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GENDER INEQUALITY IN ENROLMENT FOR ACCOUNTANCY PROGRAMME IN NIGERIAN FEDERAL POLYTECHNICS: EMERGING ISSUES IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality exists all over the world, in accessing and controlling vital resources, in regard to educational, economic, and political opportunities. This paper focuses on gender differences in enrolment pattern for Accountancy programme in Nigerian Federal polytechnics. Data were obtained from the 2011 and 2012 editions of Annual Abstract of Statistics Published by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Percentages were used to describe annual changes in enrolment. Sex ratio was used to quantify the gender dimension of enrolment. Result show that in all academic sessions examined, males are consistently more enrolled than females. More females are consistently enrolled at the ND level than the HND level. This paper suggested that current efforts to rebrand the Nigerian education emerging issue must take cognizance of the level of disparities between males and females for all programmes at the tertiary education level. Various means should also be devised to bridge the gender gap.

KEYWORDS: *Gender, Enrolment, Accountancy, Education, Inequality*

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Gender inequality is a contemporary worldwide concern. It exists in all spheres of life and in virtually all countries. Gender inequalities exist all over the world, in accessing and controlling vital resources, in regard to educational, economic, and political opportunities. Gender refers to societal norms and practices about appropriate male and female behavior, attributes, and roles. It is a social and cultural construct that differentiates men from women and prescribes the ways in which men and women interact with each other in the society (Gupta, 2000).

Gender is the word used to describe social and personality differences between women and men. It refers to what society defines as masculine and feminine (Sani & Baba, 2013). Gender disparity therefore connotes the inequality that exists between men and women in relation to access and utilisation of resources for a better life (Idyorough, 2005). Numerous studies have identified gender as one of the factors that explain academic performance (Bagamery, Lasik & Nixon, 2005; Black & Duhon, 2003; Gracia & Jenkins, 2002). Neimanis and Tortisyn (2003) highlighted key manifestation of worldwide gender inequalities as follows: two thirds of the world's 876 million illiterates are females; of the world's one billion poorest people, an estimated three–fifths are women and girls. Despite the fact that the majority of the world's poorest people are women and girls, poverty reduction strategies insufficiently addresses the differential impact of poverty by gender and inadequately targets gender equality as a core objective. Also, women represent a growing proportion of people living with HIV/AIDS.

In countries with high HIV prevalence, young women and girls with little or no education are at a higher risk of contracting HIV than their male counterparts. In only 16 countries in the world is women's representation in national parliaments above 25 per cent. On average, they accounted for 11 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide in 1999, compared with 9 per cent in 1987. Although women's contributions to the global economy is growing rapidly,

women's labour remains undervalued and under counted in national accounts. Data disaggregated by sex are still poorly developed, and an estimated one-quarter to one-half of all women has suffered physical abuse. Also, women and children comprise about 80 per cent of the world's 35 million refugees and displaced people, and they are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence while in flight, in refugee camps, and/or during resettlement.

According to Randell and Gergel (2009), striking differences have been observed between female and male enrolment with a wider gap at tertiary level. This situation leads to questionable continuity in female education at tertiary level. The World Bank (2003) buttressed the view of Neimanis and Tortisyn (2003). According to the organization, in most countries, women continue to have less access to social services and productive resources than men. Women also remain vastly underrepresented in national and local assemblies, accounting for less than 10 per cent of the seats in national parliaments on average. In most low income countries, girls are less likely to attend school than boys. Even when girls start school at the same rate as boys, they are more likely to drop out. This happens in many cases after getting pregnant due to lack of access to reproductive health services. Furthermore, in industrialized countries, women in the wage sector earn an average of 77 per cent of what men earn. In developing countries, they earn 73 per cent.

In contemporary Nigeria, women continue to be politically marginalised in the National Assembly and all the States House of Assemblies. The proportion of women among federal minister is usually less than 25%. There is yet no executive governor who is a woman among the 36 governors (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2011). According to Head, Zweimuller, Marchena and Hoel (2014), a recent assessment of women's lives and challenges across the world indicates that gender disparity remain a global social concern. The authors stressed that resources for empowerment are still significantly distributed unequally between men and women. Gender continues to play a major role in determining who goes to school, how well they do, and how far they progress. Being a female is negatively associated with enrolment, attainment, and performance in the educational system. According to Akinbi and Akinbi (2015), in all low income countries, male exceed female in their participation in formal education in terms of access, persistence, and achievement.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Several studies have shown that there is no gender equity in tertiary institutions in Africa, and there is need to ensure adequate representation of women in higher education (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). To enhance women's contribution to human progress, the millennium declaration adopted in September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Summit committed member nations to promote gender equality and women empowerment as integral aspects of genuine sustainable development. The millennium declaration was reflected in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which comprises of 8 goals, 18 targets, and 48 indicators. The MDG 3 specifically addresses gender equality. One fundamental resource to eradicating gender disparity is education. Education is crucial to improving women's lives because it is the foundation of several other opportunities. In assessing progress towards the attainment of MDG 3, it is important to examine the current state of gender disparity at all levels of the educational sector in Nigeria.

