



# THE EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON GENDER IN BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

OLASUNKANMI OLUSOGO OLAGUNJU

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS  
Email: [justpolitical12345@gmail.com](mailto:justpolitical12345@gmail.com)

## 1. BACKGROUND TO THE ANALYSIS

Education is an instrument of power, prestige, survival, greatness and advancement of men and nations. It is also an agent of change, a key to knowledge and accelerated development. It is often viewed as a sequence of stages of intellectual, physical, and social development. Education had also been viewed as a continuous process where individual continue to learn, relearn and unlearn norms, values and attitudes to make them fit to the society they live. Various successive governments in Nigeria had placed education at its focal agenda in their service delivery to its people. Over the years, education has focused on access and parity that is, closing the enrolment gap between girls and boys, while insufficient attention has been paid to retention and achievement or the quality and relevance of education.

Providing a quality, relevant education leads to improved enrolment and retention, but also helps to ensure that boys and girls are able to fully realize the benefits of education. The primary focus on girls' access to education may overlook boys' educational needs. This approach also fails to confront the norms and behaviours that perpetuate inequality. Gender issues in education had attracted national, international and intellectual recognition and interests. The perspectives, various interests and focuses had been on human rights, women inequality, women empowerment, girl-child educations, feminism, female educational opportunities performance

etc. It is the opinion of this paper that these relative gender issues are more prevalent, obvious and consequential in Nigeria.

The issue of gender inequality can be considered as a universal feature of developing countries. Unlike women in developed countries who are, in relative terms, economically empowered and have a powerful voice that demands an audience and positive action, women in developing countries are generally silent and their voice has been stifled by economic and cultural factors. Economic and cultural factors, coupled with institutional factors dictate the gender-based division of labour, rights, responsibilities, opportunities, and access to and control over resources.

Education, literacy, access to media, employment, decision making, among other things, are some of the areas of gender disparity. Increase in education has often been cited as one of the major avenues through which women are empowered. Education increases the upward socioeconomic mobility of women; creates an opportunity for them to work outside the home; and enhances husband and wife communication. In Demographic and Health Surveys for various years within the last two decades, 645 school attendance ratio and literacy rate are used as measures of education. The former shows the ratio of girls' school attendance to that of boys.

Such gender gap between males and females in socio-economic indicators has negative impact on the overall development of the country in general and on demographic and health outcomes of individuals in particular. Gender differences in power, roles and rights affect health, survival and nutrition through women's access to health care and restrictions in material and nonmaterial resources.

## **2. HISTORY OF NATIONAL POLICY ON GENDER IN BASIC EDUCATION**

Before 1920, primary and secondary education in Nigeria was within the scope of voluntary Christian organizations. More important to understand is that out of a total of 25 secondary schools established by 1920, three were girls only and the remainder were exclusively for boys. In 1920, the colonial government started giving out subvention to voluntary associations involved in education, the grant giving lasted till the early 1950s and at that point, education was placed under the control of regions.

In 1949, only eight out of a total of 57 secondary schools were exclusively for girls. These schools are Methodist Girls' High School, Lagos (1879), St Anne's School, Molete, Ibadan (1896), St. Teresa's College, Ibadan (1932), Queens College, Lagos, (1927) Holy Rosary College, Enugu (1935), Anglican Girls Grammar School, Lagos, (1945), Queen Amina College and Alhuda College, Kano. From 1950 up till 1960, six more notable schools were established and by 1960, there were fourteen notable girl's schools, ten mixed and sixty one boys only.

In the 1960s, when most African states began to gain their political independence, there was considerable gender disparity in education. Girls' enrollment figures were very low throughout the continent. In May 1961, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UNESCO's educational plans for Nigeria were announced in a conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A target was set: to achieve 100% universal primary education in Nigeria by the year 1980. While more boys than girls were enrolled in 1991, a difference of 138,000, by 1998 the difference was only 69,400. At the pan-African Conference held at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in March and April 1993 it was observed that Nigeria was still lagging behind other regions of the world in female access to education. It was also noted that gender disparity existed in

education and that there was need to identify and eliminate all policies that hindered girls' full participation in education.

