

GENDER, YOUTH, TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

Gender equality is essentially related to sustainable development and globally seen as a necessity for the promotion of human rights in the society. This is critical in that men and women face different challenges in their respective domains. As a result, measures need to be put in place to ensure equitable access to resources and basic services which are necessary in order to obtain inclusive and gender responsive governance.

The access to qualitative and functional educational opportunity for all, male and female inclusive, is perhaps one of the most effective means to combat poverty, reduction in misunderstanding perspective, political and religious intolerance as well as lack of respect for others which had been the major causes of frictions revolts and recurrent civil crises in the nation. Girls education will contribute to move the nation forward economically, politically and technologically also, it will go a long way to liberate the women folks from their natural way of dependency, inferiority, superstition and other shackles that impede national development (Osokoya, 2008). Gender equality in educational attainment has been achieved in some western countries, but more actions are needed mostly in developing nations to further improve the enrolment and retention of females in primary and secondary school education. The aim is that women and men should have equal rights, obligations, and opportunities in all fields of life. It is commonly believed that society can progress in a more positive and democratic direction when the competence, knowledge, experience and values of both women and men are allowed to influence and enrich the development (Nwankwo, 2014).

The role of Government on gender equality:

Governments along the globe are introducing institutional mechanism in order to increase women's political participation rates and to incorporate women's interest into policy making. Also parity of political participation has emerged as central to both feminist's gender campaigns and Governmental gender equality directives. In Nigeria, awareness about the role of women in development and the need to encourage them to participate more in government gained momentum in mid 80s. This awareness was further improved upon in 1995 as a result of Nigeria's participation in the international conference on women in Beijing, China (Attoe, 2006). The trend has continued to date as much more efforts are being made to boost awareness on gender equality in politics and beyond.

National youth policy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria:

Youth in Nigeria includes citizens of the federal republic of Nigeria aged 18-35 years. Variance in chronologies are used in defining youth and are addressed by members of the state (Andy, 2013)

Nigeria, been the most populous country in Africa with one of the largest population of youths in the world, has a mandate to Identify and address issues that will enhance the lives of the youth which would improve overall national development. In line with the above, a national youth development policy was created and designed to advocate, for youth and youth development. The policy views youth welfare as vital to the Nigeria nation and its socio-economic development. The policy is seen as a youth participation project, versus a project identifying problems and needs (Youth policy, 2009). The 2009 national policy recognizes five priority areas that needs to be addressed to enhance youth lives.

These include the impact of globalization, access and use of communication technology, the impact of STDs and HIV/AIDS, intergenerational issues in an aging society, and youth perpetrators and victims of armed conflict. The 2009 National Youth Policy is guided by several national and international policy initiatives, which includes; National policies for education, gender, health, population for sustainable development and the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS).

The millennium development goals, the African Youth charter, and other international agreement further guide the policy goals found in the document.

National youth policy prioritizes the difficulties women have faced in the past, some women experience less occupational opportunity, physical violence and abuse, and labour exploitation. They suffer negative consequences from teenage marriages, pregnancies and abduction- a case of Ese oruru that was forcefully taken to Kano by one Yinusa Dahiru who converted her to islam and impregnated her.

The policy seeks to protect their rights and promote female youth's interests and goals. By empowering females, restoring their dignity established programs to end gender-based discrimination and promoting their right. The policy places emphasis on the needs of young women (Youth Policy, 2009).

Strategies towards gender equality in Nigeria political environment:

The current system of governance in Nigeria is built on the principles of equal and fair representation of all citizens, this however does not mean an automatic transformation of gender inequality in representation that existed over a period of time. It does not automatically empower women who have been relegated to the background. Conscious efforts must be made to enforce gender equality in the country especially in politics. Women empowerment in Nigeria has been described as a dynamic process with four (4) major stages namely, access, conscientization, action and equity (Afolabi, 2008 in Agbalajobi 2010). The aim is to ensure numerical increase in significant positions, improve women's articulation most especially on issues concerning them as women and as citizens of the country and also to ensure a level playing field for their participation at all levels. All documents to back up this is clearly shown in the 1979 constitution as well as the 1992 and 1999. These constitutions guarantee women rights to participate in various things including politics at any level once they have attained the age of eighteen (18); which is the legal age to vote and to be voted for. Following the above declaration, on the 23rd of April 1984, Nigeria made another bold effort by becoming a signatory to the United Nations' convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) and by the 13th of June 1985, she ratified the principles of this convention without prejudice (The Guardian, 2009). CEDAW basically calls for an end to all forms of discrimination against women by emphasizing the need for a radical redefinition of the process and content of social and political development (Okome, 2002). It also stresses the need to acknowledge the important role of women in development and as such engineer their integrations into development process as equal partners with men. Basically, CEDAW recommendation have been classified as the stepping stone to attain gender equality, though, the objectives are yet to manifest in reality.

