



**NORTHERN REGION
OF NIGERIA
AND
THE CHALLENGES OF
DEVELOPMENT**

Readings in Honour of Professor Kyari Tijani

Edited by

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WOMEN EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE SITUATION IN YOBE AND AKWA IBOM STATES

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Introduction

Globalization has greatly improved the lives of women worldwide and particularly, the lives of women in the developing nations of the world. The disadvantaged position of women in many areas of life, including education, employment, health and civil rights cannot be ignored. According to U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), 57 percent of the 72 million primary school aged children who do not attend school are females. Additionally, girls are four percent less likely than boys to complete primary schools (Gender Statistics, 2010).

King (2013) asserts that though many gains have been made with regards to overall level of education worldwide and more children than ever are now attending primary school, there are still worldwide issues in gender parity in education. In every income bracket there are more female children than male children who are not attending school (Aja-Okorie, 2013). It is observed by Jensen (2010) that girls in the poorest 20 percent of households have lowest chance of getting education and that this situation does not even change in adulthood. According to Gender Statistics (2010) of the 774 million illiterate adults worldwide, 64 percent are women and

that the statistics is virtually unchanged from the 1990s.

The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women by the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG) can only be achieved through the use of education as its target and the measure of gender disparity in education as its indication of progress (Ring, 2013). Women in Nigeria have had various challenges in order to obtain equal education. As observed, education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since 1948 adoption of the universal Declaration on Human Rights. Aja-Okorie (2013) also observes that gender inequality in education is extreme and that girls are less likely to access school, to remain in school or to achieve in education. Additionally, despite the almost three decades of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the two decades of the Convention on the rights of the Child (CRC), today girls still form about 56 percent of the 77 million children not in school and women form about two thirds of the adults who are illiterates. Some girls who enrol in school may have drop out early because of irregular attendance due to other demands on them and the fact that their education may not be prioritized.

On the other hand, women involvement in entrepreneurial development in Nigeria is also of a great concern. Gender issue as it relates to the 50 percent of the World's population is of entrepreneurial development (Orhungur and Egbe-Okpenge, 2012). The population census in Nigeria according to Mang (2001) reveals that women constitute about fifty percent of the 140 million people. These women are also make up about 45 percent of the 70% unemployed population (Mundi, 2000). Women therefore play key role in entrepreneurship for national development. They further observe that women form the bed rock of the society because of their entrepreneurship in most developing countries of the world. They argued that these women are always at the receiving end of negative

impact of any distressed economy being mothers as some of them have fatherless children as widows or single parents. The women are saddled with the responsibility of bringing up the children. Some women who are married still shoulder the responsibility of managing their home, acting as a support to their husband's success as the saying goes "that behind every successful man there is a good woman". Therefore, gender issues or women education and entrepreneurship needs to be investigated in view of the critical role of women in the society.

Encarta Dictionary (2009) as cited by Orhungur and Egbe-Okpenge (2012), define an entrepreneur as a risk taking business person. Somebody who initiates or finances new commercial enterprise is an entrepreneur (Longenecker et al, 2000). It is observed that women play a significant role in entrepreneurship development since they are the bedrock of the society (Orhungur and Egbe-Okpenge, 2012). Women need to be enterprising in order to take care of the needs of the family. Osuman (1997) observes that development is the process where an economy undergoes social and economic transformation towards improvement in the quality of life of its citizens. And women can help towards the production of the nation's result through economic activities in entrepreneurial development. Education is an excellent instrument for bringing about individual and national development (Tinuke, 2011). It is important therefore that women acquire some levels of education for entrepreneurship development. But a critical look at the pattern of women's involvement in education in Nigeria reveals abysmal low levels notwithstanding the laudable goals and objectives of education. Women still suffer a lot of constraints and inhibitions which militate against their entrepreneurial development. This study examines the level of women educational empowerment, contributions of educated women in entrepreneurial development, women education enrolment rates in Akwa Ibom and Yobe States in the last 10 years.