### **3. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH**

First and foremost it should be noted that public policy itself is a process about selecting strategies and making choices. Public policy making include some steps –getting of agenda, policy formulation, policy adoptions, policy implementation and evaluation. It need be evaluated to see the intended results, to revise existing and future public programs and projects. Public policy can be studied as producing three types of policies (distributive, regulatory and redistributive) related with decision making process.

Gender can be defined as a set of characteristics, roles, and behaviour patterns that distinguish women from men socially and culturally and relations of power between them. These characteristics, roles, behaviour patterns and power relations are dynamic; they vary over time and between different cultural groups because of the constant shifting and variation of cultural and subjective meanings of gender. Hence, the national policy on gender in basic education in Nigeria denotes an approach to address the distribution of education enrolment such that it is fair not only to men but also women. It is done in such a way that existing gap in equality is closed. For example, women were discriminated against in terms of access to education, the principle of gender equity demands that they should have a fair share to bridge that gender gap.

### **4. ISSUES IN FORMULATION OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON GENDER IN BASIC EDUCATION**

Gender discrimination remains pervasive in many dimensions of life worldwide, while gender gaps are widespread in access to, and control of resources, in the economic and political spheres. Promoting gender equality therefore, is an important part of a development strategy that seeks to

enable all people – women and men alike – to escape poverty and improve their standard of living. The National Gender Policy in Basic Education is the response to the challenges of achieving gender equality in education as expressed in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which states that access to quality education is the right of every Nigerian child.

As a matter of fact, the quest to improving gender equality in education has become a prominent topic of debate in most countries. In Nigeria, there have been humongous disparities between the education that boys and girls receive. Many girls do not have access to basic education after a certain age. The Nigerian girl-child faces significant obstacles in accessing proper education because of inherent traditional societal values placed on the boy-child over the girl-child. Investing in girls' and women education is one of the most effective ways to reducing poverty and advancing national development. As a mark of deep support for the formulation of the national policy on gender in basic education in Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs has noted the problem of gender discrimination, hence, the policy is formulated to guarantee equal access to qualitative education and wealth creation opportunities across all gender.

More so, the policy is formulated to develop a culture that places premium on the protection of the child and focuses attention of both the public and private sector on issues that promote full participation of women and children in the process of national development. It should be pointed out that Nigeria has over the years strive to ensure that all children, irrespective of gender and socio-economic background have equal access to efficient education. As a result, as at 2015, the female adult literacy rate (ages 15 and above) for the country was at 49.7% in comparison to that of male which was at 69.2% with a gender difference of 19.5%. literacy was precipitated by

differences in education. In a bid to elevate the standards of girl child education, the Federal Government has launched the policy framework on Girls and Women Education. The objective of this policy was comprehensively outlined in its formulation by strategically placing importance on the girl child as well as women access to sound education. The gender imbalance in the Nigeria education system was identified as leading most of these girls and women into living deprived lives of missed opportunities and poverty. The existing gender gap in education which is especially pronounced in the Northern part of the country is unhealthy and inimical to women empowerment and the rapid socio-economic development of the political system.

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON GENDER IN BASIC EDUCATION**

Although the federal government of Nigeria is charged with the formulation of the national policy on gender in basic education, the governments are often empowered and entrusted to implement the policy. Thus the national policy on gender in basic education was designed to be implemented through the following procedures include:

- i. Campaign, Advocacy, Mobilization of Women for Programmes, Sensitization and Public Enlightenment.
- ii. Information, Communication and Value-Re-Oriented.
- iii. Skills Acquisition and Empowerment of Women and the Girl-Child.
- iv. Legislation, Policy Formulation and Implementation.
- v. Research Data and Evidence Based Planning.
- vi. Establishment, and Strengthening of Existing Institutions.
- vii. Capacity-building.
- viii. Partnership.

