

Indian Journal of Gender Studies

<http://ijg.sagepub.com/>

Female Education and Nigeria's Development Strategies : Lots of Talk, Little Action?

Risikat Oladoyin S. Dauda

Indian Journal of Gender Studies 2007 14: 461

DOI: 10.1177/097152150701400305

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://ijg.sagepub.com/content/14/3/461>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[Centre for Women's Development Studies](#)

Additional services and information for *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://ijg.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://ijg.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations: <http://ijg.sagepub.com/content/14/3/461.refs.html>

Female Education and Nigeria's Development Strategies: Lots of Talk, Little Action?

RISIKAT OLADOYIN S. DAUDA

This article analyses the various strategies and policies implemented by successive Nigerian governments since the 1985 Nairobi Declaration and the World Declaration on Education for All, and ascertains whether policy initiatives were effective in ensuring access to, and improving the quality of, education for girls and women. This article analyses primary, secondary and university enrolment figures by gender for the period 1986–2004. Findings indicate that gender stereotypes in the educational system, and wide male–female gaps in education continue despite education being a high priority area. The reasons include a weak institutional framework, lack of coordination of policy initiatives and inadequate funding. Engendering education is vital to Nigeria's development programmes.

Introduction

The belief that education is the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women has now been recognised as a fundamental tenet of development strategy. There can be no sustainable development if women remain ignorant, disenfranchised and discriminated against. Improving and widening access to education, especially basic education, is an objective in itself, as well as the conduit to accelerated social and economic development.

Aisikat Oladoyin S. Dauda is at the Department of Economics, University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria. E-mail: rissydauda@yahoo.com.

Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 14:3 (2007): 461–479

SAGE Publications Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore
DOI: 10.1177/097152150701400305

The tasks of wiping out ignorance among women and development through education are considered key to Nigeria's economic development. Thus, numerous strategies, policies and programmes intended to promote female education have been conceived and implemented by successive Nigerian governments since the 1985 Nairobi Declaration and World Declaration on Education for All. Earnest efforts have been made to improve the efficiency and quality of the educational system, and to increase the relevance of education to national needs. Unfortunately, the decline in the quality of education at all levels, gender stereotypes in the educational system and the widening male–female gap in education are at variance with the high priority the sector ostensibly enjoys. What has been the trend of female enrolment in recent years? What are the causative factors or constraints affecting female enrolment rates and participation in educational institutions in Nigeria? What can be done towards achieving universal primary education by 2015?

Theoretical Underpinnings and Literature Review

The theoretical relationship between women's education and economic development could be couched in intrinsic (equity) and instrumental (efficiency) reasons/perspectives. The equity-based approach tries to gain equity for women in the development process. Women are seen as active participants in development. This approach intrinsically recognises women's multiple roles and seeks to meet strategic gender needs through direct state intervention, giving political and economic autonomy to women, and reducing inequality with men (Moser 1993: 62). There has been a realisation that gender equality in terms of access to productive resources, to education and health, and in terms of freedom is a development objective in its own right. Furthermore, there are gains to be had from granting equality to women. If, with equal education, women's contribution to economic development is comparable to men's, then reducing gender imbalances in education will enhance women's capacity to contribute to economic progress. This is the efficiency reason for reducing gender inequality in areas where women are currently deprived.

Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 14:3 (2007): 461–479

Empirical evidence abounds in the literature of the positive effects of female educational advancement on economic growth and development for both advanced and developing countries. This reflects the efficiency with which educated women produce goods and services, thus contributing immensely to higher productivity, reducing child mortality by being exposed to better health care methods through education, imbibing birth control measures that lower fertility and population growth, improving child nutrition, and promoting family well-being generally. These invariably translate into economic growth (Anyanwu et al. 1997; Hill and King 1991; Okojie 1995; Schultz 1994).

There is no doubt that human capital plays a key role in the development process of any nation. Therefore, it is advisable that female education should be integrated into the planning process in order to achieve sustainable growth and development. Facilitating women's education will improve their social and economic status by restoring their confidence and self-worth, and increasing their participation in national decision-making and development. In fact, it has been aptly noted that development becomes endangered if it is not engendered. Nigeria needs to engender its development as a matter of urgency, taking the engendering of education as a starting point, in view of the centrality of the human being to all meaningful programmes of development.

