

Reducing Gender Inequality in Labour Force Participation in Nigeria: The School-To-Work Transition Policy Approach

Rifkatu Nghargbu, Ph.D

National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, National Assembly, Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract: - This paper examines the existing gender inequality in labour force participation in Nigeria with a view to suggest policy options in school-to-work transition that will reduce the inequality. Using the National Bureau of statistics (2019) report for men and women, Statistical evidences revealed unjustified gender inequality in labour force participation in all sectors especially in professional, technical and managerial jobs which can be traced to the level of schooling especially at tertiary level. The study concludes that school-to-work transition policy provides alternative ways to reducing gender inequality in female labour participation. As a recommendation, reduction in gender inequality in labour participation calls for gender-sensitive policies that will improve female school-to-work transition especially at the tertiary level. Tackling the existing gender inequality is one of the effective ways to end poverty in Nigeria and enhance economic, social and political development to achieve SDGs by 2030.

I. INTRODUCTION

Enhancing gender equality and women empowerment is a globally recognized development strategy for reducing poverty and hunger, improving health and living standards of the society. It is also a sure way to enhance people-centred development and efficiency of public investments. The attainment of gender equality is not just an end in itself but a prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development goals (The National Coalition on Affirmative Action, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009).

In Nigeria, lack of effective participation of women and equal gender opportunity in the labour market to enhance economic, political and social status of women is a major setback to Nigerian development and progress. Nigeria has one of the lowest Gender Development Index in the world at 0.868, below Ghana (0.910) and Iran (0.871) Wikipedia (2019). Majority of women in Nigeria are not opportune to get professional, technical and managerial jobs like their male counterparts due to lack of competence and gender discrimination. As a result, many women in Nigeria typically occupy relatively poorly-paid jobs in all the sectors of the economy. Deep-rooted gender bias and attitudes contribute to hindering women from accessing better opportunities that will improve their economic, political and social status. Many women are self-employed in the largely subsistence agricultural sector, thereby earning inadequate income. Difficulty in combining domestic and labour market activities

as well as the reproductive role in marriage is also a major constraint to effective women participation in the labour market.

School-to-work transition is the process of moving from education or training to employment. It involves the passage of a young person (aged 15 to 29 years) from the end of schooling to the first regular and satisfactory job (European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training, 2009). Nigeria has about 10.5 million out-of-school children; one of the largest in the world and the mostly affected are girls (BBC News, 2017). Evidence from the Demographic and Health Surveys (2011) for Uganda indicates that women who got married or gave birth before age 20 and achieving only secondary education are less likely to be in professional/technical and managerial positions (Ahaibwe et al, 2017). This is because early exit from school due to marriage, pregnancy and child birth influences young women to enter the labour market early without building a career life that will enable them occupy professional, technical and managerial positions. Young girls who leave school without completing at least secondary school due to marriage, pregnancy and child birth are less likely to transit to stable employment that will make them productive later in life. Training leads to the acquisition of skills and hence entry to skilled occupations

Equal opportunity in gender participation which the United Nations seeks to achieve by 2030 should be one of the topmost policy priorities if Nigeria will make progress in improving welfare and reducing poverty. This goal is important because women economic, social and political empowerment is an effective way to end poverty and achieve societal development. Research shows that countries that invest in promoting the social and economic status of women tend to have lower poverty rates because resources in women's hands result in household expenditure that benefits children and the entire family (Schmeer, 2005).

Although Nigeria has made effort to facilitate the implementation of national and international conventions and laws in support for gender equality through the 2005 gender policy, wide gender gaps in labour market participation still exist. This brief seeks to reveal that existing disparities in female labour participation especially in the managerial, technical and professional level begins at schooling in tertiary

level. Thus, there is a need for the government to pursue a policy of tertiary schooling to-work transition for inequality in female labour participation to be reduced.

II. METHOD

A review of statistical information on men and women in Nigeria sourced from the National Bureau of Statistics (2019) was carried out. The NBS (2019) statistical report for men and women is a gender disaggregated analysis of key social and economic indicators across several areas of contemporary life within the country. This covers Population, Health, Education, Work, Power and Decision Making, and Violence against Women (VAW)/Crime. The NBS identified, compiled, processed and analysed from primary and secondary sources to highlight differences/inequalities between the status of girls, boys, women and men. The information was used to analyse and discuss the inequality in labour force participation by gender, tracing the inequality from schooling and the transition from school- to- work.

