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# GENDER STUDIES AS AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAMME DESIGN: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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By

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## **Abstract**

*This exposition highlights that, although Nigeria joined many other countries, agencies and organizations in adopting the resolutions of the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) on "Education for All" (EFA), our Nigerian women are still subjected to the vicious circles of gender-stereotyping and gender discrimination, which are designed to keep them in disadvantageous position in the quest for employing education in the task of achieving effective human resource development. The paper considers that there prevails a variety of constraints militating against the effective realization of not only the endorsements and resolutions of the Dakar Framework of Action but also the decisions taken at other World Conferences which are all geared at improving and enhancing the human resource development indices of women through education. The paper attempts to explain the effects of gender-stereotyping and gender discrimination on the human resource development of our womenfolk, which have prevented them from contributing meaningfully to the socio-economic development of the country. However, the paper endorses that, through meaningful and relevant education, mediated by way of requisite curriculum content structures, much of the effects of gender-discrimination and gender-stereotyping against these women could be ameliorated. This development could go a long way in providing, our women with the vital resource-base not only for achieving ~~Academic excellence~~ ~~education and self-fulfilment but also for contributing productively to the~~ necessary where-with-all needed for sustainable socio-economic and socio-political development in Nigeria.*

Umoh (2004) reflects that the likelihood of factors such as gender, customs and traditions, religion and family education background to exert influence on the human resource development of an individual is an issue of very serious concern to our young people. In this context, gender is considered as a societal construct that separates the roles expectations of males and females. Keller (1991) also describes gender as a cultural construct that distinguishes the roles, behaviours, mental and emotional characteristics between males and females developed by a society.

However, Okeke (1999) argues 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. Okeke (1999) 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. Thus Okeke (1999) emerges with a very relevant thesis to this exposition that, although males and females can never be identical, but gender differences and gender-stereotyping tend to be exaggerated to a point such that they 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. 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.

### **Effects of Gender Discrimination on the Human Resource Development Indices of the Nigerian Womanhood**

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 (Abe, 1987; Awolesi, 1989; Bolarin, 1992; Odu, 1987; Adamu, 1988; 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 (Bolarin, 1995; Durojaiye, 1975; Okpala and Onocha, 1985; and Osuji, 1976). These studies generally endorse that Nigerian women have been grossly under-represented in the various sciences and Science-based courses and careers. It is considered that as serious as these issues are, one realizes that it is erroneous and unrealistic to think that the problem of Nigerian women lagging behind their male counterparts is a problem that can be solved within a short period of time as the slogan "Education for All in the Year 2000" tends, to point out. In her research studies on "functional women education", 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. Thus Olayinka (1973), Osuji (1976), and Abiri (1977) found from their research studies that vocational aspirations and choice are influenced by certain variables including gender and family background. These researchers revealed that males chose male-stereotyped occupations while females chose female-stereotyped occupations. Thus sex-roles and sex-stereotyped concepts, as sanctioned by the Nigerian cultural values, have traditionally insisted that the

place of women is the home. This cultural expectation, according to these researchers, is responsible for the domination of males in some job areas and females in other areas. In this perspective, Ehindero (1986) discloses that such professions and courses as Home Economics, Nursing, Secretary-ship, and other female-related courses have traditionally been regarded as aspects of the school curriculum reserved for females.

Etuk [(2004) submits that the endorsement of gender-stereotyping and gender discrimination in the Nigerian socio-cultural patterns have had a pronounced negative effects on the human resource development and availability, quantitatively and qualitatively in Nigeria. Etuk (2004) recounts that the ~~negative effects of these gender-stereotyping in Nigeria have weighted more against our women-folk.~~ He enumerates these effects thus: (e) 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 profession; (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 that our women-folk have been a victim of.

Nwagbara (1995) reveals that as a result of the "negative" 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", "domestic and rural drudgery", "discriminatory family treatment" and "old age insecurity" are some of the social injustices that afflict Nigerian womanhood. Nwagbara (1995) further considers that "low social and economic status" "marital instability", and "insecurity at old age" are some of the causes of high fertility amongst Nigerian women. 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 (Adamu, 1987; 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) expatiates 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. Ajaegbu (1985) observes that in some rural locations of Nigeria, many women breed children without due consideration of the implications on their health and on the well-being of their families. Sometimes this development, according to Ajaegbu (1985), is due to cultural biases in which child-bearing is construed as God-sent and should not be tampered with. However, on these illiteracy-syndromes menacing and militating against the human resource development of our Nigerian women folk, Adamu (1987:2) warns "that in this competitive world, no development-oriented government can afford to watch helplessly half of its population being drowned in total or partial darkness or ignorance,

more so that this neglected half is mostly charged with the responsibility of bringing up the younger generation who are always labeled, leaders of tomorrow. He reflects the problem thus:

What kind of leaders is the nation going to have if their early formative years are marked by misguidance by ignorant mothers.