Women educational empowerment

Empowerment is a call to action and it involves a process of fundamental change in the quality of life of any material being (Tinunke, 2011). Educational empowerment is the ability to effect a change in one's educational life with positive possibilities to make meaningful choices. Igbodalo (1990) views women empowerment as a process of enabling women to develop the capacity to actualize their potentials for greatness and so should be encouraged. The scholar also advanced that the process of empowerment must necessarily include the expansion of women's access to educational opportunities, facilities for skills acquisition and positions of authority.

Obanya (2004) sees empowerment as a continuous and life-long process which should be in the form of a systematic set of continuous, continued, sustained, never-ending (but ever improving) goal-directed efforts. The measure of educational empowerment is the ability to be knowledgeable. A woman with educational empowerment is one with human resources. Human resources therefore are the skills, energies, talents and knowledge of people, which potentially can be applied to production of goods and the rendering of services.

Human resources according to Tinuke (2011) constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Industrial and entrepreneurial development is got not from the much capital investment but from investment in man and improvements brought about by improved men. He further observes that despite the massive imports of physical capital in developing countries like Nigeria, there have not been accelerated growth rates because of the existence of underdeveloped human resources. According to Bola-Babs (2011) education makes people easy to lead, but not easy to drive, easy to govern, but impossible to enslave. Education of women has something to do with their entrepreneurial development. The issue of women population and illiteracy rates shows the contribution

of women (50 percent of population) is forgotten (UNICEF & FOS, 1997) as statistics show that the illiteracy rate among them is higher than that of men.

Educational empowerment of the women no doubt contributes to the changing attitude of women as Agogo (2010) observes that relevant and functional education must be comprehensive and up to date. For the women to enjoy relevant and functional education, it is important therefore to equip the products of educational system as to make them functional members of the society in which they find themselves. Udofia and Essien et al (2013) observes that countries with high GNP have greater educational quality unlike most poor countries where there is considerable variation both in overall enrolment ratios. They argued that poverty at household level discourages parents from enrolling their female children in school or withdrawing them once school fees is demanded. Low income level of most household makes it difficult for their children to go to school according to them. Gender in Nigeria Reports, (2012) data suggest that Nigeria ranks 118 out of 134 countries in the Gender Equality Index at every educational level women earn less than their male counterparts and in some cases men with less education earn more than better educated female peers (Aja-Okorie, 2013).

Nigerian girls drop out of school earlier than their male counterparts, while evidence shows further that more than two thirds of 15-19 year old girls in Northern Nigeria are unable to read a sentence (Aja-Okorie, 2013). This is more worrisome against the efforts by the Nigerian government for the past 20 years to tackle the gender parity in education which have not had any appreciable impact. As devastating as these facts are in their own right, the Nigeria's education policy has evolved since 1980 towards a gender focus and below are some key policy initiatives embarked on by the Nigerian government to show policy commitment on education equality.

Table 1: Showing key policy initiatives with a gender focus in Nigeria

S/N	Policy Initiatives	Year
1	Blue print on women's education	1986
2	Nomadic education programme	1986
3	National Commission for Mass Literacy and Non-formal Education	1991
4	Family Support Basic Education Programme	1994
5	Universal Basic Education	1999
6	National Policy on Women	2001
7	Education for All-Fast track Initiative	2002
8	Safety for Acceleration of Girl's Education in Nigeria	2003
9	National Economic Empowerment and development Strategy (NEEDS)	2004
10	Universal Basic Education Act	2004

Source: *Gender in Nigeria Report, 2012*

However, in our society there are some limitations for women to progress in education and to be considered outside their family roles and expectations. According to Oniye (2010), the gender disparity is further widened by the powerful economic and social rationale for investing in the education of sons rather than daughters, as daughters are perceived to be valuable once educated, less likely to abide by the will of the father, brother or husband and that the plight of women, in terms of education is compounded by this negative female education.

