

## AN EVALUATION OF NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION AND GENDER ACCESS

MUHAMMAD ABUBAKAR  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
IBRAHIM BADAMASIBABANGIDAUNIVERSITY, LAPAI  
[Muhammad.abubakar077@gmail.com](mailto:Muhammad.abubakar077@gmail.com)

### Abstract

Nigeria's first effort towards achieving education for all was launched in 1976 Universal Primary Education (UPE) was the biggest educational problem in Africa which sees education as an instrument for national development. This is reflected in the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1977, 1998, 2004, 2005 and 2013 editions. The intent of the government in the Universal Primary Education and reforms agendas is to make education compulsory and free for all children of primary age school with view to enhancing the efficiency and productivity of its citizen especially girls child education. This paper adopts secondary methods of data collection as its methodology. This paper also argues that National Educational policy is yet to make sense especially among the contending political elites who siphoned the state resources that was meant for the development of educational sector. Also, all the efforts made to make the UPE Scheme reality has failed due to irrational, corrupt leaders neglecting their duties such as traditional and religious leaders who are not concern about the good of their people but rather promoting and protecting selfish interests. The paper recommends that government at all levels should effect 26% of their budget allocation to educational sector as recommended by UNESCO help to revitalize UPE.

**Key words: National policy and Gender education**

### Introduction

Nigeria's educational system has witnessed a catalogue of changes in policies and programmes, some of the changes have appeared to a number of people desirable while some continues to wonder why some of the other changes were initiated. The educational for all (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) were educational policies introduced in Nigeria in 1976 and 2000 respectively, with the aim of ensuring that all children, particularly girl child in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. Education is by law compulsory and free, for all children of school age in Nigeria not concern of gender difference (Ayeni, 2000). There is therefore, a high level of uncertainties, which is affecting the meaningful planning in Nigeria's educational system. This can be very dangerous particularly as the future of Nigeria and Nigerians will be determined by the level of education (World Bank, 1999).

Nigeria's National Policy on Educational (1981), defined education based on the Vocational-technical level, that education is that aspect that of learned that gives recipient opportunity to acquired practical skills as well as some scientific knowledge. According to the World Bank (1999), "Successful entails more than investigating in physical, capital, or closing the gap in capital. It is also entails acquiring and using knowledge as well as closing the gaps in knowledge." Thus, to successful confront the challenges of development; a developing country must undertake major tasks: Acquired and adopt global knowledge

and create knowledge locally; Invest in human capital development to increase the ability to absorb and use knowledge; Invest in technologies to facilities both acquisition and absorption of knowledge.

In a similar vein, Fafunwa (1979), defined education as “the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or adult develops the abilities attitudes and other forms behavior which are of knowledge either to ensure social control or to guarantee national direction or both”.The National objectives of Nigeria are enriched in the various national policies and particularly the National Policy on Education (2013) section one:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A United strong and self-reliant nation
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens

Educational policies have an important role to play in the progress of any nation that aspired towards development. This is relevant because nations of the world today realized the necessity of education for the development of people especially women (Imogie, 2002). The prosperity of a nation depends not on the abundance of its revenue nor her numeric strength but number of its cultivated citizens and most importantly women education.

#### **Statement of research problem**

Nigeria as an independent Nation is a signatory to several global commitments on education. There was the 1900 Jometein Declaration on Education for All (EFA) and New Delhi Declaration by nine developing nation (E-9) with high population that accounted for 72% of world illiterate population that had over half of it being female. The Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) also planned to provide Universal Primary Education (UPE). There is also National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the seven point Agenda of President Late President Umaru Musa Yaradua and the current vision 20:2020 all are roadmap for educational sector aim at using the country's resources to bring about rapid development of the citizenry. Most of these educational policies did not achieve the desirable results as a result less attention that was given to them by the government and the policy makers.

#### **Review of Literature**

The National Policy on Education (2013) asserted that education is a process that helps to develop a man or woman to enable him or her function effectively in the society. In the words of Adewale (1998) every child is born with potential that used to be developed. He further stressed that education is the only process of developing the potentials for the child's development. Hegel (1986) viewed education as progressive perfection of humanity from a simple, uncultivated, primitive state of mind through the hard discipline of labour and toll to the consciousness and exercise of its freedom.