In consonance with the Federal Government project of rebranding the country, the educational system in the country must be rebranded to conform to global yearnings for gender equality. According to Professor Dora Akunyili, a onetime minister of information and communication as cited in Amaefule and Abioye (2009), rebranding Nigeria is fundamental to our national development. In cognizance of the importance of education in tackling gender disparity, studies in Nigeria have paid research attention to disparity in enrolment and outturn for different educational programmes (Okojie, 1998; Solanke, 2004a; Solanke, 2004b; Igbinedion, 2011). However, gender disparity in the enrolment for the Accountancy programme has been insufficiently studied.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study addresses the limitation by focusing on the Accountancy programme in Nigerian Federal Polytechnics. It is against this backdrop that the objective of this paper examines gender inequality in enrolment for Accountancy programme in Nigerian Federal polytechnics. It also discusses its implications for MDG 3 and the rebranding of the Nigerian educational system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study by Gracia and Jenkins (2003) examined the performance of the second and final year accounting and finance students at a Welsh university. The authors found that at second year level, gender was positively associated with performance whilst age was negatively associated with performance. In Nigeria, gender disparity in adult literacy remains significant. As observed by the NBS (2011), while the country has made outstanding gains on enrolment of girls and boys in primary schools, the country is still far from attaining universal primary education. This is because there is still a wide gap at the secondary and tertiary levels of education. The study of Kudu and Kayode (2018) examined the association between education and gender equality as indispensable tools. Thus, it was concluded that all cultural sentiments and religious beliefs should be eradicated in order to have equality among male and female at all levels of education. Agawal (2018) explores gender inequality which focuses on access to immovable property, and the result of the finding showed that 90% of women lack property ownership. This results in women been faced with spousal violence. Therefore, it was concluded that it is very important for women to have independent right of ownership. The study of Buba, Abdu and Jibir (2018) showed that social economic and demographic variables significantly influence gender inequality on household vulnerability. Okafor and Egbon (2011) examined the grades of two accounting courses of first year university students in Nigeria, and it was concluded that there was no significant difference between academic performance of male and female. However, they found that the mean performance of males in both courses was higher than that of their female counterparts.

The study of Deepak, Al-Umran, Al-Sheikh and Al-Rubaish (2011) showed that female medical students outperform male students in overall test assessment. Although the study of Deepak et al. suggests an evidence of male dominance in enrolment proportion, female students were dominant in performance. Similarly, evidence of female students outperforming male students was also found in the field of agricultural science (Hedjazi & Omidi, 2008). These evidences suggest that females are not intellectually dwarf, and this is likely to encourage more females to enroll in courses

that have enjoyed masculine dominance overtime. Dasli and Saricoban (2016) investigated determination of attitudes on gender for higher education students, and the result reveals that the students' perception about gender roles indicated that male students have more traditional belief than female students. The implication of this findings showed that there is no equality between male and female education enrolment as female education is believed to end in the kitchen. This finding is contrary to the findings of Hendley and Charles (2016) which argued that gender inequality between male and female access to education should be eradicated. This is because access of both genders to education helps to equalize the career and life opportunities of male and female. Furthermore, the study of Scarborough and Risman (2017) illustrate changes in the gender structure and concludes that individual interaction and macro level of society significantly have effect on male and female. Implication of this finding shows that some process of changes has improved gender inequality

Onokala and Onwurah (2001) found that gender inequity is an issue in all faculties in Nigerian universities. This implies that undergraduate student enrolment in Nigerian universities is not equally distributed between the sexes. They noted that in Nigerian universities, the highest percentages of female enrolments were in the faculties of Science, Arts, Education, and Social Science. However, their study found that males dominated in scientific and technical fields, which were most likely to lead to high paying and powerful positions.

