Gender Issues in Contemporary African Education

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Résumé: *Alors que la plupart des pays africains affichent une inégalité dans l'accès, la survie et les performances des femmes par rapport à l'éducation; les études démontrent les bénéfices de l'éducation pour tous. Les systèmes d'éducation en Afrique n'ont pas modifié le statut de la majorité des femmes. L'éducation et le développement devraient être réorientés vers une redéfinition des concepts-clés et de leurs relations, et vers une meilleure planification du genre, pour augmenter le volume et améliorer la qualité des activités qui lui sont liées. Il est urgent de rendre la planification, l'analyse et les dispositifs de l'éducation plus sensibles au genre et de mettre en place une approche et un modèle conceptuel capables de l'intégrer. L'auteur passe enfin en revue l'état actuel des performances et des services en matière d'éducation, ainsi que les stratégies d'intervention jusque-là adoptées.*

Introduction

Gender issues in politics, law and social movements unlike in education have a relatively longer and now familiar (international) history. In 1945, the United Nation's charter established the principles of equality and in 1946, the commission on the status of women was created to formulate guidelines and actions aimed at improving the status of women in politics, economics, social, cultural and educational fields. Twenty-nine years later, with a conference in Mexico city, the United Nations (UN) declared 1975 as the international year for women. This marked the beginning of a more direct and active approach by the UN to women's issues, the genesis of which lay in the critique of gender insensitive development planning. As a direct consequence of the conference, 1975-1985 was declared as a decade for women. The objective was to gather information on the status of women and to recommend strategies for improvement to the UN, other international bodies and member states. Significant accomplishments of the decade include:

i) two international conferences on women held in Copenhagen and Nairobi in 1980 and 1985 respectively. The Nairobi conference in which 157 countries were represented including no less than 40 African states adopted the Nairobi Forward Strategies for the Advancement of Women covering the period 1986 - 2000.

ii) the convention on the elimination of discrimination against women, was concluded in 1982 and has been ratified by 119 countries.

iii) a wider and higher level of discourse concerning women's issues leading to the rise to prominence of the women's movement and the appearance of feminist publications and writings.

A good deal of this discourse involved calling attention to the subordinate position of women in relation to men and aimed at gaining equity for women in the development process, as women are seen as active participants themselves. This produced the women in development (WID) approach which has been a dominant paradigm for explicating women's issues as well as for proffering solution strategies. The WID approach, in popular use since the 1950s had a propensity for restricting development to economic development, higher production, higher incomes, efficiency and profit all of which were believed would somehow reduce the poverty and increase the empowerment of women (Okeyo 1989, Moser 1989, Longwe 1990). Scant attention is given in the WID approach to the multidimensional and complex ways in which education affects economic development. The emergence of gender politics in education is testimony that WID and WIE (women in development and women in environment), two of the most favoured conceptual platforms for addressing gender issues are insufficient to reach the desired result of gender equity. The timing of this development is not indicative of the current popularity which education enjoys, but a response to targets set by significant world bodies which, in concert, converge on the now (magic) year 2000.

The 1985 Nairobi conference adopted the Forward Looking Strategies (FLS) for the advancement of women during the period 1986 to 2000, in which education strategies feature. In 1990, the world summit for children, which was not primarily an education sector affairs, recommended among others that:

> *By the year 2000, universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80% of primary school age children;*
> *Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to at least half of its 1990 level with emphasis on female literacy, universal access to primary education with special emphasis for girls and accelerated literacy programmes for women;*
> *Universal access to basic education, and achievement of primary education.through formal schooling or non-formal education of comparable learning standard, with emphasis on reducing the current disparities between boys and girls* (UN 1990:20-22).

Earlier in 1990, the world conference on education for all, which was organised in response to the concern over the deteriorating conditions of

education systems during the 1980s had as one of its aims, the removal of the disparity between male and female literacy by the year 2000. The world charter on education for all, which the conference adopted, is based on the principle that every individual has a right to education and emphasised the key role which education plays in the safety, health and prosperity of the world in general.

In 1995 in China, the world (in its fourth conference on women) is again to assess the FLS to determine progress with and persisting impediments to gender equity. World regions, governments or states will report on country and region-specific strategies which have been implemented in education and other sectors.

Africa, with its recent history of economic crises, structural adjustment programmes, declining budgetary allocation to education coupled with the political, cultural and religious relegation of women, will also be represented in Beijing, China in 1995. The challenge for the year 2000 is great. Considering that if present trends continue, as estimated by UNESCO, the number of illiterates in the world will drop by the year 2000, but in parts of the developing world, there will be more illiterates, and recalling that 'three-quarters of the world's illiterates live in 10 countries', three of these, African, the African picture is grim. Women are chief victims of illiteracy. In 1985, the illiteracy rate for men world-wide was 21%, but 35% for women. Less than 40% of women in Africa can read or write. The illiteracy rate in sub-Saharan Africa for men is 41% and 64% for women. It is estimated that there are about 26 million girls out of school and over 90% of African countries have lower female enrolment rates; a condition which cannot be accounted for on the basis of demography. Africa is trailing other regions of the world in eradicating illiteracy. The average illiteracy rate in the East/Oceania is 33.6%, 17% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 2.6% in OECD countries. Against this background, the question, whither African education, is irresistible.

The Pan-African conference on the education of girls, held in Burkina Faso in 1993 observed that:

> *The millions of girls out of primary schools in Africa is concrete evidence of the short-comings in our efforts to establish national education systems as well as indication of the distance between the present situation and achieving education for all targets. As we approach the 21st Century,..... the priority is to redress this situation..* adopted the Ouagadougou declaration which *calls upon governments, international and bilateral agencies, non-governmental organisations and politicians to establish the education of girls as a priority, to set targets, to provide appropriate levels of resources... (p.4).*

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To accomplish the above stated goals, a new vision for African education is critical. An expanded dimension offered by Jomtien which includes schooling, non-formal educational activities, adult literacy, and life-skills training is desirable. Only when this new dimension of education becomes widely operative can we use education to resolve the issues of women's subordination, to bring about social change bearing gender equity. To date, systems of education have not succeeded in bringing about real change in the status of the majority of women in Africa, betraying the faith the first generation of leaders of African states reposed in the powerful potential of formal education for bringing about structural change and development. Improving the status of women will therefore require a reorientation of development and development efforts, a redefinition of key concepts such as education and empowerment, and gender development planning to improve the range and quality of integrated gender responsive operations. A conceptual approach to gender issues in education is of immediate necessity to improve the gender sensitivity of educational provision and analysis, and to offer an acceptable or common approach for addressing gender issues in education.

