

## **A survey of female participation in higher degree programmes in physical/health education and sports**

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### **Abstract**

The present paper attempts an historical examination of women in education vis-a-vis the present trend, and the trend of their participation in particular at the Department of Physical and Health Education and Sports.

The University of Ilorin was made a case study and the results showed a poor participation. The paper suggests a new orientation and gender order that would make for greater enablement of women participation in higher education.

Data gathering was from the postgraduate school of the University of Ilorin for data relating to higher degree statistics while data relating to staff strength was collected from the Academic Unit (Establishment) of the University. Four years study period was deemed appropriate to show the trend in graduation for the higher degree . In view of the poor general trend of female graduation in higher degree programmes and staff strength, the paper suggest a new orientation and gender order that would make for greater enablement of women participation in higher education, especially in fields regarded as masculine like sports education and physical and health.

**Key Words: Participation, programs, development, disparity, gender, education.**

### **Introduction**

In recent times, the world's focus has been on women. In Nigeria, the Federal Government initiated different enlightenment programs aimed at raising the awareness of the female folks and at ensuring their maximum participation in every aspect of National Development. It is believed that national productivity could be increased by up to fifty percent if the energies of women were nurtured and released

### **Trends in Education in Nigeria**

Before the European advent to Africa , there was the traditional mode of education. Children were taught among other things, how to be good citizens and to be well-integrated into a given society. Female education at that time, took the primary form of teaching the female how to cook, to keep the home, how to take care of the child, and basically how to be a good wife. This was usually under the tutelage of the mother, or female guardian and the older women that may be around her. They all saw the training of the child as their assigned responsibility, more so because of the communal feeling that existed in those days.

With the coming of the whitemen to Africa and Nigeria inclusive came the introduction of the Western form of education. First to be established by the Christian Missions were the primary schools, named after the missions establishing them. With time, secondary schools were established, also by the missions (before the government participation). The agitation for higher education led to the establishment of Yaba College of Technology before the establishment of University College of Ibadan in 1948 by the Colonial Government.

From the onset of the western form of education, girls were not encouraged to go to school because schooling was seen as irrelevant to the roles they would play in their adult lives. Many parents could not waste time, energy and money to invest in a female child, more so when the child would end up in another man's house at marriage.

As early as 1922, this situation had become a source of worry to many parents. There were agitations that "education of women and girls should receive much more serious consideration as to the quality". Calls from parents were made for a change in the quality because the few girls attending schools were made to concentrate on needlework, cookery, embroidery laundry and housewifery as their course-curricular. There were very few girls schools established even by the missionaries as compared to all male schools.

By 1947, girls were lagging behind boys in education and the curricular had not changed much (Muckerinhin, 1966). However by independence, there appeared to have been some visible change in the attendance of females in primary and secondary schools. For example, enrolment at the primary level in 1960 rose to forty percent as against the twenty percent of 1954 (Taiwo, 1992).

Many factors led to the increase in girls participation in education nationwide. The first important factor was the free education that paved way for female education in the West and the second factor was the policy of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme of 1976 in the whole country. Parents were not burdened by overhead cost like school fees and so could afford to send their children to school. The new National Policy on education revised in 1981, also specifically encouraged having them go in for the technical and vocational subjects. The Federal Government of Nigeria has also in recent times given some boost to female education. For example an all female secondary schools numbering twenty were established to bridge the gap between boys and girls education. Women units were established in the Federal and States Ministries of Education in the eighties. Also in some states, especially in the Northern part of the country like Niger and Kwara States, education is free for girls sometimes up to secondary school level. However, even though these efforts can be said to have yielded dividends, the impact seem to be significant only at the primary school level.

