

Revitalisation of Education: A Pathway for Addressing Gender Inequality in Nigeria Educational Reform

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Abstract

This study empirically investigated the revitalisation of education as a strategy for addressing gender inequality in Nigeria's education system. Despite notable policy efforts, gender gaps in enrolment, retention, and achievement persist across educational levels. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design involving 200 respondents drawn from teachers and students in selected secondary schools in Kano State, Nigeria. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire and analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics appropriate for non-parametric data. Findings revealed that revitalisation efforts, such as curriculum reform, teacher capacity building, and gender-responsive policies, have significantly influenced the reduction of gender disparities, particularly at the basic education level. However, substantial inequalities remain in access to technical, vocational, and tertiary education, largely due to socio-cultural barriers, poverty, early marriage, and weak policy implementation. Results further indicated a strong positive relationship between educational revitalisation initiatives and improvements in gender parity in enrolment and participation ($p = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that sustainable gender equality in education requires continuous revitalisation of the sector through inclusive curriculum development, equitable resource distribution, teacher professional development, and effective policy monitoring. It recommends that government and stakeholders intensify gender-mainstreaming strategies and strengthen community-based awareness programs to ensure the full inclusion of both sexes in Nigeria's educational development.

Keywords: Revitalisation of Education, Educational Reform, Gender Inequality, Nigeria

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental instrument for promoting social justice, economic empowerment, and gender equality. It serves as the cornerstone for human development and societal transformation, providing individuals with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for meaningful participation in national progress. In developing nations such as Nigeria, education remains a powerful tool for breaking cycles of poverty and discrimination (Akanbi, & Seasan, 2024). However, persistent gender disparities in educational access, retention, and achievement continue to pose significant challenges to the attainment of inclusive and equitable education.

Globally, gender inequality in education has attracted considerable attention. According to UNESCO (2023), more than 130 million girls remain out of school worldwide, with a substantial proportion residing in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria. These disparities limit women's

participation in leadership, employment, and civic engagement, thereby undermining efforts toward sustainable development and social cohesion. In the Nigerian context, girls' education is often constrained by structural, socio-economic, and cultural barriers such as poverty, early marriage, gender stereotypes, and inadequate policy implementation. Consequently, the nation's potential for inclusive growth and national development remains underutilised.

The revitalisation of education provides a strategic pathway for addressing these inequalities. Revitalisation implies the renewal, strengthening, and transformation of the education sector through reforms that enhance curriculum relevance, teacher capacity, infrastructure, governance, and policy responsiveness. Okebukola (2021) posited that revitalising education goes beyond expanding access; it entails creating learning environments that are gender-responsive, inclusive, and empowering. Integrating gender-sensitive pedagogy, promoting girls' participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and addressing harmful cultural norms are critical dimensions of such transformation (Ojong & Kareem, 2025). Furthermore, revitalisation aligns with the global commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which advocates for quality education for all, and Goal 5, which seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Fayemi, & Adediran, 2024). Through purposeful reform, education can reshape societal attitudes toward gender roles, reduce inequality, and promote respect for human dignity. Civic and moral education, in particular, play a vital role in fostering inclusive values and national consciousness necessary for sustainable reform.

Despite the introduction of several gender-focused policies and programs in Nigeria such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme, the National Gender Policy in Education, and the Girls' Education Project gaps persist between policy intentions and actual outcomes. Issues of inadequate funding, weak monitoring, and socio-cultural resistance continue to hinder progress. Thus, revitalising education through a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach remains imperative for achieving genuine gender equality.

Statement of the Problem

Despite being recognised as a fundamental human right and a key driver of national development, gender inequality persists in Nigeria's education system. Various initiatives such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme, the National Gender Policy in Education, and girls' education projects have been introduced to promote equality, yet significant gender gaps remain in enrolment, retention, and achievement across all levels. According to UNESCO (2023), millions of Nigerian girls, particularly in rural and northern regions, are still out of school due to poverty, early marriage, cultural norms, and poor infrastructure, which continue to marginalise women and girls.