This paper represents a call for attention to gender issues in education; to conscientise and sensitise a wider spectrum of operators to the influence of gender on the process and product of education and the concomitant effects, on gendered roles, of education. The aim is to provide a contemporary picture of the education of women in Africa by highlighting the trends, issues and problems; discuss strategies which have been adopted, their levels of success; and suggest strategies, directions and a conceptual model for the future.

The Contemporary Picture

In spite of the fact that improving and widening access to education was a major goal of African governments particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, the history of educational provision to date is a catalogue of enduring inequality between boys and men and girls and women. Although educational opportunities have indeed greatly expanded for all children in Africa, there is still an under-representation of females in school. The decades of the 1980s and 1990s are likely to go down in history as reversing the educational gains of earlier decades on account of the effects of structural adjustment programmes and economic crises. Consequently the disparity in educational opportunity, access and achievement is likely to widen to the growing disfavour of females in a large number of African states. The state is often implicated in resistance and sometimes, obstructions to policies which propose gender equity.

Government action is usually delayed and tame. For instance, the Nigerian national policy of education adopted in 1977 which enunciates

government actions with respect to all educational issues and based on objectives which include the building of a just and egalitarian society, made only perfunctory mention of women education. This action, coming two years after the commencement of the UN declared decade for women is indicative of the timeliness (or lack of it) of government action in this regard. It was not until after 1986 (the end of the decade) that the Nigerian Government organised the preparation of a blue print on women education, the national policy on women is still a draft document. Yet Nigeria was one of the 17 African states which ratified the UN Convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women before July, 1985, along with Cape Verde, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Zaire and Zimbabwe. A still sizeable number of African states have not ratified the convention including a disproportionately large number of predominantly Islamic states (Longwe 1990).

Forty-one African countries were represented at the Pan-African Conference on the Education of Girls in 1993 where a consensus was reached to address the education of girls and females as a priority in Africa. The Conference adopted the Ouagadougou declaration as a regional follow-up to the education for all initiative inaugurated during the 1990 world conference on education, in Jomtien, in line with the framework for action to meet basic learning needs. The picture which seems to emerge from the ratification of conventions and the consensual adoption of conference declarations (Arusha, Nairobi, Lagos, Abuja, Ouagadougou) among African states suggests a great deal of policy acceptance and government rhetoric at variance with actual policy implementation within individual countries. Although there is some variation between countries of the region, the story of gender inequity is persistent at all levels of formal school systems.

Primary Education

This level of formal education, for between two and three decades after independence, was expanded with zeal as a direct consequence of the political pressure to show results. States, freshly emerging from the yoke of colonialism, with high nationalistic fervour, and a strong faith in the theory of human capital as a key element in the transformation and development of societies, pursued the universalisation of primary education with vigour. Although only a few states have been able to achieve universal primary education, considerable progress was made in the 1960s and 1970s. By the middle of the 1980s declining enrolments were characteristic of Angola, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique and Tanzania. These early efforts at expansion were not gender sensitive although the percentage of females attending primary schools generally increased with gross primary enrolments. (Annex 1 shows the enrolment figures for all the countries of

the region between 1970-1985). The primary level records the highest and best percentage representation of females in the school system but in the period 1970-85, only two African Countries, Botswana and Lesotho, had primary school enrolments for females exceeding 50%. In all the other countries female enrolments trail those of males by margins sometimes as large as 40 percentage points. Figures for the 1980s show improvements within the average range of three-five percent points but no parity in the majority of states between the percentage of females and males in primary schools in Africa, with Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho and Tanzania as the exceptions, as Table 1 shows:

Table 1: Female Percentage of Primary Enrolments
83/84 - 88/89

Country	%	Country	%	Country	%
Somalia	36. -	Malawi	42.45	Tanzania	49.50
Mali	37.37	Guinea Bissau	33.36	Nigeria	- 45
Niger	36.36	Rwanda	48. -	Zaire	43. -
Burkina Faso	37.38	Benin	33.34	Botswana	53.52
Guinea	32.31	Gambia	38.39	Zambia	47.48
Mauritania	39.41	Liberia	40. -	Kenya	48.49
Ethiopia	38.39	Cote d'Ivoire	41. -	Togo	39.39
Chad	27.30	CAR	35.38	Madagascar	48.49
Burundi	40. -	Mozambique	43. -	Cameroun	46. -
Sudan	41. -	Ghana	44.45	Lesotho	58.55
Senegal	40.41	Swaziland	50.50	Sierra Leone	41.38
Mauritius	49.49	Uganda	43. -	Gabon	49. -
Zimbabwe	48.49	Angola	46. -	Congo	49. -

Note: Early figures not available.

Source: Adapted from World Bank 1988, Assie-Lumumba, N'Dri, T, 1983.

It is not expected that dramatic improvements will appear in the early 1990s except in the few states which have made successes of the structural adjustment programmes. By 1995 therefore the picture in Africa with respect to female enrolment in the primary level will be fairly similar to that in the late 1980s. However it is expected that dramatic changes will occur within

countries from year to year and between regions as a reflection of the level of commitment and action specifically aimed at eliminating the gender inequity in educational opportunity and access. In Nigeria, Kenya and Namibia, for example, differences of over 20 percentage points between districts and states have been recorded. Tables 2 and 3 show primary school enrolments by gender and district or state in Kenya and Nigeria. The figures show that districts and states (Mandera, Wajir, Sokoto, Taraba) with similar socio-cultural and religious values orientations in respect of women's role within traditional social and economic settings tend to have lower enrolments, an issue for consideration.