Trends in Primary and Secondary School and University Enrolment in Nigeria: 1986–2004

Methodology

The data for this study were sourced from various issues of *Annual Reports and Statements of Account* published by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN 1990, 1995, 2000, 2004), the *Annual Abstract of Statistics* and *A Statistical Profile of Nigerian Women* published by the Federal Office of Statistics (1997) respectively.

The study assesses changes in the following indicators:

1. ratio of female to male enrolment;

2. the gender gap; and
3. the gender ratio, designated as gender parity index (GPI).

The GPI varies between 0 (maximum gender disparity) and 1 (gender parity). The principle is that the closer the index to the unity, the lower the gender disparity. Generally, disparities in favour of women are indicated by a negative value of the gender gap and by a value exceeding 1 of the gender parity index.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Trends in Female Enrolment in Primary Schools

Table 1 presents the distribution of primary school pupils by gender between 1986 and 2004. The data show that primary school enrolment increased from 2.9 million in 1986 to 11.5 million in 1987. Since 1988 the number of pupils enrolled in primary schools increased progressively to 28.1 million in 2004. Many factors have contributed to such a positive development. They include:

1. awareness created by NGOs and international donor agencies such as the UNDP, UNESCO and USAID;
2. the emphasis in the National Policy on Education on the need to promote primary education; and
3. the institutionalisation of measures to discourage the withdrawal of pupils from school.

In primary education, Nigeria is characterised by the combination of low female enrolment ratios and significant gender gaps. Total female enrolment figures show a fluctuating trend during the study period. It showed a negative growth of 78 per cent in 1986. It increased by 285 per cent in 1987. The economic crisis and extensive austerity and stabilisation/adjustment era that followed the post-oil boom era might be responsible for this trend. Regrettably, in accordance with the spirit of expenditure reduction under structural adjustment programmes, priorities such as health care, primary and secondary education, transport, and housing were neglected with adverse long-term development consequences.

Table 1
Distribution of Primary School Enrolment Pupils by Gender, 1986–2004

| Year | Gender | | | | | | | Gender | Gender |
|-------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|------|--------|--------|
| | Total enrolment 2 | Total male enrolment 3 | 4 Share of male enrolment (%) (M) 5 | Total female enrolment | 7 Share of female enrolment (%) (F) 8 | | | | |
| 1986 | 2,914,870 | 1,646,902 | -77.3 | 56.5 | 1,267,968 | -78.1 | 43.5 | 13.0 | 0.77 |
| 1987 | 11,540,178 | 6,647,143 | 303.6 | 57.6 | 4,893,035 | 285.9 | 42.4 | 15.2 | 0.74 |
| 1988 | 12,690,798 | 6,979,939 | 5.0 | 55.8 | 5,710,859 | 16.7 | 45.0 | 10.0 | 0.81 |
| 1989 | 12,721,087 | 7,225,577 | 3.5 | 56.2 | 5,495,510 | -3.8 | 43.2 | 13.6 | 0.77 |
| 1990 | 13,607,249 | 7,647,274 | 5.8 | 55.9 | 5,959,975 | 8.5 | 43.8 | 12.4 | 0.78 |
| 1991 | 13,776,854 | 7,701,261 | 0.7 | 55.0 | 6,075,593 | 1.9 | 44.1 | 11.8 | 0.80 |
| 1992 | 14,805,937 | 8,143,256 | 5.7 | 55.6 | 6,662,672 | 9.7 | 45.0 | 10.0 | 0.81 |
| 1993 | 15,911,888 | 8,847,010 | 8.6 | 55.6 | 7,064,878 | 6.0 | 44.4 | 11.2 | 0.80 |
| 1994 | 16,831,560 | 9,358,347 | 5.8 | 56.0 | 7,473,213 | 5.8 | 44.4 | 11.2 | 0.79 |
| 1995 | 17,994,620 | 10,076,987 | 7.7 | 56.0 | 7,917,633 | 5.9 | 44.0 | 12.0 | 0.79 |
| 1996 | 19,794,082 | 11,539,950 | 15.5 | 58.3 | 8,254,132 | 4.3 | 41.7 | 16.6 | 0.72 |
| 1997 | 21,161,852 | 11,953,446 | 3.6 | 56.5 | 9,205,406 | 11.5 | 43.5 | 13.0 | 0.77 |
| 1998 | 22,473,886 | 12,315,690 | 3.0 | 54.8 | 10,158,196 | 10.4 | 45.2 | 9.6 | 0.82 |
| 1999 | 23,709,949 | 12,210,624 | -0.9 | 51.5 | 11,499,325 | 13.2 | 48.5 | 3.0 | 0.94 |
| 2000 | 24,895,446 | 12,696,677 | 4.0 | 51.0 | 12,198,769 | 6.1 | 49.0 | 2.0 | 0.96 |
| 2001 | 27,384,991 | 13,418,646 | 5.7 | 49.0 | 13,966,345 | 14.5 | 51.0 | -2.0 | 1.04 |
| 2002 | 29,575,790 | 14,492,137 | 8.0 | 49.0 | 15,083,653 | 8.0 | 51.0 | -2.0 | 1.04 |
| 2003 | 26,292,370 | 12,357,414 | -14.7 | 47.0 | 13,934,956 | -7.6 | 53.0 | -6.0 | 1.13 |
| 2004* | 28,144,967 | 13,228,134 | 7.0 | 47.0 | 14,916,833 | 7.0 | 53.0 | -6.0 | 1.13 |

