

**WELCOME TO THE 2014 INT'L
WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION
AT THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY, OWERRI**

Theme:

***“EQUALITY FOR WOMEN
IS PROGRESS FOR ALL”***

A KEYNOTE PAPER

By:

**PROF. COMFORT M. EKPO
VICE CHANCELLOR,
UNIVERSITY OF UYO, UYO
*e-mail: vc@uniuyo.edu.ng***

A one-time Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher once said *“If you want anything said, ask a man; if you want anything done, ask a woman....”*

***“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began BOTH to do and to teach,”* Acts 1: 1 (NIV).**

THE IWD CELEBRATION

In 1975, during International Women's Year, the United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day on 8 March. Two years later, in December 1977, the General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace to be observed on any day of the year by Member States, in accordance with their historical and national traditions.

THE IWD CELEBRATION Contd.

In adopting its resolution, the General Assembly recognized the role of women in peace efforts and development and urged an end to discrimination and an increase of support for women's full and equal participation.

SIGNIFICANCE OF IWD

- ✚ NOW, Women's Day is celebrated throughout the globe on 8th March every year. Celebrating Women's Day is an opportunity to appreciate the remarkable contribution of women to our society. It is not just another day but it is a day to appreciate and give respect to all the women who are the essence of our lives.
- ✚ It is important to mark Int'l Women's Day as a time to reflect on the progress that has been made by women, for women and global development.

Significance of IWD Contd.

- ✚ IWD is also set aside as a celebration of those ordinary women whose courageous and determined acts served to play a historical role in women's rights. I can't but recall the gallant performance of the Ikot Abasi Women in 1929.
- ✚ IWD is a good time to continue to sound the call for change. Our state legislators should be made to recognize and observe the day as a mark of appreciation to those who toiled for that recognition.


Significance of IWD Contd.

- ✚ We celebrate this day not to appreciate women only but to spread the awareness among certain jerks that disrespect women. This day is for the few men who do not understand women and their sentiments.**
- ✚ Today's event in Owerri is being held in commemoration of IWD.**

IWD Themes From 1996

YEAR	THEME
1996	Celebrating the Past, Planning for the Future
1997	Women and the Peace Table
1998	Women and Human Rights
1999	World Free of Violence Against Women
2000	Women Uniting for Peace
2001	Women and Peace: Women Managing Conflicts
2002	Afghan Women Today: Realities and Opportunities
2003	Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals
2004	Women and HIV/AIDS

YEAR	THEME
2005	Gender Equality Beyond 2005; Building a More Secure Future
2006	Women in Decision-making
2007	Ending Impunity for Violence Against Women and Girls
2008	Investing in Women and Girls
2009	Women and Men United to End Violence Against Women and Girls
2010	Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities: Progress for All
2011	Equal Access to Education, Training, and Science and Technology: Pathway to Decent Work for Women
2012	Empower Rural Women, End Poverty and Hunger
2013	A Promise is a Promise: Time for Action to End Violence Against Women
2014	Equality for Women is Progress for All



The main difference between the 2005, 2010 and 2014 themes is that there is a specific reference to women in relation to equality. This shows that United Nations is conscious of the fact that there can be no development until men and women are equally empowered. We shall therefore in this keynote address examine the 2014 theme in the context of the reality of factors that border on equality.

Nagging Questions That Seems Inevitable

- What is equality?
- Why 'equality' for women?
- Why does or why should equality for women entail progress for all?
- Should we really be talking about "equality" or "equity"?
- Are there alternatives or complementary approaches?
- How can the equality gap be bridged?

Some Basic Assumptions From UN Position As Evidence From The Annual Themes:

- ✚ Women and men are not equal; in other words, there is gender imbalance.
- ✚ Inequality between the genders leads to a disconnect in the society.
- ✚ A consequence or function of the second, is that when there is equality for women or for all parties, it will ultimately translate to the overall well-being of the entire society, hence the tag phrase, “... **Progress for all**”.

LEADING CONCEPTS IN 2014 IWD THEME

- ❖ **Equality:** The same status, rights and responsibilities for all the members of a society, group or family”.
- ❖ **Status:** Categorization according to certain indices – education, financial or material, nationality, religion, race, gender, etc.
- ❖ **Responsibility:** Duty, be it moral, legal or both.
- ❖ **Rights:** Are entitlements, what should be due an individual, a group, society.