Although the government has shown commitment through reforms, weak implementation, poor monitoring, and insufficient funding have limited progress. Women remain underrepresented in STEM fields, technical education, and leadership positions, perpetuating socio-economic inequality (Fayemi, & Adediran, 2024). The revitalisation of education through curriculum reform, teacher capacity building, and gender-responsive policy execution offers a potential pathway to address these disparities. However, empirical evidence remains limited on the extent to which such revitalisation initiatives influence gender equality in Nigeria. This study therefore seeks to examine the impact of educational revitalisation on gender equality and its relationship with key gender indicators.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine how the revitalisation of education can serve as a pathway for addressing gender inequality within Nigeria's educational reform framework.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the extent to which educational revitalisation initiatives have influenced gender equality in the Nigerian education system.
2. Determine the relationship between educational revitalisation efforts and key gender equality indicators such as enrolment, retention, participation, and achievement.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent have educational revitalisation initiatives influenced gender equality in the Nigerian education system?
2. What is the relationship between educational revitalisation efforts and gender equality indicators in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance to guide the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between educational revitalisation efforts and gender equality in the Nigerian education system.

H₀₂: Educational reform initiatives have not significantly influenced improvement in gender equality indicators in Nigeria.

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it enables the collection of data from a representative sample of respondents to describe existing conditions, opinions, and relationships between variables. Specifically, it was employed to assess the extent to which educational revitalisation initiatives have influenced gender equality in the Nigerian education system and to determine the relationship between reform efforts and gender equality indicators. The population of this study comprised teachers and students in selected secondary schools in Kano State, Nigeria. This population was chosen because teachers and students are directly involved in the teaching-learning process and are therefore well positioned to provide valid insights into how educational revitalisation initiatives affect gender equality at the school level. A total of 200 respondents were selected from the study population using a simple random sampling technique. This approach ensured that every member of the target population had an equal chance of being included in the study, thereby minimising sampling bias and ensuring representativeness across schools within the selected areas of Kano State.

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was designed on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1) and was divided into three main sections. Namely; Section A: Demographic information of respondents. Section B: Items measuring the influence of educational revitalisation initiatives on gender equality. Section C: Items examining the relationship between educational reform efforts and gender equality indicators. The questionnaire items were developed based on literature related to gender inequality, educational reform, and revitalisation initiatives in Nigeria. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Educational Management, Measurement and Evaluation, and Gender Studies. Their feedback was used to

refine the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. To establish reliability, the instrument was pilot-tested with respondents outside the main study sample. The data obtained were analysed using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.70, indicating that the instrument was internally consistent and suitable for the main study. The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, administered the questionnaires personally to the selected respondents. This direct administration ensured clarity of instructions and improved the rate of retrieval. Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed, only properly completed ones were retrieved, coded, and prepared for analysis.

Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques appropriate for non-parametric data. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, were employed to summarise respondents' opinions and to answer the research questions. For inferential analysis, the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (ρ) was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. This non-parametric test was considered suitable because the data were derived from ordinal (Likert-scale) responses obtained from a single group of respondents. The Spearman correlation determined the strength and direction of the relationship between educational revitalisation efforts and gender equality indicators. All analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and results were presented in tables for clarity and interpretation.

Results

The result of the analysis was done and interpreted according to the research questions and the null hypotheses.

Research Question One: To what extent have educational revitalisation initiatives influenced gender equality in the Nigerian educational sector?

