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An Appraisal of Nigeria's Philosophy and Goals of Education on Gender Issues

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Abstract: ***This paper profiles the Nigeria philosophy and goals of education on gender issues. It relies entirely on secondary data and describes the educational situation in the Nigeria philosophy and goals of education on gender issues bringing out the objectives and strategies that the Nigerian government has embarked upon to provide access and quality education for children. The data shows that the educational prospects are dismal in Nigeria. The paper also observes that the National Policy on education in Nigeria has also overlooked the issue of girl-child education to a large extent. The effect of the policy statement on women is negative as man is the main focus. The paper adopts the feminism theory, using the qualitative design method of analysis to describe/appraise Nigeria philosophy and goals of education as they bother on gender issues. The paper concludes that the National Policy on education should be gender neutral to avoid the negative effect on the girl-child education in Nigeria.***

Keywords: Appraisal, Nigeria's Philosophy, Goals, Education, Gender Issues.

1. INTRODUCTION

National Policy on education was provided in Nigeria primarily as a tool for improving Nigeria education. In the goal statement, gender has been overlooked to a certain extent. However, in one of the objectives, it was categorically stated that inculcation of certain values is "faith in man's ability to make rational decisions". This to a certain extent must have influenced policy implementation, which along the live must have affected women education. This paper therefore appraises the philosophy and goals of education and the influence of the policy on women's (girl-child) education in Nigeria and beyond in order to abolish the negative parts to enhance women education and empowerment.

Much more has to be done to provide quality education especially in teacher training and in the continued disparity in the enrolment between boys and girls as well as the retention of

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children in school. Barrow (1979) states that "the principle of equality has an important factor, it involves the assumptions that all people no matter their differences, whether socially or economically or otherwise are to be considered as of equal importance and that the claims of all have to be treated equally" (p.39).

Prior to the formulation of the National Policy on education in 1977, the existing educational policy in the country had no focus, no structure and no spelt-out aims and objectives to lead the country to an expected end. The missionaries who first brought western education came with two intentions. The priority was to train preachers and religious instructors. Any other thing was secondary. The colonial masters, who came after the missionaries to rescue the situation, had their own motives.

Whatever they presented as content for education had emphasis on production of clerks, teachers and craftsmen who could work in their workshops for a long period of time. Prior to the coming of the missionaries, the traditional African education placed emphasis in character development and the promotion of culture. Preparation for girls' future starts at an early state. According to Fafunwa (1974) "girls are initiated at an early stage in form of cooking, keeping the household clean, protecting herself from any form of abuse in order to reach her husband's home in good shape" (p.169).

With the coming of the missionaries therefore, parents felt that, men can go for education provided by the missionaries, but certainly it is not meant for girls. This is due to the nature of the curriculum presented which they felt is not favourable for the girls. That is why most teachers, carpenters, mechanics and so on during the missionary era were mostly men, because tzhey wanted people who would withstand hardship and combine their work with the spread of the gospel. This will demand their staying away from home over a long period of time going from place to place. This certainly is not favourable for the women and contributed in affecting their early participation in education.

2. RELATED WORKS

This paper has been able to view what education is in relation to the Nigeria philosophy and goals of education. It has x-rayed the challenges and problems faced by women resulting from wrong insertions in Nigeria policy on education. This to a large extent affects the growth of Nigerian women and the country. A cursory look reveals that some works are related to the views of this paper. For instance, Otubelu (2024) analyses the principle of librarianship: problems and prospects and enumerate various career opportunities for women in that field. She equally discusses the problems and prospects and finally recommends education of women to exploit the opportunities available as a panacea to the problems.

In a similar perspective, Ajayi (2018) observes that inspite of educational achievements/developments in the country Nigeria is still lagging behind in the area of women education. According to him, not much progress has been made improving the quality of education in general and that of the girl-child in particular. He concludes that education is expected to make the recipient acceptable members of the society. Yaki (2017) also corroborates this stance of Ajayi by stating that Nigerian education system has not improved the quality of life of the majority of its people or integration of its diverse people to present a common front to tackle these social ills that plague the nation. The country's setback in the