Note: *Provisional data.

Source: Calculated by the author based on data from CBN (1990, 1995, 2000, 2004); Federal Office of Statistics (*Annual Abstract of Statistics*) (1995, 1997, 2001).

Hence, government policy pronouncements made no appreciable impact on female education. Female primary school enrolment declined from 13.2 per cent in 1999 to 6 per cent in 2000; it increased marginally to 14.5 per cent in 2001 before falling to 7.6 per cent in 2003.

In no year was female enrolment over 45 per cent between 1980 and 1997. It is obvious that girls lagged behind in primary school during this period. However, the percentage of female enrolment showed a marginal improvement between 1999 and 2004. It stood at 48.5 per cent in 1999 and rose slightly to 53 per cent in 2004. From the table, it is interesting to note that the absolute gender gap decreased in 2002 by 2 per cent, and in 2003 and 2004 by 6 per cent. The gender disparity index exceeds 1 in 2003 and 2004, standing at 1.13. This, by implication, shows that equality between male and female enrolment ratios has been reached at the primary school level. It is noteworthy that this period corresponded with the launching of the National Policy on Women, which emphasised free universal basic education for all girls and women.

Trends in Female Enrolment in Secondary Schools

Table 2 shows trends in secondary school student enrolment in Nigeria for the period 1986–2004. Enrolment in secondary schools improved considerably during the study period. Analysis by gender shows that male enrolment was greater than female enrolment. For the entire period male enrolment was never below 52 per cent. However, a marked downward trend of male enrolment, from a growth rate of 5.3 per cent in 1986 to 3.8 per cent in 2003, is visible. Female enrolment improved from 42.1 per cent in 1986 to 48 per cent in 2002, but fell to 43 per cent in 2003 and 2004. The persistent gender gap indicates that the female enrolment ratio in secondary education should increase by 14 per cent to attain gender equality as of the year 2004. The gender parity index as a measure of relative gender disparity indicates that, as of 2004, the female enrolment ratio at the secondary school level was only three quarters (0.75) of the male enrolment ratio.