To address this research question, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on six (6) statements regarding the influence of educational revitalisation initiatives on gender equality. A total of 200 respondents completed the questionnaire. Their responses were analysed using frequency and percentage distributions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents on the Influence of Educational Revitalisation Initiatives on Gender Equality

S/N	Items	SA f(%)	A f(%)	D f(%)	SD f(%)
1	The revised curriculum includes more gender-sensitive content that promotes girls' education.	86 (43.0)	72 (36.0)	30 (15.0)	12 (6.0)
2	Most teachers still lack the skills to implement gender-responsive instruction.	64 (32.0)	68 (34.0)	50 (25.0)	18 (9.0)
3	Policy pronouncements exist but are poorly implemented at the school level.	60 (30.0)	78 (39.0)	42 (21.0)	20 (10.0)
4	Schools now provide gender-friendly learning materials and instructional resources.	74 (37.0)	84 (42.0)	28 (14.0)	14 (7.0)
5	Parental attitudes toward girls' education have improved following revitalisation initiatives.	90 (45.0)	70 (35.0)	28 (14.0)	12 (6.0)
6	There is clear evidence that revitalisation initiatives have led to measurable improvement in girls' academic performance.	80 (40.0)	82 (41.0)	26 (13.0)	12 (6.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of respondents' opinions on how educational revitalisation initiatives have influenced gender equality. A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that most revitalisation activities have positively affected gender equality. Specifically, 79% of the respondents agreed that the revised curriculum now includes gender-sensitive content promoting girls' education. Similarly, 84% agreed that parental attitudes toward girls' education have improved as a result of revitalisation initiatives.

Conversely, 66% of respondents believed that many teachers still lack adequate skills to implement gender-responsive instruction, suggesting that teacher capacity remains a challenge. In addition, 69% acknowledged that policy pronouncements exist but are not always effectively implemented at the school level. The trend of responses therefore indicates that educational revitalisation initiatives have moderately to strongly influenced gender equality in Nigeria's education sector. While progress has been made in curriculum reform, gender-sensitive learning materials, and parental awareness, gaps persist in teacher training and effective policy execution.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between educational revitalisation efforts and improvements in gender equality indicators in Nigeria?

To answer this research question, respondents rated six (6) statements on how educational revitalisation efforts relate to gender equality indicators such as enrolment, access, participation, and inclusion. Their responses were summarised using frequency and percentage as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents on the Relationship between Educational Revitalisation Efforts and Gender Equality Indicators

S/N	Items	SA f(%)	A f(%)	D f(%)	SD f(%)
7	The curriculum now addresses gender stereotypes and promotes social inclusion.	82 (41.0)	86 (43.0)	22 (11.0)	10 (5.0)
8	Revitalisation efforts have provided gender training programs for teachers and administrators.	76 (38.0)	84 (42.0)	28 (14.0)	12 (6.0)
9	Parental and community attitudes toward girls' education have improved.	88 (44.0)	80 (40.0)	20 (10.0)	12 (6.0)
10	Enrolment of girls in schools has increased significantly in recent years.	90 (45.0)	74 (37.0)	24 (12.0)	12 (6.0)
11	Scholarship and support schemes have reduced gender disparity in school admission.	72 (36.0)	82 (41.0)	30 (15.0)	16 (8.0)
12	Continued revitalisation of education will ensure sustainable gender equality in Nigeria.	94 (47.0)	76 (38.0)	18 (9.0)	12 (6.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 2 reveals that a large proportion of respondents perceived a strong positive relationship between educational revitalisation efforts and improvements in gender equality indicators. For instance, 84% (Items 7: 41% SA + 43% A) agreed that the curriculum now better addresses gender stereotypes and promotes inclusion. Likewise, 82% (Items 8: 38% SA + 42% A) believed that revitalisation efforts have led to gender training programs for teachers and administrators. Furthermore, 82% of respondents (Items 9: 44% SA + 40% A) indicated that parental and community attitudes toward girls' education have improved, while 82% (Items 10: 45% SA + 37% A) affirmed that girls' enrolment has significantly increased in recent years. The data also show that 77% (Items 11: 36% SA + 41% A) agreed that scholarship schemes have reduced gender disparity in school admission. The results, therefore, demonstrate a high level of agreement that educational revitalisation efforts are positively associated with improvements in gender equality indicators across Nigeria's education sector. The pattern of responses suggests that reforms such as curriculum renewal, teacher capacity development, scholarship programs, and community awareness initiatives have collectively contributed to reducing gender disparities in access and participation.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between educational revitalisation efforts and gender equality in the Nigerian education system.