Policies for promoting gender equality

Several policies have emerged though the federal government since the return of democracy in 1999, to favour women and to allow them pursue their political career in this paper, for the purpose of clarity I will mention 3: (1) National policy on women (2) National gender policy and (3) national electoral reform policy.

On National Policy on women, this policy was formulated in the hope to ensure justice, freedom, basic human rights and most of all equality across gender. A number of important documents served as a basis reference in the formulation of this policy, and some of these documents include the resolution of the United Nations End of Decade for Women (1976-1985), the conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985 with the theme ‘forward looking strategies toward the year 2000’ (Hawa,1995). This policy provides for the empowerment of women at various levels, it calls for elimination of practices that marginalize women especially in the area of decision making. The national policy on women promotes affirmative action that would bring about up to 30% women;s representation in legislative and executive arms of government (CEDAW Nigeria, 2004). This involves taking deliberate actions to give such groups priority in appointment and nominations to positions of responsibility. The policy also ensures equitable sharing in the acquisition of resources, information, opportunity and benefits of development for both men and women. By 2006, National gender policy was adapted to replace the national policy of women (Guardian, June, 2009). In essence one can say that the national gender policy embodies the basic principles of national policy on women as well as other international policy recommendation for gender equality, it is more or less working towards similar objectives as the former documents or policies. The major goals of the national gender policy is to build or create a just society devoid of discrimination; also to harness the full potential of all social groups regardless of sex or circumstances, and to promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political well being of all citizens in other to achieve equitable rapid economic growth (Guardian, June, 2009)

The last one is the electoral reforms policy, which is the latest policy embarked upon to ensure a just and fair election and to give everyone interested equal opportunities regardless of gender. Electoral reforms as opined by Adamo (2008), involves a change in a system composed of people entitled to vote in an election to improve how public desires are expressed in election result. The general view is that a successful reform of the electoral process in Nigeria will help curb corruption during elections as well as provide a level playing ground within the various political institutions. Accordingly, on the 28th of August 2007, President Yar’Adua formally inaugurated the Electoral Reform Committee headed by Hon. Justice Muhammed Uwais. The objective is to re-examine the Nigeria electoral process with the view of ensuring that we raise the quality and standard of the general elections hereby deepening democracy (committee report, vol. 1, 2008). Also the government seeks to

promote equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for men and women. The policy of gender equality policy is to strengthen the economic independence of women and raise the percentage of women into work and making it possible for both of them to share work and care responsibilities more equitably.

Education of females and males in our society

The disparity in the education of females and male youths has become a national issue in our society. Nigeria, been a developing country is being confronted with economic, social, political and educational challenges, and the challenges had led to the introduction of different reforms at different levels of the national operation. The reforms were designed to bring about developments in areas of needs though infusion of modern methods and values. Specifically, education constitutes of a major focus because it is believed that education is an instrument of national development and as a result, it could be employed to achieve political, economic and social development. The development of any nations requires the collective efforts of its citizens and all residents. Most significantly, to achieve national development, both females and males members of the society need to be educated and be carried along. The world conference on Education for all, (EFA) held in Geneva in 1990 stressed the need for gender equity in education. The Beijing conference of 1995 and the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2005 also emphasized gender equity. In Nigeria, the national policy on education (FRN, 2004), also acknowledges the need to equalize educational opportunities between girls and boys. Gender equity is a major issue in the on-going reform programs embarked upon by the federal government of Nigeria and it is designed to address gender imbalance in education. This is because Girls access to basic education, especially in the Northern states of Nigeria has remained low, (UNICEF, 2007). For example, only 20% of women in the North West and North East of the country are literate and have attended school while the North central presents the worst scenario. (UNICEF, 2007). (Dugbezah, 2009) noted that gender composition of occupations in both the formal and informal sectors, of a country is an important indicator of the economic opportunities open to women. According to him the participatory level of individual in each sector could be determined by the enrolment of females and males in schools and participation in certain school subjects and career.

Strategies for ensuring women, gender equality in Nigeria:

The paper also examines empowerment strategies which will reduce poverty among women and society at large. They are: (1) poverty and economic empowerment, (2) empowerment of

women in politics, (3) women employment, (4) women education, (5). Constitutional guarantee.