WHY EQUALITY FOR WOMEN?

- ✚ Women constitute a larger group
- ✚ It is not in the best interest of the society
- ✚ It is evident in the various sectors of the community

Social

Religious

Education

Governance

Employment

Law, etc.

Discrimination In Rewards in academic salary in the USA

Academic Rank	Men	Women
Professor	\$59,180.00	\$52,380.00
Associate	\$44,130.00	\$41,040.00
Assistant	\$37,240.00	\$34,380.00
Instructor	\$28,220.00	\$26,390.00
Lecturer	\$32,800.00	\$28,530.00


Discrimination In Rewards in academic salary in Canada

Academic Rank	Men	Women
Professor	\$75,580.00	\$71,858.00
Associate	\$61,091.00	\$58,388.00
Assistant	\$47,223.00	\$45,247.00
Lecturer	\$41,790.00	\$39,329.00


Why Should Equality For Women Entail Progress For All?

**“Every Time We
Liberate A Woman,
We Liberate A Man”**

Margaret Mead.



**Women are 'wired' differently
from men. There is an
ingrained resilient power in
every woman and if she is
God-fearing and wise, she is a
builder of homes and lives.**




**It would therefore be a
major disservice to
humanity if the perspective
of a significant part of the
population is
discountenanced.**

'EQUALITY' OR 'EQUITY'?

But I understand and I do believe that all of us know that when reference is made to equality it is not made to the idea of women being the same as men, which would be quite an absurd proposition, but rather to the principle of equal educational opportunities, equal pay for equal work, right to life, work, political leaning and association, job opportunities, etc.

BRIDGING THE INEQUALITY GAPS BETWEEN THE GENDERS

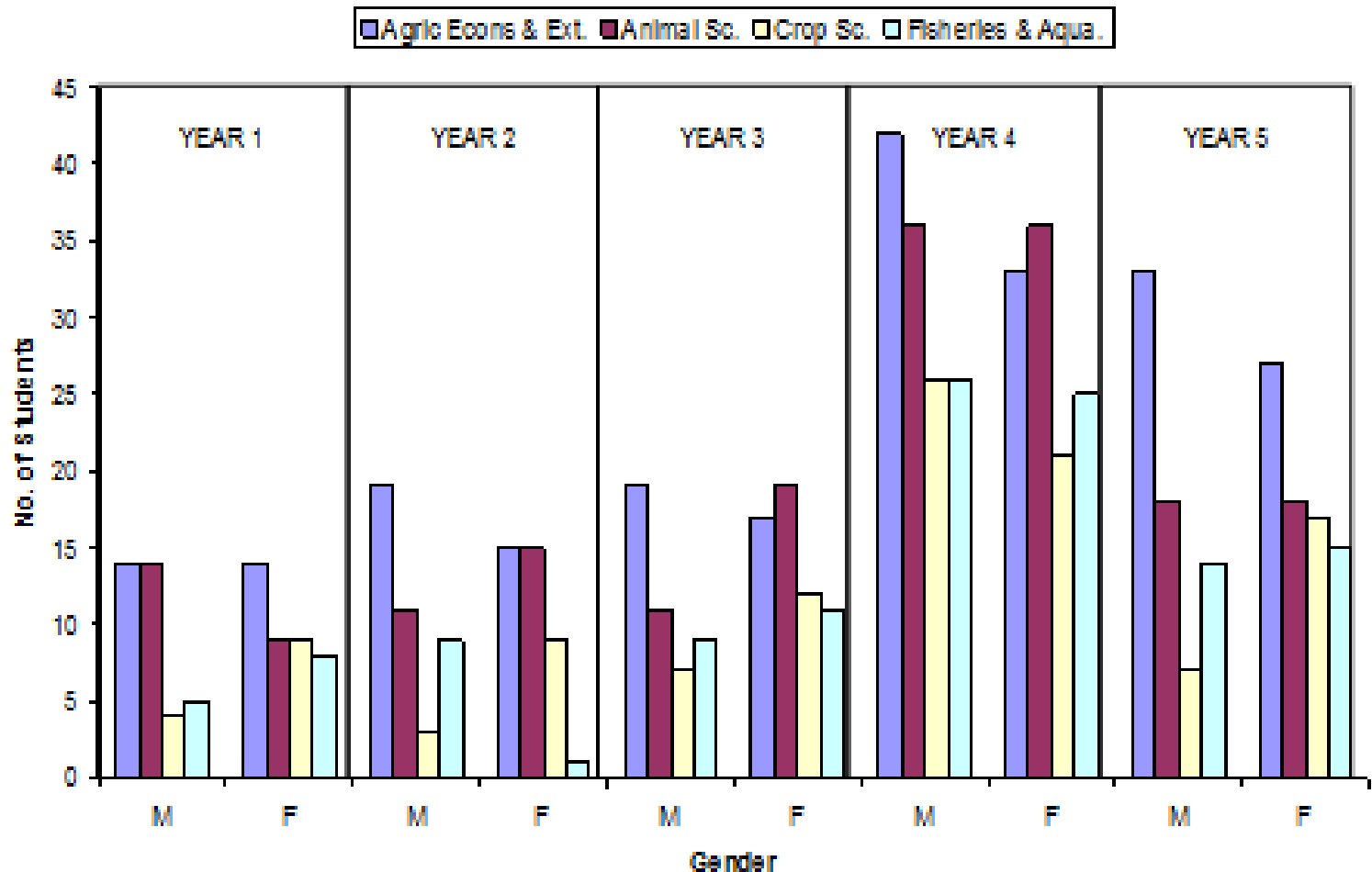
- # Recognizing the gaps**
- # Positive actions by all to sensitize the public**
- # Affirmative action**
- # Advocacy**
- # Provide level playing grounds for all – equal opportunities specifically target the major levelers - education**