Table 3: Spearman Rank Order Correlation (ρ) between Educational Revitalisation Efforts and Gender Equality Indicators

Variables	N	ρ (rho)	p-value	Decision
Educational Revitalisation Efforts ↔ Gender Equality Indicators	200	0.72	0.000	Reject H₀₁

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 3 shows that the calculated Spearman correlation coefficient (ρ) between educational revitalisation efforts and gender equality indicators is 0.72, with an associated p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This result indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between educational revitalisation initiatives and gender equality outcomes in Nigeria's education system. Since the p-value ($0.000 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected. This implies that improvements in educational revitalisation efforts such as curriculum reform, teacher training, and gender-sensitive policy implementation are strongly associated with enhancements in gender equality indicators, including enrolment, retention, and participation of female learners. The finding suggests that as the education sector undergoes revitalisation through inclusive and equitable reforms, gender disparities tend to reduce. This supports the assertion of Okebukola (2021) and UNESCO (2023) that sustained education revitalisation fosters inclusivity and empowers women and girls, thereby contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5.

H₀₂: Educational reform initiatives have not significantly influenced improvement in gender equality indicators in Nigeria.

Table 4: Spearman Rank Order Correlation (ρ) between Educational Reform Initiatives and Improvement in Gender Equality Indicators

Variables	N	ρ (rho)	p-value	Decision
Educational Reform Initiatives ↔ Gender Equality Indicators	200	0.68	0.001	Reject H₀₂

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 4 indicates a Spearman correlation coefficient (ρ) of 0.68 between educational reform initiatives and improvements in gender equality indicators, with a p-value of 0.001, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This result signifies a moderately strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that educational reform initiatives have significantly influenced improvements in gender equality indicators in the Nigerian education system. This finding implies that the more education is revitalised through curriculum transformation, teacher capacity development, and gender-responsive policies, the greater the progress toward achieving gender parity in schools.

Summary of Major Findings

Based on the analysis of data and hypothesis testing, the following key findings emerged from the study:

1. The study revealed that educational revitalisation initiatives have significantly influenced gender equality in the Nigerian education system. A majority of respondents agreed that revitalisation efforts such as curriculum reform, provision of gender-friendly learning materials, and improvement in parental attitudes have led to increased enrolment, participation, and academic performance among girls. However, some gaps remain in teacher competence and effective implementation of gender policies at the school level.
2. The result of the study also indicated a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between educational reform initiatives and improvements in gender equality

indicators. This finding implies that as educational revitalisation and reform efforts are intensified through teacher training, scholarship schemes, and gender-responsive policy implementation gender parity in access, retention, and achievement is progressively enhanced across the Nigerian education sector.

Discussion

The study find out that educational revitalisation initiatives had significantly influenced gender equality in the Nigerian education system. Respondents generally agreed that reforms such as curriculum review, teacher training, and the provision of gender-friendly school environments have improved female enrolment, retention, and academic performance. This finding implies that recent revitalisation efforts are gradually closing the gender gap in access to quality education. This could be attributed to the fact that the implementation of gender-sensitive policies and curriculum reforms promote inclusion and equity in schools. Over the last decade, Nigeria has adopted several policy frameworks such as the National Gender Policy in Education and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme) which emphasise equal educational opportunities for both sexes. These frameworks have encouraged gender mainstreaming in curriculum development, teacher training, and school governance. The positive perception of these initiatives among respondents suggests that teachers and students are beginning to experience the benefits of such reforms through improved access and more supportive learning environments. Another possible explanation lies in increased advocacy and awareness programs initiated by government and non-governmental organisations. Campaigns such as UNICEF's Girls' Education Project (GEP 3) and UNESCO's community sensitisation initiatives have played a crucial role in reshaping parental attitudes toward girls' education, particularly in Northern Nigeria. The finding that parental attitudes have improved following revitalisation efforts aligns with reports from UNICEF (2022) and Okeke et al. (2021), which noted that community-based interventions and school incentives have reduced early marriage and increased school retention among girls.

