Chapter 7

Gender Disparities in Primary and Secondary School Enrollment and Attainment in Nigeria:
Implications for Gender Equity, Social Justice, and National Development

James Etim

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4352-7331
Winston-Salem State University, USA

ABSTRACT

The education of girls and women is necessary to national development. This chapter, divided into four parts, set out to study if there had been progress in the area of girl's education. Section 1 provides analyses of data from the National Bureau of Statistics, the Universal Basic Education Commission, and other Federal Government of Nigeria agencies on gender differences in education from 2010-2016. In Section 2, data is compared for selected years from 1990-2016 to determine if there are improving trends for girls in the areas of enrollment and completion rates. Section 3 explored some of the causes for the disparities. Section 4 discussed federal government input in the area of improving girls education in Nigeria and how education of women is a social justice issue and necessary for national development. The study showed that while there were improving trends, problems still remained. Recommendations were made on how to improve the situation. For without gender equality, women will continue to be left out of the national development process.

INTRODUCTION

Article 28 and Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the rights of children globally in the area of education. Article 28 states that " State Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity". To achieve this, Article 28 continues that state parties should make primary education free and compulsory, develop different forms of secondary education and make them available and accessible to each child. Moreover, state parties should take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates. Article 29 advocates for state parties to agree that the education of the child shall be directed to the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes.

Education is a vehicle for social change. It has been linked to development, whether personal, social, economic or national development. According to Ozturk (2001), improved education leads " to greater income equality, which, in turn, is likely to favor higher rates of growth. As education becomes more broadly based, low-income people are better able to seek out economic opportunities" (p.42). Education is an important tool for reducing poverty and all kinds of inequities, including gender inequity. Quality education becomes a gateway to ensuring social justice and allowing all individuals to engage in productive work and have a voice in the society they live. Writing on the importance of girls and women education, UNESCO (2012, p.38) declared:

The possibility of social mobility out of poverty must become a reality for larger proportions of national populations, particularly for girls and women. Failure to ensure girls' access to secondary schooling increases the chances of transmitting poverty and illiteracy from generation to generation. A quality education, including in the areas of science and technology, can help ensure that girls and women can access decent jobs and make a real contribution to sustainable development in their communities.

According to the World Bank (2017), " Girls' education is a strategic development priority. Better educated women tend to be healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn higher incomes, have fewer children, marry at a later age…". These factors help lift the individual, household and nations out of poverty. In another World Bank sponsored report (Wodan et al 2018), five benefits were posited for girls and women education. Four of the five are-

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