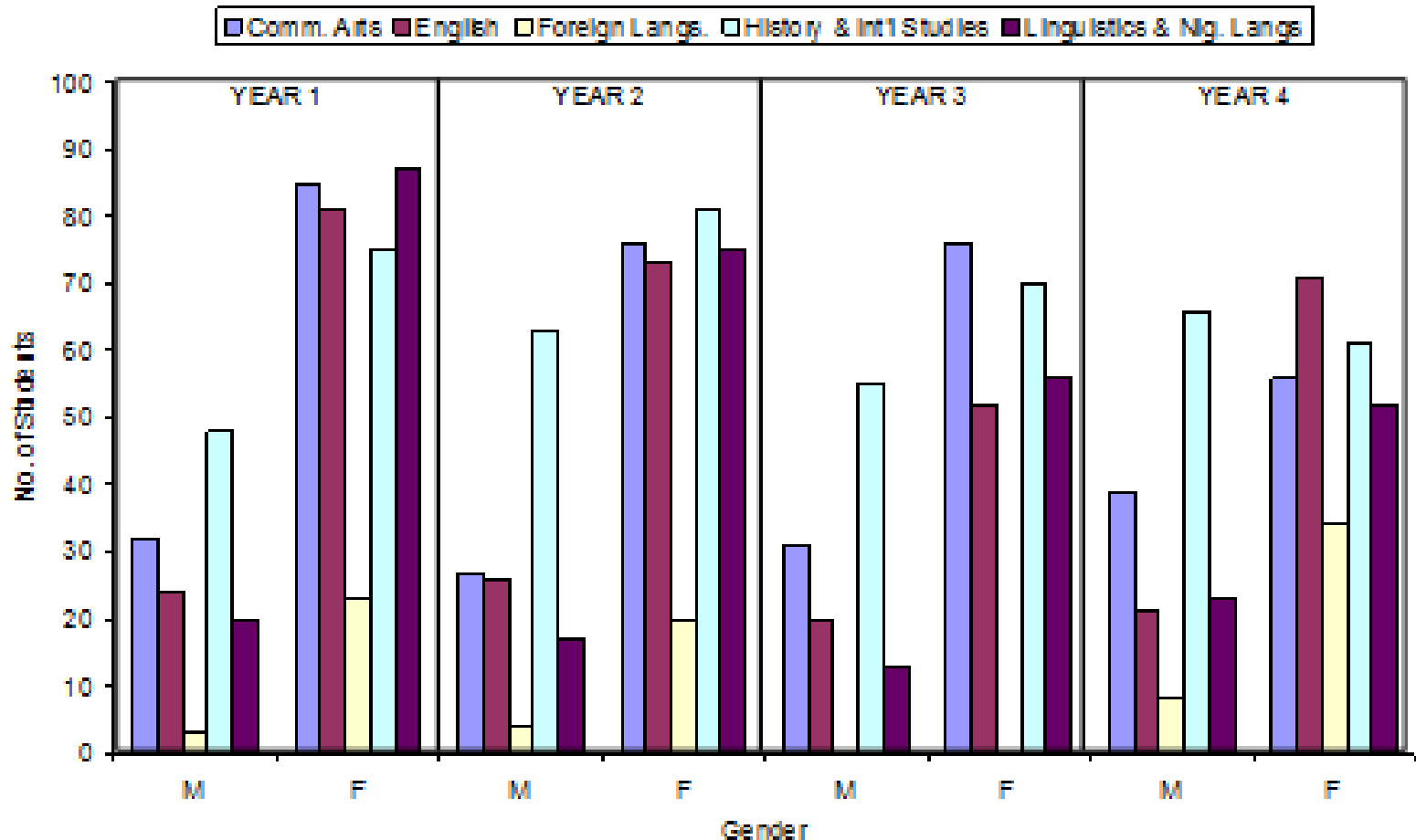
The level of women's education in a society determines the level of the society's development. Therefore in this paper, I would push for the encouragement of more quality education for the girl-children in order to begin the process of bridging the gap between women and men

