



OVERVIEW OF GENDER SEGREGATION IN THE ACADEMIA

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ABSTRACT

The academia has been known as an institution that shows support for the principles of democracy, encourage social movements and social justice, but it has failed to address the issues of gender equity and equality hence making their mode of governance a male dominated and patriarchal. In spite of the advances which women have made in many areas of public life in the past two decades, they are still a long way from participating on the same footing in academia as men. The global picture is one of men outnumbering women in research and publication. This paper has discussed gender equality which indicates that people are free to make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes and that their various contributions and needs are valued equally, Emphasis is on the fact that gender equity is a mechanism through which gender equality may be achieved. A consideration of both gender equity and gender equality is integral to good development practice and the goal of a development practitioner should be equity for equality.

Key Points: *Academia, Equity, Equality, Gender, Segregation*

INTRODUCTION

Gender equity refers to the treatment of people according to their respective needs to ensure equal rights, obligations and opportunities. It recognizes that people are born with different strengths and weaknesses and demands that development practitioners should adopt different actions accordingly. On the other hand Gender equality indicates that people are free to make choices

without the limitations set by stereotypes and that their various contributions and needs are valued equally. Gender equity is a mechanism through which gender equality may be achieved. A consideration of both gender equity and gender equality is integral to good development practice. The aim of a development practitioner should be equity for equality.

Gender segregation in academia may be influenced by educational credentials. Only few females have doctorates degrees and those who have it in the system are under-represented as full professors. Consequently, female academics are less included, respected, and valued as researchers and are likely to be taken less seriously than men.

(Ogbogu, 2006) explained that unavailability of mentoring for the younger female academics is also a catalyst to disparity in academia. Mentoring has a network-building effect, increases self-confidence, creates career awareness and promotes progression in personal work. It helps in climbing the academic ladder and also an avenue for the mentees to release their frustrations of all the barriers and realities working against them in the system. The mentors help to overcome gender inequalities and unequal opportunities because of the networking that the relationship often provides. Where there is no female role models, it is perceived that the gender inequality in academia would persist for a long time to come.

Marriage is also a contributor for gender inequality in Nigerian academia. This is true with the fact that females experience high institutional mobility and some have had to relocate and disengage from academia in order to join their husbands because the job of their husbands takes precedence over theirs. Marriage and its accompanying responsibilities of parenthood constitute more problems to women than men in attaining continuity in their research work. This accounts not just for the inequality in number, but also for the difference in the rates of progression in academic careers of males and females. (Ogbogu, 2006). The emphasis of this research is on gender equity which will pave way for gender equality. The advocacy is not to compete or take over the man's job, but to be given an equal opportunity in terms of equity in career progression. For example, and as obtainable in some private institution, if the payment of salaries or allowances is a function of the number of days one comes to work, then the

woman on maternity leave should be given full salary and all entitlements considering the peculiarity of maternity to women.

REVIEWS

Female Deans and Professors are a minority group, while female Vice-Chancellors are rare (Poole, 2005). Women in Nigerian universities hold less than 35 percent of academic posts. They are mainly represented in the lower and middle level academic positions and their participation relative to men decreases at successive levels. Despite the fact that the Nigerian university system is over sixty years old, there are still evidences of low female participation as academic staff. For instance, in 2006 University of Ibadan had an academic staff strength of 3081, out of which 2574 were males and 507 females, Obafemi Awolowo University had 1207 academic staff members out of which 210 were females and University of Lagos's academic staff strength was 813 out of which 250 were females. Engineering, medicine and the science disciplines remain strongly dominated by men, while the highest concentrations of women are found in the humanities and social sciences (Ogbogu, 2006).

women frequently face cultural barriers which emanate from the way society view the roles and the expectations ascribed to them. In addition, their dual responsibilities as wife and mother perpetuate their under-representation in academia. Consequently, they progress haltingly in academia, taking breaks off to rear children and in the process suffer great tension in their attempts to reconcile academic and domestic roles. In view of this, Winslow (2010) suggests the need for husbands to support their wives so that they can be empowered to effectively manage their dual role and maintain a balanced career.

Gender inequality in academia is an important issue not only in Nigeria, but all over the world. The situation in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Spain, India and Switzerland reflects a high under-representation of academic women in professorial positions and in science and technology disciplines. The percentage of women across commonwealth universities of full-academic staff status ranges from 9.5 percent in Ghana to just over 50 percent in Jamaica. The pattern that emerges suggests that woman get stuck at the lower levels of the academic career structure (Ogbogu, 2009b).

