

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Women, education and work in Nigeria

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**This paper examines the implication of the growing educational opportunities for women in Nigeria. Although bias has existed from the traditional Nigerian society against women, recent events especially in education reveal a conquering of this deep-rooted prejudice. Enrollment figures particularly in the last ten years show a remarkable bridging of the gap between the genders. In other words, more and more women are acquiring tertiary education. However, it is the contention of this paper that, in view of the needs of development, education acquired becomes meaningful when utilized in the labour sector. Against this realization, this paper argues that the number of women who have acquired tertiary education is disproportionate to the number involved in the labour sector. Thus, a significant number of women with tertiary education do not get involved in the labour process in Nigeria. Therefore, there is under utilization of manpower and a negative return to investment in human resources. Such factors as the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian labour market, women attitudinal and psychological dispositions, choice of marriage partners by women among others are identified as responsible for the marginal participation of women in the formal labour sector. As a result, there is need for education to address the imperatives of development by liberating women from unfounded and baseless myths or stereotypes that keep them away from labour participation.**

**Key words:** Education, work, women, Nigeria, employment, development.

## INTRODUCTION

The contention that there was a bias against women in traditional Nigerian society is too obvious to scholars of history of education in the country. That women are the subjects of a growing national and international interest is unquestionable (Sator, 1992; Ekejiuba, 1991; Okonjo, 1991) and this interest stems from the acute recognition that women are crucial to social and economic development. The barrier placed against women's self-actualization especially in traditional Nigerian society was without recourse to the roles the women played in such society. Apart from the domestic tasks which may be seen as facts of socialization and convention, women were also very productive in the economic sphere of the Nigerian society.

Adeyokunu (1981) has reported that women in Nigeria are more involved than men in virtually all areas of agricultural activities ranging from farm clearing to processing. In spite of this, the women suffer and are victims of a social order that treats them largely as second position role players. Thus, gender bias against women ranges from labour market discriminations to exclusion from policy making. According to Mamman (1996), this

discrimination exacerbates poverty by preventing the majority of women from obtaining the credit, education, training, health services, child care and legal status needed to improve their prospects. One clear area of noted imbalance against women has been in the area of education. It is therefore not surprising that women's inadequate access to education has been seen as the source of the various discriminations that they suffer (Afigbo, 1991).

As a result, there has been a groundswell of agreement that women's lot and general socio-economic improvement of nations can be achieved through the acquisition of education and broad empowerment of women (Stephen, 1992; Palmer and Almaz, 1991; Caldwell, 1979). It is against this background that efforts to educate women in Nigeria have received a significant boost in recent times. Particularly worth mentioning in this regard is the efforts of informal groups and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in encouraging female education in the South and North of the country and the commitment of state governments in the North to an enhanced education for women. Some of these efforts manifest in the establi-

shment of special schools for girls and women education units in the education ministry of many states in Nigeria. Despite all these efforts women still lag considerably behind men in education (Ezeani, 1996), but there has been marked closing of the gap as more and more women take to formal education while some young men under the influence of distorted values in today's Nigerian society are lured away from schools.

As a result, the National Universities Commission Annual Reports since 1988 show a significant increase in the female enrollment figures in Nigerian Universities as against what it was half a decade before then. In addition to this fact, female enrolment in post-primary schools especially in Southern Nigeria has virtually caught up with male enrolment. Education per say, is the main tool for impacting skills and attitudes relevant to the contribution of the individual concerned to national development.

Ideally education trains manpower for the economy, helps to fully develop the potentials of individuals and help such individuals consummate employment opportunities (Ali, 1988; Okafor, 1971). In other words, formal education ideally enhances labour force participation of women since education is a critical variable in modern work situations. But more interesting is that education broadens experience of women and gives them access to new resources and skills (Shaheed, 1995). But these lofty aims of education are fulfilled only where the individual offers himself for employment and uses the opportunity of employment to make various contributions towards the development of his society.

Therefore, education acquired is only relevant to the extent it makes noticeable impact in the lives of the individual and society. It is in this sense that we are concerned with the ways and manner in which the growing educational empowerment of women will affect the Nigerian society. This concern derives from the fact that women have always been seen as not only late comers to the labour market but as also marginal to the labour process.