Contributions of Educated Women to Entrepreneurial Development

There are many benefits derivable from education which includes enhanced quality of living, housing, health, clothing, transport, communication, entertainment and worthy use of leisure. Women education enhanced personal development and also the tremendous development of other members of the family including the husband and the children. Women are likely to have more confidence in themselves and their ability to contribute effectively to entrepreneurial development. Women education helps in the fulfilment of women's

obligation in entrepreneurship (Bola-Babs, 2001). Educated women perform creditably their responsibility to the home and society at large. Educated women have the knowledge of basic health care and are in a position to help others to maintain and improve their own health (Osumam, 1997). The development of the potentials of women through education helps in terms of social development. Increasing educational opportunities for women also boost national development and stabilize women stay in labour force. Tinuke (2011) observes that the participation of women with degrees in the labour force is more than that of women who have only primary education and that this creates an ever increasing pool of experienced and skilled personnel that can be filled. Educated women also assist in nation building and reconstruction.

Educated women also contribute to the economic sphere of life by engaging in small scale businesses. These women who are married to big time businessmen or entrepreneurs are able to help such husbands by offering useful advice to their husbands and also converse with them intelligently concerning their businesses. Furthermore, educated women are gainfully employed and can assist in financing the home. According to Agbe and Agbe (1990), the new system of education aim at making Nigerians find more meaning in education and life. This system is to enhance job creation by educated women rather than job seekers and to improve upon their entrepreneurial development. The skills associated with entrepreneurship include technical skills, specific operation technology, communication, interpersonal relations, presentation and assertiveness and looking at these skills needed, education become imperative or key to acquiring them. Educated women possess all these and therefore can contribute meaningfully toward entrepreneurial development.

Women education enrolment rates in Nigeria

Generally, it can be noted that purposeful plans of action has led to an increase in female enrolment in schools after 1990. More boys than girls were enrolled in 1991 with a difference of 138,000. But by 1998, the difference was only 64,400. The combined gross enrolment for primary, secondary and territory school for females was 57% compared to 71% for males in 2002 (Oniye, 2010). This according to him also translates to fewer women in certain economic fields as well. Female workers percentages in selected professions were as presented in the table below:

Table 2: Showing Women Participation Ratio in Nigeria

Profession	Women Participation (%)
Architecture	2.4
Quantity Survey	3.5
Law	25.4
Lecturing	11.8
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	8.4
Paediatrics	33.3
General Medicine	18.3

Source: Adapted from Oniye, 2010

The question therefore is what is the level of women access to and participation in education in Nigeria?

The tables below show the level of enrolment of women in three levels of education in Nigeria from 1990-2009.

Table 3: Showing Primary School Enrolment in Nigeria by Sex (1990-2009)

Year	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1990	7,729,677	56.8	5,877,572	43.8	13,007,249
1995	8,729,421	55.5	7,134,682	44.5	15,741,078
2000	9,672,225	55.3	7,810,971	44.7	17,483,193
2005	10,563,251	57.8	8,309,032	42.2	18,265,094
2006	10,652,372	56.8	8,218,911	43.5	18,871,283
2007	11,045,727	57.5	8,155,385	43.3	19,201,112
2008	11,263,219	57.4	8,356,615	42.6	19,619,834
2009	11,315,725	56.4	8,746,506	43.6	20,062,231

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, 2011

Table 4: Showing Secondary School Enrolment in Nigeria by Sex (1990-2009)

Year	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1990	7,099,213	58.6	5,024,022	41.4	12,123,235
1995	7,806,204	57.2	5,601,597	42.3	13,409,801
2000	8,862,592	58.6	6,270,843	41.4	15,133,435
2005	8,947,199	57	6,742,156	43	15,689,355
2006	9,431,432	57.5	6,980,822	42.5	16,412,254
2007	10,201,322	56.8	7,766,512	43.2	17,967,834
2008	10,846,387	59.43	7,441,803	40.7	18,288,190
2009	10,989,261	56.46	8,436,931	43.4	19,426,192

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, 2011

Table 5: Showing University Undergraduate (Full Time) Enrolment by Sex in Nigeria (2001- 2009)

Year	Male	%	Female	%	Total
2001-2002	274,131	61.6	170,818	38.4	444,949
2002-2003	373,778	61.6	232,326	38.4	606,194
2003-2004	489,276	67.9	231,117	32.1	720,393
2004-2005	466,159	64.3	258,697	35.7	724,856
2005-2006	513,491	67.4	248,682	32.6	762,173
2006-2007	518,243	66.4	262,300	33.6	780,543
2007-2008	520,762	66.0	268,539	34.0	789,301
2008-2009	522,139	65.2	279,228	34.8	801,367

Source: National University Commission, Abuja, 2011

The data above show the gender disparity in education assessment in Nigeria. At any given time, women are disadvantaged and the disadvantages increase as the level of education increases. This situation however exists despite exerted efforts over the years to correct the situation.

