

## Capitalizing on the Realities of the Millennium Development Goals in Overcoming Dilemmas of Human Resource Acquisition of Nigerian Womanhood for Nation-Building: Issues and Challenges

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### Abstract

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) constitute a vital innovative curriculum instrument for raising individuals and citizens who would constitute the basis not only for nation-building but also for bringing about the implementation of a variety of human resource development designs in Nigeria. One of the basis of the theoretical design perspectives rooted in the MDGs bear on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women including the improvement of maternal health and reduction of child mortality. It is entertained that the articulation of policies, strategies and plans that are needed in Nigeria in the task of achieving this goal could be seen as a defining moment for global cooperation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century especially in the development of human resources and capacity building skills and assets. However, serious fears and doubts are being entertained as to whether Nigeria is capable of attaining the objectives established the foregoing MDGs. Researchers entertain the view that Nigeria has not put in place mechanisms and designs for achieving women's economic empowerment and development. It is considered that the institutioning of a re-invigorated education strategy could assist Nigeria achieve the above goals.

**Keywords:** Curriculum instrument, Human resource development, Mechanisms and Designs.

### Background to the Study

Ukeje (2000) subscribes to the view that African societies need to explore the vitality of human resource and capacity building assets which are rooted in massive re-orientation, re-direction, rebirth and re-construction in this 21<sup>st</sup> century if they must move from retrogressing to developing and indeed join the club of developed nations of the world. Thus, it is envisaged that education is the most potent instrument for African salvation. More importantly in this exposition, it is submitted that the exploration of human resource and capacity-building assets intrinsic in the curriculum design structures which are rooted in effective citizenship development programmes in the task of achieving the African vision of this century should constitute the pivot of control.

It is recounted here that the first expression of the vision for Nigeria was in the Second National Development Plan (1970-74), which endorsed as the necessary foundation for National Policy on Education, as building of:

a free and democratic society,  
a just and egalitarian society,  
a united, strong and self-reliant nation,  
a great and dynamic economy, and  
a land of bright and full opportunity for all citizens.

Regrettably, none of the foregoing ideals has been realized in Nigeria since the past four decades when they were enunciated. Umar (2008) recounts that presently, Nigeria is witnessing the launching of a programme of rebirth which is tagged "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs) and which possess positive and serious bearings with what it takes to be engulfed in sustainable development (Agbaje, 2006; Umar, 2008; and Boroffice, 2008). These scholars concede that most African countries have identified education as a main instrument for galvanizing and sustaining the goals established in this programme.

The challenges confronting Africa in the task of achieving the development goals presented in the foregoing strategic plans and agendas bear seriously on the problem of implementing all the objectives intrinsic in them so that African countries could be portrayed as being on the verge or threshold of attaining sustainable development in all its ramifications by 2020. If our education has to be employed in achieving these developmental goals, it must be efficient. In particular, if this education is to serve as a vital instrument for capitalizing on the human resources and capacity-building assets needed for achieving the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we need a re-orientation. We require the kind of education that has to be tailored at recreating the necessary socio-economic and political values considered critical to the growth and consolidation of a number of human resource development values (Umar, 2008).

However, and specifically, it is envisaged in this exposition that the exploration and employment of the human resource and capacity building assets intrinsic in the design perspectives rooted in the Millennium Development Goals/programmes could lead to a recovery of a good deal of what Nigeria lost over the years since her independence era.

In essence, the theoretical basis of this exposition is hinged on the vitality of exploring the human resources and capacity-building assets and skills rooted in the Millennium Development-Goals for transforming Nigeria into the "Giant superstructure" in all ramifications by 2020. Boroffice (2008) reflects that the emergence of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000) is meant to haul out Africa out of misery, promote human dignity and equality, and achieve peace, democracy and environmental stability. This emphasis, according to Agbaje (2006), is to build and groom skilled human capacities who would display organizational and management practices needed for developing Africa's natural resources and manage the environment in a sustainable manner.