The observed gender disparity in academia is further shaped by educational credentials. Women, on average, are less likely to have doctorates and those who have it in the system are under-represented as full professors (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2009). Consequently, female academics are less included, respected, and valued as researchers and are likely to be taken less seriously than men. In addition to this, marital and parental status accentuates gender inequalities. This is because men are less likely to be responsible for family care needs. A number of scholars argue that the scheduling of work and structure of workplaces are built around a model of an „ideal worker“ who is relatively unencumbered by responsibilities outside of paid labour, best represented by a man with a wife at home to manage family responsibilities. In support of this, Cress and Hart (2009) and Williams (2000) affirm that academia is built on a male worker norm because women faculty report being looked down upon as less qualified or committed to academics because they have families. Thus, the likelihood of successfully marching through the lockstep life course of a traditional academic career is much greater for those not encumbered by family demands (Mason and Goulden, 2002).

CONCEPT OF GENDER

Gender has attracted varieties of definitions from researches and scholars. It emerged as a social issue with scholars adopting it to distinguish the social and biological aspects of the differences between male and female. Conceptually, it is defined as those aspects of male and female shaped by social forces. It can as well be described as the meaning the society gives to biological differences in humanity. According to Ejifugha and Nosike (2005) sex is natural, gender is nurtured. Being nurtured gender is subject to cultural influences and interpretation as well as limitations. Each community shapes and determines the cultural tenets that define the male gender versus the female gender.

With a meticulous encroachment the gender issues, social scientists have developed a broader approach to the social phenomenon. It is to be considered as the way societies are organized functionally, rather than mere attribute of the individual male or female, or their collective attribute as males or females. This concept is rather comprehensively focused on the way societies are organized around male of female responsibilities.

Like race and social class, gender orders and directs social relationship and prejudices. Gender determines and affects 'power to' and 'power over' (Riley, 1997). 'power to' implies the ability to act and obtain access to social resources such as education and political opportunities/positions 'power over' implies ability to assert ones wishes and goals even in the face of challenging situation. The female gender was handicapped by society to demonstrate 'power over' circumstances around them. Consequently, gender is a social phenomenon which is subject to reconstruction, for the attainment of social equilibrium. Substantiating Riley's declaration of female' incapacitation of 'power over' resources, Rogers in Ejjifugha (1999) asserted that males have power over knowledge and resources and that increases their oppressive tendency and practical power over women. Culture is a major determinate factor that constructs and reconstructs gender; hence, gender biases differ from community to community. The clamour for gender equity in our educational system particularly in science teacher education may be a contextual case in Nigeria. Gender equity is not synonymous with sex equity. Sex equity deals with biological male or female, while gender equity deals with socially constructed and reconstructed roles of male female. Gender has social, cultural and psychological connotation. Its definition is focused on masculinity and femininity. The proper term for defining sex is male and female while gender is masculine or feminine. Although femininity may be independent of biological sex, masculinity is concerned with attitude that describes males in the social and cultural context. Hence the normal female has a preponderance of masculinity while a normal female has preponderance of masculinity while normal female has a preponderance of femininity. According to Stroller in UNESCO (1997) gender is the amount of masculinity and femininity found in a person. Furthermore, gender refers to ones subjective feeling of maleness and femaleness irrespective of ones sex. This is described as gender identity. It is possible to be genetically of ones sex without socially and emotionally desiring to belong to that sex. It is possible to be genetically male or female but with gender identity of the opposite sex. This is described as trans-sexual identity. Gender is mostly determined by behavioral attributes given by the society such as submission; humility are considered to be feminine. Attributes like dominance, aggressiveness, talkativeness are masculine (UNWSCO 1997).

GENDER AND EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Currently, women in higher education in Africa have been topical due to the importance of education in transforming individual lives and societies. Kwesiga (2002) documents the long trek Ugandan women have had to make before having access to Ugandan universities. According to Pereira (2007), Kwesiga's review of theory on the meaning of educational access and her analysis of barriers to women access address a number of interlocking sites including family, society, culture, unequal development and educational institution itself. She explained that early marriage, cultural image of the female and poverty all militate against female access to higher education. Kwesiga pointed out that the education of women had implications that go beyond education specific issues. Kwesiga's (2002) findings are similar to the findings of a Nigerian study supported by UNICEF in 2001 which indicated that the number of pupils decline from one class to the next. The gender disparity in education in Nigeria exists at all levels but it is especially glaring at the tertiary level. At the teaching level, the proportion of male teachers was consistently higher than that of female teachers for all levels of education but the gap increased more widely from primary school to universities. In primary school teaching, the male/female gap was about 5% and over 80% for colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. Among professors and associate professors, males constituted 94% while females constituted 6%. There were 88.1% males and 11.9% females among senior lecturers and research fellows as at 2001. An emerging trend appears to be that the higher the level of education and professional cadre, the less the proportion of females. Historically, women have not been given the opportunity to pursue higher education; a prerequisite to becoming a professional. In fact, the first female doctors in Nigeria were seen as a threat both to the society and their male colleagues. The UNICEF study identifies societal norms as important inhibiting factor to female education. In Nigerian society, women and girls are still largely considered as domestics whose should take up roles as mothers and wives and not scholarly professions. In some communities, women's and girls' education is frowned on. This situation creates further inequalities which those tolerant recording better female enrolment rates. A number of studies examine the disparities in the already grim national situation. Ohiri Anichie (2001) discusses important