### **Female Education Considered in Comparison with the Ideals of the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) for the Human Resource Development**

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 problem 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 occurs when important information is coupled with the modern advancement that is rooted in our new capacity to communicate. The Conference entertained the hopes that these new forces of development, when combined with the cumulative experience of reform, innovation, research and the remarkable educational progress of many countries, could make the goal of women education an attainable goal.

Based on the foregoing philosophical reflections and pronouncements by the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) on the place of education in enhancing the human resource development of women, it emerged with three major components in respect of its framework about 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.

#### *Academic Excellence*

In respect of the implication of the fundamental right of all women to be educated, the Conference considered the relevance of the following to the totality of the spectrum of womanhood 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) a 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.

With regard to the purpose of education for all women, the Conference considered the vitality and necessity of meeting their 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.

The Conference emphasized that the acquisition and satisfaction of these "need areas" in the lives of women could expose and equip them to achieve the following designs, namely:

- (i) empowering them in any society and conferring upon them the responsibility to respect and build upon their collective cultural, linguistic and spiritual heritage;
- (ii) a commitment to promoting the education of others;
- (iii) a commitment furthering the cause of social justice;
- (iv) a commitment to the achievement of environmental protection;
- (v) a commitment to a display of tolerance towards social, political and religious systems which differ from their own;
- (vi) a commitment to ensuring that commonly accepted humanistic values and human rights are

*Gender Studies as an Innovative Programme...*

- (vii) a commitment to work for international peace and solidarity in an interdependent world. A cultivation of these designs, according to the Conference, could commit our womenfolk into the task of promoting the transmission of common cultural and moral values which are designed to enable them find their identity and worth; they could also be enabled to recognize "education" as more than an end in itself which is designed to create the necessary foundation for life-long learning and human development on which an individual may build systematically further levels and types of education and training.

In the context of an expanded vision and a renewed plea for women to become committed to education, the Conference suggested the need for them to contemplate and embrace educational designing that surpass present resource levels of institutional structures, curricula and conventional delivery systems while building on the best in current practices. The Conference 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, the Conference emerged with 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 partnership which bear on education as a human endeavour.

In the sphere of universalizing access and promoting equity, the 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 should 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. As regards the focusing on learning, the Conference endorsed that active and participatory approaches are particularly valuable in women's education in a bid at assuring learning acquisition and allowing them to reach their fullest potential.

In the task of broadening the means and scope of education for women, the Conference noted that their learning needs are diverse and should be met through a variety of delivery systems. It explains that literacy programmes could be employed in creating the basis and foundation for other life-skills; it expatiates further that literacy in the mother tongue could be used in strengthening women's cultural identity and heritage. It also suggested that women could be encouraged to utilize skills-training and ~~academic excellence~~ ~~to explore the value of educational programmes in a number of societal issues for~~ a purpose of enhancing their human resource development. These educational programmes could possess relationships which bear on such issues as: health, nutrition, population, agricultural techniques, the environment, science, technology, family-life including fertility awareness.

In the area of enhancing the environment for learning, the Conference endorsed 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.

With regard to the issue of strengthening partnerships, the 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; the Conference cautions that the terms and conditions of service of teachers and their status, which constitute a determining factor in the implementation of education for women must be urgently improved in all countries in line with the joint ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966). The Conference reminded all stakeholders that the essence of "an expanded vision and a renewed commitment" to the education of women is rooted in exploring and employing "partnership designs" in achieving deserved ends.

### **General Views About Women Education and Human Resource Development in Nigeria**

Discrimination against women's education in relationship to the bid for enhancing their human resource development 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 Ukpabor (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 the country. In line with these reflections, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) clearly states that every Nigerian shall have a right to equal educational opportunities according to his or her ability.

Adugbo (2000) 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 this requisite and effective education appear to be eluding our womenfolk on daily basis.