Thus, the articulation of policies, strategies and plans amongst the member states of the United Nations for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the MDGs could be seen as a defining moment for global cooperation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century especially in developing human resources and capacity-building skills and assets to achieve the laudable goals in the programme. The main

strategies for achieving MDGs include technology and skills' acquisition, natural resource management, infrastructure development and public private partnership (Boroffice, 2008; Agbaje, 2006; Agbaje, Ingersoil, and Mochamuk, 2008). These scholars noted that many societies around the globe, including ours, are embarking on initiatives and developing agendas towards achieving these goals.

However, it is re-stated here that, for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and objectives, participating African countries, are expected to articulate -policies, strategies and plans which will facilitate the achievement of the eight goals entailed (Boroffice, 2008-; Agbaje, 2006; Umar, 2008). These include:

- (a) Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger;
- (b) Achievement of universal primary education;
- (c) Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women;
- (d) Reduction of child mortality;
- (e) Improvement of maternal health;
- (f) Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- (g) Ensuring environmental sustainability.

#### Research Problem

Of the seven goals enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), over 55% of these are centered on the emancipation of our womenfolk. These goals are specific about women in terms of proffering solutions to the predicaments, namely:

- a) Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger;
- b) Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women;
- c) Improvement of maternal health; and d) reduction of child mortality.

In the task of overcoming the foregoing predicaments of our womenfolk, it is endorsed that the Millennium Development Goals currently represent the highest-level expression of International Community Development Priorities (Daily Trust, 14/4/2014). Nigeria should, therefore, key into this for an action agenda which emphasizes sustainable human development as the basis to fulfilling social and economic progress, and by extension economically empower women.

One of the major goals entertained in this scheme impinges on the issue of bringing about the economic enhancement of women, particularly in the developing world including Nigeria. This objective has also ramified into agonizing questions which bear on the following issues in the context of our womenfolk:

- a) Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women;
- b) Promotion and enhancement of women's rights;
- c) Protection of women against domestic violence; and
- d) Improvement of maternal health (Borriface, 2008; Umar, 2008; and Daily Trust, April 4, 2014).

Within the framework of the foregoing predicaments, Bolarin (1995) considers that Nigerian women, unlike the male counterparts, have not made any significant contribution in terms of the socio-economic development of Nigeria. She reflects that the possibility of making this contribution is very much in doubt when one takes cognizance of the high level of illiteracy prevailing amongst Nigerian women. She expatiates further that non-formal education programmes for women can only be effective if the recipients are involved in the formulation of objectives, planning and execution of such programmes based on their needs, aspirations, interests, abilities and competencies; she regrets that this development is quite far from being the case.

A number of research studies on the literacy level of Nigerian women (Bolarin, 1995; Nwagbara, 1995; and Okeke, 1999) have shown that women are lagging behind their male counterparts in every level of formal education. The same pattern of low representation of Nigerian women has been discussed in several research studies on-career aspirations amongst these womenfolk. These studies generally endorse that Nigerian women have been grossly under-represented in the various sciences and Science-based courses and careers. Bolarin (1995) posited that UNESCO endorsed that 62% of the adult illiterates in Nigeria have been found to be women. This posture discloses that serious work needs to be done in the area of "Women Literacy Programmes" if the situation is to improve. It is endorsed in this exposition that one will not expect much from illiterate women-folks who definitely lack the basic functional education and training which will lead to their effective participation in the socio-economic development of this country.

Etuk (2004) discloses that gender discrimination has had very serious negative consequences on the human resource development of the women-folks in Nigeria. He submits that the endorsement of gender-stereotyping and gender discrimination in the Nigerian socio-cultural patterns have had a pronounced negative effect on the human resource development and availability, quantitatively and qualitatively in Nigeria. Etuk (2004) recounts that the negative effects of this gender-stereotyping in Nigeria have weighted more against our women-folk. He enumerates these effects thus:

- (a) Overwhelming domination of males in such a job area as the auto-mechanic profession;
- (b) Shortage of manpower in certain professional fields as the carpentry field because it is believed to be a special reserve-field for men;
- (c) More number of unemployed women who have resorted to becoming complete house-wives because of lack of job opportunities which largely emanate from the problems intrinsic in gender-stereotyping;
- (d) Very few number of job areas available for women due to gender discrimination;
- (e) Little concern for women education which limits the quality of their innate capabilities for human resource development;
- (f) Under-utilization of the potentials of women in a number of professional fields because of the negative effects of gender-stereotyping associated with these professions;
- (g) general shortage of women skilled manpower in the labour market due to the neglect that women education have suffered at all levels of education; and

(h) Uneven distribution of the entire labour force due to gender discrimination and stereotyping that our women-folk have been a victim of.