Table 2
Trends in Secondary School Student Enrolment in Nigeria, 1986–2004

| Year | Gender | | | | | | Gender parity | | |
|-------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|---------------|------|------|
| | Total enrolment 2 | Total male enrolment 3 | 4 Share of male enrolment (%) (M) 5 | Total female enrolment | 7 Share of Female enrolment (%) (F) 8 | Absolute | | | |
| 1986 | 3,094,349 | 1,791,628 | 5.3 | 57.9 | 1,302,721 | 0.7 | 42.1 | 15.8 | 0.73 |
| 1987 | 2,934,349 | 1,698,988 | -5.2 | 57.9 | 1,235,361 | -5.2 | 42.1 | 15.8 | 0.73 |
| 1988 | 2,997,464 | 1,762,509 | 3.7 | 58.8 | 1,234,955 | -0.0 | 41.2 | 17.6 | 0.70 |
| 1989 | 2,723,791 | 1,582,523 | -10.2 | 58.1 | 1,141,268 | -7.6 | 41.9 | 16.2 | 0.72 |
| 1990 | 2,901,993 | 1,659,940 | 4.9 | 57.2 | 1,242,053 | 8.8 | 42.8 | 14.4 | 0.75 |
| 1991 | 3,123,277 | 1,820,870 | 9.7 | 58.3 | 1,302,407 | 4.9 | 41.7 | 16.6 | 0.72 |
| 1992 | 3,600,620 | 1,980,341 | 8.8 | 55.0 | 1,620,279 | 24.4 | 45.0 | 10.0 | 0.82 |
| 1993 | 4,150,917 | 2,245,646 | 13.4 | 54.1 | 1,905,271 | 17.6 | 45.9 | 8.2 | 0.85 |
| 1994 | 4,500,000 | 2,448,000 | 9.0 | 54.4 | 2,052,000 | 7.7 | 45.6 | 8.8 | 0.84 |
| 1995 | 5,084,546 | 2,898,191 | 18.4 | 57.0 | 2,186,355 | 6.5 | 43.0 | 14.0 | 0.75 |
| 1996 | 5,389,619 | 3,276,888 | 13.1 | 60.8 | 2,112,731 | -3.4 | 39.2 | 21.6 | 0.64 |
| 1997 | 5,578,255 | 3,240,966 | -1.1 | 58.1 | 2,337,289 | 10.6 | 41.9 | 16.2 | 0.72 |
| 1998 | 5,795,807 | 3,118,144 | -3.8 | 53.8 | 2,677,663 | 14.6 | 46.2 | 7.6 | 0.86 |
| 1999 | 6,056,618 | 3,331,140 | 6.8 | 55.0 | 2,725,478 | 1.8 | 45.0 | 10.0 | 0.82 |
| 2000 | 6,359,449 | 3,434,102 | 3.1 | 54.0 | 2,925,347 | 7.3 | 46.0 | 8.0 | 0.85 |
| 2001 | 6,995,394 | 3,707,559 | 8.0 | 53.0 | 3,287,835 | 12.4 | 47.0 | 6.0 | 0.89 |
| 2002 | 7,485,072 | 3,892,237 | 5.0 | 52.0 | 3,592,835 | 9.3 | 48.0 | 4.0 | 0.92 |
| 2003 | 7,091,376 | 4,042,084 | 3.8 | 57.0 | 3,049,292 | -15.1 | 43.0 | 14.0 | 0.75 |
| 2004* | 6,745,186 | 3,844,756 | -4.9 | 57.0 | 2,900,430 | -4.9 | 43.0 | 14.0 | 0.75 |

Note: *Provisional data.

Source: Same as Table 1.

Trends in Female Enrolment at the Tertiary Level

Table 3 shows the distribution of enrolled students in Nigerian universities by gender between 1986 and 2004. The figures show a clear dominance of male enrolment for the late 1980s and the 1990s. However, an emerging trend is the continuous decline in male enrolment and the persistent rise in female enrolment in the late 1990s. The female share in total enrolment rose from 24.7 per cent in 1986 to 43 per cent in 2004, while the proportion of males fell from 75.3 per cent in 1986 to 57 per cent in 2004. Thus, the gender gap was reduced from 50.6 per cent in 1986 to 14 per cent in 2004. The gender disparity index stood at 0.75.

Without any doubt, successive Nigerian governments have made giant strides in reducing the gender imbalance in education, especially at the primary school level. However, there is still a big gap between sound government policies and practical implementation, which inhibits female enrolment in Nigerian schools.

An Overview of Past and Existing Development Strategies, Policy Initiatives and Programmes for Female Education in Nigeria

The two-period sequence adopted here is 1960–85 and post-1985, and the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies Declaration.

1960–85

Following independence in October 1960, Nigeria has prepared and executed five national development plans as follows: First National Development Plan 1962–68, Second National Development Plan 1970–74, Third National Development Plan 1975–80, Fourth National Development Plan 1981–85, and First National Rolling Plan 1970–92. The Nigerian government realised very early the importance of human capital development. It embarked on the establishment of schools on a massive scale, and also encouraged people to attend schools by offering free primary education.

Table 3
Distribution of Enrolled Students in Nigerian Universities by Gender, 1986–2004