Masha (2006) attributed high level of illiteracy to culture, religious, economic, early marriage and unfavourable attitudes expressed towards the education of females in Nigeria. The reality is that many parents still proffer to invest in the education of their male children alone rather than the two sexes (male and female). The 2016 statistical data cited by UNICEF (2017) revealed that out of total number of about 500,000 students that were admitted in all tertiary institution in Nigeria, female are just 175,000 which is 34%.In the opinion of Abubakar (2010) high cost of education coupled with the economic status of the parents are serious impediments to girl's child education in Nigeria. The money obtained from hawking are used for marriage expenditure rather than sponsoring her school. This is considered as economic wastage of resources. As the girls child education mostly terminates with marriage or ends in kitchen. However, Lantana ( 2002) contend that psychology of the girl - child which include poor self- concept, negative self- values and low esteem were the major factors militating against female education in Nigeria.

The first educational policy date back 1925 during the colonial era. This policy was formulated for Africa and touched on primary, secondary and adult education with some modifications in the policy in 1935, and 1945 there was little additions in the educational policy with emphasis on adult education. The colonial educational policy centered on the production of literate nationals who were required to occupy positions which would strengthen the colonial administration. Most of the literate national served as clerks, interpreters and forest guards and that implied that professional and entrepreneurial skills were not given to them (Akinyemi, 1987). The educational sector is guided by the National Policy on Education and several coordinating mechanism have been put in place to ensure that the highest standards are maintained in curriculum, infrastructure and man power development. Successive governments have tried to address the educational development through some educational-related programmes and policies which include:

**The 6-3-3-4 System** Until the 1976, the structure of Nigeria education system was six years of primary for children of ages 6 - 11 years, 5 - 7 years post-primary school (secondary, teachers training and sixth form) and 4 - 6 years of tertiary Education (College of Education, Polytechnics, Colleges of Technology and University Education). The structure that emanated as from 1976 can be classified thus, the pre-primary of kindergarten education, which lasts from 2 to 3 years, the post primary education which is for 6 years period the post primary which is for 6 years but divided into two halves (namely of 3 years junior secondary and 3 years of senior secondary school) and the tertiary education level which comprises of the Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and the University (Okoruma, 2000).

**Education For all:** This policy dates back to the introduction of Universal Education in the 1950s in two of the then three regions (northern, western and eastern parts) of the country and its introduction at the national level in 1976. Thus, by joining other countries and agencies, Nigeria adopted in March, 1990 the World Declaration of Education for all. Thus, Nigeria was merely reaffirming that which she believed, and had already taken steps towards achieving. The National Policy on Education, (1977, revised 1981, and 1998) attested to Nigeria's commitment to Educational for all, in particular, basic education for all. The policy laid emphasis on Universal, functional and qualitative education. The guiding principles of the Education for all programme in Nigeria is the equipping of every citizen with such knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as will enable him/her derive maximum benefits from his/her membership of society, lead a fulfilling life and contribute his/her own quote towards the development and welfare of the community. For Nigeria therefore, Basic Education comprises both the range of formal schooling as well as a wide variety of non-formal educational activities offered to meet the learning needs of groups of people of all ages. Thus, basic education refers to early childhood and pre-primary education, primary education, the first three years of secondary education and basic and functional literacy for out of school children, youth and adults, as well as a nomadic education for school age children of nomads and migrant fisherman (Charles, 2007).

**The Universal Basic Education:** In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserted that everyone has the right to education. Over 60 years later, it became clear that many people are still being denied this basic human right. Indeed, the 1980s saw more backward than forward movement in most countries of the world. It was at the point a World Conference on Education for all was held in Jomtien, Thailand, for the purpose of forging a global consensus and commitment to provide basic education for all. Universal Basic Education grew out of the Conference (Dike, 2000).

President Olusegun Obasanjo formally launched the UBE in Nigeria on 30th September, 1999. The programme was intended to be universal, free, and compulsory. Since the introduction of western education in 1842 (Eya, 2001) asserted that regions, states, and federal governments in Nigeria have shown a keen interest in education. This can be seen in the introduction on the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the western region of 17th January, 1955, its introduction in the eastern region in February, 1957, and in Lagos (then Federal Territory) in January, 1957. Other developments include the publication of a National Policy on Education in 1977, launching of Universal Free Primary Education on 6th September, 1976, and the subsequent launch of UBE in 1999. The goal of these programmes are providing functional, universal, and quality education for all Nigerians irrespective of age, sex, race,

religion, occupation, or location. According to Aluede (2006), the UPE scheme has failed perhaps because the FGN underestimated the number of pupils that would want to benefit from such a programme, could not also determine the number of teachers, school buildings and the amount of money that would be required to make the programme functional. As a result, the programme was abandoned. Mango (2011) attributed this failure to who he described as narrow minded, who were most concerned about the future of their family alone. They have criminalized the thinking and mentality of Nigerians culminating in the failure of UPE without positive impact on Nigerians. Basic educational policies are only a deceiving factor for government themselves with UPE that is useless it is as corrupt as panic stricken Nigeria politicians.