One likely cause of the above even in contemporary Nigeria in spite of the increase in the number of women with formal education may be seen in the adoption of the Women in Development (WID) approach to women's education which while improving access to education for women does not tackle the structural factors limiting the usage of this education to liberate women from patriarchal domination. A cause of worry in the Nigerian case in this regard is the fact that globally women's labour force participation has increased and at times even at the expense of the male rate (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2003/2004).

Globally, it is estimated that women labour force participation has increased from 36% in 1990 to 40% by 1997 (Razavi, 2003). Recent data indicate that, globally over the last five decades women's labour force participation has increased and women today make up over 45% of

the world's workforce with more women than ever before participating in the labour force or actively seeking for jobs (ILO, 2007). But besides the above general picture country specific data from the ILO and United Nations Population Division (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2003/04) show significant increase in female labour force participation in such countries as Japan, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand.

## THE SOCIOLOGICAL BASIS OF EDUCATION

Education generally concerns itself with the imparting of knowledge in people. Knowledge in this case can be seen as the corpus of instruction and social ethos, which hinge on the acquisition of abstract ideas, which makes for a refined mind and the acquisition of psycho-motor skills, which in turn makes for a skilled person or at least positions one in the right frame of mind to acquire the skill necessary for existence in an atomized social order. Thus, education is first and foremost a social tool that is imperative for the continued survival and growth of the human society.

Against this background, education whether formal or informal, assumes a heavy social context. It is apparently easy to figure out that the lack of social contextualization of education may be responsible for the inability of education to foster genuine development in many developing societies. It is not surprising that Hoare (1976) has expressed dissatisfaction at the predominance of conservative, rationalizing, romantic and democratic thoughts on education. He sees these as too retrogressive and inane to lead to a groundswell of activities and thought processes necessary for continued progress in any society. He sees sustainable or progressive education as the one that will have the following criteria:

- (a) As opposed to the conservative tradition, it should stress education as the development of critical reasoning in the individual, a questioning attitude towards all existing reality.
- (b) As opposed to the romantic school, it should embody a full acceptance of the social character of man, rejecting forever the notion of a pre-social dimension of human existence.
- (c) As opposed to rationalizers, it should insist on the active nature of the child's participation in the learning process and contest the mechanist conception of education as the transmission of fixed skills.
- (d) As opposed to the democratic tradition, it should be dialectical, treating all human reality as radically historical.

In spite of the radical dimensions of education as implied in the above prescriptions, it is obvious that it takes as its basis the progress of society and the socialization of the process of education in which man is the measure of all

things. Hoare's attempt to place education within a social pedestal as the commodity deemed necessary by society as a collective, which makes each individual better positioned to contribute to societal development and generally enhances the level of progress in society is a bold step in putting back education and learning where they rightly belong, that is, in the social system.

According to Connor (1957) the educational system is the elaborate social mechanism designed to bring about in persons submitted to it certain skills and attitudes that are judged to be useful and desirable in the society. This then means that education derives from the social system and exists to mainly satisfy the demands of this system. In this case, education even though with a universal orientation should be dynamic enough to reflect the socio-cultural realities of the society in which it takes place. The problems of development in many African countries may be related to the inability of most of these countries to fashion their educational systems to suit the demands of their societies which are peculiar and often different from those of the original owners of the educational systems being operated.

## THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

One dominant theoretical perspective on women education and economic development or empowerment is the women in development (WID) approach made popular by the World Bank and other UN agencies. This approach is based on the assumption that education leads to economic development and so policies and actions for greater access to education must be based on gender equity (Acker, 1994; King and Hill, 1993; Browne and Barrett, 1991). The WID approach which is still popular up till now owes its emergence in the 1970s to the demands of female economists and development professionals for equality of access and opportunities for women in key development programmes and initiatives.

The demand was anchored on the argument that development planning and macro-economic policies have hardly taken cognisance of women's experiences and needs. This has impacted negatively on women's status and exposed them to poverty especially in developing countries (Lindsey, 1997; Rathgeber, 1989; Boserup, 1970). Against this background the WID approach advocates for women's inclusion in economic and educational policies and sees this as a panacea for empowerment of women and more crucially improvement in families and national development. Incidentally the WID approach has been seen as not radically changing the situation in Sub-Saharan Africa in spite of decades of campaigns, programmes and initiatives or interventions (Stromquist, 1998).