In addition, the implementation of the national policy on gender in basic education is implemented through strict adherence to the following;

- a. Advocacy and Sensitization.
- b. Free and Compulsory Basic Education.
- c. Child Friendly School Principles.
- d. Integration and Mainstreaming Issues.
- e. Gender Capacity of the Basic Education Sector.
- f. Gender-Sensitive Education Budgets.
- h. Gender Responsive Curriculum.
- i. Incentives for Girls.
- j. Training and Supply of Female Teachers in Rural School

## **6. EVALUATION OF THE POLICY**

Nigeria is a complex and pluralistic in nature, hence, any policy irrespective of the policy statements must observe or adjust to the policy environment. Nigeria is not an exemption in this case because even after gaining independence for more than 60 years some traditional characteristics still determine what policy is formulated or implemented. Although with empirical evaluation of the national policy on gender in basic education, it cannot be denied that the policy placed emphasis on the principle of equity which has often manifested in forms of establishment of free education or special schools such as girls colleges and women empowerment centres, education scholarships, grants and awards. It can be still be the policy has had some positive effects particularly in the upsurge of the presence of schools, empowerment programmes among others in the country.

The enrolment rates of girls in modern education is increasing rapidly especially in the southern part of the country. Although some regions in the country are still left behind due to some primordial factors which make education of girls unnecessary. As a matter of fact, there is real equality in access to education in Nigeria and this is helping the growth of enlightened women in national economy and politics. Nigeria has recorded a significant growth of girls enrolment in education nowadays with approximately 40 percent through this policy because it emphasises indiscriminate treatment of girls in admission into schools and other education institutions. Consequently, women are considerably not discriminated against; they receive equal treatment before the law and in other areas of social services provision and social interaction.

However, the policy still suffers some artificial defeats especially in the face of traditionalism. The policy environment in Nigeria contains some factors which have greatly affected the implementation of the Nigerian national policy on gender in basic education.

What this evaluative explanation means is that in Nigeria, there exists some number of factors and practices affect the implementation of National Policy on Gender in Basic Education in Nigeria. These include poverty/child labour, illiteracy/ignorance, early marriage Islamic religious practices and social stratification or family background. Socio-cultural value, peer influence, ethnicity and culture among others. Some of the factors militating against national policy on gender in basic education include the following:

a) Poverty or Child Labour: It is common practices to see girls of school age hawking various article of trade in many parts of Nigeria, especially in Nigeria. This situation had been blamed exclusively on the unacceptable poverty level in Nigeria.



b) Illiteracy or Ignorance: Closely related to poverty and child labour is ignorance and illiteracy.

The value of education for girls had not been fully acknowledged by most parents in Nigeria particularly those that reside in the remote villages.

c) Islamic Religious Practices: Though Nigeria is a secular country, but the most parts of Nigeria is predominantly Muslims. The Islamic moral tenets based on chastity discourage fornication. Based on this belief most parents encourage their females to marry at the expense of formal schooling.

d) Socio-Cultural Value: The socio-cultural set up in most part of the Nigerian political system encourages the education of males in favour of the female who are expected to perform various domestic chores at home.

The social background and family structure of the girl-child to a large extent depend on their chances of enrolment to formal education. Enlightened parents or families do not discriminate against female education. Where the policy will survive largely depend on the rapid increase in girl enrolment in education and the will-power on part policy actors to invest more resources in promoting girl-child education.

## 7. CONCLUSION

It is concluded here that equity in gender enrolment in national education frameworks is exceedingly instrumental to national poverty reduction objectives. It equips the female children to be able to contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of any society. Even access to formal education is the building block for all development goals. Until even numbers of boys and girls are in school, it will be impossible for Nigeria to build the knowledge necessary with which to counter poverty and hunger, combat disease and safeguard the environment.

It is therefore further concluded that in spite of the successes achieved by this policy, the environment in which the policy is to be implemented is highly diverse and dangerous for sustainably putting actions in place for the actualization of the goals and objectives of the policy.

Ultimately, a continuous learning environment for girls is one of the fundamental strategies in the reconstruction and peace-building efforts of the government and other international and local development partners. While conflict remains an overarching problem for the Nigerian political system, girls will still face major barriers in going to school. It is imperative for policymakers and stakeholders who plan these policies to reconsider this problems during the implementation of projects targeted at girl-child and women.

The national policy on gender in basic education are designed to ensure equitable access to quality education for girls. However, some factors have affected or influenced gender disparity in education in Nigeria and some north-eastern parts. The work thereby concludes that for Nigeria to achieve the goal of being amongst the largest 20 economies in the world by 2020, she must rapidly educate the children, particularly the girls. Educating girls results to mothers who are educated and will in turn educate their children, care for their families and provide their children with adequate nutrition. More so, it can be concluded that educating the girls can

reinforce and help produce some women whose will be instrumental to national economy and political development.