| Year | Gender | | | | | | | Gender disparity |
|-------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| | Total enrolment | Total male enrolment | 4 Share of male enrolment (%) (M) 5 | Total female enrolment 6 | 7 Share of Female enrolment (%) (F) 8 | Gender | Gender | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | (%) (M) 5 | enrolment 6 | (%) (F) 8 | disparity | disparity | |
| 1986 | 135,783.0 | 102,244.6 | 6.5 | 75.3 | 33,538.4 | 10.7 | 24.7 | 0.33 |
| 1987 | 150,613.0 | 111,001.8 | 8.6 | 73.7 | 39,611.2 | 18.1 | 26.3 | 0.36 |
| 1988 | 219,119.0 | 166,530.4 | 50.0 | 76.0 | 52,588.6 | 32.8 | 24.0 | 0.32 |
| 1989 | 307,702.0 | 215,391.4 | 29.3 | 70.0 | 92,310.6 | 75.5 | 30.0 | 0.43 |
| 1990 | 326,557.0 | 228,589.9 | 6.1 | 70.0 | 97,967.1 | 6.1 | 30.0 | 0.43 |
| 1991 | 368,897.0 | 239,783.0 | 4.9 | 65.0 | 129,113.9 | 31.8 | 35.0 | 0.54 |
| 1992 | 376,122.0 | 252,001.7 | 5.1 | 67.0 | 124,120.3 | -3.9 | 33.0 | 0.49 |
| 1993 | 383,488.0 | 258,087.4 | 2.4 | 67.3 | 125,400.6 | 1.0 | 32.7 | 0.49 |
| 1994 | 236,261.0 | 161,366.3 | -37.5 | 68.3 | 74,894.74 | -40.3 | 31.7 | 0.46 |
| 1995 | 391,035.0 | 256,910.0 | 59.2 | 65.7 | 134,125.0 | 79.1 | 34.3 | 0.52 |
| 1996 | 689,619.0 | 436,528.8 | 70.0 | 63.3 | 253,090.2 | 88.7 | 36.7 | 0.58 |
| 1997 | 862,023.0 | 526,696.1 | 20.7 | 61.1 | 335,326.9 | 32.5 | 38.9 | 0.64 |
| 1998 | 941,329.0 | 545,970.8 | 3.7 | 58.0 | 395,358.2 | 17.9 | 42.0 | 0.72 |
| 1999 | 983,689.0 | 550,865.8 | 0.9 | 56.0 | 432,823.2 | 9.5 | 44.0 | 0.79 |
| 2000 | 1,032,873.0 | 568,080.2 | 3.1 | 55.0 | 464,792.8 | 7.4 | 45.0 | 0.82 |
| 2001 | 1,136,160.0 | 624,888.0 | 10.0 | 55.0 | 511,272.0 | 10. | 45.0 | 0.82 |
| 2002 | 1,249,776.0 | 687,376.8 | 10.0 | 55.0 | 562,399.2 | 10.0 | 45.0 | 0.82 |
| 2003 | 1,274,772.0 | 726,620.0 | 5.7 | 57.0 | 548,152.0 | -2.5 | 43.0 | 0.75 |
| 2004* | 417,281.0 | 237,850 | -67.3 | 57.0 | 179,431 | -67.3 | 43.0 | 0.75 |

Note: *Provisional data.
Source: Same as Table 1.

The Second and Third National Development Plan periods coincided with the oil boom, which provided much needed revenue. The inflows of oil wealth raised public expenditure and empowered the government to intensify the provision of social services. Concerted efforts were made by the government to improve the efficiency and quality of the educational systems, and the little attempts that were made to enhance female enrolment in educational institutions produced modest results (see Ojo 1997). During the Fourth Plan period Nigeria was facing dwindling revenues, and domestic absorption exceeded gross domestic product, thus resulting in heavy borrowing. Following the collapse of oil prices in 1981–82, the level of external reserves became inadequate to meet import demand. The inherent weaknesses in the structure of the Nigerian economy are reflected in the over-dependence on imports for its productive base. In real terms, oil export revenue fell below their pre-oil boom era, resulting in external and fiscal imbalance. Amidst these problems, the government introduced austerity measures in 1982 to combat the worsening economic situation. These measures, however, did not achieve much because they relied on controls and regulations. In 1986, when there was a sharp drop in oil prices, the government was forced to introduce the structural adjustment programme (SAP). During this period, there were no institutional arrangements for the articulation and implementation of programmes to increase women's access to education. Many of the policy initiatives designed to ensure access to adequate social services, including education, during the previous plan period could not be sustained.

Generally speaking, gender issues in development received little attention in national planning in Nigeria until the Declaration of the United Nations Decade for Women. As a result, prior to that, women's reproductive, productive and community management roles, and women's potential were marginalised and left out of the system of national accounting. Although the United Nations Decade aroused awareness about the strategic and practical needs of women, there was little commitment to incorporating these into national and sectoral policies until the mid-1980s (Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs 2001).