As opposed to the above, the radical school of thought have questioned the belief that access to education leads to economic development or empowerment of women

(Graff, 1986; James, 1990; Hollos, 1998). Interestingly, the radical school disavows the focus on issues of access, participation and productivity in the labour market and calls attention to patriarchal ideologies and institutions that reduce the status of women and de-empower them (Hollos, 1998; Odora, 1993). Therefore, for the radical perspective even where women have access to education such access due to patriarchal factors often fails to address gender imbalance in power.

Hence in the case of women while the WID approach has resulted in strategies that now grant women equal access, the usage of education for empowerment in the form of gainful formal sector employment has been less than commensurate. It is along the above lines that this paper interrogates the often taken for granted direct relationship between formal education and formal sector labour participation of women. Hence, the above scenario is perhaps aptly captured in the contention, "while a minority of women acquire skills which equip them for paid employment, schooling has not fundamentally changed their subordinate position or challenged deep-rooted views of women's primary role as unpaid wife and mother" (Leach, 1998).

## WOMEN AND EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

It must be understood that historically education in Sub-Saharan Africa and even Asia was initially available only for males (EFA Report, 2003/2004). This then entails that women were from the onset disadvantaged in the formal employment sector since jobs in this sector are mainly negotiable through acquisition of education and skill. In fact women's late entrance into education and the tailoring of women's education to meet mainly domestic needs is not peculiar to Nigeria. Thus, it has been reported that even in Latin America where the expansion of the educational system started earlier, women were denied formal education during colonialism but often received instructions to enable them perform domestic tasks and raise their children (Avalos, 2003).

However, the coming of colonialism and the introduction of formal education changed the order of things. The first educational institutions in Nigeria were established by the Christian Missions. In fact, the Reverend Thomas Freeman of the Wesley Methodist Mission is credited with the establishment of the first formal school in Nigeria (Okoro, 1993). Following the example of the Methodists, other denominations such as the Roman Catholic, Anglican etc. involved themselves in the school enterprise. Thus, the first secondary school in the country, Lagos Anglican Grammar School was established in 1859 by the Church Missionary Society, around 1878 this initiative was followed by the Roman Catholic Mission with the precursor of the present St. Gregory's College and the Wesleyan Methodist Mission with the Methodist Boys High School, Lagos (Nduka, 1964).

Expectedly, the missionary venture in education was borne out of the desire to use the school and its curriculum to reinforce church doctrine. Hence, such schools at that time were largely pious, parochial and restrictive both in curriculum and organizational principles. Apart from the selfish aim of the missions, the colonial government needed clerks as well as teachers and other manpower required by the colony especially since the importation of all levels of manpower was not only impractical but beyond the budgetary allocations of the colonial government. Therefore, this education was neither the product of the social exigencies of the country nor rooted in the socio-cultural reality of the nation.

While at first, it was convenient for the administrators to leave education for the missionaries, they soon enough realized its futility. This arose from the realization that as more and more converts are won by the church and as more denominations staked their claims to different geographical zones of the country, the church as a whole began to emphasize the more spiritual aspects of its mission. Also, the competition among the denominations for new converts and the over-riding need to retain those already in the fold pushed secular education to the backburner of the missionary schools.

The involvement of the colonial government in education eventually was ostensibly borne out of a need to make education suited to the social needs of the society as well as equip the people of Nigeria mentally and otherwise to meet the challenges of nation building and self government. However, Ukeje (1966) has cast doubts on whether these noble objectives guided the colonial government since the educational system put in place was largely divorced from the life of the people and emphasized aspects of education with little contribution to development. This sort of education stressed the rejection of indigenous cultures while facilitating the adoption of foreign ones.

In spite of the discomfort this might have on educationists, there is always in existence some form of relationship between education and politics. In this sense, all or at least a significant number of educational issues are also political issues (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963). This is because educational considerations usually involve decisions about priorities especially in a situation where there are competing uses for scarce resources. In other words, decisions on education and educational policies mean, at least, indirectly decisions on resource allocation either immediately or in the future. Despite this fact, many scholars do not see this connection between the educational and the political and the over-riding nature of educational issues.

