

## LOW FEMALE ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN KANO STATE: A CHALLENGE TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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### Abstract

The Millennium Development Goals targeted for achievement by year 2015 doesn't seem to be realizable, as very little improvement is recorded in the aspect of gender equity in access to university education in Kano State. This study therefore, aimed to determine patterns of access to university education in Kano state between male and female students. Two objectives of the study were to determine gender difference in access to university education in Kano state, and difference in access to selected undergraduate courses in universities in Kano state of Nigeria. The study was guided by two research questions. The population comprised the universities in Kano state. Data was obtained on official records from the universities and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The major finding of the study was that male students (up to 2009) gained more access to universities in Kano state than females and in all disciplines of study. This is a sharp contrast of the situation in the southern universities. Recommendations included subsidizing women education and creating job opportunities for female graduates.

The philosophy of education in Nigeria has been designed to emphasize "right to equal education for all". It is stated in article 4 of the National Policy on Education that "...every Nigerian child shall have right to equal education opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities (FRN, 2004: 7). Nigeria's philosophy of education is therefore based on:

i. The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.

ii. The full integration of individuals into the community and provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside formal school system (FRN, 2004: 7).

Adopted by world leaders in the year 2000 and set to be achieved by 2015. The MDGs provide concrete, numerical benchmarks for tracking extreme poverty in its many dimensions.

The MDGs also provide a framework for the entire international community to work together towards end-making sure that human development reaches everyone, everywhere. If these goals are achieved, world poverty will be cut by half, ten of millions of lives will be saved, and billions more people will have the opportunity to benefit from the global economy. The eight MDGs breakdown are as follows:

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
- Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equity and empower women.
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health.
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases.
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental suitability
- Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Women need university education to be empowered, as philosophers of old identified that half education is dangerous. UNDP focuses on gender equity and women's empowerment not only as human rights, but also because they are a pathway to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development. The idea behind women's empowerment is to reduce dependency, equip women for democratic governance, crises prevention and recovery and environment and sustainable development. University education will give them a real voice in governance institutions, from judiciary to the civil service as well as in the private

sector and civil society, so they can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision making.

It is difficult to claim that there is balance access to university education in Kano state of Nigeria in line with the *policy* on equality on education, Udigwoman (2004) identified the major obstacles to women education especially in the core north to include home background, social community sanctions and early marriage . A critical analysis of data by NCCE/ UNESCO (2005) on female access to and participation in education shows that the situation is worst in the northern parts of Nigeria - a situation which has been in existence for nearly a century with little improvement. The position of female enrolment stated by NCCE/UNESCO study confirmed earlier report by ESA (2003) Education Sector Analysis, that gender imbalance increases from primary education through secondary to tertiary education, and is greater in the northern states of the country than in the southern states.

Rufai (2001) observed that there is general commitment to eliminating the gender gap in female education, since the 1990 world conference on education for all held in Jomtien, Thailand. The declaration made in this conference sharply focused attention on the importance of girls education ... women's rights and access to higher education by women African Academy of science research Programme (2001) identified parental education as one of the numerous factors inhibiting girls access to education "Wards of educated

parents/guardians were more likely to be enrolled in school than those of uneducated parent/guardian. Girls have better chances if both parents were educated, uneducated parents prefer to send boys to school Girls were more likely to continue to tertiary level if they had educated parents”

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To determine whether there is a gender difference in access to university education in Kano state.
2. To determine patterns of access to university education in selected undergraduate courses in universities in Kano state.

### **Research Questions**

The following were research questions generated to guide the study.

1. Is there a gender difference in access to university education among university students in Kano state?
2. What is the pattern of access to university education in the selected undergraduate courses in universities in Kano state by male and female students?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The study employed the descriptive design, since it aimed to describe and interpret what exists, conditions and trends that are prevailing and the effect being felt. The study was conducted under conditions

that do not permit control, manipulation of variables because the subjects are available in their natural setting.

### **Population**

The population of the study comprised the two universities in Kano state, thus Bayero University Kano (BUK) and Kano University of Science and Technology Wudil (KUST)

### **Sample**

The two universities in Kano state BUK and KUST formed the sample of this Study. Since the study aimed at describing the existing trend in these universities.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

#### **Official Records**

To determine the pattern of access by male and female students in universities in Kano state. Official records of first year undergraduate students admission, were obtained from the universities for three academic sessions. (2006/2007 – 2008/09). This is with a view to comparing the pattern of access in different academic session, and to assess the trend of access to university education by female candidates

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data obtained from this study was analysed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics used included simple percentages and arithmetical means.

**Results**

**Research Question 1:**

*Is there a gender difference in access to university education among university students in Kano state?*

To investigate this, data was obtained from admission records for three academic sessions as stated below, from the two universities in Kano state and summarized in percentages.