Women Education Enrolment Rates in Akwa Ibom State

In Akwa Ibom State, the Akpabio's restoration, according to the Commissioner for Information, Umanah, (2008) has raised the bar of school enrolment through the free and compulsory education policy of government. There is a deliberate strategy to use education to achieve socio-economic transformation as witnessed in Japan under the Meiji era. The government of Akwa Ibom State sees education as an inalienable right to be provided free to all citizens including women from primary to

secondary school levels. One significant impact of the policy is that it has a multiplier effect on school enrolment by 60 percent (Umanah, 2008). The current primary school enrolment which stood at 761,422 increased to 932,872, and additional of 171,450, while the secondary school enrolment which stood at 159,009 increased to 252,699, an additional of 93,601 (Udofia and Essien 2013). This is achieved at the cost of N7billion annually (Umanah, 2008).

To ensure a holistic assessment of the cost and benefit of the policy, the government has also announced the establishment of two state-of-the art model schools in each of the 31 local government areas of the state with necessary facilities and learning aids like laboratories, well stocked libraries, and so on. Although no mention is made of the gender differences in the enrolment, but it is believed that males still dominate the enrolment rates. However, with a remarkable improvement on what it used to be in the past.

Women education enrolment rates in Yobe State

In Yobe State, the belief that overcoming illiteracy and ignorance will form the basis for an accelerated national development made the government of Ibrahim Geidam to see education as an antidote and therefore influences his policies especially in the area of education upon assumption of office through articulate blueprint. Statistics according to Muhammad (2012) indicate glaring imbalances against females in enrolment, attendance and completion rates at all levels of education, due to a variety of socio-cultural and religious factors.

However, some of the issues affecting (female) education negatively in the state are being addressed. With the assistance of Universal Board Education Commission, the state is constructing 1,251 classrooms, and toilets in different primary schools across the state, distributing 1,11,808 books and assorted library materials to primary schools and renovating

and fencing of scores of such schools. According to Muhammad (2012) the governor has also spent over 1.3 billion on scholarships to Yobe State students studying various courses in the nations institutions of higher learning. However, statistics also indicate that imbalance against female enrolment, attendance and completion rates have greatly improved under Geidam led - administration. This situation has also influenced the level of women entrepreneurship for national development as in all sectors immediately he assumed the mantle of leadership in the state.

The Educational Imbalance Between the Northern and Southern Nigeria

The educational imbalance between the Northern and Southern States in Nigeria has historical antecedents. According to Okobiah (2012), prior to the colonial conquest and domination in the 19th century, most of the Northern States were Islamic in religious beliefs and educational orientation. It became necessary to educate the converts with the rudiments of the Qur'an which was initially written in Arabic language and form. This education became a formal literary form of education overtime (in the north), while the western education was introduced into Nigeria through evangelization activities of the Christian missionaries in the middle 19th century. In Christianity, reading and writing were obvious necessities and if the gospel was to be spread and this propelled the building of schools and subsequent training of converts and catechists. The Moslems which dominated the Northern part of the country repelled the contents and process of Western education until it was too late. The educational imbalance according to Okobiah (2002) is from the point of view of "rejection-acceptance" dichotomy by the North and South respectively. Below is the University undergraduate enrolment rate between the Northern and the Southern Nigeria in 1998/99.

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Table 7: Showing University Undergraduate Enrolment Rates between the North and the South - 1998/99

Region	Male	Female	Total	Gaps Between North - South		
				Male	Female	Total
North	45,370 (18.2%)	14,459 (5.8%)	59,829 (24.0%)			
South	129,878 (52.1%)	59,580 (23.9%)	198,458 (76.0%)	84,509	45,121	121,629
Total	175,248	74,039	249,287			

Source: National Universities Commission, Abuja, 2005

Below, is another table showing university new entrants between Akwa Ibom and Yobe States from 1980-2000.