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educational sector, according to Shopeju (1995) arose from over-emphases on technological development as the expense of other areas of education with a hope that this alone will produce a socially stable or satisfied society. Thus he opines that "a nation which ignores or attaches little importance to the study of social, political and psychological development of its people is potentially brewing some problems for further generations.
In conclusion, Mbahi (2009) states that "look and see is good sense that art education inculcates in a woman, she is enabled to see beyond the common sights. And to Jiddah (2022) the focus of the policy of some of the programmes initiated were mostly adults for skill acquisition. Tahir (1999) states that, although women constitute about fifty percent (50%) of the Nigerian population, their level of participation in the socio-economic, political and educational programmes of the nation is not proportionate to their size in the total population.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts the descriptive research design since its aim is to analyse and appraise Nigeria's philosophy and goals of education on gender issues. As a plan/blueprint, this method provides the procedural outline for the conduct of the investigation to arrive at a good result. This involves gathering data that describe the ones collected and this involves describing events/issues as they are without any manipulation of what is being observed or read. Therefore, descriptive method becomes appropriate in this paper in order to appropriately appraise Nigeria's philosophy and goals of education on gender issues. The paper uses the national policy on education as a springboard to arrive at a possible conclusion that the policy is gender neutral but its implementation is gendered.
The population of this study comprises all women in Nigeria covered by the provisions of the national policy on education. The data are collected through random sampling technique to have a sample of the population covered in the paper. The instrument used is valid and highly accurate as it aids in the collection of secondary data in the area of this study. The instrument produced stable and consistent results to achieve the objectives of the study. This method provides an understanding of underlying reasons and motivations, uncovers the trends in thoughts and opinions using unstructured forms of data collection that do not lead to experimentation with variables. It therefore provides an insightful analysis of the deprivations of the women caused by wrong provisions in the philosophy and goals of education on gender issues. The method inquires deeply into specific experiences with the intention of describing and exploring meaning from texts, interviews, journals to arrive at a conclusion in this paper.

The Curriculum, Philosophy and Goals of Education in Nigeria and Gender Issues

The curriculum content for over forty-seven years (1977-2024) was scanty, lack in-depth knowledge and most of the learning experiences and content are foreign. This was what brought dissatisfaction with the educational system that led to the national curriculum conference in September, 1969. This conference witnessed active participation by non-governmental organizations, communities, individuals as well as government interventions. Education in Nigeria is therefore seen as "an instrument par excellence" (NPE, 1998). After the 1969 conference, the need for a National Policy on education arose. This brought about a

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seminar of experts drawn from all walks of life and various interest groups such as voluntary agencies and external bodies in 1973. These people deliberated on the outcome of the conference and the production of a viable policy on education suitable for an independent nation like Nigeria was effected (Akeralagbe 1973, p.87). The outcome of the seminar was what birthed the 1977 National Policy on education after receiving comments from states and other interest groups. There is no doubt therefore that the National Policy on education was formulated for the benefit of every Nigerian citizen irrespective of gender. Is the policy gender blind, neutral or sensitive? This paper will attempt to look at the Nigerian philosophy on education as it affects women in education.

Any nation's policy on education has the intention of realising the specific part of the national goals using education as a tool. The policy cannot be successfully formulated without identifying the overall philosophy and goals of the nation. Section (2) of the NPE (1997) identified the country's overall philosophy of which one of them is living in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice (NPE 1997, p.7). No 3. That same section identified five (5) main goals of the country which form the basic foundation of the National Policy on education. They are:

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; and
5. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

Looking at the philosophy, no one is left out as most of the statements are gender neutral. This is confirmed by the statements in section (5), which said that the National Policy is based on:

a. The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.
b. The full integration of the individual into the community.
c. The provision of equal access to educational opportunities to all citizens of the country at primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

This is highly commendable is every individual is equal in the educational affairs and gender differences were not prominent. It is however uncomfortable to note that after all the beautiful pronouncements, the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards the inculcation of certain values along which is "faith in man's ability to make rational decisions (p.8, no 8b).

This leaves one to wonder whether it is a man that can make rational decisions on educational matters. Even if it is the intention that man refers to both male and female, why were the words "individual" or "all" not used as earlier pronounced? This goes to explain that the use of man is deliberately referring to male gender and this singular statement by omission or commission has influenced the lives of man and woman in educational activities positively and negatively. It is also indicated that policy matters were male-dominated and the few women among could not defend their position on this statement. This statement is not only

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misleading but has influenced the interpretation of vital education issues in the country that bothers on gender. However, Ohia (2015) makes an analogy with Nigerian language policy thus: "A comparison between the present state of language education in Nigeria and its state, say, at the turn of the last century is certain to show that much progress has been made in the intervening period" (p.12).

It is glaring to note that women, irrespective of the denials, deprivations and challenges they face, perform multiple functions that are meaningful and productive. These wide range of activities which women indulge in to a large extent, contribute to the economic development of their families and societies. The late Tanzanian statesman Nyerere (1994) observes that "a person does not walk very far on one leg alone" (p.78). He was referring to the phenomenon to which men alone, representing only half of the entire populations were expected to shoulder the responsibility of economic development. Thus, women are inseparable from the world of economic development as their activities cut across various facets of life. Agriculture is one of such important aspects where the activities of women have yielded much result. This informs why the feminist theoretical framework is used as a pivot in providing a structural lens through which to analyse and interpret Nigeria's philosophy and goals of education on gender issues. It serves as a guiding paradigm, offering a set of concepts, perspectives, and tools that facilitate a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent to the topic under discussion.