Progression within primary school and onto the next level of formal education also retains the disadvantaged position of females as does completion of primary schooling. Fewer females than males reach and complete the final grades of primary school making worse an already poor situation. Promotion, repetition and completion rates, used as indicators of efficiency suggest that females in primary schools are less efficient; suffering higher attrition rates. Higher drop out and repetition rates for females suggest an interaction between the structural and curricular components of education and socio-cultural variables inimical to the persistence of females within the educational system; a situation in need of urgent attention. In Kenya out of a total of 417,425 girls enrolled in 1984, 58.4% dropped out, almost 5% higher than the corresponding male drop-out rate. The primary school enrolment figure of 1,199,234 females in Nigeria in 1984 had shrunk to 677,846 by the time the cohort of girls were in primary six. For every additional year of schooling fewer and fewer females are enrolled as the figures in Table 4 show, in the case of Nigeria.

African countries are preponderant among the developing countries classified as low and very low on the UNESCO basic education index (1993) which employs five indicators including the male/female disparity to determine their relative positions on a scale of basic educational provision. The female/male literacy gap for each country in the region is as shown in Table 5, and it represents the gender inequity in past efforts to provide basic education.

Table 2: Primary School Enrolment in Kenya 1991

District	Enrolment		Total Pupils	Girls' Participation as a % of total	Rank
	Boys	Girls			
Nyeri	86,453	88,585	175,038	51	1
Thika Municipality	5,823	6,076	11,899	51	1
Meru	143,630	148,958	292,588	51	1
Kakamega	198,026	204,350	402,376	51	1
Muranga	136,757	135,857	272,614	50	5
Kiambu	106,590	106,851	213,441	50	5
Kirinyaga	53,464	54,868	108,332	50	5
Nyandarua	51,354	50,578	101,932	50	5
Uasin Gishu	47,070	47,502	94,572	50	5
Bungoma	115,001	114,933	229,934	50	5
Nandi	65,117	64,362	129,479	50	5
Keiyo Marakwet	34,975	34,899	69,874	50	5
Nyamira	59,299	58,073	117,372	50	5
Kisii	106,253	105,910	212,163	50	5
Kitui	92,815	91,085	183,900	50	5
Machakos	215,109	215,225	430,334	50	5
Embu	54,584	55,292	109,876	50	5
Mombasa	33,683	32,215	65,898	49	18
Taita Taveta	30,893	30,037	60,930	49	18
Nairobi	75,926	73,639	149,565	49	18
Baringo	42,151	40,987	83,138	49	18
Nakuru	96,418	94,134	190,552	49	18
Kericho	136,627	130,767	267,394	49	18
Laikipia	31,561	30,551	62,112	4	18
Trans Nzoia	47,332	46,347	93,679	49	18
Eldoret Municipality	9,059	8,866	17,925	49	18
Nakuru Municipality	16,298	15,573	31,871	49	18
Caesium Municipality	15,716	15,003	30,719	49	18
Cadelle Municipality	3,930	3,696	7,626	48	29
Siaya	98,044	92,011	190,055	48	29
Caesium	75,158	50,501	145,659	48	29
Lamu	7,381	6,709	14,090	48	29
South Nyanza	151,790	131,340	283,130	46	33
Kajiado	25,493	20,155	45,648	44	34
Narok	40,217	31,677	71,894	44	34
Busia	67,116	51,576	118,692	43	35
Isiolo	6,958	5,241	121,99	43	35
Tana River	12,600	9,410	22,010	43	35
Kwale	43,071	32,320	75,391	43	35
Kilifi	70,518	51,367	121,885	42	40
West Pokot	24,010	18,727	427,87	41	41
Marsabit	9,168	5,695	14,863	38	42
Turkana	20,596	12,022	32,618	37	43
Samburu	8,767	5,004	13,771	36	44
Wajir	6,783	3,105	9,888	31	45
Garissa	8,687	3,522	12,209	29	46
Mandera	8,701	3,423	12,124	28	47
Total	2,796,972	2,659,024	5,455,996	46	

Source: Government of Kenya and UNICEF 1992a.

Table 3: Primary School Enrolment in Nigeria, 1992

State	Boys	Girls	Total	% Boys	% Girls
Abuja (FCT)	4621	4572	9193	50.27	49.73
Abia	10298	10462	20760	49.67	50.33
Adamawa	13163	10349	23512	55.98	44.02
Akwa Ibom	33271	34380	67651	49.18	50.82
Anambra	15672	15055	30727	51.00	49.00
Bauchi	18989	12423	31412	60.45	39.55
Benue	29259	25560	54819	53.37	46.63
Borno	14421	11492	25913	55.65	44.35
Cross River	13893	13881	27774	50.02	49.98
Delta	16084	15075	31159	51.62	48.38
Edo	25726	23787	49513	51.96	48.04
Enugu	21360	23981	45341	47.11	52.89
Imo	18240	17867	36107	50.51	49.49
Jigawa	13334	9110	22444	59.41	40.59
Kaduna	22340	16053	38398	58.19	41.81
Kano	27148	17326	44474	61.10	38.90
Katsina	13955	9240	23195	60.20	38.80
Kebbi	5713	2999	8712	65.55	34.45
Kogi	12393	11902	24295	51.00	49.00
Kwara	11026	9318	20344	54.20	45.80
Lagos	29385	30730	60115	48.88	51.22
Niger	10347	6228	16575	62.43	37.57
Ogun	17160	16543	33703	50.92	49.08
Ondo	23053	22590	45643	50.50	45.50
Osun	15175	14600	29775	50.97	49.03
Oyo	30917	31020	61937	49.91	50.09
Plateau	22337	18053	40390	55.30	44.70
Rivers	17260	17274	34534	49.97	50.03
Sokoto	17042	6334	23376	72.90	27.10
Taraba	12109	7319	19428	62.32	37.18
Yobe	12412	7710	20122	61.68	38.32
Total	525763	457180	982943	53.48	46.52

Source: Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF 1992.

