 57 | 79 | 42 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.d. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 36 | 83 | 29 | 27.3 | 20.8 |
| Sierra Leone | 44 | 84 | 35 | 78 | 4 | 17 | 6.5 | 1,800 | 42 | 60 | 12 | 22 | 18 | 45 | 8 | 6.3 | 5.9 |
| Somalia | 63 | 87 | 43 | 87 | 2 | 11 | n.a. | 1,600 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 14 | 36 | n.a. | n.a. | 0 |
| Sudan | 33 | 86 | 28 | 84 | 5 | 11 | 4.9 | 660 | 48 | 61 | 19 | 24 | 35 | 58 | 2 | 5.3 | 1.7 |

(a) Data of 1990-95

(b) Data of 1994;

(c) Data of 1995

* Married women old enough to procreate

** Position of Ministers and Deputy Ministers

Source: UN African Recovery from information provided by the UN statistics Division (Kankwenda, Gregoire, Legros, Ouedraogo, 2000).

The table above reveals that in Nigeria for instance, 48% of women occupied economic activity group in 1995. However, the school enrolment in 1993 reveals that 82% were girls while 105% were boys for primary schools while 27% were girls and 32% were boys in the secondary schools. Furthermore, the adult literacy in 1997 shows that 47% were females and 67% were men. In the same manner, women administrators and managers in 1990 indicates 6% and 6.2% in 1996. This, however, shows that there is an imbalance of gender and educational opportunity in Nigeria which may adversely affect education as well as the political economy of Nigeria.

In the same vein, Human Development Report 1995 cited in (1998) maintains that Nigeria's Gender related Development Index (GDI) ranking was negative (-0.023), thus, highlighting the inadequacy of the economic and social empowerment of women reflected in differential access to, and control of resources, power and social identity or prestige in the society.

Similarly, Aina (2003:10) argues that there is a gender differential in education at all levels of education; of which fewer girls than boys are enrolled at school. The argument went further that, sex disparities exist in educational achievement because of a higher educational wastage among girls (for instance, girls drop out more often than boys as a result of time to perform household tasks and so on) which might limit occupational choices for female students.

However, all the available data shows that the enrolment figures both in primary and secondary is a reflection of candidate who may likely gain admission into the Nigerian Universities. The study, however, shows that there is a gender inequality in the Nigeria Universities. The tables below reveals the disparities in both male and female in primary, secondary schools as well as academic staff of tertiary institutions.

Table 5

Percentage of Females In Total School Enrolment -Primary, Secondary, Polytechnic and University

| YEAR | PRIMARY | SECONDARY | POLYTECHNIC | UNIVERSITY |
|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| 1984 | 44.3 | 41.2 | 20.0 | 22.8 |
| 1984/86 | 44.4 | 43.1 | 23.7 | 24.0 |
| 1987 | 43.5 | 40.0 | 20.0 | 24.7 |
| 1988 | 42.4 | 41.2 | * | 25.8 |
| 1989 | 45.0 | 42.0 | * | 26.9 |
| 1990 | 43.2 | 43.0 | 30.0 | 25.2 |
| 1991 | 43.8 | 41.7 | 32.8 | 26.4 |
| 1992 | 44.1 | 45.0 | * | 33.2 |
| 1993 | 43.3 | 46.0 | 32.6 | 35.7 |
| 1994 | 44.1 | 45.6 | * | * |
| 1995 | 44.5 | 47.0 | 33.1 | * |
| 1996 | 44.3 | 46.9 | * | 35.7 |
| 1997 | 43.4 | * | * | * |
| 1998 | * | * | 37.6 | * |
| 1999 | * | * | 39.8 | * |
| 2000 | * | * | * | * |

* Not available

Source: Gender Gaps in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (Aina, 2003)

TABLE 6
ACADEMIC STAFF IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES- BY SEX
AND CADRE 1996/97

| CADRE % | MALE | FEMALE | FEMALE ASTOTAL |
|---|-------|--------|-------------------|
| Professors/Associates Professors | 1890 | 112 | 5.6 |
| Senior Lecturers/Snr. Research Fellows | 2659 | 389 | 12.8 |
| Lecturers/Research Fellows | 4322 | 870 | 16.8 |
| Asst. Lecturers & Jnr. Research Fellows | 2087 | 433 | 17.2 |
| Others | 876 | 157 | 15.2 |
| TOTAL | 11834 | 1961 | 14.2 |

Source: Gender Gaps in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, (Aina 2003)

Equalisation of Educational Opportunity

Formal education in traditional African culture was regarded as significant to males in the society. In other words, to educate the female child was not recognized or regarded as investment. The conception is that the education of female child ends in the kitchen. In the same vein, Kayode and Bola, (1999:189) explained that the problem of female formal education is not peculiar to Nigeria alone; that before fifties, the nature of female education in Britain "assumed that the main interest of girls was in their future role of wives and mothers". Similarly, Robert and Jeanette (2002:262) reported that Americans value education but the inequality in post-high-school education is that the traditional female role as a keeper of the home contradicts the value of education. That is, the earlier woman has sexual experience, married and become pregnant negates or lower her educational attainment. In view of this, Kayode and Bola (1999:191) argued that:

Females, therefore, were not seen as a group that should be actively involved in the productive sectors of the economy. Consequently, when formal education come with it possibility of capacity building for productivity, the females were not considered as a group of persons that should benefit from the venture.

Furtherance of this argument, the researchers reported that, in Nigeria, there were 37, 43, 44 and 43 women per 100 males for the years 1970, 1980, 1985 and 1990 respectively in the primary school level and at the secondary school level, 32 females per 100 in 1985 and 1990 respectively. On the other hand, the tertiary enrolment reveals 15 females per 100 in 1970, 21 per 100 in 1980, 27 per 100 in 1985 and 1990. From the figures presented above, it therefore connotes that there is gender gaps in the education industry. This, however, is gender disparity in school enrolment. The disparity of this nature will allow women to play little role in decision and policy making in the nation. Damiar (1999:203) explains that the 'United Nations Department of public information in 1995 revealed that of the world's nearly one billion illiterates two thirds are women; and of 130 million children without access to primary education, more than 80 million are girls and on average, by the age of 18, girls have received 4.4 years less education than boys'. It therefore means that there is need to balance the imbalance of girl child education to that of boy-child because the education of women will enhance the education of her immediate family and at the end becomes a productive member of the society as well as a useful member in the society at large. In view of this, Federal Republic of Nigeria official Gazette, Act, (2004) lays emphasis on compulsory, free Universal Basic Education and recommends that:

Every parent shall ensure that his child or ward attends and completes his –

- (a) Primary school education; and
- (b) Junior secondary school education

The sociological implications of these recommendations enacted by the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of the UBE bill is to curtail enrolment disparities in the education sector. Since the family institution cushioned other social relations such as economic, political, religion and other social institutions; failure of access to formal education as well as enrolment disparities in the education industry will result to various kinds of discrimination in the area of education, employment resulting in a high proportion of illiteracy and poverty (Aina, 2003, Aina, 2001, IFAD, 2001).

Conclusion

The role of women cannot be underestimated in every society. The development of a nation also needs the contribution of everywoman in the society. This is achievable if there is no gender gaps, gender discrimination and disparity. Furthermore, educational opportunity should be given to every Nigerian child at all levels. At university level there should be equal access to various fields of education, this will, however, curb gender discrimination and promote educational opportunity in Nigerian especially now that the world is becoming unipolar or a global village. Failure to curb gender inequalities in the field of education will affect human resources both locally and in the international world.

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