After 1985

Much importance has been attached to female education in Nigeria since the Declaration of the UN Development Decade for Women (1976–85), the 1985 Nairobi Declaration, and the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, in the year 2000, to the extent that the government recognises that women's education is a vital element in achieving universal basic education. Consequently, since 1985, several policy measures have been put in place to achieve this goal. A summary of major policy initiatives and programmes that the federal government of Nigeria has put in place since then is presented in Table 4, the overall aim being to provide all women equal educational opportunities, irrespective of age, residence, creed or social status. The period between 2001 and 2004, however, left an indelible mark on the history of gender mainstreaming in Nigeria. For the purpose of engendering development, the National Policy on Women was proclaimed in 2001 to empower women through enhanced strategic human resources development. The major objective of this policy in the area of education includes: provision of compulsory and free primary and secondary education for all children and as a right for all citizens; enforcement of legal penalties for withdrawal of girls from schools for marriage; encouragement of female students to enroll in science, technology and mathematics (STM) courses, especially at the secondary school level; provision of education and relevant training for girls and women with special needs: the gifted and handicapped, nomadic women in *purdah*, riverine and rural areas, dropouts, widows, single parents, market women and career women (Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs 2001).

The most recent policy that seeks to provide the base for enhancing gender equality in the area of education is the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).¹ The strategy is aimed at consolidating the gains of democracy, unlocking Nigeria's dormant potential, and providing the foundation for the sustained development of the country. The thrust of NEEDS with respect to women is full integration through enhancing their capacity to participate in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the country.

Table 4
Major Government Policy Initiatives and Programmes for Women's Education in Nigeria between 1986 and 2004

| <i>Policy initiatives and programmes</i> | <i>Year established</i> | <i>Nature of invention</i> |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| Blueprint on Women's Education | 1986 | To promote women education by putting in place public enlightenment to show the significance of equal educational opportunities for men and women; expanding educational opportunities for women, discourage withdrawal of female pupils and students from school; to provide functional education for all girls and women through skill acquisition, sewing, cooking, baking, tie and dyeing, typing, knitting, etc; enhancing the consciousness of girls and women to the need for developing a positive self-image. |
| Nomadic Education Programme | 1986 | Designed to make primary education available to nomadic children without endangering the sustainability of pastoralism—a very prominent occupation among the folks in ethnic group. |
| National Commission for Mass Literacy and Non-Formal Education | 1991 | Aimed at eradicating illiteracy by encouraging parents to send their children to school. In addition, encourage the establishment of women functional crafts literacy centres that focus on domestic science, home economics and crafts. Women are targeted in the programmes. |
| Family Support Basic Education Programme | 1994 | To encourage families in rural areas embrace girl child education as a means of promoting child welfare and youth development. |

| | | |
|--|------|--|
| Universal Basic Education | 1999 | To overcome geographical and gender disparities by ensuring the access of all children to primary and junior secondary school education. |
| National Policy on Women | 2001 | A carefully planned and comprehensive approach that intends to locate schools close to communities to reduce geographical distance; ensure the training and retraining of teachers; provide encouragement and incentives for education of girls/women in science, mathematics and technology; provide educational support services for girls' education through advocacy and social mobilisation; encourage community participation to develop the interest of communities in education. |
| National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) | 2004 | To fully integrate women through enhancing their capacity to participate in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the country. |

Sources: Igube (2001); Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs (2001); National Planning Commission (2004); UNDP (2001).

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the government recognises the need to increase girls' and women's participation in education irrespective of their location and circumstances. At this juncture, the following questions arise: To what extent have the numerous strategies, policies and programmes embarked upon by successive Nigerian governments to promote female education really fulfilled the goal of ensuring access to and improving the quality of education for girls and women? How were they implemented? Why have the results been so varied and often lacking?

Policy Administration, Implementation and Evaluation

Development policy initiatives and strategies have important roles to play in the bid to enhance gender equity in education in any economy. For a development strategy to have a desirable effect, it must be seen as inextricably linked with the identification of needs, priorities and constraints, with the creation of action plans and implementation of these plans. Factors that may affect effective implementation could include the political setting, time frame, inter-organisational politics and implementation structure.

For the purpose of assessment and evaluation, it may be useful to select a few of the past and existing policy measures. Here, the following programmes are considered: the Blueprint on Women's Education, the Family Support Basic Education Programme, the Universal Basic Education Programme, the National Policy on Women and NEEDS.

If we look at the scorecard of the Blueprint on Women's Education, it will be observed that there were high hopes for encouraging gender-sensitive development in the area of education. The Blueprint achieved modest success. It reawakened women's consciousness and re-evaluated their self-concept to imbibe the culture of empowerment in all its ramifications. The Blueprint was able to document and expose socio-cultural, economic and religious factors impeding female education.