Hence, educational policies and government's involvement in education are sometimes solely motivated by political considerations. Thus, the colonial government ventured into education when it saw it as politically expedient. So also have the policies and actions of post-

colonial governments in Nigeria on education been well influenced by political considerations. While one cannot deny that, there have been profound changes in the educational system in Nigeria over the years, the point remains that taken as a whole; the educational system is still not anchored on the society's social rubric, culture or functional needs. Thus, the more educated one becomes the more alienated or distanced from his roots and culture he often becomes.

Be that as it may, women even in contemporary times still live in a male-dominated world that gives more preference to the man than the woman. In the area of education, this preferential treatment of the males has persevered. But an emerging reality today is that more and more women are getting educated thus narrowing the gap between them and the men. In fact, if this trend continues with the same momentum, it will take only a few years for the women to close the gap in education between them and the men in Nigeria. As interesting as this observation appears, it has implications for the formal labour sector and the development of the nation.

This is because as more women acquire education their percentage of the manpower resources of the nation increases. Therefore, more women are going to acquire the mental skill and capability necessary for work life. Besides the well known fact that the involvement of educated women in the labour force aids the development of society, there is also the positive impact this exerts on the women themselves. Thus, "the relationships between family, education and work are major influences on women's futures and on the patterns of incentives and costs facing families in deciding to send girls to school" (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2003/2004).

As a result, education produces the work force needed to keep the wheel of the economy turning. Education then contributes in concrete terms to development basically when those educated submit themselves to work and seek some form of actualization or fulfillment in the work process.

## **WOMEN, EDUCATION AND WORK**

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2007), 1.2 billion of the 2.9 billion workers in the world in 2006 were women. But the report goes on to state that while the gender employment gap is closing in some countries, trends vary from region to region. Thus, while 80 women per 100 men are economically active in the developed economies of the world, the ratio for Sub-Saharan Africa is lower at 75 women per 100 men. While the above picture remains valid, the fact is that in Nigeria there appears to be hardly a direct or one to one relationship between education and employment. Hence, the number of women in formal employment is not commensurate with the number of women with formal education. Moreover a disproportionate number of such economica-

ally active women are located in the informal sector where education is not a key variable in involvement.

Be that as it may, work can be seen as an activity that produces value for other people (Steers, 1981) and which is undertaken in return for payment, reward in money or in kind (Akpala, 1982). Work then refers to the participation of an individual in the labour process or employment. Generally, women's participation in the labour sector in Nigeria was given a boost by the demise of colonialism and the subsequent accelerated efforts at national development. Until the late 1960s, women were virtually not seen in the formal sector of the Nigerian economy. As a result, it was the atmosphere of general industrial development and urban growth that led to a change in orientation towards women as people who could also be meaningfully used in the economic process of the society.

Despite the contention of Grint (1991) and Rees (1990) that global changes as a result of industrial restructuring gave rise to women's involvement in paid employment, it is obvious that this involvement would not have been possible without women's possession of skills and education. Thus, until women in Nigeria became serious human resources with all manner of qualifications, just like their male counterparts, they were not considered as real contributors to the economic system. Prior to this, women were mainly seen as reserve mental and physical resources called upon only in an emergency to help in national development (Afigbo, 1991).

Interestingly, Pearson (1999), Cagatay and Ozler (1995) have related the increasing female labour force participation to the impact of the structural adjustment programme (SAP) which has meant declining real wages, declining government social provisioning and withdrawal or cut back on subsidies. These conditions have meant equally increased challenges of survival amongst families and may have forced many women to seek employment in order to ensure family survival. However, SAP may have meant more female labour participation in some cases, the reverse may be the case in some other countries especially those in transition and where there is increasing informalization of female labour (UNIFEM, 2000; Razavi, 2003). Therefore, the case which is a typical economy in transition may reflect more of the later case than former. This is particularly likely if one realizes that since the onset of the SAP in the mid 1980s in Nigeria, the informal economy which thrives on informalization of all forms of labour has emerged as a key sector of employment.

Women's first emergence as contenders in the formal labour or economic sector in Nigeria occurred in the area of teaching particularly at the primary school level. The considerable in-roads which women made in this area can be attributed to two main factors viz: women's possession of the qualification needed and their natural flair for teaching children; and men's increasing displeasure or

discontentment with teaching especially at the primary school level. The ILO (1992) projections up to 1980, taking cognizance of women's improved education see women as constituting about 7 million of Nigeria's labour force. But since 1980, women's participation in education especially at the tertiary level has improved significantly, thus by a one way logic, one would expect that a lot more women would be involved in the labour process in Nigeria now. But this optimism does not really take heed of the fact that the labour market in Nigeria may not actually be a free entry and exit domain for women. In this regard, women's labour force participation despite their increasing possession of education and skill may be fraught with some obstacles.