- ✓ Poverty and economic empowerment: This is by ensuring equal access to women to critical resources in order to reduce extreme poverty among women and to ensure gender equitable access to capital and large scale investment opportunities. It is aimed also to remove gender discriminatory practices on access on to landed properties; facilitate women's entrepreneurial skills. Involve women in the execution of empowerment programmes. Government should enhance the business enrolment through provision of infrastructure and accounting for the value of women work in Gross Domestic Product. Building the capacity of the women and men in low poverty group on investment opportunities, provide access to institutional credit facilities. Supporting and encouraging the development of small, medium and large scale enterprises, and provide extension services for those in poverty group to enhance information (Ekpe, Aloba, Egbe, 2014).
- ✓ Empowerment of women in politics: increasing the level of women participating in politics, there is the need for sensitization of women to political participation, creating enabling environment for women to participate in politics by economic empowerment and adequate education of women for political participation. Also all discriminatory policies should be eradicated by reviewing the structure and operational guidelines of political Parties, and also by providing financial support for women political aspirant.
- ✓ Women employment: Building women to allow comparable opportunity in the modern labour market. More women need to be recruited in the private sector. Personnel policies and practices must comply with the principle of equitable representation of both sexes.

Women education: the need for skill acquisition for women to increase their participation at the managerial level, and making vocational education and adult literacy programmes available to all.

Education reforms in Nigeria:

What is Reform: Reforms could be seen as the improvement or amendment of what is wrong, undesirable or unsatisfactory in a system. Reforms as an act emphasizes changes and improvement that will bring about development through, the removal of inconsistencies, abuses and adaptation of modern methods and value. It sometimes finds its origin at the

grassroots level where certain needs considered important are made known to policy makers at the top, often through petition, agitations, demonstration and sometimes violence.

These acts usually call for an interactive communication between the policy makers and the stakeholders so that policies can be formulated to ease the demands of the populace. Thus education reforms could be described as those practices and programs that are designed to bring about positive changes and new development in one or more aspects of the educational system of a nation (Adeniran, 2009), in Samuel, Bassey and Olorunfemi (2012), Nigeria has been witnessing different kind of reforms in its education sector right from the outset of the colonial (pre-independence) era, across the post-independence period and up-to-date. This is with a view to meeting both local and global challenges in the area of science and technology. The various educational reforms witnessed in Nigeria, among others include: the Universal Primary Education (UPE) of 1985, 1995 which brought about the national curriculum conference in 1999, which was the basis for the formulation of the National Policy on education (NPE) by the Nigerian government in 2007. The national policy on education was revised in 1981, 1988, 2004 and 2007. Other reforms introduced by the federal government of Nigeria include: the universal primary education in 1976, the 6-3-3-4 system of education in 1981, the computer education in 1988, the Nigerian information technology policy and the universal basic education in 1999 (Lawal, 2007, in Salman et al 2011). In the work of Oladosu (2007, in salman et al 2011), he highlighted eight factors which prompted the current education reforms in Nigeria; the factors are as follows:

- i. 43% of the Nigeria population can neither read nor write. That is, sixty million, two hundred thousand Nigerians are illiterate
- ii. Only 51% of practicing teachers are professionally qualified to be in the classroom.
- iii. Infrastructure, educational facilities and instructional materials are in short supply across all levels of the educational system.
- iv. Not every Nigerian has equal access to education, partly as a result of prejudice and socio-cultural misconceptions, and other related factors
- v. There are significant differences in learners' academic achievement and the quality of education received by Nigerians living in different parts of the country.
- vi. Nigerian schools tend to emphasize the learning of theories to the detriment of technical knowledge, vocational know-how and entrepreneurial skills.

- vii. The curriculum content calls for drastic and urgent review in favour of relevance and practical orientation of learners
- viii. The natural mean scores for primary four Nigerian pupils in literary, numeracy and life skills did not exceed 40% in any of the competencies assessed jointly by UNICEF and UNESCO in 1997. The justification for education reforms are within the context of these challenges. Therefore, the former six years of primary, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary and four years of university (6-3-3-4), education structure was re-aligned into 9years of formal schooling consisting of 3years of lower Basic (primary 1-3), 3 years of middle Basic (Primary 4-6), and 3 years both in Junior and Secondary and 4 years in university education(9-3-4). This structure emphasizes Universal Basic Education (UBE), which is one of the reform programs of the federal government of Nigeria. According to the National Policy on education (2004), the 9years basic education comprising of 6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary shall be as follows:
 - a. Free and compulsory education
 - b. Adult and non-formal education programs at primary and junior secondary levels
 - c. Education for adults and out of school youths

Also Obong (2006) in Salman, Olaoye and Yahaya (2011), it was reported that the initiative by the federal government is aimed at removing distortions and inconsistencies in basic education delivery; provide greater access and un-interrupted access to 9 years formal education by providing free, compulsory and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age. Thus, the universal basic education Act (2004) described and gave meaning of Basic Education as early childhood care and education; 9 years of formal schooling; adult literacy and non-informal education; skill acquisition programs and the education of special groups such as nomard and migrants; girl-child and women; the almajiri and disabled groups.