Nwagbara (1995) reveals that as a result of the "negative and unrealistic" gender-stereotyping construed in reference to their role-behaviour, Nigerian women have not effectively participated in the nation's development. She reveals that, at present, a variety of social and cultural barriers which impinge on such gender issues as "early marriages", "high bride-price", and domestic and rural drudgery", "discriminatory family treatment and old age insecurity are some of the social injustices that afflict Nigerian womanhood, She endorses that the large-scale exclusion of Nigerian women in the nation's development has fostered and enhanced fertility rates amongst them.

Okam and Umeh (2004) warned that the current over population and unemployment crises in Nigeria is largely traceable to the incidence of high fertility rates amongst the women-folk. It is conceded that in spite of the gender issues and problems which largely derive from the stereotyping of women's role-behaviour and status, women make up about 50% of Nigeria's population (Nwagbara, 1995; Okam and Umeh, 2004). Again, in spite of their numbers, this section of the Nigerian population is characterized, to a very large extent, by widespread illiteracy, especially in the rural areas. Thus Nwagbara (1995) expatiate further that it is not an understatement to say that about 90% of the women in Nigeria are uneducated, yet it is these women who are central to the issues that bear on the Nigerian over population crisis. She reflects that it is only if these women are well educated and well-informed can they, on their own, understand the implication of large populations and or the problems of overpopulation and unemployment.

The challenges confronting Nigeria in the task of achieving the development goals presented in the foregoing strategic plans and agendas bear seriously on the problem of implementing all the objectives intrinsic in them so that Nigeria could be portrayed as being on the verge or threshold of attaining sustainable development in all its ramifications by 2020. If our education has to be employed in achieving these developmental goals, it must be efficient. In particular, if our education is to serve as a vital instrument for capitalizing on the human resources and capacity-building assets needed for achieving the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we need a re-orientation. We require the kind of education that has to be tailored at recreating the necessary socio-economic and political values considered critical to the growth and consolidation of a number of human resource development values (Umar, 2008).

The foregoing tasks demand that the various governments in this country should work hard at achieving the Millennium Development Goals, ensuring that basic amenities are available to women, and striving at realizing that vision 20:20:20 becomes a reality. This thought demands that appropriate authorities should put effective legal framework in place towards achieving the MDGs which will be up in 2015. It is envisaged that this perspective will reduce poverty among women and help to achieve economic empowerment in the country especially among women.

### Objectives of the Study

The study is geared at a determination of a number of issues which are at stake in the study:

- a) The mechanisms that have been put in place to fully promote the rights of girls and women in this country
- b) a determination of the extent to which governments are working at sustainable partnership levels with civil society groups in pursuit of advocacy to institute laws and policies to ensure development for the benefit and welfare of women
- c) A determination of the extent to which governments have demonstrated the political will to ensure that every woman counts by providing sustainable development especially at the grassroots
- d) A determination of the extent to which governments are implementing laws and policies to track Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with reference to economic empowerment of women
- e) A determination of the extent to which Nigeria has keyed into the Millennium Development Goals (which currently constitute the highest-level expression of International Community Development Priorities) for an action agenda which emphasizes sustainable human development as the key to fulfilling social and economic progress, and by extension economically empower women
- f) A determination of the extent to which governments are addressing and ensuring that occurrence of gender-based violence in the Nigerian society especially in homes, public spaces and conflict situations is eliminated or reduced to the barest minimum.