One of these obstacles is the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian labour market. In this sense, women may have to contend with the fact that men see themselves as the rightful owners of the formal economic sector and abundant socio-cultural practices support this. In fact, this re-echoes the contention of the radical school of thought that meaningful education for women should equip them to challenge the structural factors which limit their empowerment through education.

According to Fapohunda (1978), Nigerian women's modern economic sector behaviour is influenced by dynamic economic and social factors which invariably predispose employers to display bias against women. One other factor seen as adversely affecting women's employment is their productive roles which often entail working part-time or interrupting employment to raise children (Soroptimist, 2008). Also women face a good number of other constraints to formal employment besides education. Some of these include lower income in relation to men, low quality employment, sexual harassment and violence and exclusion from retirement and pensions (Rubery, 2004; ILO, 2008; UNIFEM, 2005).

Hence, the number of women who eventually get employed in the formal economic sector may not really reflect the increase in the number of women who are qualified to be there. Closely related to this, is the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society. Men are usually more likely to see their wives as first and foremost homemakers rather than fellow workers and partners in national development. This has led to a situation whereby many women despite their educational attainments or qualifications have been kept out of the economy because of the desire of the husbands. This is particularly the case where the man has the means with which to take care of the whole family.

Another great obstacle is that of women's attitudinal and psychological disposition at the work place. Many Nigerian women approach the labour market with the wrong mental and behavioural attitudes. One of this is the desire in some of them not to strive to prove the men wrong. Thus, they display attitudes and work orientations that show them as not hardworking, committed and not

able to shoulder work related pressures and stress. In other words, many take shelter in social bias against women workers and rather than throw themselves into their jobs, throw their jobs at the men. This creates the impression that women workers cannot be expected to be as productive as the men neither can they be relied upon in time difficulties or when work demands going the extra mile.

Worth noting again is the fact that women's choice of marriage partners also contributes to their eventual participation at the work place. This may create a situation whereby women do not seek employment despite the great investment made in their education because of the type of husbands they marry. Actually, it is no longer out of place to see a woman with enviable academic qualifications end up in the kitchen because she married a business man or trader who does not see any reason why his wife should exert herself in the work place when he has enough resources to keep the whole family comfortable. Therefore, we arrive at the uneasy realization that a lot of the women who work do it out of concern to earn money in order to complement their husband's income or are driven to work because of the non-existence of a male bread winner (in the case of divorced women, widows and single parents).

The above problems negate the perceived benefits of increasing access of women to education. Apart from its clear development impact, female education is seen generally as investment that yields high returns in terms of social and economic gains (King and Hill, 1993; Floro and Wolf, 1990). However, this optimistic outlook is realizable in such societies in which patriarchal counter-influences are at a minimum. In other words, socio-cultural factors generated by patriarchy influence women's usage of knowledge and skills acquired through education.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION**

There is no gain saying the fact that, the involvement of educated women in employment goes a long way in family and societal improvement. Thus, decent work and wages lift women and their children out of poverty (OECD Observer, 2005) and exerts a positive or significant impact on the growth of nations and development (World Economic Forum, 2007).

Development in this regard means to increase and expand the potentials of an individual or group in a positive direction. Development even though generally appreciated is not a very easy concept to define. An impressive statement of its complexity is perhaps borne in the contention of Tomori (1979) that development implies modernization of a society, entails the conversion of a peasant society into an industrial one and means a change in the whole way of life, in expectations and motivations and even in the physical environment of daily

life.

Therefore, development in spite of differences in semantics, lexically refers to individual and group growth and improvement, increase in coping capacity and general positive stride towards a better social pedestal. For Uchendu (1982) to conceive of development comprehensively is to comprehend it normatively and this means to underscore the role of education in the development process. In other words, education is a sure route to individual and group improvement or development.