Table 4: Primary Enrolment by Class in Nigeria
1985/86, 1989

Year	Class	Number of Females	Drop-outs (%)
1985/86	Primary 1	1,226,455	219,162 (17.9)
	Primary 2	1,007,293	219,162 (17.9)
	Primary 3	954,785	52,508 (5.2)
	Primary 4	918,897	35,888 (3.8)
	Primary 5	852,023	66,874 (7.3)
	Primary 6	768,865	83,158 (9.7)
	Sub Total	5,732,318	457,590 (8.0)
1989	Primary 1	1,339,814	
	Primary 2	1,084,876	254,938 (19.0)
	Primary 3	3,999,417	85,459 (7.9)
	Primary 4	852,352	147,065 (14.7)
	Primary 5	769,426	82,926 (9.7)
	Primary 6	677,846	91,580 (11.9)
	Sub Total	5,723,731	661,968 (11.6)

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria, 1990.

Secondary, Technical and Tertiary Education

Secondary level enrolment figures are characteristically lower than those for the primary level and the disparity betwe. 1 the sexes is even wider to the greater disadvantage of females. Annex 2 which presents secondary/second level enrolment figures for the region between 1970 and 1986 shows that Botswana, Lesotho, and Seychelles are the only countries with percentage female enrolment higher than 50, that is representing half the number of all enrolments. Generally female enrolment is ten percentage points lower at each successive level of formal education in the region. So while the mean for female enrolment is about 44% at the primary level, it becomes 33% and 22% at the secondary and tertiary levels respectively. Female under-representation is sharpest in technical and tertiary educational institutions in Africa. Lesotho is the only country in Africa which in 1982 recorded 59% of the total enrolment in the tertiary level as females. Other countries recorded female enrolment percentages ranging from 10-44 (World Bank 1988).

The percentage of female enrolments in technical and tertiary institutions has however increased steadily since the 1960s. For example in Nigerian tertiary institutions the percentage of females enrolled grew from less than 10% in 1960 to 14.4% in 1970, 20% in 1980 and 27% in 1990, with the greatest gains in the liberal arts and education and least inroads in Technology and Engineering fields. Similar trends are observable in Burundi, Congo and Uganda while countries such as Angola and Botswana

had percentages of female enrolment higher than the current regional mean in 1960. The Seychelles' picture of female enrolment in tertiary level institutions is a-typical with 77% in 1960 and 93% in 1970.

Table 5: Female/Male Literacy Gap in Basic Education

Country	Index**	Country	Index**
Ghana	.73	Gabon	.66
Morocco	.62	Tunisia	.76
CAR	.48	Botswana	.78
Malawi	.75	Egypt	.54
Uganda	.66	Algeria	.65
Senegal	.48	Zambia	.81
Tanzania	.95	Kenya	.73
Burundi	.65	Zimbabwe	.82
Angola	.51	Libya	.67
Mozambique	.47	Cameroun	.64
Sierra Leone	.37	Lesotho	1.05
Mauritania	.45	Togo	.54
Sudan	.27	Cote d'Ivoire	.60
Chad	.42	Madagascar	.83
Ethiopia	.69	Congo	.63
Guinea	.40	Rwanda	.58
Niger	.42	Benin	.49
Liberia	.58	Nigeria	.63
Mali	.59	Zaire	.73
Somali	.39		

Source: UNESCO, 1973.

Notes: * Basic education includes primary education and some years of secondary education.

** The higher the index to 1 the more equitable. Figures above 1 indicate that females are more favoured.

Table 6: Enrolment in Nigerian Universities
1980-1990

Enrolment			
Year	M/F	Female	% Female
1980/81	33,910	6,845	20.2
1981/82	36,456	7,161	19.6
1982/83	37,777	8,774	23.2
1983/84	43,522	10,327	23.7
1984/85	46,260	10,852	23.5
1985/86	48,468	11,862	24.5
1986/87	53,844	13,925	25.8
1987/88	57,489	15,585	27.1
1988/89	63,297	17,999	28.4
1989/90	62,452	17,384	27.8

Source: Federal Government of Nigeria, 1990.

Adult Literacy and Pre-Primary Education

The provision and consequently access to formal literacy classes and pre-primary education is not as extensive as that in other levels. In some countries, national policies of education specifically enunciate significant and worrisome non-involvement in pre-primary education (Zambia, Tanzania, Nigeria) with government provision earmarked to commence for individuals at officially declared school ages of six or seven years. Most of the provision at this level is therefore in the hands of private individuals, NGOs and religious groups. Generally however the percentage of females in these facilities is closer to half the total number enrolled than at any other level. In Kenya for example in 1991, of a total enrolment of 834,640, for the zero — three year age group, 407,516 were females — a difference of less than on percentage point.

High levels of involvement and advocacy by non-governmental organisations and international organisations notably UNESCO have sustained the inadequate provision of adult literacy in Africa in general compared with the level of need. Tables 7 and 8 provide figures for adult literacy enrolments in Kenya and Nigeria for the period 1979-1991 (1985-90 in the case of Nigeria). Adult literacy is prone to oscillations unlike the steady growth of provisions in other levels.

Table 7: Adult Literacy Enrolment in Kenya
1979-1991

Year	Male	Female	Total
1979	93,866	321,208	415,074
1989	89,053	309,824	398,877.
1981	76,351	295,651	372,002
1982	74,481	273,319	347,800
1983	74,276	269,612	343,888
1984	57,188	205,544	262,732
1985	38,497	132,550	171,047
1986	51,367	174,865	226,232
1987	38,602	105,880	144,482
1989	33,543	100,383	133,926
1990	37,093	110,847	147,940
1991	30,123	97,984	128,107
Grand Total	69,440	2,397,667	3,092,107

Source: Government of Kenya and UNICEF 1992.

Table 8: Adult Literacy Enrolment in Nigeria
1985-1990

Year	Total enrolment	Female	% Female
1985	509,820	171,783	33.7
1986	486,432	161,502	33.2
1987	622,451	206,195	33.1
1988	791,913	320,674	40.5
1989	697,537	291,811	41.8
1990	772,845	314,976	40.8

Source: Federal Government of Nigeria 1990.

The overall picture emerging from the facts and figures presented in this paper is of greater inequity of access, survival and performance at all levels in most of Africa, greater difficulty, measured in terms of completion and attainment levels for females and the feminisation of certain fields of study at the tertiary levels. These are the major issues in contemporary African

education from a gender perspective. The question which naturally follows concerns the reasons for this state of affairs.