### Methodology and Sources of Data

The materials for this paper were derived from the research and analysis of scholars, analysts, practitioners, newspaper documents (2004) and journal articles. A few of these sources include: Boserup, 1970; Keller, 1991; Okeke, 1999; Umoh, 2004, Agbaje, 2006, Agbaje and Akinyede, 2006; Agbaje, Ingersoll and Muchamuk, 2008; Borrifice, 2008; and Umar, 2008. Thus, the primary method of this study was an extensive review of available literature for an in-depth analysis of the problems and issues at stake which bear on the exploration of Millennium Development Goals in overcoming dilemmas of human resource acquisition of Nigerian womanhood for nation-building. These sources of information, among many others, were carefully evaluated and analyzed to determine their variety.

Thus, the issues at stake in this study have warranted Okeke's (1999) endorsement that as society assigns and imposes certain behaviour characteristics on either sex, members begin to think, feel or act in ways expected of the society. Thus certain behaviour characteristics and attributes have been imposed by society on either sex and these behavioural attributes have now been constituted into stereotypes. She also observes that these stereotyped "sex" roles and functions imposed by culture or tradition from one generation to another became accepted without question, internalized and erroneously interpreted and applied as if they are biological characteristics. She emerges with a very relevant thesis to this exposition that, although males and females can never be identical, however, gender differences and gender-stereotyping tend to be exaggerated to a point such that they are constituted into myths and predicaments which tend to limit the human resource development and utilization of one's potentials.

What is being emphasized from the above is that when we sex-stereotype roles, we directly or indirectly limit full participation of individuals as well as limit full development of their resources. This is also a very serious constraint upon full realization of human resource development. In the Nigerian society, our women-folk have become victims of gender-stereotyping of roles and behavior attributes such that these have heavily militated against their overall human resource development in the task of nation building. The problems and issues deriving from this gender stereotyping, according to Boserup (1970), have largely been instrumental for the marginalization of women in almost every aspect of human resource development. In Nigeria, this circumstance has contributed its own quota in the present very low indices of human resource development of the Nigerian womanhood.

A number of research critics (Boroffice, 2008; Umar, 2008; Agbaje, 2006; Agbaje, Ingersoil and Monchamuk, 2008; Agbaje and Akinyede, 2006) have entertained serious fears and doubts as to whether Nigeria would be capable of attaining the objectives established in the MDGs. Their fears are largely centred on Africa's lack of adequate human resource capabilities needed for developing her natural resources very effectively with a view to managing the environment, in a sustainable manner. They also disclosed doubts that the available human resources in the country might not be able to display a high level of organizational capacity and management practices required in sustainable development planning operations which are needed if we must realize the objectives intrinsic in the MDGs. The research reflections of these scholars generally portray the view that African countries lack what it takes to possess adequately the necessary and adequate human resource and capacity-building skills and assets needed for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by the end of 2015.

#### Conceptualizing Human Resource Development Perspectives of Women

The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) for "Education for All" (EFA) endorses that every woman has a right to education. It asserted that it is only through a sustained commitment of women to useful and meaningful education could they contribute with strength and purpose in addressing a variety of problems that have engulfed the world. The Conference reflected that the world faces daunting problems; it enumerates some of the notable ones as follows: mounting debt burdens, the threat of economic stagnation and decline, rapid population growth, widening economic disparities among and within nations, war, occupation, civil strife, violent crime, the preventable deaths of millions of children and widespread environmental degradation. It noted that these problems have led to the major obstacles in the provision of women's education in many of the least developed countries of the world.

The Conference equivocates that it is only through a genuine commitment of women to education could they embrace their essential rights and capacities for the purpose of benefiting and tapping into the promises and possibilities of the new century including the following: a variety of useful scientific and cultural developments; availing themselves of available information, much of which are considered relevant to survival and basic well-being; an exposure to information schemes which are rooted in the provision of more life-enhancing knowledge, including the structures involved in learning how to learn, as well as tapping into the

synergistic effects that occur when important information is coupled with the modern advancement that is rooted in our new capacity to communicate. Umar (2008) emerged with three major components in respect of the vital need for women to be educated as follows:

- (a) The implications of the fundamental right of all women to be educated;
- (b) The purpose of education for all women; and
- (c) An expanded vision and a renewed plea for women to become committed to education.