In this case, education is more or less directly related to development. The more educated a nation's citizenry the more likely developed the nation in question. In the same vein, any economic system that fails to consummate its human resources because of gender differences cannot realize real or genuine development. It is in this sense that the education of women in Nigeria, their involvement in work and the effects of this on development becomes important.

The foregoing discourse points to the fact that as Afigbo (1991) has argued a harmonious and mutually acceptable reconciliation between the roles of women in social, economic and political development and their traditional role of the lynchpin of the family has not been achieved. Therefore, women still see themselves and are largely seen as mainly reserve role players whose domain of influence is strictly at the domestic front. This orientation is anti-development since by virtue of their population, the non-active participation of women in the economy cannot be anything but counter productive.

In addition to this, is the fact that education becomes a tool of development only when its fruits are realized in the process of work. In other words, education can contribute meaningfully to development where those educated submit themselves to work. Contrary to some opinions, women often turn out better workers than men after their initial fears and apprehensions have been allayed. Actually, they are often seen as possessing the submissiveness, kind nature and thoroughness that work demands (Onah, 1996). In this frame, women's participation at the work place may have been limited more by social impediments and dominant male biased Orientations than by the fact that they are not really suitable workers.

However, the point remains that women have most times been willing to conform to those societal notions that keep them out of work or see them as inadequate workers. Hence, their psychological dispositions and general work attitudes may have reinforced these notions. Definitely, while some women in Nigeria have risen to the challenge of the work place and excelled in the process, a greater number of women have gladly maintained a below average performance at the work place.

This is where the challenge to education in the views of the radical school of thought lies. The educational system in Nigeria should be tailored to liberate the individual from

unfounded and baseless myths and stereotypes while facilitating societal progress and positive transformation. This according to Hoare (1976) makes the democrats' and rationalizers' conceptualizations of education irrelevant, since they hardly emphasize the end to which the education is put. As a result, any educational system which does not make women realize that there is something inherently wrong with the non-utilization of the skills and aptitudes acquired is certainly inadequate, especially in a developing society that needs the participation of all to ensure growth. Women who possess good educational qualifications and end up only in some domestic front or kitchen make little use of the investment that their education constitutes.

In the case of a developing society like Nigeria, education can only be conceived as a form of investment in human capital (Schultz, 1971) and which is expected to yield some returns. The returns accrue as the individual involves herself in the economic sphere of the society and in the process contributes to the general development of the society. As Clark (1992) aptly posits the road to a successful career for anybody is through education, at the highest level.

## Conclusion

From the foregoing presentation, the thesis that education automatically translates to improved labour involvement or empowerment for women should be taken cautiously. Actually in the case of Zambia it has been argued that, schooling perpetuates gender imbalance or female subordination (Longwe, 1998). Longwe sees schools as mainly arenas permeated by values and rules of patriarchal social organization and where girls are simply conditioned and made to internalise and unquestionably accept their subordination to the males. In this sense, schools do not really equip the females to challenge male domination. In the case of Nigeria, the involvement of educated women in work has been hindered considerably by patriarchal ideologies.

Thus, the radical school of thought has aptly raised the need to look beyond access, participation or enrolment and focus on structural impediments. In other words, more critical to the quest for empowerment through education is the ability of the educational system to go beyond merely imparting knowledge or skills to include equipping the females to constantly challenge practices and beliefs that reinforce male domination in the work place. However, this is only realizable by a radical re-orientation of the products of the educational system. In the absence of the above, the Nigerian educational system would largely continue to produce females who in the views of Longwe (1998) are indoctrinated and acculturated into the prevailing male-biased systems who rather than seek transformation of such systems tend to

meekly accept them.

Education as stated elsewhere, is basically a form of investment in human capital. The rate of development of a nation is related to its investment in this human capital (Takubawskas and Palomba, 1983; Scott and Pearson, 1971). But education can only perform this task when those who possess this education use their skills and knowledge at the work place, be they females or males. A situation where a substantial number of educated people stay away from work and from participation in the economy because they are women will only create distortions and inequality in the growth or development process.

Therefore, one agrees totally with the submission that, "policy-makers and employers not only need to place women's employment in the centre of social and economic policies, they also need to recognize that the challenges faced by women in the world require intervention tailored to specific needs" (Soroptimist, 2008). It is along these lines that, one calls for the recognition of peculiar challenges which militate against women's labour force participation in Nigeria and the evolvement of policies or measures to tackle them.

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