From the secondary school level to the university participation of girls in formal education has been dwindling, for graduate studies the same trend is noticeable. Participation of girls become even more critical at every subsequent level and in the so called "unfeminine" fields. Available data reveal that females in choosing subjects and courses to pursue follow the stereotype (i.e. traditional lines). For example in the 198/82 session of the final year students in technical and vocational schools in Anambra State, there were only 80 females in a population of over 800 students. And in some states of the federation e.g. Kano girls are said to shy away totally from the vocational and technical schools, subsequently their number is very insignificant in the schools (Blueprint on Women Education, 2009, Fagbemi, Ijaiya & Apata, 2010).

The poor state of female education , revealed above is however not peculiar to Nigeria. Horner (1982) noted that in the United States of America, there is a decline in the proportion of women seeking every level of higher education, even with the increased opportunity in that country. Career wise, even though the participation of adult women in the labour force rose from 20 percent to 45 percent from 1,900 – 1,974, it was still considered low (Troll, 1975). It was also observed that 45 percent of the technical and professional positions in USA were occupied by women. And in 1973, of all the registered nurses in the same country, women constituted 97 percent. Women also constituted 92 percent of all dieticians, 85 percent of all elementary teachers and 70 percent of health technicians. Whereas they made up just 2 percent of the engineers in that country, 5 percent of the attorneys, and 9 percent of the physicians (U.S. Department of commerce, 2003).

In conclusion, while it may be true to say that there has never been any deliberate policy in Nigeria to deny the females access to education, or career options, it may be equally true to say that different constraints within the social and cultural million, make women disadvantaged, and this is more pathetically so in fields like sports education and physical and health.

### **Statement of Problem**

Studies have shown that women are under-presented in many professional areas in Nigeria. In Nigerian Universities, their representation in Higher Degree programmes is disappointing. In the University of Ilorin their distribution in terms of higher degree participation and academic staff representation is very poor. As important as PHE is to National Development, there is dearth of studies in the area of female participation in this field especially in Higher degree programmes. This study therefore hopes to find out women's participation in higher degree programmes and academic staff positions in University of Ilorin with specific focus on the Department of PHE.

### **Methods of Study**

Data was collected from the graduate schools of the University of Ilorin on the sex ratio of those who have graduated in the last four years. The data collected for the staff strength was from the Academic Department of the University. The data on female participation in higher education from 1988 – 1991 are shown on table 1. The survey method of research was made use of. It aimed at finding out women's participation in PHE teaching specially.

### **Results**

The results of data collected is as presented on Tables 1 – 3, with a 4 year examination of graduating students on the masters and doctoral programmes, cum an examination of the level of participation of women on the teaching roll at the university. The results show that under the 4 years examined , no female student graduated in any science based faculty and in social science, there was one female graduand. There were more women granduands in the faulty of education during this period but none under the PHE Department.

The trend for the masters programme was better, though it was the same trend with no female in the PHE department, and while the faculty of education had the highest number of female participation for the academic staff; but noteworthy is the fact that there was no single female lecturer in the department of physical and Health Education which also “house” the sports education yet, the university does not lag behind other universities in the country in laurels especially at NUGA games. Maybe if there was a female lecturer, that could be a model for other female undergraduates who may want to model her since records show that the department does have many female graduands at the undergraduate level. Since a lecturer may also have a way of counseling the female wards under her even for their participation in higher education and may show others how she does cope with her various roles since it is believed that sports does hinder older women from their roles of child bearing and rearing and home making. In the faculty of Science, of the one hundred and two staff, only three were females. The faculty of Engineering and Technology had none at all. The same trend was also recorded in the faculty of Health Science.