In 2002, Nigeria's literacy rate at Babalola (2000) put it, was 52%. In 1998, only 40% of all heads of households in Nigeria had any education at all, 21% had only primary education, 14% up to secondary education, while only 5% had post-primary education (UNDP, 1998). Data from the Federal Ministry of Education, Education Statistics (1996) showed that only 14.1 million out of 21 million school age children enrolled in primary school. UBE was born from these starting statistics, to promote education among all citizens. Efforts by governments to promote education and literacy in Nigeria have failed because there was no provision for school libraries in the implementation of these programmes. The successful implementation of the UBE has serious implications for school libraries. It indicates an expanded vision for school libraries to include not only libraries in primary and secondary schools, but also libraries for early childhood education (in homes, communities, daycares centers and nursery schools), in skills centers for out-of-school youth, in adult education centers and in schools for nomadic peoples, UBE is broader than UPE, which focused only on providing educational opportunities to primary school age children. UBE stresses the inclusion of girls and women and a number of underserved groups; the poor, street children, rural and remote populations, nomads, migrant's workers, indigenous peoples, minorities, refugees, and the disabled. The formal educational system is only one of six components included in basic education in the implementation guidelines of the Federal Government. Others relate to early childhood, literacy and life skills for adults, nomadic population, and non-formal education or apprenticeship training for youth outside the formal education system (UBEC 2000).

The major objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) include the acquisition of the basic tools of learning and development of life skills and work aptitude. Available evidence suggests that early childhood education has a positive influence on educational development of children in later life and some writers on early childhood education have asserted that investing in it can yield high returns (Barnett, 2006; Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003). This assertion indicates, however, that it is not any type of educational experience offered anywhere by any type of teacher that can have such an effect on children. Ware (1994), opined that, Educational policies have an important role to play in the progress of any nation that aspired towards development. A conflict which deserves attention seems to arise in the promotion of education for development purpose vis-a-vis population control activities as regards finance. This is because Nigeria's desire to improve the educational sector has increased. Education is necessary for any economy to grow and develop via the amelioration of illiteracy rate by developing the knowledge, skill or character of the people. According to Harbison (1973), a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will have a retarded progress. Corruption is one of the problems affecting the Nigerian Educational system. The issue of corruption in education became more prominent in 2005 when President Olusegun Obasanjo made a broadcast to the nation alleging that some members of National Assembly demanded and collected # 55 million from Professor Fabian Osuji (the former minister of Education). The senate Presidents and five other senators were involved in the deal. According to President Olusegun Obasanjo the purpose of the bribe was to enable the National Assembly to approve an enhanced budget for the ministry of Education (Obasanjo, 2015).

#### **Theoretical frame work**

The paper adopts feminist theory and the term feminism is a theory about women exercising the same rights and opportunities as men and this issue of equal opportunities brought about the movement of

feminism. There are several versions of feminism such as radical, marxist, liberation and postmodern feminism, but most share a number of characteristic in common. This paper uses Feminist theory explain that society or a nation can only developed if women are given equal opportunities with their male counterpart. Marxist theory sees society been divided into men and women. To Marxist society is characterized with exploitation of women in term of education, powers and social life ( Haralambos, 2004).

#### **Methodology**

The paper adopted secondary sources of data collection from text books, journals, Newspapers and internet materials. Duffy (2000) stated that the document analysis approach is dynamic in nature because it can be used as the central or exclusive method of research. Hakim (2000) viewed document analysis as examining information that came into existence during a particular period of study.

#### **Gender Access to Primary Education in Nigeria**

Gender access is a complex issue due to the uneven development and “wide divergence” in education and training generally across the community. Gender Education needs to be a core element in school programmes and teacher need to be educated on how to teach gender issues. The central idea of the universal primary education is men and women, boys and girls and male and female need to have equal opportunities to access education. The Education for all and Goal 5 of Millennium Development Goals which were ratified by the world leader's summit in September, 2000 in the Millennium Declaration Goal 2 and 3 focus on the achievement on the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and promoting gender equality and women empowerment in both primary and secondary schools with an emphasis on ensuring girls equal access to achievement in basic education of good quality (Etim, 2014). He further stressed that in Nigeria, though policies and laws have been enacted to encourage women education there is still problems and challenges in the area of women education. Girl child interest in education especially in some developing countries, particularly in Nigeria. Gender access especially Girls child education is a human right. Furthermore, According to Medium Term Sector Strategy (MTSS), 2013, Education for All and Goal 5 cries out for “Eliminating Gender Disparities through the women education and girls by 2005 and above, reduction of gender disparity in enrollment by 10% to .09% in all education programme. By 2015 and above, 95% of girls of primary school age will be enrolled in primary school or its equivalent and 80% of all girls and women will have access to relevant basic education with a special focus on hawkers, housekeepers and groups of hard to reach women and girls (Okoroma, 2015).