Table 8: University New Entrants Between Akwa Ibom and Yobe States 1980-2000

STATE	1980/81		1989/90		1999/2000	
	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%
AKWA IB	1485	5.2	2304	3.9	2606	3.5
YOBE	496	1.7	7202	2.1	105	0.1

Source: National Universities Commission, Abuja, 2005.

(Yobe was part of Borno State during periods highlighted).

Women Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: The Situation in Akwa Ibom and Yobe State

Women play a significant role in entrepreneurship development in Nigeria since they are the bedrock of the society. In order to cater for the needs of the family, women have to be enterprising. Many of them are involved in commerce which involves buying and selling of goods and services to satisfy human wants which include food, clothing and shelter, among others. This probably could be the reason why most working class women are involved in selling of goods. If development is the process whereby an economy undergoes social and economic transformation towards an improvement in the quality of life of its citizen as asserted by

(Osuman, 1997), so women in Nigeria have actually helped towards the production of the nation's wealth through economic activities in entrepreneurial development. But it is important also to stress here that women cannot meet this requirement if they are not educated because education in an investment in human capital as a lasting legacy required for an individual to be productive in whatever economic activities he/she undertakes.

In Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, there is low industrial and entrepreneurial development. The civil service nature of the state economy where every school graduate looks up to government for white collar job is not helping the matter. The unskilled women have been actively involved in commercial activities which involved buying and selling in order to cater for the economic needs of the family. The educated women too are not left out in the commercial activities in order to complement the efforts of the husband. This attitude of the women is not totally strange for the root is old as seen from the Holy Scriptures which had been written long ago as showing the woman as one who "seeketh wool and flax and worketh willingly with hands. She is like a merchants' ship, she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth while it is yet night and giveth meat to her household and so on". This can only be improved as a result of education as Agogo (2010) posits that relevant and functional education must be comprehensive and up to date.

Farming has been the major preoccupation of women in Yobe State. This farming is done at a subsistence level and therefore poverty and under employment of feminine gender in Yobe State is endemic. But the renewed vigour with which the government under Governor Ibrahim Geidam of Yobe State is pursuing education and development, a new attitude to entrepreneurship is envisaged. Counselling is seen as helping relationship which helps individuals to change their attitude or perspective for better achievements. Fuster (2000)

posits that counselling is neither giving of advice nor offering solutions to problems, but helping counselees to change their attitude, perception of self or habits. However, the summary of the situations in both states shows that the only solution to improving on women entrepreneurship is education. An educated woman would be able to take risk in business since entrepreneurship is about risk taking. Again, counselling as it were can only succeed on the basis of the educational foundation of the counselee.

Conclusion

The past ten years have witnessed improved but not sufficient enrolment in higher education. Efforts to improve female education in Nigeria needs to go beyond rhetoric and should involve more policies and programmes with measurable results. Women education plays any role in entrepreneurship for national development and that is the more reason women education should be encouraged at all levels of government. Obviously, there is a gap between women education and entrepreneurship in Akwa Ibom and Yobe States. The gap could only be traceable to some Scio-cultural and religious factors. Insecurity challenges have only added to the seriousness and gravity of the situation. Akwa Ibom State has a higher female education enrolment rates than Yobe State and by extension higher entrepreneurship development.

Recommendations

The following are some recommendations for women education and entrepreneurship for national development.

- Both the government and school administrators need to promote the principle of equality between women and men in school curricular and educational programmes.
- The government at all levels must tackle the present insecurity challenges in the North east of Nigeria in order to ensure protection of lives and property in those

- areas for education to be meaningful to its citizens.
- The policy makers in education need to develop practical oriented mechanism targeted at ensuring equal access to education for women and must take particular account of the situation in the rural areas.
- Socio-cultural and religious factors such as observed in Yobe State must be effectively managed to curtail its influence on women education for entrepreneurial development in Yobe State.
- Monitoring agents should be made to monitor the implementation of the free and compulsory education policy of Akwa Ibom State government to ensure that women are given equal opportunities to access education at all levels.
- Finally, school curricular should be entrepreneurially designed to ensure skill acquisition and technical proficiency in training of the students.

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