Thus Adugbo (2000) 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 Odu (1986) states that in Nigeria, much of the illiteracy and lack of numeracy prevailing in the country are found amongst the womenfolk. According to the UNEESCO (1960) 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 ~~emphasized in various ways that a high priority must be given to education to ensure development in this country~~ (Olayinka, 1973; Osuji, 1976; Okpala and Onocha, 1985; Abe, 1987; Odu, 1987; Adamu, 1988; Awolesi, 1989; Bolarm, 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; Wilson, 1963). What this neglect implies, among others, is that this pattern of education lays the foundations between the roles men and women are supposed to play in society. 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 (2004) lays emphasis on gender equality on education, women's education still trails far behind men's with far-reaching adverse consequences for both individual and national well-being. Thus Aboribo (2000: 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 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 pastures 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 (i) 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 almost 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;~~ *Gender Studies as an Innovative Programme* (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 (2004) 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.

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. 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). However, a number of research studies (Yeld, 1964; Kaita, 1972; Omololu, 1972; Uyanga, 1976; Musa, 1981; Hake, 1970; Adamu, 1987 and Chineme, 1999), have generally confirmed the negative and demoralizing effects of gender-stereotyping on the human resource development of Nigerian women. Thus, Yeld (1964) identifies that the high degree of seclusion generally imposed on women, as a result of adherence to certain religious and cultural activities, constitute one of the most adverse limiting factors on the education of women and girls in Kebbi and Sokoto States. Kaita (1972) stresses that in many parts of Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina and Kano States, the greatest problems that hinder women education are mostly attributable to their home-background and religion as well as some social and community sanctions. Thus Kaita highlights that children are brought up right from the beginning with some "feelings against Western Education and in this respect, they are unwillingly forced to go to schools against which they already had cultivated a traditional prejudice for. Omololu (1972) expresses her dismay on the issue that women are still being held inferior to men almost in every part of the world. She reflects that male children are preferred to female children because the male child will propagate the family name; for this reason, according to Omololu, any amount of money could be spent on his education and this would not be regarded as a waste, whereas, in the case of a girl, it is considered a waste as she would eventually end up in the kitchen. Musa (1981) highlights the view that most Hausa husbands disapprove of the independent activity of women outside the home, feeling that it would lead to liaisons with other men. He also points out that in the Northern States, there is the tendency to regard all



unmarried educated women as sexually loose, especially those who work or appear well-dressed. This prejudice is extended by the general populace even to highly educated ladies attempting to enter the professions. Musa also discloses that in these Northern States, particularly among the Hausas, men generally do not want to marry educated girls, fearing that the home may be neglected if a married woman with children spends most of her time out of the home working, and with no responsible person at home, the children may be adversely affected. Uyanga (1976) discloses that the problem of finding a husband once a woman is educated is a major force militating against human resource development amongst women particularly in the Hausa-speaking areas of the North. ; She stresses that the Hausa-speaking communities' lack of interest in marrying educated women is very high and precarious. She expatiates that this development could be as a result of one or more of these factors: high bride price, cultural upbringing, desire of men to be dominant, religious values or the superiority feelings of educated women and their rejection or seclusion. These forces, according to Uyanga, are so pervasive that, though a great proportion of men may have the desire to marry the educated women, very few have the genuine intention of doing so. Hake (1970) comments that the problem of allowing girls to attend school is a significant one for parents living in Northern Nigeria. He reflects that the Muslim religion entreats women to be humble and subservient towards men especially their husbands. He discloses that parents entertain fears that when a girl receives even an elementary form of education she would no longer be submissive to her parents as well as to her future husband. Hake (1970: 17-18) advances a number of reasons militating against female education in Northern Nigeria as follows: pervasion against the co-educational approach to female education; and the failure of teachers in the public schools to emphasize the need for moral education in their institutions. Adamu (1981) in his research studies considers a number of reasons which have operated adversely against female education, particularly in the Northern States thus: the desire of men to maintain their dominance over women; the fear that women might supersede men in knowledge and therefore pose a threat to their positions and dominance; irrelevant curriculum; men's fear of being displaced from their jobs by females; the need for upholding the patrilineal system of social organization; the negative effect of Western Education on female members of the community that encourages them to disrespect their traditional cultural norms (it is upheld that this development tends to foster gross immorality among the educated women); early marriages; and the lack of confidence in the teachers operating in both the primary and secondary schools. In her research studies. Chineme (1999) discloses that although Nigeria joined other countries, agencies and organizations in adopting the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) by the year 2000, there are many constraints against the effective realization of this resolution. She emerged with the view that the conventional methods of education alone can not achieve education for all by the year 2000. She advances the need for embracing Popular Education (PE) as a strategy in the education of illiterate women, a group that resigns its helpless predicament to fate. Chineme expatiates that Popular Education conscientizes people and empowers them to take action and change all oppressive social and economic structures. She endorses that the empowering of women demands action on several fronts - from the government, non-governmental organizations, cooperative societies and public spirited individuals. She considers that a concerted effort from all these groups either collectively or singly could ensure sustainability of any gains achieved.