regional and gender disparities in school enrolments in Nigeria. The study reveals that northern compared to states tend to have lower enrolment rates for both males and females. In addition, northern compared to southern states have lower female enrolment rates. Also, Ekhaguere's (2003) study points to glaring disparities in enrolment by region, gender and economic status as well as between rural and urban households in Nigeria. Lamenting over the nature and analysis of educational disparities, Pereira (2007) cautions against the tendency to focus on enrolment levels to the neglect of other equally compelling factors and employment of deep analyses. Pereira explains that student enrolments can be misleading in the sense that many students, especially females, drop out even at the university level. Dropout rates for women in 1999/2000 academic year in the University of Ife are 87.2% for Law, 54.6% for Education and 61.8% for Social Sciences. For the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, the dropout rate for Arts was 11.3% and Education was 62.5% (NUC, 2001). Women's low representation in the university system is also glaring in at the staffing level. Many universities in Nigeria have few female academic staff, the percentage of which is not up to 20%. As at 1997/8, Federal university of Technology, Akure had 9.1%, Minna 9.6%, Yola 6.7%, Nsukka 18.1%, Lagos 21.3%, Benin 15.6% (NUC 2001). The low representation of females on staff in Nigerian universities is accompanied by the problem of low women's participation in decision making. The percentage of female professors in Nigerian universities is even more disturbing. In the Universities of Ibadan, Lagos, Nsukka and Maiduguri, female professors constitute 13.1%, 12.0%, 9.3% and 2.1% respectively. In some faculties and even universities in Nigeria, there are no female professors (Okebukola, 2002). Decision making positions in the educational bureaucracy are almost overwhelmingly held by men. No woman has ever held the position of visitor, vested in the President. The Ministers of Education have been virtually all men. The post of Executive Secretary of National Universities Commission has also never been occupied by a woman and of all the Vice Chancellors, only three have ever been women (Pereira, 2007).

GENDER EQUITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Gender inequity is an obvious indicator of disequilibrium in the specific field where it occurs. The field of education requires gender equilibrium in the

teaching of science. This is to enable it to be able to foster procreation of manpower in it. Gender equity in the field of education erases the erroneous impression that the study of science in teacher education is feminine. If this trend is ignored, it may develop to be the way it is done.

Sociologically, attitudes develop to become norms and norms develop to become custom and custom, with years, turn out to become culture. This explains how behaviours like submissiveness, quietness and humility are considered to be feminine source. This development in education may not promote science education for sustainable development. Science teacher education is not feminize. The Ministry of Education should correct this development before it becomes the pattern and eventually described as such.

The World Commission on Environment and Development (The Brundtland Commission) brought the term 'Sustainable Development' into popular use in 1987 (Nosike, 1996). Sustainable development focuses on improving the quality of life without compromising the need of the future generation. The term encourages humanity to focus on sustaining the natural endowment of the physical environment in the pursuit of his daily needs. The concept demands the exercise of precautionary measures that will continue to sustain the natural environment while humanity is in pursuit of economic development. Man must continue to live within the limitations of the physical environment as both a provider of input and a "sink for wastes" Humanity must realize that even if environmental degradation does not reach a life-threatening level, it can result to a perceivable decline in the quality of life of mankind. Furthermore, sustainability means survival, keeping the community alive. This implies food production and the means to this end is Agriculture-which is science-based. Sustainability also means economically acceptable production whereby everything removed is being replaced so as not to harm the ecology. This is also primarily science-based.

In a social sense, sustainability is viewed as a growing economic and social order with production structures and relationship. This obviously ensures fair distribution of income, power and opportunities, thus providing the basis for social peace (Serageldin 1993). Against this background, gender inequity in science teacher education may not promote fair distribution of income, power and educational opportunities, and as well may not yield an acceptable

production structure in manpower development. Additionally since sustainability advocates the replacement of whatever is removed from the environment, gender inequity if not balanced will not promote social peace and order.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implication of this disparity on the academic development of women is the general reduction in their research output and the perpetuation of their low status in academia. It is also evidence that there are not enough corresponding structures or policies in Nigerian higher institutions that support gender equity in academia, other factors include, lack of mentoring, poor remuneration, women's lack of interest in academia, family responsibilities and the lengthy period of training. All these makes women to encounter obstacles on their way to the top of the academic career ladder which further accounts for the persistence of sex disparity in academia, It is therefore recommended that WITED and other related bodies should embark on critical feminist knowledge through workshop and seminars that can help lead the way toward more dynamic and challenging perspectives on gender equity and equality in the academia.

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