## **8. RECOMMENDATION**

For Nigeria to make further political and socio-economic progress, ensuring equitable access to quality education for the girl-child and countering gender disparity in education are very crucial. In the light of this, the paper proffers the following recommendations; first, the Nigerian Government should incentivize girl-child education through the provision of scholarships around the country. This would enable poor parents and even those that have to consider sending boys to school over scarce resources to be able to send their girls to school. For the most parts of the country, incentives to parents would motivate them to send their girls to school.

Although unconditional and conditional cash remittance and transfers have begun in a few states, social protection policies like cash transfers is an investment that will benefit the country in the long run. Supervision and monitoring is necessary for the National Policy on Gender in Basic Education to be substantially implemented in the political system. In as much as the policy legally makes girl-child education mandatory, monitoring and empirical scrutiny by the government is important. This calls for a stronger social work department at federal and state level. Based on the Nigerian ecosystem, this portends that there should be strong coordination between the Federal Ministry of Education and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development where social work is situated.

There should be more emphasis on the promotion of girls' rights. Teaching of this should be introduced at all educational levels so as to foster awareness. The government should strengthen coherent campaigns on public service information and community advocacy on girl-child education. There should be collaborative efforts from the Government, Non-Governmental

Organizations, Community Based Organizations and Human Right Groups Provision on the need for improved advocacy on the need for girl-child education. Also, the government should discontinue the concentration of teachers in the urban centres and ensure equal distribution of educational amenities in both the urban and rural areas to retain teachers.

There should be coherent strategies to strengthen the enforcement of policies to enable pregnant girls and young mothers to stay in school and discourage child marriages. In addition, the respective government agencies should analyze and review the curriculum and teaching in classes that are gender prejudiced. The government should also expand flexible and non-formal education options, and ensure safe and supportive learning environment for girls. For the latter, the security of the girl-child is key as well as the provision of good toilet facilities in schools and sanitary conditions. In addition, a female leadership component is important in ensuring the success of policies and projects directed at improving girls' education. When women and girls are seen as key actors and not just beneficiaries, those projects are more likely to achieve successful results.

## REFERENCES

AED (2010), "Success in primary school". AED 1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW Washington, DC. [www.aed.org](http://www.aed.org).

Basic Education Coalition (2004). Teach a child transform a nation. Washington, DC: Basic Education Coalition.

C.O.D.E (2017), "An Examination of Girls' Education Policies in Nigeria with focus on the Northeast" in [www.connecteddevelopment.org](http://www.connecteddevelopment.org).

Duze, C. O (2011). Falling Standards of Education: An Empirical Evidence from Delta State of Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary Research*, 8(3),1-12.

Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (1981R) National Policy on Education. Lagos.

Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (1998) National Policy on Education. Lagos.

Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (2004) National Policy on Education. Lagos.

Nwagbara, A.C (2003) Education in Nigeria: early learning and related critical issues. Lagos: TAIT:Publications.

Obemeata, J.O. (1985) The Factor of the Mother Tongue in the Teaching and Learning of English Language, *Nigerian Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 3(1), 43-55.

Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) EdData Profile 1990, 2003, and 2008: Education Data for Decision-Making. 2011. Washington, DC, USA: National Population Commission and RTI International.

Obanya, P. (2010), Planning and Managing Access to Education: The Nigerian Experience. Centre for International Education University of Sussex Department of Education Open Seminar Series: 2010.

Osanyin, E.A. (2005) Early Learning and Development: implications for early childhood education, Early Learning and Reading Development.

Starting Strong II: early childhood education and care.

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/63/37423587.pdf>

Tassoni, P., Beith, K., Eldridge, H. & Gough, A. (2005) Nursery Nursing: a guide to work in early years. London: Heinemann.

World Education Forum (2000) Education for All 2000 Assessment.

<http://www.unescodoc.unesco.org/images>

Wikipedia (2018), “Early Childhood Education” in

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Early\\_childhood\\_education](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_childhood_education)