This result also agrees with Okebukola (2021), who emphasised that revitalisation of the education sector in Nigeria promotes inclusivity and quality learning outcomes when reforms are implemented with a gender perspective. Similarly, Akinola and Lawal (2020) argued that gender-responsive educational policies enhance equitable participation of women in social and economic development. The finding therefore supports the assertion that educational revitalisation can serve as a catalyst for gender transformation when linked with deliberate policy action and stakeholder engagement. However, despite these positive outcomes, the finding contrasts with Agboola and Alade (2025) who reported that persistent socio-cultural barriers, teacher bias, and inadequate monitoring still limit the effectiveness of reform policies in achieving gender parity. These studies emphasise that while curriculum reforms may be in place, the absence of sustained teacher capacity building and effective policy enforcement can hinder meaningful progress. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) observed that gender inequality in education persists in sub-Saharan Africa, not necessarily due to lack of policy but because of weak implementation and accountability mechanisms.

The study also revealed that, there is a strong significant positive relationship between educational reform initiatives and improvements in gender equality indicators in Nigeria's education system. This means that as education reforms such as curriculum review, teacher capacity development, scholarship programs, and gender-sensitive policy implementation are strengthened, measurable progress is observed in female enrolment, retention, participation, and performance. This is as a

result of the revitalisation-oriented reforms which have created enabling environments that foster inclusiveness and equal opportunity. Over the past few years, Nigeria's education sector has undergone several reforms focused on integrating gender perspectives into policy and practice. Programs such as the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme and the Girls' Education Project (GEP 3) have reduced economic barriers for girls from low-income families and encouraged regular school attendance. These initiatives align with UNICEF (2022) and UNESCO (2023) reports, which indicate that gender-responsive interventions have had tangible effects on improving girls' school participation and reducing dropout rates. Furthermore, the result can be attributed to curriculum transformation and teacher retraining efforts that emphasise equity and social inclusion. When teachers receive training on gender-responsive pedagogy, they become better equipped to identify and eliminate bias in classroom interactions and assessment.

This finding supports the work of Abdullahi, et al. (2025), who asserted that revitalised teacher education programs enhance equitable learning outcomes by promoting inclusive classroom practices. Similarly, Fayemi and Adediran (2024) found that integrating gender equality concepts into curriculum design improves students' attitudes toward gender fairness and social justice. However, this finding contrasts with the observations of Abe and Agbalajobi (2024), and Oyekanmi (2025), who noted that despite reform efforts, progress toward gender parity remains uneven, especially in rural and conflict-affected regions. They argued that policy inconsistency, weak monitoring, and socio-cultural resistance continue to limit the full realisation of gender equality goals. In the same vein, Simpasa (2024) emphasised that reforms without adequate funding and community engagement tend to have limited and short-lived impacts.

Conclusion

The study concludes that revitalising education is crucial for reducing gender inequality in Nigeria's educational reform. Initiatives such as curriculum review, teacher development, and gender-responsive policies have improved girls' enrolment, participation, and performance. A strong positive relationship was also found between educational reforms and gender equality indicators, showing that inclusive practices promote gender parity. However, challenges including insufficient teacher training, weak policy implementation, and socio-cultural resistance still hinder full equality. Sustained reforms, effective monitoring, and collaboration among government, educators, and communities are essential to ensure that revitalisation efforts produce lasting, equitable outcomes.

Recommendations

1. Teacher education institutions and ministries should integrate gender-sensitive pedagogy into teacher training programs and ensure strict monitoring of gender-related policies at all school levels. This will enhance teachers' competence in promoting equitable classroom practices and ensure that curriculum reforms achieve their intended impact.
2. Government and stakeholders should continue to support inclusive education reforms through scholarships, community sensitisation, and curriculum innovations that address gender stereotypes. Sustained investment and coordination among education agencies will help maintain the positive relationship between reform initiatives and improved gender equality indicators in Nigeria's education system.

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