Women Empowerment Through Education In Some Selected Local Government Areas In Taraba State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
The paper presents an overview of women Education empowerment in some Local Government Areas of Taraba State. It examines some of the factors that hinders female Education in Nigeria, such as: socio-cultural factors, socio-economic factors, factors related to school environment, political factors and institutional factors. This paper also shows how these factors cause high illiteracy rate among women such that women are relegated to the background and have little to contribute to the Nation's development. However it presents the realization of the girl-child condition by many individuals, Government, National and International agencies etc. through their efforts in designing programme interventions for promoting girl-child education in order to place her in a rightful position to enable her acquire Education and contribute her quota to the National development.

Keywords: women empowerment, education, girl child, development

INTRODUCTION
Education is a tool for societal development. It is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies that equip and enables every individual to participate fully in the economic and social development of the communities and to improve their own lives. Baraka (1977) viewed Education as the strongest instrument devised by men for socio-economic emancipation and progress. Umar and Gbana(2003) defined education as major instrument used in equipping the individuals with the skills and knowledge which help in transforming a society to a greater height. Malgwi and Takoba (2003) states that Education as a means of positive change of individual perception of self, others that contribute meaningfully to the progress of the society.

Looking at the importance of Education to the society, it is necessary that women have access to education at least to a reasonable minimal level (e.g SS3), but with higher educational attainment women will further better the society. This is because women have been known to have contributed immensely to the development of the country even during the traditional era. It is painful when one sees women not having access to education due to one problem or the other. Empowerment on the other hand can be seen as giving lawful power or authority to somebody to act. Dashen & Dashen (2004) defined it as a situation in which someone is made to be productive to his or herself and the society, thereby is in a position to assume vital roles in economic, social and political life of the community devoid of any burden or discomfort.

In this context, women empowerment can be seen as a dynamic process that enhances women's ability to change structures and ideologies which keep them subordinate.
MEANING AND PURPOSE OF WOMEN EDUCATION

Umar (2003) defines women education as the type of education given to females at the various levels of learning so that they can be empowered to fully participate in social, economic, technological and political development of their nation. In support of this Richard and John (2002) stressed that women just like their male counterparts need education so that they can perform effective roles in societal transformation.

Women education is of great importance to the society in which we live. Education of women enables them to fit into the life of the immediate community and society at large in their commitment to the realization of national objectives. Adeniji (2006) pointed out that women have the potentialities that could be tapped and utilized for the social, economic, cultural and political development of any country. Women education is therefore a prerequisite to National development. Let it be mentioned that education is the best legacy any parent can bequeath to a child. It is the greatest possession a person can have.

In addition, Kingdom (2007) contended that mother's education has greater impact on the educational attainment and school achievement of children than father's education because of the greater interaction between mother and children in the family. In this way, education of females contributes more significantly to increase in human capital, productivity and economic growth not only in their own generation but also in the next generation.

Omololu (1972) on the importance of women education clearly points out seven different but related purposes which women's Education in a democracy ought to foster:

- **Social Status:** An Educated woman can on her own in any class or society express opinion freely contribute her quota to and development of social life in the community.
- **Cultural Value:** The Educated woman is a cultured woman who knows how to behave in a proper manner. She is gentle, polite and respectful.
- **Economic Development:** An Educated woman can get a well-paid job far better in business and be in a position to contribute toward the up-keep and education of her children thereby raising their standards. Thus, she can contribute immensely toward the economic development of our country.
- **Realization of the importance of child-care:** Education makes mothers to be more aware of their responsibility to know how their children thrive and learn.
- **Political Awareness:** With Education, the Nigerian women who had no political rights before now have such rights. Today, they can vote and be voted for.
- **National Unity:** Education has made Nigerian women aware of the importance of national unity. Today there are Women's Association whose membership and activities cut across the whole country.
- **National Reconstruction:** Today in Nigeria, there are lot of women belong to voluntary organizations that contribute in various ways to develop the nation. However, from the above one can say that the gains from female schooling are generally greater and should be given the necessary assistance and encouragement to continue their education.

**Educational Enrolment of women in secondary Schools and Tertiary Institutions**

The poor enrolment of female in various levels of institution has led to the inequality in the participation of women in education industry. The tables below shows that females enrolment in secondary and tertiary institutions lag behind those of the male.

From table 1, one can see that the number of females enrolment into secondary schools in the "State is generally less compare to their males counterpart. This may tend to affect their level of empowerment thereby making them to contribute less to national development. For example from the table 2, the numbers of enrolment into post primary schools for the sampled local government areas for 2000/2001 for the males were 18,161 and that of the females were 7,465. This shows that there is a wide gap between the gender enrolment into secondary schools in the state. From table 2 in the sampled higher institutions, differences exist between the gender enrolment. For example, the total enrolment or intake figures for males in 2000/2001 academic year was 1,509 while that of the females was 642 only.
2004/2005 academic year, the figure was 1747 males and 837 for females. From the two tables, it may tend to suggest that women education is not given the necessary attention it deserved. This may affect their contributions to National development. National development and economic growth of a country can be achieved and attained when the citizens are properly educated. This chance should be given to women also to enable them contribute their quota to National development.