Charles and Enemuoh 2007 sees Education reform or policy across the globe as a tool for accessing and achieving educational policies with a view to understand problems, what has broken and followed by a vision of achievable outcome, strategy and proper implementation of such policy. It has the objectives of improving quality education and reducing class inequalities. According to Denga 2000 cited in Robert 2014 observed that universal access to female education has been the prime target for Nigeria Educational objective Later, in the middle of the 1970's when the universal primary education (UPE) scheme was confused. This led to rise of enrolment from 6.2 million in the 1975/1976 session to 14.8 million in 1992. This pointed out increase in admitted students without proper planning created a lot of obstacles in programme.

Government at all levels needs to improve standard and quality primary education by providing the reasonable minimum wage for its workers especially primary schools teachers as per a civil servant or citizen of this giant of Africa. Nigerian citizens must buy water for domestic and offices uses and must take their children to private school and pay school fees, the same thing all other ministries whereas state governors provides unconstitutional free education, medical treatment for themselves, families and their relatives but at the end of 4 years tenure of Governors are collect not less N200 million naira as gratuity for governor their role is not even important that of teachers. Therefore, basic education in Nigeria is very difficult to be standard and quality in our country because narrow minded, irrationality of the Nigeria leaders especially politician selfish interest had put nation's into danger.

### Assessment of Female Primary Enrolment in Nigeria

Women education over the years remained topical issue particularly bridging the gap between the gender sexes. The agitation for the provision of equal treatment, educational opportunity, equal economic and political participation in governance and academic remained a subject of interest for public and intellectual discussion. The structure favors male in all social life (Mango, 2008). For the purpose of illustrating this structural imbalance, the table below shows the number of female enrolment students in primary schools across 36 states including FCT Abuja. Nigerian's indicates total admitted pupils during 2013/2014 session enrolled of all gender are 22,125,417 and 23,476,939 students respectively (UBEC).

**TABLE 1: FEMALE ENROLMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA**

S/NO	STATES	NO OF SCHOOLS 2013/2014	2013/2014 FEMALES ENROLLED	NO OF SCHOOLS 2014/2015	2014/2015 FEMALE ENROLLED	DIFFERENCE ENROLLED	PERCENTAGE (%) EACH STATE
1.	Abia	864	118,235	864	114,775	-3,460	-2.93
2.	Adamawa	1,612	227,535	1,612	238,578	11,043	4.85
3.	Akwa-Ibom	1,153	429,223	1,153	412,454	-16,769	-3.91
4.	Anambra	1,041	342,071	1,041	362,864	20,793	6.08
5.	Bauchi	2,413	313,137	2,413	303,935	-9,202	-2.94
6.	Bayelsa	537	201,494	537	241,793	40,299	20.00
7.	Benue	2,665	318,007	2,665	288,336	-29,671	-9.33
8.	Borno	1,179	268,187	1,179	267,925	-262	-0.10
9.	Cross-River	1,026	106,121	1,026	114,707	8,586	8.09
10.	Delta	1,291	172,883	1,291	177,083	4,200	2.43
11.	Ebonyi	1,060	173,978	1,060	169,334	-4,644	-2.67
12.	Edo	1,011	155,518	1,011	155,518	0	0.00
13.	Ekiti	775	61,865	775	67,881	6,016	9.72
14.	Enugu	1,204	120,028	1,221	120,536	508	0.42
15.	Gombe	1,614	188,265	1,614	183,345	-4,920	-2.61
16.	Imo	1,269	409,493	1,269	409,493	0	0.00
17.	Jigawa	2,010	213,284	1,918	232,595	19,311	9.05
18.	Kaduna	3,879	482,639	4,026	482,639	0	0.00
19.	Kano	5,335	940,585	5,335	940,585	0	0.00
20.	Katsina	2,175	679,894	2,175	618,145	-61,749	-9.08
21.	Kebbi	1,635	161,610	1,635	168,856	7,246	4.48
22.	Kogi	2,009	535,068	2,009	535,068	0	0.00
23.	Kwara	1,228	170,052	1,228	175,868	5,816	3.42
24.	Lagos	1,001	216,654	1,001	200,130	-16,524	-7.63
25.	Nassarawa	1,290	136,128	1,290	135,997	-131	-0.10
26.	Niger	2,881	294,298	2,881	298,034	3,736	1.27
27.	Ogun	1,449	205,465	1,449	207,363	1,898	0.92
28.	Ondo	1,202	478,886	1,202	624,444	145,558	30.40
29.	Osun	1,379	421,129	1,379	343,612	-77,517	-18.41
30.	Oyo	1,507	460,768	1,529	460,768	0	0.00
31.	Plateau	2,020	314,681	2,379	667,948	353,267	112.26
32.	Rivers	894	136,762	905	135,914	-848	-0.62
33.	Sokoto	1,890	273,050	1,890	291,455	18,405	6.74
34.	Taraba	1,540	216,259	1,540	222,856	6,597	3.05
35.	Yobe	1,041	300,959	1,041	348,068	47,109	15.65
36.	Zamfara	1,371	83,375	1,314	91,188	7,813	9.37
37.	FCT Abuja	525	92,501	525	95,366	2,865	3.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>58,975</b>	<b>10,420,087</b>	<b>59,382</b>	<b>10,905,456</b>		