In the next section of this paper, an attempt is made to briefly identify some of the more culturally relevant and intractable factors which have been shown to explain the persistent gender imbalance in the educational achievement of females as a group as opposed to pockets of males in one locality or other (e.g. Nigeria-Anambra, Abia).

The Constraining Factors

Whereas country after country in Africa show the familiar pattern of female under-representation, discrimination, bias and inequity, study after study show unequivocally the expansive benefits of education for the individual, society, nation and continent, (Klien 1984; Alele Williams 1986; Eshete 1992, UNESCO 1993; Johnson 1992; Kihoro 1992; Jacobson 1992; Johnson 1990). A good deal of writing has also concerned itself with unearthing and explaining the underlying factors (Osinulu *et al*. 1993; Etta 1993; Okebukola 1993; Assie-Lumumba 1993, Namuddu 1993). The single most inclusive factor is the culture. The culture of female subjugation, the religious culture, social customs, traditions, the culture of the school, or the national culture of paying lip service to the issue of gender inequity in education. Biological/genetic differences account for sex differences but cultural factors explain differential role allocation on men and women with men commanding more power than women; power to make decisions, effect them and control events. Modernisation, commercialisation, marginalisation, and the feminisation of work roles or occupations reduced the value of reproduction and work that was perceived as feminine — usually meaning those preponderantly done by women. Both Christianity and Islam also brought with them the western and eastern values whose hallmarks were manifested in the different status and positions of power attainable by man and woman. In the catholic church, priests are male and most key sacraments can only be given by priests. Christianity's Old Testament woman was created from Adam's rib as his 'help mate' a situation which lends itself to interpretations of female inferiority and male superiority.

The fourth Sura of the Quran verse 34 declares that:

Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient (WIN 1985:12).

At the national societal or community levels cultural influence is played out in traditions, customs. attitudes, preferences, collective expectations and fears.

Perhaps the most pervasive traditions and therefore potent sources in Africa of influence are those which concern the value of children.

Practically all African societies value children and a good number prefer male offsprings. Male offsprings are particularly valued for the continuity in family name. Males unlike females will more often not change their names and in traditional sedentary agricultural societies, are far less likely to relocate on marriage because of patrilocal marriage customs. Females as a consequence of marriage in patrilineal societies commonly change their names, losing their family names to adopt husbands' family names. This silent preference which translates into the differential value placed on children influences the socialisation, rearing and caring practices and even nutrition which ultimately manifests in development, attainment and achievement differentials.

Boys are generally socialised to be inquiring, adventurous or venture-some, to subdue, conquer or at the very least understand nature while girls are expected to be obedient, malleable, traditional preservers of nature. The tragedy in the situation is that women are themselves the chief agents of this socialisation which confers inequality on their kind. It is not so much the inequality as the effect of the socialisation which is inimical to educational attainment and achievement. Boys and girls, men and women therefore enter (when they have access) the contest called education with differential attributes some more congenial to success, which have to a significant extent been shaped by their socialisation experiences.

Aspects of interaction within the family, marriage, occupation, work or production can also explain gender inequality in education.

Within the family, the male head of the household wields a disproportionate amount of power and control over the children. All major decisions regarding children are taken by men. This tendency is ratified and sustained by customary, muslim and even statutory law. In the rural areas, the produce of family farms is directly controlled by the family head who in a great number of cases, is male. There is however, a growing degree of independent income in commodity production and factory work, in contemporary Nigeria. With independent incomes women can more readily purchase for their children school materials such as books, pencils, pens etc. These are usually provided by mothers in polygamous family situations as the fathers more commonly provide school fees and sometimes uniforms where required. When mother's income is not sufficient to provide these materials for school, this acts as a disincentive for continued schooling. Where the number or the gender of children to be catered for in this manner is multiple, the decisions regarding who gets supplies are usually in favour of males. With increasing economic difficulty in Africa more and more females within families are having to bear the opportunity cost for male sibling persistence in the educational system. Although the mean age of marriage in Africa is 18 years, early marriage is common in some parts of Africa. Girls as young as 10-12 can be married off to much older men.

With marriage come the roles, duties and responsibilities of wife, the heavy double or triple burden which has been a subject of much discourse in gender issues. In attempting to bear the responsibilities of wife to the acclaim or simply, acceptable expectation of the family, wives have little time for education. Early marriage was found in Nigeria to be the single most significant factor explaining female drop-out from primary schooling.

The phenomenon of 'bride price' is a familiar feature in Africa? This practice is a major contributor to the reproduction of dependent relations. The wife so 'purchased' is the husband's property over whom proprietary rights are wielded, which are manifest in a variety of forms. Wives can re-enter the educational system usually only with tacit approval and often financial support from their husbands. Most married females are encouraged, placed and supported in schools by their husbands. Although men are increasingly acknowledging the beneficial effects of educating their wives, the lower number of females re-entering the educational cycle after discontinuation can be explained by the attitudes and beliefs of husbands.

In the case of some muslim wives the policy of seclusion guarantees that a significant proportion of muslim women in Islamic countries are excluded from education (Longwe 1990).

On the death of a husband a widow endures a number of restrictions including seclusion, for extensive periods sometimes up to one year. These long periods of seclusion during which normal activity cannot be engaged in influence attendance in formal educational institutions. More females whose fathers died prematurely do not 'complete' schooling. Inheritance laws, customary and statutory, also exacerbate the problem of financial deprivation in widowhood. Often banking laws do not allow widows to withdraw money from deceased husband's accounts.

Other practices which are culturally unfavourable to the education of girls include circumcision, attitudes to pregnancy and childbirth practices. According to the WIN Document (1985) 'female circumcision or clitoridectomy is widely practised in Nigeria, among Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Ibibio and several others in Bendel State. This practice which involves surgery may lead to infections and other health problem which could lead to long absences from school.

Prominent in pregnancy are food taboos which prohibit the consumption of some foods e.g. eggs, chicken, parts of animals e.g. heart, liver, kidney and some vegetables. The consequence of this is that the health status and consequently energy levels of pregnant women is poor (Aina, Etta and Zeitlin 1992). This would affect performance (even cognitive) and continuation in educational pursuits. Food taboos are also in place for young females with similar effects. Food apportionment also tends to disfavour females.