Table 1. Enrolment Figures In Post Primary Schools Of Some Selected Local Government Areas In Taraba State By Gender From 2000/2001 to 2004/05

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<td>1</td>
<td>Ardokola</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>1368</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>1377</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Gashaka</td>
<td>1108</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>1678</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>433</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Gas Sol</td>
<td>2289</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>2832</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>2435</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ibi</td>
<td>1189</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>1094</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jalingo</td>
<td>7386</td>
<td>3767</td>
<td>7968</td>
<td>4205</td>
<td>8167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ussa</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>2677</td>
<td>1025</td>
<td>1617</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yorro</td>
<td>1432</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>2185</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>2035</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Zing</td>
<td>1804</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>2056</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>2052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>18,161</td>
<td>7,465</td>
<td>21,729</td>
<td>9,041</td>
<td>9,211</td>
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Source: Taraba State Ministry Of Education - Jalingo

Table 2. Enrolment Figures Of Some Selected Tertiary Institutions In Taraba State

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<td>College Of Education, Jalingo</td>
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<tr>
<td>College Of Agriculture, Jalingo</td>
<td>1207</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>1226</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>1526</td>
<td>844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Of Agriculture, Jalingo</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1509</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>2163</td>
<td>1070</td>
</tr>
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Causes/ Factors Affecting Women Education

The purpose of women education in Nigeria today have not totally been achieved. Despite all efforts by the governmental and non-governmental agencies to improve education of the woman, most women are still denied access to functional education. The following are some of the causes discovered by the authors during their research for the poor intake/enrolment of women in schools.

Culture: Culture which is the customs and beliefs or the way of life and social organization of a particular country or group has affected women education. Most culture in Taraba State belief in early marriage for girls and this deprives them of the opportunity to go to school. When the authors interviewed the respondents to give reasons why they allow their daughters marry early, the following reasons were given:

- That when a girl marry early she will be more subdued to her husband.
- That Western education makes girls to be exposed to worldly life than education.


That the duty of a woman throughout her life is to bear and rear children and keep the family clean so there is no need for them to go to school.

That since a girl cannot inherit any property or title of the father, there is no need in training her.

The researchers interviewed some young women in the study area to give reasons why they cannot continue in school; they said, they actually wanted to school, but have no alternative since culture demands that they obey their parents.

Religion: Most people in Taraba State are predominately Christians with few Moslems. Some parents especially in Ardo-Kola, Jalingo and Ibi When interviewed stated that allowing female children access to western Education might expose them to immorality. In addition, the seclusion of Purdah among the Moslem women as revealed by the study of Ademola (1993) have reduced the chances of girls and married women from having access to western education which is the basic tool of development.

Preference of males to females is another cause of female access to education. In most ethnic groups in Taraba State, patrilineal culture is the order of the day. In such patrilineal culture, the place of the male as head of the family is well established. As a result, some parents take the responsibility to educate the male child rather than to spend money on girls who will later get married to another family.

Poverty: Some parents have little or no access to available financial means of empowerment to take care of their children's education. This makes them to give priority to education of boys especially in large families where funds are insufficient to enroll all children and since female children can easily be married to prospective suitors.

Pregnancy: Most girls as interviewed by some principals and

### Typology Factors That Influence Education Outcomes For Female Students In Sub-Sahara Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools Related Factors</th>
<th>Political and Institutional Factors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Poor quality of learning environment</td>
<td>Fiscal Crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prohibitive cost of schooling</td>
<td>Inadequate Public expenditure in the sectors</td>
</tr>
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<td>Irrelevant Curricular</td>
<td>Political instability and Civil strife</td>
</tr>
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<td>Long distant to schools</td>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
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<tr>
<td>High levels of repetition and failure-</td>
<td>Weak research and data collection capacity and use in policy formulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear girls education strategy</td>
<td>Low status of women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>Limited employment prospects</td>
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</table>

### OUTCOMES

Non - Enrolment
- Average Enrolment
- Absenteeism
- Poor motivation
- Low self - Esteem
- Poor academic performance
- High levies of drop - out
- Ambivalent Parents/ Familiy attitudes to girls education
- Poverty
- Limited employment prospects
- Premium placed on apprenticeship
- Socio-Economic Status and social class
- Initiation Ceremonies
- Parental/familial investment behaviour
The above factors obviously deprive our girls ‘their right to meaningful education in Nigeria resulting in the set back of women education in Nigeria. Particularly, in Northern areas, Kaita (1972) holds the view that what a man can do a woman can also do. To her, women should be given equal educational opportunity so that they can compete very favourably with the challenges of time and also contribute adequately in the struggle and task of National reconstruction” and economic recovery. In some countries of the world today, women hold reins of government. Efforts must be made to change the psyche of Nigerians, which has been influenced to believe that the role of the women as the weaker sex is that of childbearing, raising a home, cooking and in fact the head and foundation of all matrimony. This concept has to be entirely discarded if any meaningful progress is to be made... in the field of women's education.