Patriarchy is the system that places men only at the top of the social and political ladder. There are numerous forms of female malignment; the cultural misconceptions and taboos limit women to keep quiet when men are talking. According to Ojo-Ade (1985), "woman is woman, mother, child-bearer, and supporter of man. If a woman talks too much, she is considered a wild specimen" (p.159). The cries of consciousness in male/female relationships in patriarchy needs to culminate in a re-definition of marriage consequent upon the re-education of womanhood and man, and invariably articulate the conditions of a woman's marriage to man with a well spelt-out roles of both genders in the home. The woman should symbolically shed her immanence in traditional marriage and prepare herself psychologically for a new independent life. Against this background, Okereke (2000) explains that woman ought to "undertake her quest for autonomy in a macrocosmic patriarchal context for its universality, heterogeneity and impersonality. She should forge to give her life a new meaning" (p.95).

This new awareness grows and launches her into an iconoclastic sexual relationship, with her husband; giving her independence and will never compromised her hard-won freedom in marriage which is basically a relationship of conflict that does not favour woman. In the new experience, marriage will never subsume woman under man and cannot impoverish her in all spheres.

Effects of Policy Statement on Women Education

As observed earlier, the policy statement that sees man as one that thinks rationally has been portrayed in many areas of life. Men have continued to believe that only them can go into some fields of study and even take decisions that can be worked with. Science and

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technology are areas that need rational thinking and practicalisation of that which has been learnt. Women always felt that these areas are meant for men alone. Where women venture to go into these courses, they are met with discouraged statements of their inability to make it. Only those who have made up their minds venture into such areas and excel amidst discouragements. Parkison (1994), Okeke (1977) and Yoloye (1998), all attest to the fact that there is a low enrolment of girls into science, technology and mathematics because most of them feel that they are not capable of offering these courses. Kelly (1998) finds three reasons for stereotyping and low enrolment and performance of girls in science, technology and mathematics as:

a. Lack of self-confidence on the side of girls and the fear that science and technology are too difficult and abstract for their venturing into.
b. The masculine nature of science and technology.
c. Remote nature of science from girls' everyday concerns.

Girls are not confident enough to venture into science and technology because they feel they lack the brain to think accurately and scientifically. They feel that men are those "made" for sciences and technology because of their forward nature, while they (girls) are to settle for more soft sciences like Biology, Health Science and Home Economics. The masculine nature of the books for these areas has not also helped matters. Most, if not all the books in physical sciences portray pictures of men participating in the activities indicating by implication that only men can go into these areas. This is confirmed by a study on access, participation and achievement in education in Nigerian institution by Amummu, Babalola and Taiwo (1999) where there is a record of low female enrolment in polytechnics in subjects such as mechanical engineering, printing technology, land surveying, mining engineering and related technical courses. This cannot be disassociated with the fact that most of the laboratory and workshop attendants in these courses as well as the lecturers are men. Due to their male dominance, females find it uncomfortable to go into these areas.

Another contributing factor to this problem is the teacher who is the implementer of the educational policy. Teachers mostly make examples in science and technology with male and even drawings they use are masculine. No thank you to that aspect of policy that portrays only men to have rational thinking. The girls' everyday concern in the Nigerian context does not allow her to come close to those things that will expose her to science and technology. Most of her activities are curtailed and tailored towards household activities, because that is the place meant for her by the society. Odumosu (2001) avers that "women have defined positions in society and are frowned at when they violate or go beyond their boundaries" (p.165). All these could be attributed to the gender-based statements in Nigeria Policy on Education (NPE) which have gone a long way to affect woman's participation in technology education.

If women are given the chance to freely participate, the country would have moved ahead because women are the first educators and teachers that children come across and interact with at the first instance. Their exposure to science and technology would have helped in

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bringing up children, especially the girl-child in a scientific and technological way, breaking every barrier and hindrance to their becoming scientific and technology conscious.

The Way Forward

Women have come a long way as co-inhabitants of the planet earth. They are gentle and tender, though very powerful. Their roles have gone beyond being passive sexual objects, mothers, and housekeepers. Education has opened new frontiers in the upliftment of the status of women. This has not been without its attendant problems such as denials, discriminations, marginalisations and deprivations based on gender. This paper examines the problems created by Nigeria philosophy and goals of education in gender issues. Women, for long, have had to face the problem of bridging the gap between them and the men folk in the provision of equal education for all genders. From the time of creation, women have always been regarded as being inferior to men. Religiously and traditionally, women are accorded the position of inferiority and seen as subservient and weaker sex.