He expatiated on the need for these vital assets in terms of the lives of our womenfolk as follows:

- (a) Exposing them to an understanding that education can help them ensure a safer, healthier, more prosperous and environmentally sound world while simultaneously contributing to their social, economic, and cultural progress, tolerance and international cooperation;
- (b) Acquainting them with the knowledge that education is an indispensable key for personal and social improvement;
- (c) A recognition that sound basic education for women is fundamental to the strengthening of higher levels of education for them including their attainment of scientific and technological literacy and capacity and thus to self-reliant development; and
- (d) Recognition of the necessity to provide and to present the coming generations of women an expanded vision of and a renewed commitment to education to enable them address the scale and complexity of the challenges confronting humankind in the quest for survival and effective living.

Okeke (1999) further disclosed the vitality and necessity of meeting women's' basic learning needs in a variety of ways through the process (education) itself. The following endorsements were made:

- (a) the necessity for meeting women's basic learning needs in the areas of literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem-solving through exposure to basic learning content that embraces knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required by human beings for the purpose of executing the following:
  - (i) Ability to survive;
  - (ii) Ability to develop their full capacities;
  - (iii) Ability to live and work in dignity;
  - (iv) Ability to participate fully in development;
  - (v) Ability to improve the quality of their lives;
  - (vi) Ability to make informed decisions and to continue learning.

Onuekwe (2007) endorsed the need for urging women to tap with vigour and creativity into the present new possibilities which result from the convergence of the increase in information and the unprecedented capacity to communicate in a bid at achieving this design. Thus, in the circumstance of the determination for increased effectiveness in the education of women, he suggested a number of ways of achieving the expanded vision of education thus:

- (a) Universalizing access and promoting equity
- (b) Focusing on learning;
- (c) Broadening the means and scope of education generally;

- (d) Enhancing the environment for learning; and
- (e) Strengthening partnerships which bear on education as a human endeavour.

Thus, the Dakar Conference awakens women to the realization that an enormous potential for human progress and empowerment largely derive upon their ability and enablement to acquire the education and the start needed to tap into the ever-expanding pool of relevant knowledge and the new means *for* shaping this knowledge; the Conference calls for the removal of every obstacle that prevents the active participation of girls and women in education; the Conference also demanded that all gender stereotyping in education be eliminated. It advocated that active commitment must be made to remove educational disparities against women; it also endorsed that women should not suffer discrimination in access to learning opportunities.

The Conference advanced that societies must ensure that all women receive the nutrition, health care and general physical and emotional support they need in order to participate actively in and benefit from their education. It advocates that the knowledge and skills that will enhance the learning environment of children should be integrated into community learning programmes for women; the Conference endorsed that the education of children and their mothers is mutually supportive and this interaction should be used to create for all (including women) a learning environment of vibrancy and warmth.

The Dakar Conference advocated that authorities (national, regional and local) should explore new and revitalized partnerships at all levels for the purpose of providing education for all (including women). It endorsed the need for creating a variety of partnerships such as: partnerships among all sub-sections and forms of education; recognizing the special role of teachers, administrators and other educational personnel; partnerships between education and other government departments, including planning, finance, labour, communications and other social sectors; partnerships between government and non-government organizations, the private sector, local communities, religious groups, and families. The Conference urges that the recognition of the vital role of both families and teachers is particularly important in this "partnership" context.

#### Problems Associated with Human Resources Development Activities of Nigerian Women Examined in the Context of Nation-Building

Discrimination against women's education in relationship to the bid for enhancing their human resource development for nation-building has been the subject of concern for several years in the world. Four World Conferences were held in Mexico (1975), Nairobi (1985), Copenhagen (1995) and Beijing (1995) and were designed, among other aims and objectives, to improve and enhance the human resource development indices of women. In the perspective of this exposition, these Conferences largely dealt with the ways and means of executing, in practical terms, most of the pronouncements and recommendations demonstrated above in the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) for the Human Resource Development of Women. The United Nations (UN) has also organized very high frequency Commissions on women and approved a decade for women from 1985 to 1995. These Commissions "endorsed, recognized and emphasized the need to promote the education of girls and women and to bring about the

necessary conditions for them to enjoy full and genuine equality in education especially at the secondary and higher levels and in science and technology education" (Okeke, 1999). Also, these Conferences, according to Ukpebor (2007), advocated the need to enhance the status of the girl-child and women and help them to participate fully in the various responsibilities of economic, social and political life for rapid and qualitative development of Nigeria. In line with these reflections, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2008) clearly states that every Nigerian shall have a right to equal educational opportunities according to his or her ability.