Attitudes and practices regarding childbirth also influence educational access. Most customs prescribe a period of confinement before and immediately after birth. After birth among some Africans, a woman is expected to observe a period of seclusion. All these periods in seclusion are not taken care of in the planning and execution of formal education calendars with the result that women in the active child bearing age are disadvantaged, or marginalised. Even fairly routine tasks like immunisation/health/child care attendance at clinics affect the education of women who customarily have to perform them. Time given to these duties is time taken off academic tasks for those women who are still within the educational system. For others the child care tasks are so demanding that all educational activity must stop albeit temporarily. Yet cessation makes resumption at a future date more precarious.

Formal labour laws in recognition of these special child care demands occasioned by childbirth have made provisions in the form of maternity leave and nursing mother time scheduling. The formal school sector denies the female student in similar situations these basic rights. In some secondary and primary schools in Nigeria for example, commencement of child bearing is equivalent to termination of schooling. Female students are discouraged from coming to school once married by subtle and not so subtle means. Expulsion or exemption from boarding houses is a common practice, so also is the absence of day care provision. Luckily some African countries have found a remedy for this (e.g. Morocco).

The overall picture of the traditional place of women and girls is that of very little time to do much else other than reproductive and low paid but demanding productive work. The workload is so heavy that were the body not physically exhausted, there would be no time left over to perform educational tasks. The early marriages and attendant role result in long absences from school and reduced energy for school work.

Moving away from cultural factors located within the society or community, we also encounter factors in the culture of formal schooling which inhibit the education of girls and women. Characteristics of formal education which may hinder female performance include quality and quantity of schools, or an inappropriate curriculum, the material requirement for schooling and the social relations within the school which are gendered. For example a good deal of the information in the primary level curriculum may be seem useless for a group of females who 'know' that their destiny in life is to marry as soon as they can, possibly by 10 years of age.

Female pupils can be exploited by male staff and teachers or simply exposed to them. Among some African groups, females should not mix freely with males and older males are an added source of threat because they can and do take sexual advantage of younger and less powerful females. It is

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easy to see how and why females can be kept from going to school because the school is mixed or does not adequately segregate the sexes.

The school calendar in terms of times that schools operate, opening and closing, break and vacation times also influence the attendance, continuation and achievement motivation of pupils. Girls often have to perform chores at home before and after-school. Early morning cooking, house cleaning, fetching of water and selling often done by young females affect their punctuality at school. When sustained, this feature could coalesce into school absences and eventually attribution, or drop out.

Term times and vacation (holiday) periods that are not sensitive to agricultural seasonality among agricultural communities affect attendance. Harvesting agricultural produce falls quite heavily on women and children. Besides the excitement and accompanying enjoyment or exertion of farming activities during periods of harvesting, planting, clearing or others are practical reasons to stay away from school.

Uniforms, fees, textbooks and other supplies required for schooling are one more disincentive for schooling. In polygamous settings, common in Africa, mothers usually provide a substantial proportion of these requirements.

When problems of material provision do not affect school enrolments the values transmitted by modernising schools do. Parents and guardians who oppose schooling for their offspring express the opinion that the values reinforced by modern schooling are in conflict with those of traditional society. Even male spouses are sometimes wary of women with too much schooling for a variety of reasons. The often touted one being that of promiscuity. Parents and guardians are afraid daughters might lose virginity before being properly married off or worse still they would be unmarriageable on account. There is also the fear that women, wives, and daughters will lose the prized tradition of unquestioning obedience to male family members, a legacy of patriarchy. Parents also worry about safety for their children travelling long distances to school, particularly in poor weather.

On account of all these and other political and legal factors operating in synchrony, the education of girls and women continues to lag behind that of males.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, aspirations and expectations of a better world mount for the new century, yet as Saint (1992) and Aina (1993) point out, the early decades of the twenty-first century will bring uncertainty and rapid changes in demography, politics, economics, social structures, cultural forms and consciousness patterns, technology and health and ecological patterns, for which education ought to be the anchor providing the capacity to benefit from and contribute to these changes.

In the concluding section of this paper, the prevalent modes and methods, through which gender issues have been resolved are highlighted, as are issues for the future.

Looking to the Future

The lessons of today will inform and shape the events of the future. With respect to the contemporary management of gender issues in education many suggestions have been made and many also have been implemented with varying degrees of success. Success is measured by the degree to which inequity in the major issues of access, survival and performance have been reduced or removed altogether.

The setting up of specially designated organs or units of government charged with the specific responsibility for women's issues has been quite popular, among states. Commissions for women, Ministries for women, are an all too easy way of advertising commitment. Affirmative action has also been a popular strategy with more than cosmetic effect. For example, in Nigeria, the introduction of lower entry requirements into designated secondary schools, have created a noticeable boost in the number of females enrolled in secondary schools. A twin strategy was the provision of 22 female — only secondary schools.

Increasing the number of primary and secondary facilities is a common strategy to all countries of the region. This has the added advantage that schools are increasingly being located within short distances from homes as in Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria. Nigeria is currently experimenting with taking schools to migrant fishing communities and pastoralists.

In Zambia efforts are being made to enrol girls at the official entry age to reduce drop out. Schools are operating the shift system to accommodate more children. Many NGOs are getting involved in a variety of activities; conducting workshops and seminars to sensitise parents to the ways in which cultural attitudes and practices can impede female education (in Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe). Other activities in which NGOs engage are: supply of school materials, and credit, the provision of support, remedial help and counselling to females who become pregnant while in school and lobbying for stiff and enforceable penalties and sanctions for male aggressors. In some instances national governments have sponsored NGOs such as The National Commission for Women (NCW) in Nigeria, with dismal political chances for changing the *status quo.*

Road shows have been organised to increase awareness and enrolment in courses on sexually transmitted diseases in Zimbabwe, Ghana and Nigeria. Female models are being sought, rediscovered and re-presented to the public.

Curricular changes to counter the sex-stereotyping in textbooks are being discussed in several countries, with slow progress.

Renewed community commitment and involvement in the expansion of educational provision is being actively solicited, with the likely effect of more schools nearer homes. A dimension of this is the private provision of tertiary level facilities.