*Gender Studies as an Innovative Programme...*

**Overcoming the Effects of Gender-Stereotyping through Effective Female Education for Human Resource Development**

Umoh (2004) reflects that the pattern of defense 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 affects all aspects of a child resource development capacities including his thinking, behaviour and career selection (Umoh, 2004). Azikikve (1998) notes that children are socialized very early into "appropriate" sex-typed behaviour including a variety of forms of human developmental activities and occupations.

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 or 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, 1988). 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-painpering 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.

#### *Academic Excellence*

Umoji (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. Hurlock (1973) notes 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. It follows that 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 pre-requisites 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 that could become counter-productive for effective human resource development in the final analysis. In other words, a child's career choice abilities, his nature and demands should constitute an integral part of the function of education in the context of nurturing, grooming and improving these human resource development ingredients and prerequisites in the interests of the child.

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;

Anyinkwa, 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. In other words, a school's responsibility, among others, is to assist the individual (man or woman) formulate realistic and realizable career and human resource development goals. In order to achieve this design, the school must include, as part of its curriculum offerings, career and human resource development programmes so as to enable both sexes cultivate the necessary human resource development structures and ingredients germane for achieving self-actualization and self-fulfillment in a bid at contributing productively to sustainable national development in Nigeria.

*Gender Studies as an Innovative Programme...*

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### **Conclusion**

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 or ideals 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 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. The above-named researchers generally concede 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. It is considered in this exposition that 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 our womenfolk to the curriculum resource base of human resource 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 the context of Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

A number of recommendations which bear on gender studies are made in the task of engendering and enhancing the human resources development indices of our womenfolk so as to become instruments for sustainable development in Nigeria as follows:

Firstly, we need to discourage cases of gender stereotyping in our societies as this is largely instrumental for the marginalization of women in almost every aspect of human resource development in Nigeria.

Secondly, it is entertained that if educational programmes for women are effective, women must necessarily be involved in the formulation of objectives, planning and execution of these programmes;

### Academic Excellence

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such programmes have to be based on their needs, aspirations, interests, abilities and competencies. There is need for exploring all productive avenues for instituting basic functional education and training for women that could ensure the effective participation of these individuals in the socio-economic development of this country.

Thirdly, the political class and other authorities in this country have to recognize the necessity to provide and to present the coming generations of our womenfolk and expanded vision and a renewed commitment to education so as to enable them address the scale and complexity of the challenges confronting humankind in the quest for survival and effective living.

Fourthly, there is need for the endorsement of the employment of active and participatory approaches that are particularly valuable in women's education in a bid at assuring learning acquisition and allowing them to reach their fullest potential.

Fifthly, our educational stakeholders need to embrace and take more seriously that the essence of an expanded vision and a renewed commitment to the education of women is rooted in exploring and employing partnership designs in achieving deserved ends.

Sixthly, our educational stakeholders need to emerge with schemes designed for ensuring that women received sufficient attention regarding their involvement in schemes and structures that could bring about large-scale human resource development.

Seventhly, it is submitted that the empowering of women in our society demands concerted efforts and action on several fronts – from the governments, non-governmental organizations, cooperative societies and public spirited individuals – in capitalizing on the employment of popular education in conscientizing people and empowering them to take action and change all oppressive social and economic structures to counterproductive to the liberation and emancipation of women.

Eighthly, our schools must be made to accept the responsibility, among others, of assisting individuals (men or women) formulate realistic and realizable career and human resources development goals; this perspective demands that these institutions must include, as part of their curriculum offerings, career and human resource development programmes so as to enable both sexes cultivate the necessary skills, structures and ingredients germane for achieving self-actualization and self-fulfilment in a bid at contributing productively to sustainable national development in Nigeria.

### Gender Studies as an Innovative Programme...

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