Adugbo (2010) recounts that the basic objective of the foregoing Conferences is to bring about gender equality at home, in the work place and the wider national and international communities. He expatiates further that these conferences were largely designed to bring to focus the status and rights of women which leave very much to be desired because it is believed that the perceived discrimination against them engenders certain obstacles which prevent women's active participation in all spheres of life. Thus Okeke (1999) is emphatic on the view that gender issues in education has assumed great and negative dimensions in the lives of our womenfolk; She reminds us that many persistent problems of underdevelopment such as "overpopulation", "high inflation", "high infant mortality rate", "poor nutritional status and health care", "low family income", "children's under-achievement in education" and "low gross national productivity" can find their solution in the requisite and effective education of women and these appear to be eluding our womenfolk on daily basis.

Thus Adugbo (2010) reflects sadly that female education is known to have lagged far behind that of their male counterparts in most countries of the world including Nigeria. He reminds us that even though the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (1995) regards education as a human right, low level of education is generally observed among women. Boserup (1970) believes that this development largely resulted from the discriminatory policy in education and the attitude of many parents; she concedes that parents were more willing to send their sons to school than their daughters. Thus Adugbo (2010) states that in Nigeria, much of the illiteracy and lack of numeracy prevailing in the country is found amongst the womenfolk. According to the UNEESCO (1990) figures, the only place where girls constituted 50% of the enrolled primary school population was Lagos; it was only 20.3% in the Northern States; the figures for the secondary school level were 12.7% in the old Eastern Nigeria; 19.8% in Western Nigeria; and 12.3% in the North. Yet, it has to be stressed that education is an essential tool for achieving the goals of equity, development and peace. It has been clearly documented and endorsed in many ways that a high priority must be given to education to ensure development in this country (Bolarin, 1995; Nwagbra, 1995; Okeke, 1999; Etuk 2004). To neglect the education of women is to neglect the full potential of human resource development and ignore the totality of development (FAO, 1975). The girls are made to accept the role of the women primarily as a wife and mother. These situations have been well articulated by Hammond and Jablor (1977) when they pointed out that "Africa" itself provides the ordeal which initiates the youth (whether females or males) into the society of men. The exclusiveness of male society is mentally accompanied by a sense of masculine Superiority to which women give ascent.

Thus, in spite of the view that Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2008) lays emphasis on gender equality in education, women's education still trails far behind men's with far-reaching adverse consequences for both individual and national well-being. Aboribo (2010: 82-83) considers that the willingness, enthusiasm and ability of women to actively participate in the development process in Nigeria is a function of many factors which are socio-economic and political. He reflects on these factors thus:

- (a) Conflicting religious and cultural norms and values which have done little or nothing to advance women's education because their educational endeavours are influenced by these norms and values;
- (b) Only educated parents could countenance the tendency to send their female children to school; most illiterate parents thought very less about the relevance of that "super structure";
- (c) The endorsements of early marriages by parents for their female children led to early settlement in life for these ladies and this development in itself deprived them of education;
- (d) Many residential school environments have been found to be un-conducive for the pursuit of education in respect of women; these schools lacked the necessary facilities and resources and also conducive atmosphere to engender female education;
- (e) Some husbands and even parents might want to terminate their support for female education at a certain level of attainment and thereafter terminate it;
- (f) In some cultures, the female sex is to be seen and not to be heard; their activities are restricted strictly to the home and domestic affairs; this position coupled with allied postures and attitudes appear to have shaped the female emotions, interests and activity over the years; in certain circumstances, women are denied and deprived of many socio-economic benefits which their male counterparts enjoy and these deprivations and discrimination have affected the status of girls and women in the society;
- (g) Generally, there is low transition of females to higher levels of education
- (h) Inadequate and incommensurate response of governments (Federal, State and Local) to the reality and scope of the problem of discrimination of women in the quest and pursuit of education;
- (i) Women non-governmental organizations have not adequately participated or emerged with sufficiently meaningful and sustainable educational programmes for the females;
- (j) Although the government Blue Print (1989) on women's education has been in existence for over two decades, it does not contain adequate appraisal of the state of women's education in the country; the implementation of its lofty *ideals* have not been sufficiently and vigorously pursued;
- (k) Widespread researches have not been sufficiently executed to alert the nation about the consequences of denying women of access to education; also, most public *functionaries* are not adequately 'aware of the viable options or strategies to adopt in promoting female education;
- (l) Women's education was not given any priority attention in the 1976 Universal Primary Education; again, women's education has not been adequately attended to in the present dispensation in spite of the endorsements in the National Policy on Education (2008) regarding the provision of equal access to education for all groups; and