**Table 1: Summary of Frequencies and Percentages on First Year Undergraduate Students' Admission 206/07 to 2008/09**

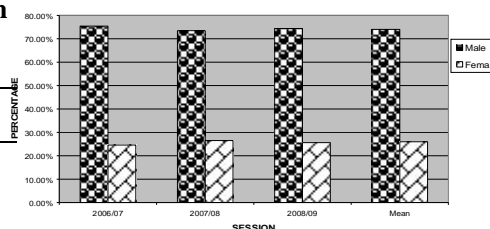
	2006/2007		2007/2008		2008/2009	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Bayero University Kano (BUK)	2919	997	2527	1036	3519	1378
University of Sci/Tech, Kano	333	62	593	90	829	119
Total	3252	1059	3120	1126	4348	1497
Percentage	75.43%	24.57%	73.48%	26.52%	74.39%	25.61%

**Table 2: Summary of Percentages on First Year Undergraduate Students Admissions in Universities in Kano state (2006/2007 – 2008/2009)**

Sessions	PERCENTAGE	
	Male	Female
2006/07	75.43%	24.57%
2007/08	73.48%	26.52%
2008/09	74.39%	25.61%
Mean	74%	26%

The results in tables 1 and 2 respectively indicate that male students generally gain more access to university education than their female counterparts in universities in Kano state with a difference of about 46%. The mean percentage access for three academic sessions 2006/07 – 2008/09 as indicated in the tables above, show that the males gained 74% access as against 26% by the females. The imbalance in access to university education in Kano state in favour of males, points that a lot has to be done.

**FIG. 1: GRAPHIC PRESENTATION OF MALE AND FEMALE ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN KANO STATE**



**Research Question 2**

*What is the pattern of access to university education in selected undergraduate courses by male and female students in Kano universities?*

To investigate this, data on admission statistics for the selected courses stated below were obtained from admission records in each of the universities in Kano state.

**Table 3.1: Summary of First Year Undergraduate Student's Admission Statistics in Selected Undergraduate Courses in Kano Universities**

Institution	Acad. Session Dates	Medicine		Law		Staff		SMS		Education	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
BUK	2006/07	19	6	78	23	88	26	68	177	52	234
	2007/08	87	65	77	39	807	342	521	178	482	238
	2008/09	131	74	163	50	1043	40	871	288	667	394
KUST	2006/07	-	-	-	-	144	27	-	-	-	-
	2007/08	-	-	-	-	254	38	-	-	-	-
	2008/09	-	-	-	-	388	51	-	-	-	-

**Table 3.2: Summary of Percentages on First Year Undergraduate Students Admission in Selected Undergraduate Courses in Kano Universities**

Institution	Acad. Session Dates	Medicine		Law		Science		SMS		Education	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
BUK	2006/07	75%	27%	77%	23%	79%	25%	78%	22%	70%	30%
	2007/08	57%	43%	66%	34%	70%	30%	75%	25%	64%	36%
	2008/09	64%	36%	77%	27%	72%	28%	75%	25%	62%	38%
KUST	2006/07	-	-	-	-	84%	16%	-	-	-	-
	2007/08	-	-	-	-	87%	13%	-	-	-	-
	2008/09	-	-	-	-	88%	12%	-	-	-	-

The results the tables above show that male students gained more access to study the stated courses than their female counterparts in universities in Kano State. The access gap is between male and female access is wider in law and SMS.

### **Findings**

The major findings of the study were as follows:

1. Male students gain more access to university education than their females in universities in Kano state.
2. Male students gain more access to all of the undergraduate courses in universities in Kano state

### **Discussion on Findings**

The findings that male students gain more access to university education in Kano state than the female students is in accord with previous UNESCO (2003) report that Nigeria like most developing countries, gender gaps persist in favour of the boys at all levels of the educational system. The findings are also in corroboration with the joint study of the NCCE (National Commission of Colleges of Education) and UNESCO (2005) on female access to and participation in education in Nigeria, that the gender gaps in access to education between male and female were wider in the core northern states of Nigeria than other states in Nigeria. Educational sector Analysis (2003) reports in line with the present study, that gender imbalance increases from primary education through secondary to tertiary education, and is greater in the

northern states of Nigeria. One may safely attribute this persistent imbalance in access to university education between male and female students in this state to parental level of education and enlightenment socio-economic background and early marriage than to religion.

### **Conclusion**

The result of the present study reveals that there is a significant gender imbalance in access to university education in Kano state and females are at a disadvantage. There is need for the state to brace up to this challenge in order to improve girl-child access to university education to achieve the MDGs objective of women empowerment and gender equity in civil activities and democratic governance.

### **Recommendations**

1. Women education should be subsidized to reduce the impact of preference by parents of low - socio - economic background (boy -child education to the detriment of girl — child education).
2. More job opportunities should be created for graduate females in the state.
3. Cut off marks for admission of female should be lower than that of the males
4. The state should vote special fund for the support of women education in the universities.

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