Table 1  
Master Degree Awarded by the University of Ilorin by faculty and sex (1988-1991)

	Faculty	1988			1989			1990			1991		
		M	F	%F	M	F	%F	M	F	%F	M	F	%F
1	Agriculture	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	2	22.2	13	2	13.3
2	Arts	12	8	10	14	2	12.5	23	11	32.4	14	3	17.6
3	Business/Social Science	2	-	0									
							2			2			
	A) MBA	9	1	10	32	5	13.5	59	6	9.2	-	-	-
							1			1			
4	B) M.Sc.	8	-	0	15	3	16.7	10	1	9.1	2	-	0
5	C) MPA	10	1	9.1	23	3	11.5	27	1	3.6	2	-	0
6	Education	15	12	44.4	31	10	24.4	27	17	39.5	57	43	43
7	Engineering/Technology	-	-	-	3	-	0	3	-	0	5	-	0
	Health Sciences	-	-	-	1	2	66.7	2	1	33.3	4	-	0
	Sciences	-	-	-	13	7	35	20	2	9.1	28	2	6.7

Key:

M.Phil candidates

Number of names missing from data collection

Note that of the data from faculty of Education under which the PHE: Department is there was no female graduand during this period.

Table 2  
 Doctoral Degree Awarded by the University of Ilorin by faculty and sex (1988-1991)

	Faculty												
		M	F	% F	M	F	% F	M	F	%F	M	F	% F
1	Agriculture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Arts	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	33.3	2	-	0
3	Business/Social Science	-	-	-	4	-	0	1	-	0	1	1	50
4	Education	4	-	0	9	1	10	9	2	18.2	7	3	30
5	Engineering/Technology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	0
6	Health Sciences	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Sciences	-	-	-	4	-	0	-	-	-	8	-	0

Key:

During this period, there was no female graduand in physical and Health Education under the faculty of Education.

Table 3  
 Academic Staff the University of Ilorin by faculty and sex as at January 1992

	Faculty	Male	Female	% Female
1	Agriculture	31	5	13.8
2	Arts	64	8	11.1
3	Business/Social Science	52	4	7.1
4	Education	50	12	19.3
5	Engineering/Technology	44	0	0
6	Health Sciences	61	6	8.9
7	Sciences	99	3	2.9
8	Research Institute	6	0	0
9	GNS	2	1	33.3

Key:

- There was no single female physical and health education lecturer in the department of physical and health education.
- Female academics made 8.7% of total staff.

## Discussion

As could be observed from Table 1, the faculty of education consistently had a high percentage ratio of females as compared to the other faculties. This no doubt could be attributed to the general notion that teaching is a feminine profession and that it gives women the opportunity of taking care of the home. Another faculty with high

percentage of women was the faculty of arts, another supposed feminine area of study for women. One curious aspect was the non-availability at all throughout the period under study of any female in the faculty of Engineering either among the staff or among the graduate students. At the doctoral level, the same pattern followed and even in the faculty of science, there was no single female student. As at this period, there was also none in the PHE department. The general observation though is the low ratio of students graduating in the programme. This could be because of the high level of dropouts among new entrants to the programme. At the professional level of teaching the stereotype followed. It is worthy of note that of the almost one hundred lecturer in the faculty of science, just three were women. There was none for engineering and there were just six for the Health Science. Further, there was none in the PHE department.

It follows that even now, much still needs to be done to raise female participation at all levels of education. This is the only way by which more can move into the higher echelons of many professions. The poverty level of Nigerians also need to be reduced to enable a greater level of people the opportunity to participate in higher education.

## Conclusion

Females constitute the majority of Nigeria's population. Nigeria must seriously think of ways to join the global village if she is not to continue to be an on-looker. If this is the objective, then women cannot be left behind because of their numerical strength. Many development nations took special interest in the education of their females for maximal output. Nigeria must take steps towards this and should not leave the propaganda on paper. This is a task that must be done and the time to begin is now. There are still many professions that women still tend to shy away from, and this include the physical and health education unit. It is still higher dominated by men at the higher level. Even Nigerian sports women seem women seem to shy away from higher education while those who do not prefer to go abroad for higher degrees. Higher degree programme must be made appealing to Nigerian sports women by examining the factor that make studying abroad more appealing. Definitely, the social economics and political milieu in the country; has contributory factors and societal constraints must be broken for progress to evolve, for the society generally and women in particular, may be then, there could also be improvement in the attitude of women to higher studies in PHE

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