(m) In spite of the United Nations' declaration of a Decade for Women (1975-1986) which resulted in greater involvement of women in development activities in many parts of the world, Nigerian women have not received sufficient attention regarding their involvement in schemes and structures that could bring about large-scale human resource development for them.

The implication of the foregoing reflections largely subscribe to the view that our women have not sufficiently acquired the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are necessary for making them active participants and beneficiaries of resource development activities in society in the task of nation-building. Thus the implementation of the ideals of the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) for the education of women in this country has largely not been executed (Umoh, 2004; Etuk, 2004; Okam and Umeh, 2004; Ukpebor, 2007; and Onuekwe, 2007; Boriffice, Umar, 2008; Agbaje, Ingersoil and Muchamuk, 2008; Aboribe, 2010; Daily Trust, 4/4/2014).

The reflections of Aboribo (2010) rendered above generally conceded that we have almost not effectively addressed and solved the predicaments of our womenfolk as a problem which was expected to be overcome in the framework of the MDGs which emerged in 2000, a programme which is expected to be rounded-up by 2015. In other words, the issues at stake which are raised in the problem of this study are yet to be fully addressed. The Daily Trust (4:4:2014) documented that Nigeria has not keyed fully into the MDGs for women's economic empowerment. The Newspaper has advanced a number of reasons to support this assertion. It considers that government has not put in place a number of mechanisms in order to promote the rights of women in this country; it considers that the principle of gender equity should be enshrined in our constitution as a nation; thus our laws and development policies should aim at women advancement in different spheres. The view is entertained that government has not worked at sustainable partnerships with Civil Society Groups (CSG) so as to continue with advocacy to push laws and policies that ensure development for the benefit and welfare of women. The newspaper endorses the view that government needs to do more in terms of demonstrating political will by ensuring that every woman counts by providing sustainable development especially at the grassroots.

#### Some Policy Implications and the Way Forward

Umoh (2004) reflects that the pattern of development based on gender-stereotyping does not and would not favour human resource development in Nigeria. He emphasizes the need for people to employ the virtues implicit in education as an end to bring about human resource development through an exploration of the innate characteristic intrinsic in the womenfolk. It is also important to recognize that, to a very large extent, the family influences virtually affect all aspects of a child resource development capacity including his thinking, behaviour and career selection (Umoh, 2004). Azikiwe (1998) notes that children are socialized very early into "appropriate" sex-typed behaviour including a variety of forms of human developmental activities and occupation.

What is being emphasized here is that an individual's career choice including his human development indices is often a reflection from sex-stereotype initiated through family socialization and education. As a result of parent-child socialization, adolescents often make their career choice including their human resource development indices in accordance with the aspirations held for them by their parents (Nwezeh, 2007). Thus, family and home socialization often produce a significant contribution to an individual's human resource development indices and behaviour. However, unfortunately, Umoh (2004) considers that family education in the aspect of socializing the child into occupational area based on gender is discriminatory and bears a negative consequence on human resource development. In other words, sex-stereotyping in occupational choice is pervasive in boosting the human development indices of an individual. Thus while sex-stereotyping limits choices of both male and female, it is particularly constraining for women because few career occupations are perceived as being appropriate for women. Besides, the fewer job areas available for women might be of low status and income and thus seem discouraging.