Enrolment Figures in the Faculty of Agriculture

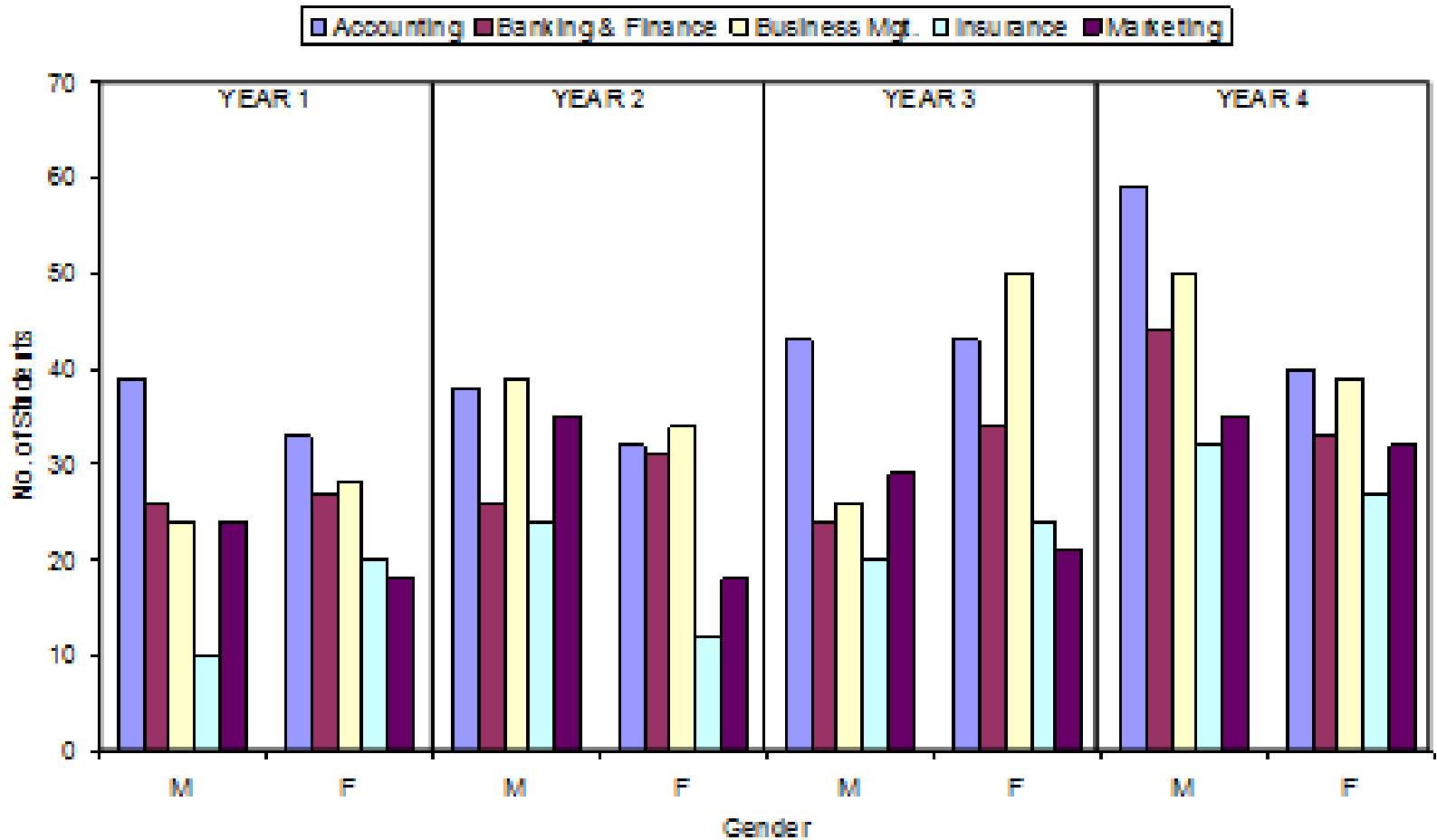