**Contribution of Women to National Development**

With all the hindrances of women access to education, they still contribute their quota to National Development. They: found themselves in religion, education, agriculture and e-commerce. The modern status of most women especially in Nigeria has therefore evolved from the old prejudice of sloe kitchen tenders and baby factories to working mothers, professional qualified to practice a chosen career based on their innate potentials and societal needs (Shonibare, 2001). Nigeria for example, have produced some outstanding women who have distinguished themselves in various disciplines. We now have women lawyers, medical doctors, pharmacists, engineers etc. We also have women who hold sensitive programmes and offices in Nigeria e.g the better life for rural women programme by Mrs. Maryam Babangida (1989), The Child Trust Fund by Late Mrs Stella Obasanje (1999), Women trafficking and child labour eradication: foundation by Mrs. Titi Abubakar (2004), Net Work Against Girls Street Hawking by Mrs. Aisha Adamu Mu'azu etc. others include Prof. Dora Akunyili- Director General National Agency for Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Prof. Chinwa Obaje- Minister for Education, Dr (Mrs) Ngozi Okonjo Iweala- one time Finance Minister, etc. In Nigeria in general and Taraba State in particular, most women are seen in various markets engaging in petty trading, agriculture and other income generating activities as individuals and NGOs. Inspite of all the contributions of women towards National building, negative opinions are still held against women education especially in the North east sub-region where in most cases, the success of women are frowned at by male chauvinists. (Modu and Chinene 2004)

**The Way Forward for Promoting Women Education**

In order to direct educational inequality, the Federal Ministry of Education forwarded a proposal on female education at the emergency meeting of the National Council on Education (NCE) in Kaduna. February 1986. According to Manquat and Abama (1999) the Council endorsed the following policy objectives:

- Provision of more education opportunities of girls from primary school to tertiary level.
- Creating awareness among all citizens of the fact that equal educational opportunities exist irrespective of gender, age, locality creed or status and should therefore be made available to all.
- Re-orienting the attitudes- of all females irrespective of age towards education.
- Provision of basic literacy and skill acquisition for illiterate females and early school levels through skill such as sewing cooking, baking, typing,
• Provision of basic literacy and skill acquisition for illiterate females and early school levels through skill such as sewing, cooking, bakry, typing, knitting, crocheting; tatting, tie/dye, and subsistence agriculture.
• Awakening the consciousness of all women to the need for the development of a positive self-image.
• Educating parents and the general public so as to bring about a change in attitude towards women educational programmes.
• Promoting female education in the fields of science, technology and mathematics.

The blue-print on women education was produced in September, 1987 as a framework for women education in the country. Campaigns to enlighten the need to promote women education were launched, special schools were established for girls, and efforts were made to discourage withdrawal of girls from schools. At the state level, the recent promulgation of laws in some Northern States against the withdrawal of girls from school is an encouraging development. Increasing initiatives have also been witnessed under the current political dispensation to lessen the impact of poverty on educational achievements. These include the payment of -the SSCE examinations for all pupils by some state governments, revival and enhancing the value of bursary and scholarship awards UNFPA (2000).

While some parents also understand that, maintaining few children for good Education and health is better than larger numbers with poor health and education. UNFPA (2000) pointed out that, parents who hope for better education for their female children tend to want smaller families, perhaps so that they can provide more fully for the offspring they have.

In Nigeria, education is considered as the most important element in National development; because of this any successive governments have addressed education as a means of achieving the nation's aspiration for economic progress and political cohesion. According to Manquwat and Abama (1999), that when the Universal Primary Education campaign was launched, the sector witnessed rapid expansion for example, the number of pupils increased from 6 million to 14.5 million. They further stressed that the expansion in educational institutions at all levels led to increased access to education by women, but this expansion did not however close the gap between the genders.

In view of this the following recommendations should be considered:

- Universal Basic Education (UBE) which is the cornerstone of current government with efforts aimed at ensuring the access of all children in Nigeria from primary and 333 level of education should intensify their efforts to overcome geographical and gender disparities.
- All inhibiting religious, traditional culture, beliefs etc. must be discarded, while all available channels of communication must be explored to change society attitudes to girl's education.
- School curricula should be diversified to meet the needs of both men and women who will play their respective roles in the process of economic and technological development of the country.
- All children should have equal access to the same type of education at all levels irrespective of sex, to fulfill the country's human resource.
- Early marriage and use of girls in hawking should be discouraged
- Birth rate should be controlled to make room for adequate training of children.
- Women should be given equal political empowerment to enable them become part of the decision making organs, in addition women on their part should be courageous enough to strive for political positions.
- Parents should be enlightened on the importance of education for girl-child
- Parents should work harder so as to be empowered economically to train their children.

CONCLUSION
In conclusion, women education in Nigeria is to enable women contribute to life, adapt to society, develop and broaden their minds, prepare young adolescents and adults to be able to cope with domestic
work and family life, develop in the women's folk social, economic and political empowerment in their ability to understand, participate in life and finally to be good citizens. Any obstacle to women education must be removed so as to make Nigerian women contribute immensely in the rebuilding of our battered economy.

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