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

School-to-work transition and low female labour participation

National Bureau of Statistics (2019) shows that gender inequality in labour participation can be traced to schooling, especially at the tertiary level. Many young girls end their education at secondary level. As such gender inequality begins at the point of transition from secondary to tertiary school and then to profitable employment. Figure 1 shows that there is little discrepancy in primary and secondary school completion rate as well as distribution of WASSCE May/June. The gender difference at the level of primary and secondary school is about 6%. (see figures 1 and 2 below).

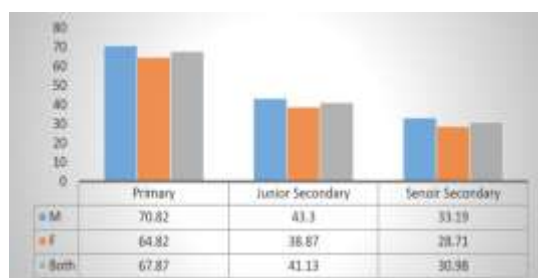


Figure 1: Schools Completion Rate by Sex (2016)

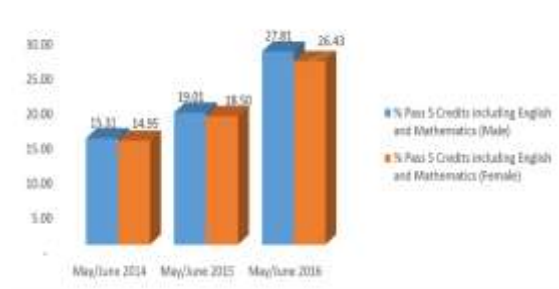


Figure 2: Distribution of WASSCE May/June by Year and Sex

Note: Both is the average of male and female enrolment

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2019)

Figures 3 and 4 show that gender disparity in admissions/enrolment into tertiary education (colleges of education and universities) is much higher at the primary and secondary school level. There is gender discrepancy in favour of males in admissions into colleges of education by over 7% and over 12% in undergraduate programs at the universities. At the postgraduate level, discrepancy in admissions in favour of males is over 24.8% (see figures 3 and 4 for details). This shows that fewer females obtain higher training to position them for professional/managerial and technical jobs.



Figure 3: Admissions in Nigerian Colleges of education



Figure 4: 2017 Student's Enrolment in Nigerian Universities by Sex

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2019)

Figures 5 to 13 show the high gender statistical disparities in labour participation in academia, civil service, appointive and political positions in Nigeria.

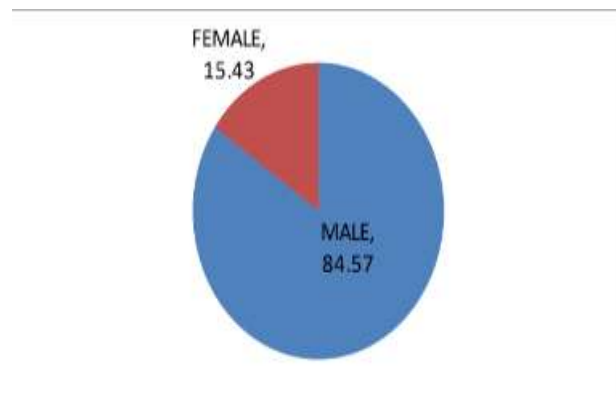


Figure 5: Professors in Nigerian Universities (2017)



Figure 6: Non-Academic Staff of Federal Colleges of Education

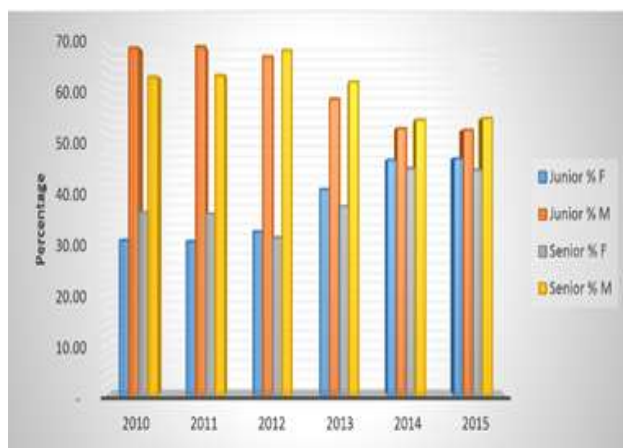


Figure 7: Employment in State Civil Service (2010 – 2015)