Source: Universal Basic Education Commission 2013 /2014 & 2014/2015

Table 1 shows that there is increase of primary enrolment in some states while many states decrease in number of female enrolled in Nigeria as at 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 session in Plateau state had highest increase enrolment in 2011/2012 session which is the highest enrolled are 353,267 (112.26%) across the nation located in a North central geo political zone while Benue state there is decrease enrolled as fall down between 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 of 29,671 (-9.33%). This means that 2013/2014 have had high than that of 2014/2015 as in Benue state concern. The south west according to UBEC is the second highest enrolment of female pupils/students which is Ondo State have 145,558 (30.40%) enrolled while Osun State have lowest in that geo political zone decrease to -77,517 (-18.41%). North East part of the country Yobe State enrolled increase up to 47,109 (15.65%) and Bauchi decrease up to -9,202 (-2.94%), the parameter of the female enrolment gender in South South Bayelsa State basic primary pupils enrolment rise up between 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 session

are 40299 (20%) and AkwaIbowState fall down to -16,769 (-3.91). AnambraStatehave had increase to 20793 (6.08%) and EbonyiState fall to -4644 9 (-2.67%).

Lastly, in the Northern west Jigawa has 19,311 (9.05%) while Katsina state decrease - 61749 (-9.08%) and also FCT Abuja enrolled female increase to 2865 (3.10%) and all the enrolment is from primary 1 to primary 6 classes in public schools only. The Teacher's Ratio: total number of teacher's in Nigeria of both male and female staff and qualified and unqualified across the country as at 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 are 582.633 and 550,238 respectively. There is short fall of teacher's staff down to 32395. Going by the above indices of students and teachers ratio Nigeria cannot able to provide quality and standard basic education to its citizens. Plato's most popular work on education is the republic and most important contribution to education arguing that the best of men can ever have is education. In the critic he postulated that no man should bring children into the world that is unwilling to preserve to the end in their nurture and education (Rusk 1976 cited in Shaaba 2013:51).

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

In conclusion, despite the political and socio-economic importance of women in Education and the development of the nation, the educational standard of Nigeria girl- child is nothing to write home about in spite of the several campaigns for woman emancipation and liberation that female should be given utmost priority. The paper discovered that there was a serious gap between the male and female students that were enrolled in the primary schools in Nigeria from 2014 - 2016 and there is need to close this gap in order to enhance the enrolment of females in Nigerian schools. This work also discussed the reasons that led to the failure of National Educational Policies in Nigeria. These forces includes the costs of implementation, reliable data, and qualified teachers are not employed and interplay of politics in the implementation of National Policy on education. Above all, the Nigerian constitution is unjust in realizing the nation's educational goals, especially in recognition of the equal claims of all citizens on free, compulsory on basic primary education. The paper recommends that Government should apply 26% in educational sector spending allocation as recommend by UNESCO to help revitalize the universal primary education and ensure strict on supervision of all primary school. Government should have proper implementation minimum standard qualification of (NCE) teaching in all primary school teachers and maintain standard way of recruitment of staff. Education should be removed from the sphere of politics. It should be made purely a constitutional matter. The enshrinement of education as non- negotiable rights of every citizen in the constitution would help check corruption in that sector. Mismanagement of educational resources at any level should be made a serious offence attracting a minimum of five years imprisonment. Nigerian government and leaders should develop necessary political will for education to grow.

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