FACULTY OF AGRIC



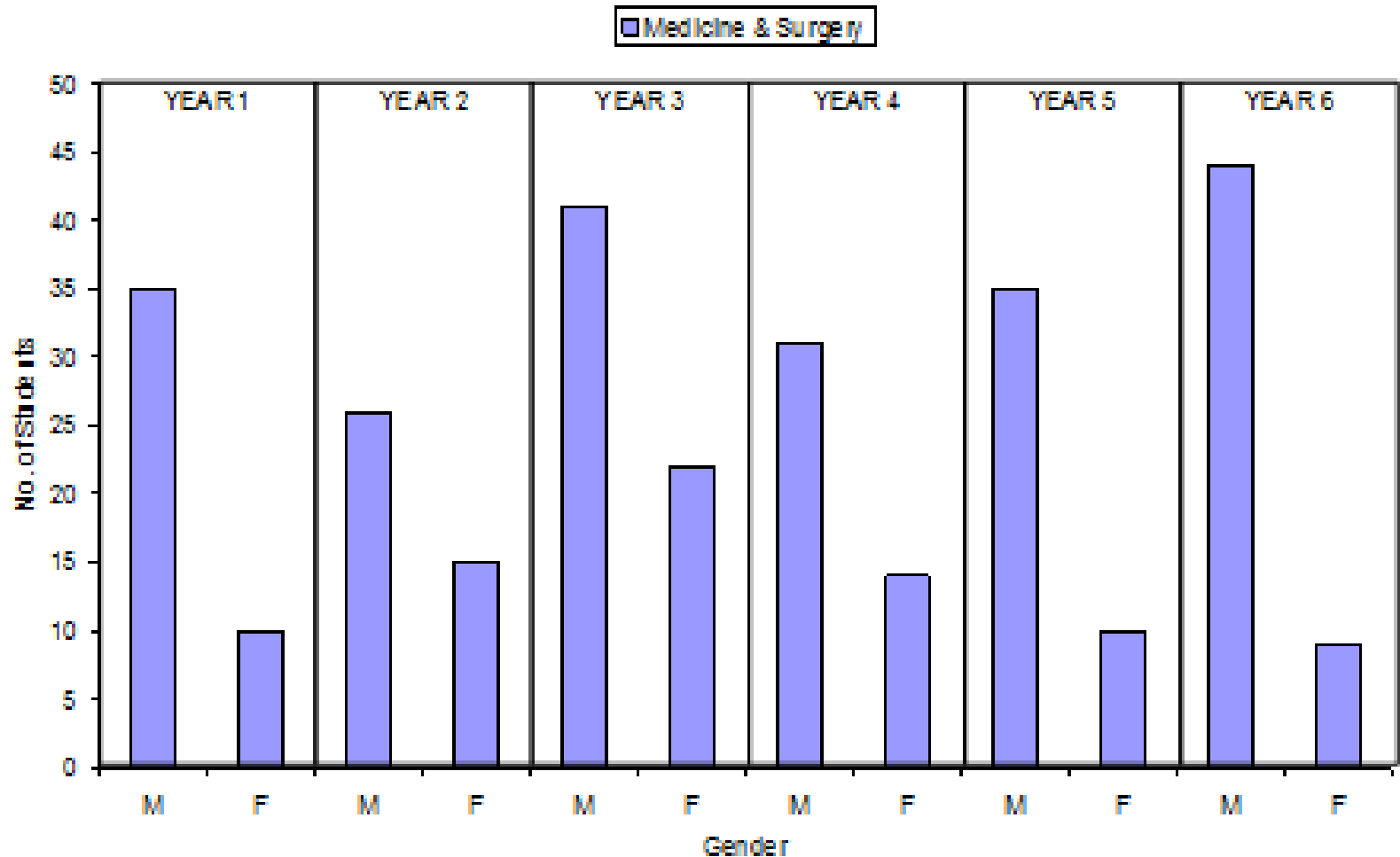
Enrolment figures in the Faculty of Arts