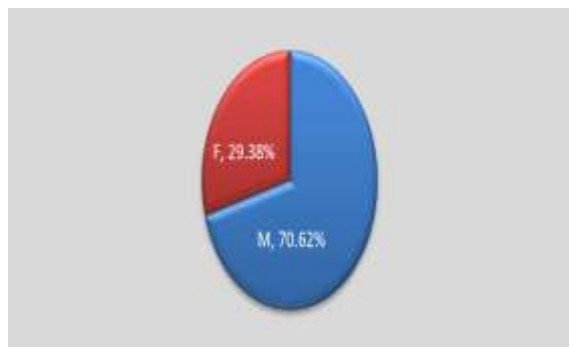


Figure 8: Judges in Federal Court by Sex (2011- 2016)

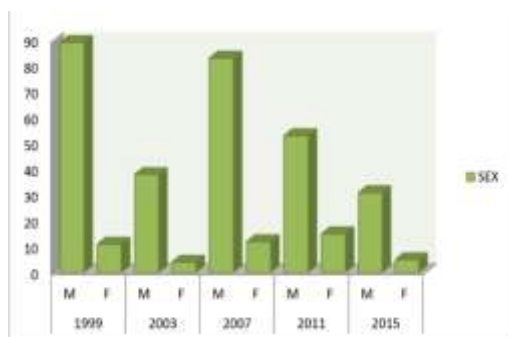


Figure 9: Ministerial Political Position by Sex (1999-2015)

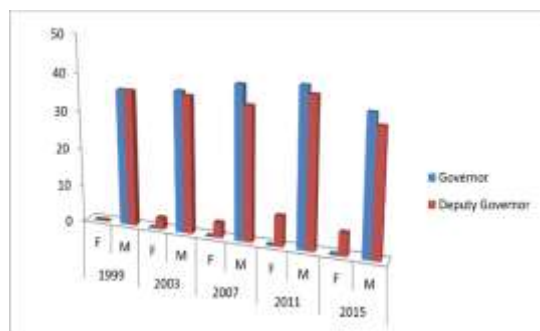


Figure 10: Representation as Governor and Deputy Governor

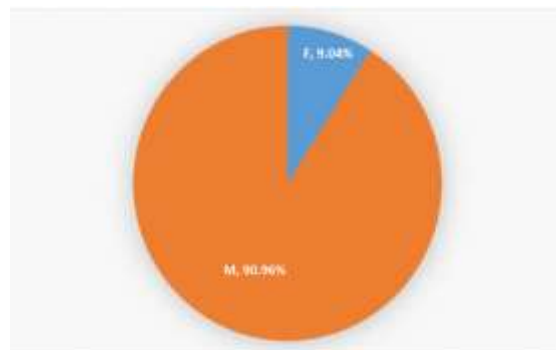


Figure 11: Local Chairpersons by Sex (1999 – 2015)

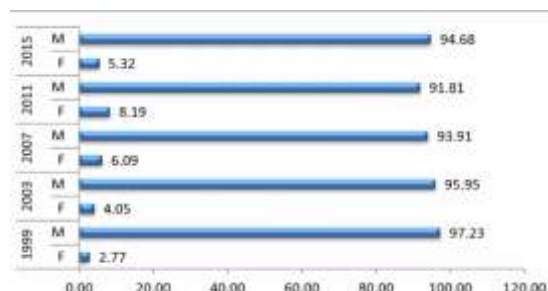


Figure 12: Honorable Members at the State Houses of Assembly

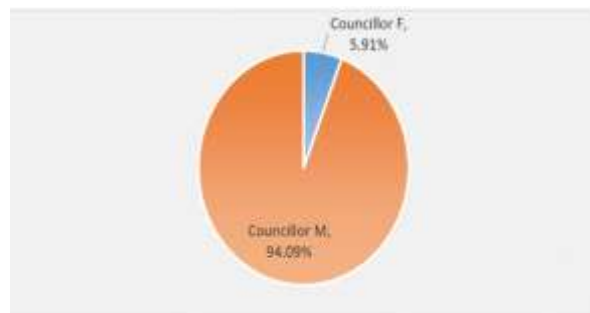


Figure 13: Councilors by Sex from 1999 – 2015

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2019)