METHODOLOGY

Polytechnics in Nigeria have maintained National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) with one year period of industrial attachment serving as one of the pre-requisites for entry into the degree programmes. The population of the descriptive research was the enrolment of student in accountancy programme from 1991-2011 academic section. The sample size consisted of all the admitted male and female students for the academic period. Their main goal is to train whoever can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental problems for convenience of man with exposure on professional studies in the technologies. Not less than 70% of admissions into polytechnics are on technology based courses. This study is based on the analysis of secondary data. The statistics of students' enrolment for Accountancy programme in Nigerian Federal polytechnics for six academic sessions were extracted from 2011 and 2012 editions of the Annual Abstract of Statistics published by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The validity of the data from the NBS is not in doubt since the organization is not only the apex statistical body in the country, but it is also the custodian of all national and official statistics in the country. The data obtained for the study are presented in Table 1 and Table 2. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were applied in the study and regression was used to run the analyses. Sex ratio computed as males/females X 100 was calculated for each session to quantify and assess the gender dimension of enrolment. The chi-square statistic was used to examine associations between gender and enrolment trends. However, the data for 1994/1995 and 1999/2000 sessions were not available. Therefore, it was not part of the analysis. These analytical tools are appropriate for the study and have been applied in previous gender and enrolment studies (Solanke, 2004a, 2004b; Igbinedion, 2011).

FINDINGS

Table 1. Enrolment for Accountancy Programme in Nigerian Polytechnics by Gender and Level of Study

Session	National Diploma			Higher National Diploma			All (Both Sexes)		
	Male	female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1990/1991	4203	1970	6173	1481	582	2063	5684	2552	8236
1991/1992	4220	2204	6424	1873	882	2755	6093	3086	9179
1992/1993	5313	2724	8037	3278	1573	4851	8591	4297	12888
1993/1994	7258	3548	10801	4638	2076	6714	11896	5619	17515
1995/1996	5756	3130	8886	4773	2061	6834	10529	5191	15720
1996/1997	7642	3613	11255	6510	2480	8990	14152	6093	20245
1997/1998	10846	4597	15443	7079	3853	10932	17925	8450	26375
1998/1999	9891	6797	16688	5583	3634	9217	15474	10431	25905
2000/2001	11095	9214	20309	6505	4417	10922	17600	13631	31231
2001/2002	16163	12245	28408	8589	6035	14624	24752	18280	43032
2002/2003	11253	9443	20696	5938	4594	10532	17191	14037	31228
2003/2004	12339	8967	21306	6198	4197	10395	18537	13164	31701
2005/2006	14297	8653	22950	5544	4155	9699	19841	12808	32649
2006/2007	7364	5967	13333	5807	4298	10105	13171	10265	23438
2007/2008	5902	4466	10368	4292	3108	7400	10194	7574	17768
2008/2009	4872	3696	8568	3893	2654	6547	8765	6350	15115
2009/2010	4961	4236	9197	1718	1427	3145	6679	5663	12342
2010/2011	6897	5757	12654	6767	5185	11952	13664	10942	24606

Source: Annual Abstract of Statistics, 2011, 2012, National Bureau of Statistics

Results shown in Table 2 below revealed that the sex ratios show an inconsistent pattern in general enrolment for Accountancy programme. In all the sessions examined, males are consistently more enrolled than females. The sex ratio has however declined from 223 in the 1990/91 session to 141 in the 2003/2004 session.

Table 2.

Session	National Diploma			Higher National Diploma			All (Both Sexes)		
	Male % Increase	Female % increase	Sex ratio	Male % Increase	Female % increase	Sex ratio	Male % Increase	Female % increase	Sex ratio
1990/1991			213.4			254.5			222.7
1991/1992	0.4	-88.8	191.5	26.5	51.5	212.4	7.2	20.9	197.4
1992/1993	25.9	23.6	195.0	75.0	78.3	208.4	41.0	39.3	199.9
1993/1994	36.6	30.2	204.6	41.5	32.0	223.4	38.5	30.8	211.7
1995/1996	-26.0	-11.8	183.9	3.0	-0.7	231.6	-11.5	-8.2	202.8
1996/1997	32.8	15.4	211.5	36.4	20.3	262,5	34.4	17.4	232.3
1997/1998	42.0	27.2	235.9	8.8	0,6	183.7	26.7	38.7	212.1
1998/1999	-8.81	47.9	145.5	-21.1	-5.7	153.6	-13.7	23.4	148.3
2000/2001	12.8	35.6	120.4	16.5	21.5	147.3	13.7	30.7	129.1
2001/2002	45.7	32.9	131.9	32.0	36.6	142.3	41.0	34.1	135.4
2002/2003	-30.4	-22.9	119.2	-30.9	-23.9	129,3	30.5	-23.2	122.5
2003/2004	9.7	-5.0	137.6	4-4	-8.7	147.7	7.8	-6.2	140.8
2005/2006	15.9	-3.5	165.1	-10.6	-1.0	133.4	7.0	-2.7	154.9
2006/2007	0.5	-31.0	123.4	4.7	3.4	135,1	-33.6	-19.9	128.3
2007/2008	-19.9	-25.2	132.3	-26.1	-27.7	138.1	-22.6	-26.2	134.6
2008/2009	-17.5	-17.2	131.8	-9.3	-14.6	146.7	-14.0	16.2	138.0
2009/2010	1.8	14.7	117,1	-55.9	-46.2	120.4	-23.8	-10.8	117.9
2010/2011	39.0	36.0	119.8	293.9	263.3	130.5	104.6	93.2	124.9