Challenges of Modern Technology:

At the second world summit on the information society (Tunis, Nov 2005), Kofi Ana charged that we are living in a world of rapid change where technologies play a multiple of roles. How we tap this technology's potential will shape our future together. We cannot remain indifferent to this enormous change in the society at large. The participation of researchers

and educators in the process of change that ICT brings to education is an eye opener and opportunity to construct, to shape and share development knowledge (Karsenti, 2010). ICT are obvious of great significance of education and the use of ICTs can make substantial change for education and training.

The researcher did not undermine the challenges encountered with the new technology; which are as follows: (i). security (ii) lack of infrastructure of data base (iii) lack of adequate research studies (iv) political instability (v) bureaucratic control, sustainability issue etc, but on the other hand strategies that would combine the new technological capacity, with investment, which would enhance economic development and increase standard of living, could be developed and women should not be left out.

There is a saying that, “If you educate a female, you educate a nation”. Education of women gives them opportunity to participate and contribute to national development; this is so because female education automatically increases economic growth by engaging in the labour force as well as creating wealth for other people in the society. Women that are educated, increases the level of their contributions to the maintenance and development of themselves, their family members and the society at large. So also mothers’ education has significant positive relationship with children’s educational attainment and opportunities. (Plewis, Money & Creeser 1990). Over population is a menace and social problem which slow down development, so education of women contributes to national development in the sense that educated women give birth to fewer children they can cater for thereby reducing poverty at large in the society.

Many educated women have contributed immensely to the development of their society, some have become politician, leaders of different organization and parastatals, (e.g our amiable vice chancellor, Professor Oluwayemisi Obilade), Professionals and bread winners. We have many of such women in Nigeria who had made their impact, both past and present. They have been able to contribute useful ideas for the smooth running of national affairs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Women education/liberation is being encouraged today because it is believed that it could ensure total transformation which the society craved for. Women will be able to adapt themselves into society, developed their morale as well as broaden their minds to cope with work responsibilities and family life. It is not gain saying that women had been outstanding in

their schedule of duties in this nation both past and present. We have seen the late Professor Dora Akunyili, the former director of NAFDAC, she had been able to fight against fake drugs and the rebranding of Nigeria image, the past minister of Finance, Dr (Mrs)Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, Professor Alele Williams, former Vice Chancellor of University of Benin, they had contributed immensely to the development of Nigeria. We also have some women in the house of representative and, national assembly presently contributing useful ideas to the effective running of national affairs. The society had benefitted greatly by tapping into their brain. Our dogged minister of finance; Mrs Kemi Adeosun is making waves in the national development currently, most educated women in Nigeria have proved that they are intelligent, trustworthy, and humble and can adequately manage both their domestic and official responsibilities. The understanding and support of men is needed for the situation of women to change in the family in particular and in society in general. There is the need to re-orientate the society about the misconception they have about women. (Igwesi, 2012).

It is equally important to carry out enlighten campaigns among men both in the rural and urban areas on the need for a change in their perception of the women and also gender roles in this ever changing and dynamic society. They need to be educated on the need to support their wives, daughter and sisters in their struggle for self-fulfillment, intellectual, social, economic and political emancipation .Women should be encouraged to participate fully in national development.

The following recommendations were suggested by the researcher:

1. Relevant laws should be promulgated to prevent all forms of discrimination against the Girl-child, also laws should be made against the use of vulgar language on women in public offices.
2. The government should implement a policy to support women emancipation in Nigeria. Women should not be caged, they should be giving opportunity to air their views. Women should be able to contest for the post of president in this nation.
3. There should be a propaganda to engage men to develop their role in achieving gender equality.
4. Government should design; pilot and progressively roll out education program in support of women.

5. There should be consistency in access to work practices across the public sector and improved work life balance.
6. Government should organize a summit in other to empower both male and female aspiring leaders to drive inclusive leadership.
7. Government should research the levels and nature of harassment in the public sector and the different experiences between genders and implement remedial actions.
8. There should be employment opportunities for youth in order to curb them in engaging in youth military.
9. Government should ensure full and equal participation of women and girls in sustainable development; this will reduce poverty to a greater extent.
10. Government should promote decent work and adequate wages for informal workers especially women through labour market regulations and employment policies that guarantee decent employment conditions for all and prevent discrimination against women (world survey, 2014).

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