This is a catalogue of innovative ways in which the practical issues have so far been attacked with fair degrees of success. To date, the greatest difficulty has been the inflexibility of the formal school, to allow stepping out and in at will. Females particularly of reproductive age should be able to stop and resume schooling at will. Perhaps parallel structures and arrangements could guarantee this.

The school classrooms and lecture halls, must also be investigated for the understanding, isolation and amelioration of the salient elements of classroom interaction and dynamics implicated in survival and performance reduction.

The most difficult aspects to deal with are the deep seated cultural, religious and attitudinal factors and structured gender inequalities, which operate in the private sphere with public manifestations. Yet unless these private worlds are glimpsed, appropriate routes to sustainable change may continue to elude us for a long time.

In addition, a more detailed analysis of the cost-benefit analysis of gender equity in education is vital for the exposition of actors, beneficiaries and potential losers, who could be chief resisters. Finally a reconceptualisation of education and development is urgently required. A reconceptualisation which should be sensitive to the reality that development is multifaceted, involving cultural, personal, economic, social, legal and political dimensions, with no one dimension superior to all others. So, for instance, economic development alone is inferior to holistic human development. Social and cultural development are valuable in African societies.

An evolving conceptualisation of the relationship between education and development which places education temporally before and contributing to development would be a refreshing shift away from current thinking of tucking it on as an afterthought to development.

Addressing gender issues in African education with social, cultural, structural and personal dimensions assuming critical defining characteristics should provide the unique opportunity for the consideration of incipient gender roles and responsibilities for the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

The challenge of equitable provision of education for females, as for other disadvantaged groups, in Africa is tremendous. As we approach the year 1995 when the world reconvenes in China to appraise efforts so far made since 1945, and assess the distance still to cover by the end of the century, it

is expedient that, the continent which has suffered traumatising economic realities in the 1980s whose debilitating influence is pervasive and continuing, takes carefully measured steps in preparation for the next century.

Education is critical for development and the education of females particularly so. There are no workable short cuts or quick fixes to full development without the education of the other half or more. The 1960s was the decade of blind faith in education for Africa the late 1990s should be years of a resuscitated, and restructured realistic faith in education, a new kind of education which ought to prepare both males and females for the new roles and relations which are sure to emerge in the twenty-first century.

Annex 1: Primary School Enrolment 1970-1985

Country	Year	Female	Male	% Female
Algeria	1970	707933	1179215	37.5
	1980	1309246	1813320	41.9
	1984	1469043	1945662	43.0
Angola	1970	154932	279438	35.7
Benin	1970	48040	107215	30.9
	1980	121745	258181	32.0
	1984	147808	296424	33.3
Botswana	1970	44053	38949	53.1
	1980	93793	78121	54.6
	1985	117185	106423	52.4
Burkina Faso	1970	38322	67029	36.4
	1980	74367	127228	36.9
	1984	115180	198180	36.8
Burundi	1970	59843	121915	32.9
	1980	69352	106504	39.4
	1984	140521	202506	41.0
Cameroun	1970	392788	530446	42.5
	1980	626966	752239	45.5
	1984	743750	890678	45.5
Cape Verde	1983	27396	28355	49.1
Central African Republic	1970	57669	118631	32.7
	1980	90468	155706	36.7
Chad	1970	46191	137059	25.2
	1975	55963	157020	26.3
	1984	78974	209504	27.4
Comoros	1970	4749	10298	31.6
	1980	24777	34932	41.5

Congo	1970	105890	135211	43.9
	1980	188431	202245	48.2
	1984	222625	235612	48.6
Côte d'Ivoire	1970	182950	319915	36.4
	1979	375233	578957	39.3
	1983	476170	683654	41.1
Djibouti	1970	1926	4496	30.0
	1985	10004	15208	39.7
Egypt	1970	143270	2361641	37.8
	1980	1875949	2786867	40.2
	1983	2255782	3093797	42.2
Equatorial Guinea	1970	13891	17709	44.0
Ethiopia	1970	205676	449751	31.4
	1980	744068	1386648	34.9
	1983	936602	1560512	37.5
Gabon	1970	47890	52735	47.6
	1980	76209	78872	49.1
	1983	84961	87240	49.3
Gambia	1970	5251	11889	30.6
	1980	15147	28285	34.9
	1984	25111	41174	37.9
Ghana	1970	610016	809822	43.0
	1980	611328	766406	44.4
	1984	640041	824583	43.7
Guinea	1970	60644	130643	31.7
	1980	85842	171705	33.3
	1984	90664	197140	31.5
Guinea Bissau	1970	8428	19546	30.1
	1980	23549	50990	31.6
	1984	25946	50322	34.0
Kenya	1970	591282	836307	41.4
	1980	1864014	2062615	47.5
	1985	2267500	2434900	48.2
Lesotho	1970	109954	73441	60.0
	1983	163690	125900	56.5
Liberia	1970	39565	80680	32.9
	1980	85874	141557	37.8
Libya Arab	1970	129595	220630	37.0
Jamahiriya	1980	314570	348273	47.5
	1982	341979	379731	47.4
Madagascar	1970	433105	509910	46.2
	1984	783716	841500	48.2
Malawi	1970	134763	227798	37.2
	1980	333495	476367	41.2
	1984	383776	515683	42.7