More females are consistently enrolled at the National Diploma level than the Higher National Diploma level. Results further show that the pattern of annual changes in overall enrolment is inconsistent. There were declines in total enrolment in some sessions such as 1995/96, 1998/99, and 2002/2003 sessions

Table 3. Cross tabulation of gender and enrolment at ND Level

Enrolment by academic sessions for National development											
Gender	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Total	Df	$\chi 2$	Critical value	Conclusion
Male	14297	7364	5902	4872	4961	6897	44293	5	342	11.07	Significant association
Female	8653	5967	4872	3696	4236	5757	32775				
Total	22950	13331	3696	8568	9197	12654	77068				

Table 4. Cross tabulation of gender and enrolment at HND Level

Enrolment by academic sessions for Higher National development											
Gender	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Total	Df	$\chi 2$	Critical value	conclution
Male	5544	5807	4292	3893	1718	6767	2801	5	27	11.07	Significant association
Female	4155	4298	3108	2654	1427	5185	20827				
Total	9699	10105	7400	6547	3145	1195	48848				

Findings show that in all academic sessions examined, males are consistently more enrolled than females. At the ND level, significant association exists between gender and enrolment ($\chi 2= 343$, $p<0.05$). However, at the HND level, gender and enrolment are significantly associated ($\chi 2= 27$, $p<0.05$).

DISCUSSION

With consistent enrolment of more males than females in the Accountancy programme, the prospects of MDG eliminating gender disparity in all levels of education needs additional efforts to quicken the process. With enrolment already in favour of males, deliberate efforts are needed to boost female enrolment. The findings of this study concur with findings of previous studies (Bagamery, Lasik & Nixon, 2005; Black & Duhon, 2003; Gracia & Jenkins, 2002) on gender differences in enrolment for accounting programme in tertiary institutions.

Greater enrolment of females will lead to growth in future share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. This is in addition to increasing the future size of women accountants. There is now increasing understanding that educational programmes which fail to take gender inequality into account and does not address disparities between males and females will have limited effectiveness and cost implications. The enrolment of more females at the ND level than the HND level implies that many of the female students may have faced obstacles in continuing studies at the HND level. This may be as a result of early marriage, unwanted pregnancies, and childbearing. This has contributed to the under representation of women at top managerial levels. Appropriate interventions must be developed to enhance the access of women to higher education. As noted by the World Bank (2003), evidence from around the world shows that

eliminating gender disparities in education is one of the most effective development actions a country can take.

The federal government of Nigeria through the National Policy on Education (2004) also noted that education is an instrument for national development. It is therefore important that efforts to rebrand the Nigerian educational system must bring a gender perspective across the whole range of the rebranding process. This will further enhance the ability of the educational system to achieve its set goals. For instance, according to the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in 1990, the ND and HND Accountancy programmes should contribute adequately to the production of good quality and dedicated business manpower for commerce, industry, and private and public enterprise. The more women are highly educated and opportune to fill such skilled manpower positions, the greater the benefit to the nation. Therefore, the contribution of womenfolk will lead to sustainable development of the nation.

It is therefore important that contemporary initiatives must take note of the level of gender disparity in enrolment for programmes in tertiary institutions in the country to close gender gaps in all spheres of national life. It is also necessary to take concrete steps to eliminate the disparity.

RECOMMENDATION

It is important that current efforts to rebrand the educational sector must take cognizance of the level of disparities between males and females for all programmes at the tertiary educational level. In addition, a means should also be devised to bridge the gender gap. Some of the emerging issues in educational system that needs to be addressed with immediate solutions are as follows: Government policies in enrolment for tertiary institution should allow male and female have equal access to education in Nigeria. This is because gender disparity is one of the emerging issues in educational system. Religious and cultural beliefs should be eradicated in order to address the educational gap between male and female inequality in manpower positions. Female enrolment in tertiary educational system should be considered as highly emerging issues that need to be addressed as this will lead to better growth wage of employment apart from agricultural sectors. The national gender policy rules and regulations should be strictly followed by tertiary institutions in enrolment for male and female education. Also, critical areas of gender gap (economic participation, economic opportunity, educational attainment, health and well-being) should be bridged. This is the only way by which the millennium goal for eliminating gender disparity at all levels of the educational sector can be achieved in the country. Further studies may focus on student enrolment in Accountancy programme in state and private institutions respectively as these areas have not been exploited.

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