In modern times, women are not longer restricted to the kitchen or made child-bearers. Through education, women are how seen as politically, socially and economically vibrant assets to the upliftment of the nation. This paper assesses how women are confronted with problems created by society, the religions and their career counterparts. It also goes further to give suggestions on how these problems could be overcome. The Nigerian society should see women as being equal to men and must compete favourably with men. According to Folashade (1997), “the women possess less muscles and strength than the men and they are naturally designed or created to incubate the young ones. A woman is the most powerful individual despite being gentle, tender and intangible” (p.68).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The modern-day status of women has changed overtime and has succeeded in producing working mothers who compete favourably with man in every area of endeavour. When we are reflecting on women in education today, we are celebrating an achievement, which had taken time to be attained. This has to be sustained by enacting into law policies that will encourage women to move forward. There are some perceived roles for women in education. These include seeing her as a teacher, a counselor and an administrator, a researcher and so on. In addition, women’s roles could make them to be seen as policy-makers who are responsible for the overall determination of education, budget planning and implementation.
We have seen women who have aspired to the highest levels of their careers. We have examples in women vice-chancellors of Universities, Provosts Of Colleges of Education, Principals of Secondary Schools, Headmistresses of Primary Schools and Education Secretaries. From statistics, it can be proudly said that women educationists in Nigeria today outnumber their male counterparts with the little opportunities afforded to them. When a woman is educated, she is equipped with the knowledge of so many things about herself and her rights; she can stand on her own if she is engaged in a trade or is given employment in an establishment. Education has actually helped women to be recognised by the government and to occupy key positions in the scheme of national development; education has actually come

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to shape the lives of women. Blackmore and Cooksey (1981) believe that "educated women have the ability to explain school work to their children, encourage them to read, punish them according to their school performances and making sure that they do their homework" (p.91). Despite all these achievements by women, we still have men segregating against them. In fact, we have instances when some male chauvinists came outright to condemn women vying for elective posts. Women are called derogatory names just in order to frustrate and discourage them. Though women are now given equal opportunities educationally as their male counterparts, they should also be given equal rights in all spheres of life; they should not be discriminated against. Anywhere a woman is made the leader; she should be accorded the full respect as would be accorded a male in such a position. It is therefore suggested as the way forward that a woman should have some roles in education and its policy for instance as a teacher, a counselor, an administrator and a researcher.

5. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is evident that the Nigeria philosophy and goals of education have outlined beautiful objectives for the country's scientific and technological advancement. Such pronouncements were gender neutral to a certain extent, but as a seed or gender bias was sown along the line of national thinking. This must have affected the interpretation of some of the objectives, which invariably have also affected women in education. The paper has been able to view what education is, the roles of women in education as well as the problems faced by women as a result of patriarchy-assigned role to women in the society and women broke the jinx through their self-effort to acquire western education.

The paper therefore advocates that the education of women should be regarded as the beginning of the growth of any nation and should be placed in/on the priority list. We cannot rule out the fact that the education of women has contributed positively to the welfare of the family as well as the general public. There is the popular adage that says that to educate a man, you educate an individual, but to educate a woman, you are educating a nation. Therefore men should see their women counterparts as partners in progress and not as objects to be relegated to the background or as rivals. Women must be involved in the formulation of any government programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the deprivations of women as a result of the provisions of the National Policy on education in its philosophy and goals, it is necessary to provide avenues for increasing women's participation in education. To improve on the status of women, the government has to make provision of free primary education and the massive sensitisation campaign on the importance of educating the girl-child; with this, access to primary education of the girl-child is expected to rise. Furthermore, this sensitisation campaign should not only focus on the girl-child but also on the disadvantaged and indigent members of the society.

The following recommendations are also preferred to help women education irrespective of gender: there is need for policy makers to reframe the aspect of philosophy that sees only

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men as rational thinker so as to give the recognition to gender as in other areas of the philosophy; equal opportunities for education to all lie with the teacher. What the teacher does with the students and how teachers based on gender, treat these students is what will move the girl-child in examples in science with only boys and they should stop pushing derogatory words to girls with regard to their performance and participation in science and technology.

All science and technology books published with men on the cover should be recycled, let there be a representation of both male and female. Such pictures discourage girls and inform them that they cannot go into these areas, only men can; to break this bias, children at a very early stage of school (pre-nursery) should be allowed to play with all types of toy before moving into nursery one and basic one of their school career; and teachers should not be biased in exposing children to challenges. They should not be sympathetic towards females with the notion that they are the weaker sex. Let them, both male and female face the same challenges equally.

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