Mali	1970	72658	131045	35.7
	1980	105115	186044	36.1
	1983	107214	185836	36.6
Mauritania	1970	8881	23064	27.8
	1980	32057	58473	35.4
	1982	42041	65349	39.1
Mauritius	1970	73042	77360	48.6
	1980	63033	65725	49.0
	1985	69528	71186	49.4
Morocco	1970	397959	777318	33.9
	1980	804056	1368233	37.0
	1984	863884	1414850	37.9
Mozambique	1980	590101	797091	42.5
	1983	495569	667048	42.6
Niger	1970	30563	58031	34.5
	1978	69023	118228	36.9
Nigeria	1970	1299598	2216229	37.0
	1983	6331658	8051829	44.0
Rwanda	1970	184877	234182	44.1
	1980	337625	367299	47.9
	1984	383932	406266	48.6
Sao Tome & Principe	1970	3980	5038	44.1
Senegal	1970	101734	161194	38.7
	1980	166913	252835	39.8
	1984	227899	339160	40.2
Seychelles	1970	4629	4595	50.2
	1980	7356	7112	50.8
	1985	7073	7295	49.2
Sierra Leone	1970	66741	99366	40.2
	1982	143397	206763	41.0
Somalia	1970	8071	24539	24.8
	1980	98053	173651	36.1
	1983	78997	141683	35.8
Sudan	1970	311864	513756	37.8
	1980	591173	873054	40.4
	1984	668779	984712	40.4
Swaziland	1970	33484	35571	48.5
	1980	55937	56082	49.9
	1984	66732	67796	49.6
Togo	1970	70850	157655	31.0
	1980	194064	312292	38.3
	1984	175276	278933	38.6
Tunisia	1970	364867	570871	39.0
	1980	438252	615775	41.6
	1984	549314	695948	44.1

Uganda	1970	282928	437199	39.3
	1980	558300	734077	43.2
	1982	688636	928155	42.6
United Republic	1970	337814	518399	39.5
Tanzania	1980	1585140	1782504	47.1
Zaire	1970	1135556	1952455	36.8
	1978	1598549	2320846	40.8
	1983	1990710	2663903	42.8
Zambia	1970	308994	385676	44.5
	1980	487435	554503	46.8
	1983	562097	631973	47.1
Zimbabwe	1970	324124	411658	44.1
	1984	1029687	1100800	48.3

Source: United Nations 1989

Annex 2: Secondary School Enrolment 1970-1986

Country	Year	Female	Male	% Female
Algeria	1970	68563	173773	28.3
	1980	397959	633832	38.6
Angola	1970	24131	33698	41.7
Benin	1970	5330	12559	29.8
	1984	35266	85316	29.2
Botswana	1970	2364	2833	45.5
	1980	11434	9535	54.5
	1985	19163	16981	53.0
Burkina Faso	1970	3000	7717	28.0
	1980	9224	18315	33.5
	1984	15345	28498	35.0
Burundi	1970	1632	6537	20.0
	1980	6079	12934	32.0
	1984	8248	15736	34.4
Cameroun	1970	21896	54565	28.6
	1980	82720	151370	35.3
	1984	124569	203854	37.9
Cape Verde	1971	2043	2053	49.9
Central African	1970	2134	9145	18.9
Republic	1980	11936	33275	26.4
Chad	1970	802	9754	7.6
	1984	6945	38667	15.2
Comoros	1970	322	951	25.3
	1980	4665	9133	33.8

Congo	1970	10298	23969	30.1
	1980	7722	110363	41.2
	1984	86473	116435	42.6
Côte d'Ivoire	1970	15031	54683	21.6
Djibouti	1970	376	1009	27.1
	1985	2718	4323	38.6
Egypt	1970	465901	982341	32.2
	1980	1081504	1847664	36.9
Equatorial Guinea	1970	1556	4458	25.9
	1975	751	3772	16.6
Ethiopia	1970	33697	101482	24.9
Gabon	1970	2851	7132	28.6
	1980	11776	17630	40.0
	1983	14704	21456	40.7
Gambia	1970	1223	3819	24.3
	1980	2853	6804	29.5
	1984	4802	11111	30.2
Ghana	1970	27473	71826	27.7
	1980	254191	414196	38.0
	1984	282641	468551	37.6
Guinea	1970	13064	50345	20.6
	1981	26282	67378	28.1
	1984	27157	73964	26.9
Guinea Bissau	1970	1526	2689	36.2
	1980	939	3818	19.7
	1984	2006	7378	21.4
Kenya	1970	40183	95847	29.5
	1980	174281	253742	40.7
Lesotho	1970	3970	3372	54.1
	1979	13417	9129	59.5
	1983	19707	12912	60.4
Liberia	1970	3860	12911	23.0
	1980	15343	39280	28.1
Libya	1970	9819	44134	18.2
	1980	118953	177244	40.2
	1982	141077	199626	41.4
Madagascar	1970	45073	68197	39.8
Malawi	1970	3123	8332	27.3
	1980	5704	14177	28.7
	1984	7426	17417	29.9
Mali	1970	7549	2707	21.8
	1981	21272	54647	27.9
	1983	20792	52426	28.4
Mauritania	1980	4528	17574	20.5
Mauritius	1980	39602	42324	48.3

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Morocco	1970	84499	214381	28.3
	1980	300665	496445	37.7
	1984	446186	683999	39.5
Mozambique	1981	30606	77243	28.4
	1983	36659	84374	30.3
Niger	1970	1876	5123	26.8
Nigeria	1970	114272	242293	32.0
Reumon	1981	35853	29572	54.8
	1983	36879	31512	53.9
Rwanda	1970	3387	6872	33.0
	1980	3718	6949	34.9
	1984	5691	10852	34.4
Sao Tome & Principe	1970	693	976	41.5
Senegal	1970	16925	42476	28.5
	1980	313307	62497	32.7
	1984	40138	81358	33.0
Seychelles	1970	1308	1051	55.4
	1980	438	486	47.4
	1984	1997	1978	50.2
Sierra Leone	1970	9766	24880	28.2
Somalia	1970	5151	19711	20.7
	1980	11689	32152	26.7
	1983	21434	41821	33.9
Sudan	1970	37416	95210	28.2
	1980	141736	242458	36.9
	1984	218854	302698	42.0
Swaziland	1970	3676	4762	43.6
Togo	1970	4926	17077	22.4
	1981	33053	97178	25.4
	1984	21884	69106	24.1
Tunisia	1970	52928	138517	27.6
	1980	107074	186277	36.5
	1984	166293	253044	39.7
Uganda	1981	28995	65619	30.6
	1982	47977	97412	33.0
Tanzania	1970	12934	32007	28.8
	1981	26312	50099	34.4
Zaire	1970	53350	194968	21.5
	1983	610374	1541526	28.4
Zambia	1970	18294	37888	32.6
	1980	35718	66301	35.0
Zimbabwe	1970	19622	30223	39.4

Source: United Nations 1989

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