The Family Support Basic Education Programme also recorded several remarkable achievements, such as the establishment of many nursery and primary schools, construction of public toilets

and the setting up of several vocational schools. However, many of these projects were not properly executed and could not be sustained, and the poor in several communities did not actually benefit from these projects while they lasted (Ogwumike 2003).

The Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE) also recorded some success. The evidence in Table 1 shows that girls actually benefited from the programmes at the primary school level, but failed to produce the desired results at the junior secondary school level. The UBE, which would have helped restore the confidence of parents in the educational system, has been facing problems. According to Obikaonu (2002: 113), inadequate preparation, lack of funds, disputes among the three tiers of government over the issue of control of the federal government's contribution and weak management problems hampered the proper implementation of the initiatives.

The National Policy on Women paved the way for the greater involvement of women in politics, but achievements in the educational sector have been slow and uneven between 2001 and 2004 (Tables 1–3). The main objectives of the National Policy on Women in the area of education were not achieved. The failure in implementation may be once again traced to a weak institutional framework, lack of coordination of policy initiatives and inadequate funds, etc.

There is firm evidence that, overall, the intervention programmes have over time led to increased access of girls and women to formal education in Nigeria. The variations in the female enrolment ratio and gender gaps between 1986 and 2004 are quite clear. Improvement in female enrolment in Nigerian universities is larger than male enrolment, and there has been a decline in the gender gap altogether. Though much still needs to be done to achieve equality, the Nigerian government has tried to match words with actions in the bid to enhance female education. The present democratic government has already taken steps to design NEEDS in order to 'unlock Nigeria's dormant potentials, and provide the base for the sustained development of the country' (National Planning Commission 2004). NEEDS is based on the lessons taught by past failed plans, articulates a clear national purpose or

vision, and contains a realistic appraisal of what is feasible within the medium to long term. It is an action plan that is now the basis of budgeting.

In comparison with some of the earlier plans, NEEDS has several distinguishing features. It is different in three key areas: the participatory process;² scope and coordination; and content. This is the first plan in Nigeria to benefit from a nationwide participatory process in which all Nigerians and stakeholders are given a chance to contribute to a plan that affects their lives. It is, however, difficult to assess the achievement of NEEDS in the area of female education since its inception in March 2004 due to paucity of data.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Greater emphasis should be placed on the empowerment and improvement of the quality of lives of Nigerian women through both formal and non-formal education in order to facilitate their full integration into every aspect of the Nigerian economy. Measures that could help are discussed.

- 1. Compulsory free education:** Universal, free and compulsory primary and secondary education should be ensured, while grants and scholarships should be given to exceptionally brilliant girls in all Nigerian educational institutions.
- 2. Public enlightenment:** There is a need to organise enlightenment campaigns to educate Nigerian citizens, especially, poor, illiterate women and rural dwellers, on the benefits of female education.
- 3. Stakeholders' participation:** Development policy and programmes should be constantly reviewed to incorporate women's views into the formulation of strategies aimed at facilitating and increasing women's access to education. These strategies should be implemented and monitored mostly by women.
- 4. Special budgetary allocation to female education:** Special funds must be allocated and due emphasis placed on education that would help individuals to acquire sufficient skills that would foster self employment initiatives.

5. Review of educational policies: Periodic review of existing educational policies through effective evaluation, monitoring and implementation strategies at all levels of educational institutions must be undertaken.

6. Provision of a conducive learning environment: Lack of infrastructural facilities is among the problems most known to discourage learners and also contribute to dropout rates. An enabling learning environment would encourage girls and women to persevere in their educational programmes.

7. Availability of gender-disaggregated data and information: For effective planning and implementation of strategies, the provision of data disaggregated by gender, states, age groups and educational attainment levels is important. On the basis of such data, a variety of programmes could be devised for different categories of girls and women.

The basic thrust of NEEDS is towards women's empowerment in Nigeria, particularly in the area of education. Effective implementation of the various policy measures outlined here will contribute to a narrowing of the educational gender gap at all levels of the educational system and advance the objectives of NEEDS.