It is suggested that the family as an agent of socialization and the first institution for the propagation of career aspirations, behaviour and human resource development indices, particularly for young persons, must be ready to make the home ultimately equitable in terms of motivation, counseling, and supervising both males and females through the employment of education, both as a process and as an end in itself. Thus both males and females at home should be made to face difficult task situations while they are severely monitored to determine the direction of their potent fiats. Over-pampering of the female folk, according to Umoh, makes them weak in thinking, initiative and problem-solving. In essence, if women are initially challenged at home through exposures to problem-solving tasks and a variety of forms of educative endeavours, and there is a pattern of sex-stereotyping, both male and female alike would flourish into full developed human resource assets for the nation. Umoh (2004) concedes that no nation will develop without quality and quantity manpower and human resources. Thus, the actualization of our quest for human resource development requires that parents, teachers, and the learners must be abreast with the current trend in the labour market in terms of existing employment opportunities and the skills required to fill in the opportunities. He notes further that too little vocational information limits the child and often forces him to select an occupation not well suited for his interest, abilities and human resource development. Career development and information are necessary for human resource development. By providing adequate and appropriate career information, through education, students can be helped to acquire competencies that will enable them make realistic choices.

Anyikwa (1998) entertains the view that most parents in Nigeria are illiterates and do not possess the adequate career information to help their children to begin to cultivate the necessary prerequisites and ideals germane for effective human resource development. Their choice of career for their children is usually based on gender and gender-stereotyping. It therefore becomes directly a function of the school, through the education process, to help the child out of the predicament of making unrealistic career choices that could become counter-productive for effective human resource development in the final analysis.

It is considered that probably the most basic function of the school in respect of an individual's career development including his/her human resource development agenda is to encourage him to grow and utilize his/her full potentials. This aim rests on the assumption that each person, woman or man, is capable of utilizing his/her abilities to the fullest if given opportunities to grow and realize his/her potentials through adequate and meaningful exposures to education through the school (Umoh, 2004; Anyikwa, 1998; Etuk, 1998; Okam and Umeh, 2004). The school has an obligation to assist the individual to fully utilize his/her abilities and on completing her/his education, to engage in jobs, careers or activities that are commensurate with his/her abilities and interests in the quest for effective human resource development in the task of contributing meaningfully to sustainable national development.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

A number of scholars (Okeke, 1999; Nwagbara, 1995; Bolarin, 1999 Anyikwa, 1998; Etuk, 1998; Umoh, 2004; and Okam and Umeh, 2004) are opposed to the ideas intrinsic in gender-stereotyping because they could constitute impediments to effective human resource development, particularly in respect of our women-folk. These researchers and academics generally endorse that individuals possess innate characteristics and potentials which when properly developed, through education, enable them to assume full responsible personalities who can contribute meaningfully and productively to national development. Thus, effective family education could be employed in exploring gender differences amongst young persons (males or females) so as to enable them cultivate the ideals intrinsic in embracing human development structures that constitute necessary prerequisites for making good career choices. Research generally concedes that sex-stereotyping is responsible for shortages of manpower resources in certain professional fields and this development has been allowed to weigh adversely against our women. Thus, sex-stereotyping should not constitute a prominent issue in deciding life in Nigeria. It is also entertained that women have not been given equitable education and employment opportunities necessary for effective human resource development in Nigeria.

We need to employ education for the purpose of exploring gender issues and matters to enhance and improve the psyche of our womenfolk. We also need to explore all the necessary and a variety of pedagogical processes and avenues in order to expose them to the curriculum resource-base of human development so as to enable them contribute their own quota in addressing and solving such national development problems as the "over-population crisis" in which Nigeria is currently wallowing in. Through meaningful exposures to education, our womenfolk could be made to occupy central and strategic positions in our socio-economic framework such that they could put checks and restrictions in our population growth. It is vital that all women be exposed meaningfully to formal or non-formal forms of education programmes in order to tap into the knowledge resource base of human development as a curriculum design. Through this emphasis, these women could become human resource-assets and experts on issues and matters which bear on sustainable national development in Nigeria.

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