In the academia less than 16% of females are professors compared to over 84% of males. This also applies to employment of non-academic staff in federal colleges of education. Over 70% of non-academic staff in colleges of education are males compared to less than 30% females. In the civil service, employment of the junior and senior female cadre ranges from 30 to 40 % compared to 60 to 70% males. At the judiciary, less than 30% of judges in federal courts are

females compared to over 70% males. Statistics on appointive ministerial positions between 1999-2015 shows that only 3 to 10% females are appointed as ministers within this period compared to over 90% of males. Executive political positions at the federal, states and local government level in favour of males are very low. Female governors and deputy governors are about 1% and 0% in many states. Female Local Government Chairpersons are about 9.04%. At the legislative arm, less than 9% honorable members are females between 1999 to 2015. Less than 6% of females are local government councilors compared to over 94% of males.

The point derived from the figures is that there is extreme gender inequality in labour market participation in Nigeria in all sectors. The inequality begins at the level of tertiary education. Girls are less likely to access tertiary schools. This makes it difficult for them at adulthood to acquire suitable academic qualifications and professional/technical and managerial skills that will enable them to participate productively in nation building. Policies that encourage female enrolment from secondary education to tertiary level will help to bridge part of the gender gap in female labour participation. Existing policies on girl-child education are focused on basic education for primary and secondary school enrolment (British council Report, 2014) less emphasis is on tertiary education. Thus, the overarching policy priority should be the enhancement of female schooling at the tertiary level to improve female participation in the economy.

In addition, the burden of childcare and domestic work placed on women and girls affects school to-work-transition and consequently, female labour participation especially when young girls leave school early and have children in their teens. Having young children at home decreases young women's educational and employment outcomes.

Cross country analysis of school-to-work transition policy

S/ N	Country	Policy	Implementation strategy
1	Uganda	1. National Adolescent Health Policy (2004) 2. National Strategy (2015 -2020) to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy	1. Delaying first child birth, raising the age at first birth to 18 years for females, and re-admission of adolescent mothers back into the education system 2. Overarching goal of ending child marriages and teenage pregnancies for socio-economic transformation
2	Ghana	1. Fast Track Initiative (FTI): major focus on promoting girls' education 2. Cash and in-kind contributions to girls and/or families for the purpose of school attendance (Camfed Ghana, 2012)	1. Was endorsed in 2003-2004. In November 2004, the FTI Catalytic Fund (CF) allocated USD 8m to Ghana to support (i) supplying of basic school textbooks; (ii) a teacher initiative scheme; and (iii) monitoring and supervision ⁸ .

3	Bangladesh	The Female Stipend Program (FSP) (Raynor and Wesson (2006)	1. The FSP was created in 1982 in Bangladesh. The Female FSP sought to help keep adolescent girls in secondary school to delay their marriage and motherhood. This strategy was a response to the growing population, estimated at between 123.3 million to help increase the enrolment and retention of girls in secondary schools ⁹
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Source: compiled by author

Lessons from cross country analysis

Just like Uganda, policy that will raise the age at first birth to 18 years for females, and re-admission of adolescent mothers back into the education system can be initiated

Policies against child marriages and teenage pregnancies should be initiated.

Just like Ghana and Bangladesh Cash and in-kind contributions and Female Stipend Program can be introduced to encourage the girl-child to further her education beyond secondary school

IV. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Reduction in gender inequality in labour participation calls for gender-sensitive policies that will improve female school-to-work transition. In addition to the 2005 gender policy in Nigeria, the following policy options can be considered to improve female labour participation:

Like Uganda, a policy to reduce incidences of female school dropout, early marriage and child birth should be introduced.

As in Bangladesh, a stipend policy for tertiary education that will encourage girls especially in the northern part of the country to further their education beyond secondary school should be encouraged.

Creating opportunities for young married women or young mothers to continue their education is essential to enhance prospects for better livelihoods. This may include a range of incentives, as well as reducing barriers to girls' school attendance

Policies that will encourage women to work, that is to say, promoting childcare in workplaces should be introduced. Reducing the burden of care may improve education and employment outcomes for women. This might include better access to daycare and encouraging new norms that see more equitable sharing of domestic duties within the household. Policies to incentivize employers to create work friendly environments for women to balance work and family responsibilities should be put in place.

Gender-sensitive employment policies will also reduce inequality in gender labour market participation. In this regard, policies that will discourage occupational segregation in the labour market and negative social attitudes towards women should be introduced.

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