Notes

1. It is a participatory process whereby Nigerians can contribute to this strategy. Major stakeholders had a chance to contribute to the NEEDS design. The president and his cabinet fully endorsed the programme; the National Assembly and the National Economic Council, which comprise all the 36 governors of the states, have also endorsed NEEDS. The Drafting Committee of NEEDS reflects the wide ownership and participatory nature of the exercise. The 35-member committee comprises ministers, representatives of ministries and agencies, president of the Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria, president of the Nigerian Labour Congress, chairman of the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations, the Nigerian Economic Summit Group, etc.
2. NEEDS is not just a plan, it defines a process of development anchored in a clear vision, sound values and enduring principles. The vision underscores the necessity and urgency to build a modern Nigeria that maximises the potential of every citizen. NEEDS rests on four key strategies: reforming the way government works and its institutions, expanding the private sector, implementing a social charter for the people and reorienting the people with

enduring African values. The goals of NEEDS are wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value reorientation.

NEEDS hopes to lay a solid foundation for a national self-recovery and strong values based upon enterprise, competition and efficiency at all levels, equity and care for the weak and vulnerable, moral rectitude, respect for traditional values, and extolling of African culture, a value system for public service that makes efficient and effective service delivery to the citizens, and discipline at all levels of leadership.

References

- Anyanwu, J.C., A. Oyefusi, H. Oaikhanan and F.A. Dimowo. 1997. *The Structure of the Nigerian Economy (1960–1997)*. Onitsha: Joannee Educational Publishers Ltd.
- Central Bank of Nigeria. 1990. *Annual Report and Statement of Account*. Abuja: Central Bank of Nigeria.
- . 1995. *Annual Report and Statement of Account*. Abuja: Central Bank of Nigeria.
- . 2000. *Annual Report and Statement of Account*. Abuja: Central Bank of Nigeria.
- . 2004. *Annual Report and Statement of Account*. Abuja: Central Bank of Nigeria.
- Federal Government of Nigeria. 1970. *Second National Development Plan (1970–74)*. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Economic Development.
- . 1975. *Third National Development Plan (1975–80)*. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Economic Development.
- . 1980. *Fourth National Development Plan (1981–85)*. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Economic Development.
- Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs 2001. *National Policy on Women*. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Federal Office of Statistics. 1995. *Annual Abstract of Statistics*. Abuja: Federal Office of Statistics.
- . 1997. *Annual Abstract of Statistics*. Abuja: Federal Office of Statistics.
- . 2001. *Annual Abstract of Statistics*. Abuja: Federal Office of Statistics.
- . 1997. *A Statistical Profile of Nigerian Women*. Federal Office of Statistics: Abuja. Lagos: Federal Office of Statistics.
- Hill, M.A. and E.M. King. 1991. 'Women Education in Third World: An Overview', in E.M. King and M.A. Hill (eds.), *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits and Policy*, Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Igube, R.B. 2001. 'Introduction to Gender and Policy'. Paper presented at the Gender Institute Workshop, Ogun State River Basin Authority, Abeokuta, 20 May–3 June.
- Moser, C.O.N. 1993. *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training*. London: Routledge.
- National Planning Commission. 2004. *Nigeria: National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)*. Abuja: National Planning Commission.

- Obikaonu, F.C. 2002. 'The Recent Human Capital Formation and Economic Development Programmes in Nigeria: Did Government Match Its Words with Actions?' Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Nigerian Economic Society, Ibadan, August 2002.
- Ogwumike, F. 2003. 'An Appraisal of Poverty Reduction Strategies in Nigeria', *Central Bank of Nigeria Economic and Financial Review*, 39(4): 45–72.
- Ojo, F. 1997. *Human Resource Management: Theory and Practice*. Lagos: Allied Emant.
- Okojie, C.E.E. 1995. 'Human Capital Formation for Productivity Growth in Nigeria', *Nigerian Economics and Financial Review*, 19(2): 44–57.
- Schultz, T.P. 1994. 'Human Capital and Economic Development'. Centre Discussion Paper No 711, Economic Growth Centre, Yale University, New Haven.
- UNDP. 2001. *Nigeria: Common Country Assessment*. Lagos: UNDP.

Further Reading

- Federal Government of Nigeria. 1988. *Recurrent and Capital Budget Estimates of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1970–1988*. Lagos: Federal Office of Statistics.
- World Bank. 1990. *World Development Report, 1990*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- . 2001a. *Financing Education for All by 2015: Simulation for 33 African Countries*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- . 2001b. 'A Chance to Learn: Knowledge and Finance for Education in Sub-Saharan Africa'. http://wdr.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSconventserver/WDSP/IB/2001/04/24/000094946_01032905304/Rendered/PDF/multiOpage.pdf, accessed May 2005.