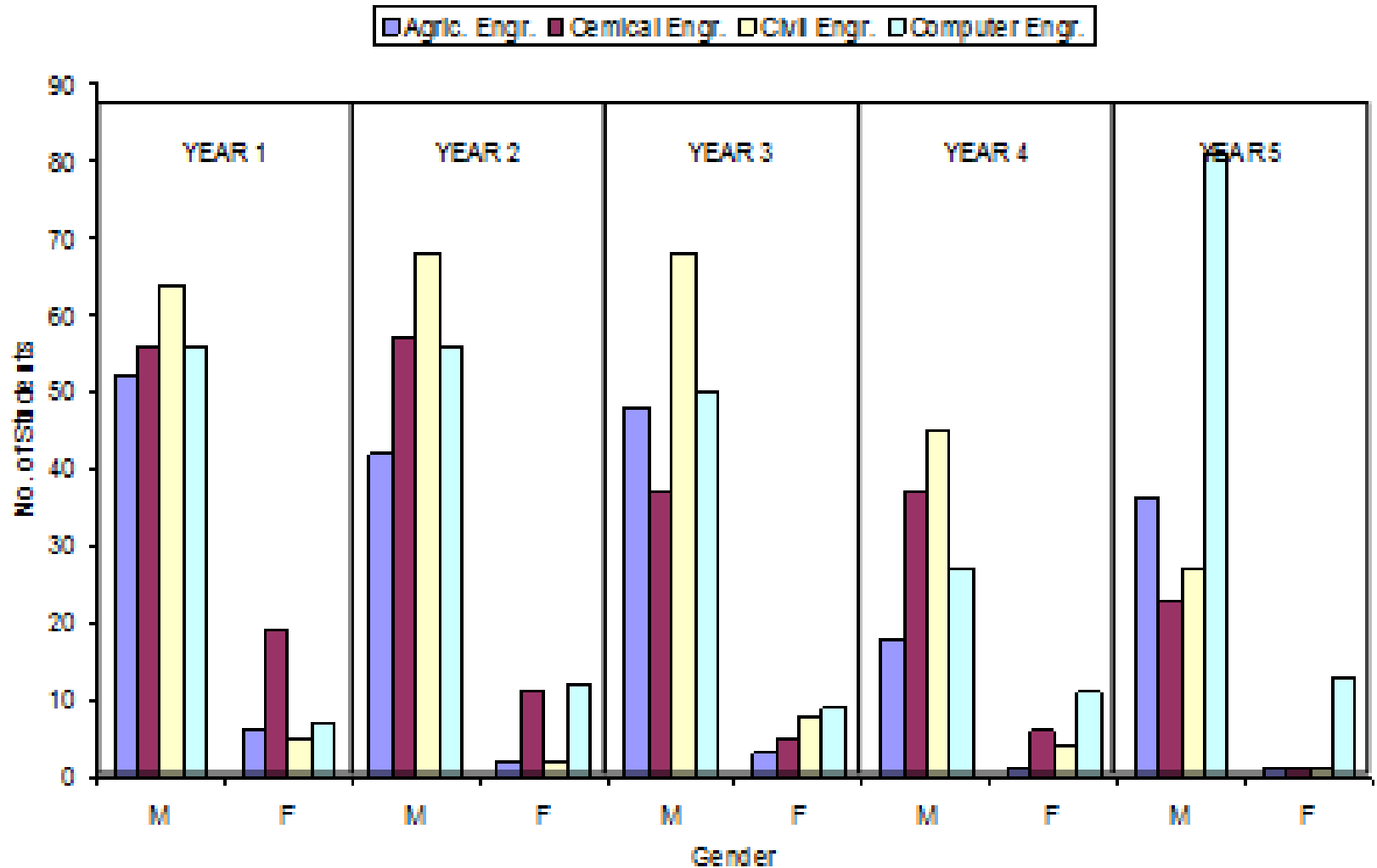
Enrolment Figures in the Faculty of Business Administration



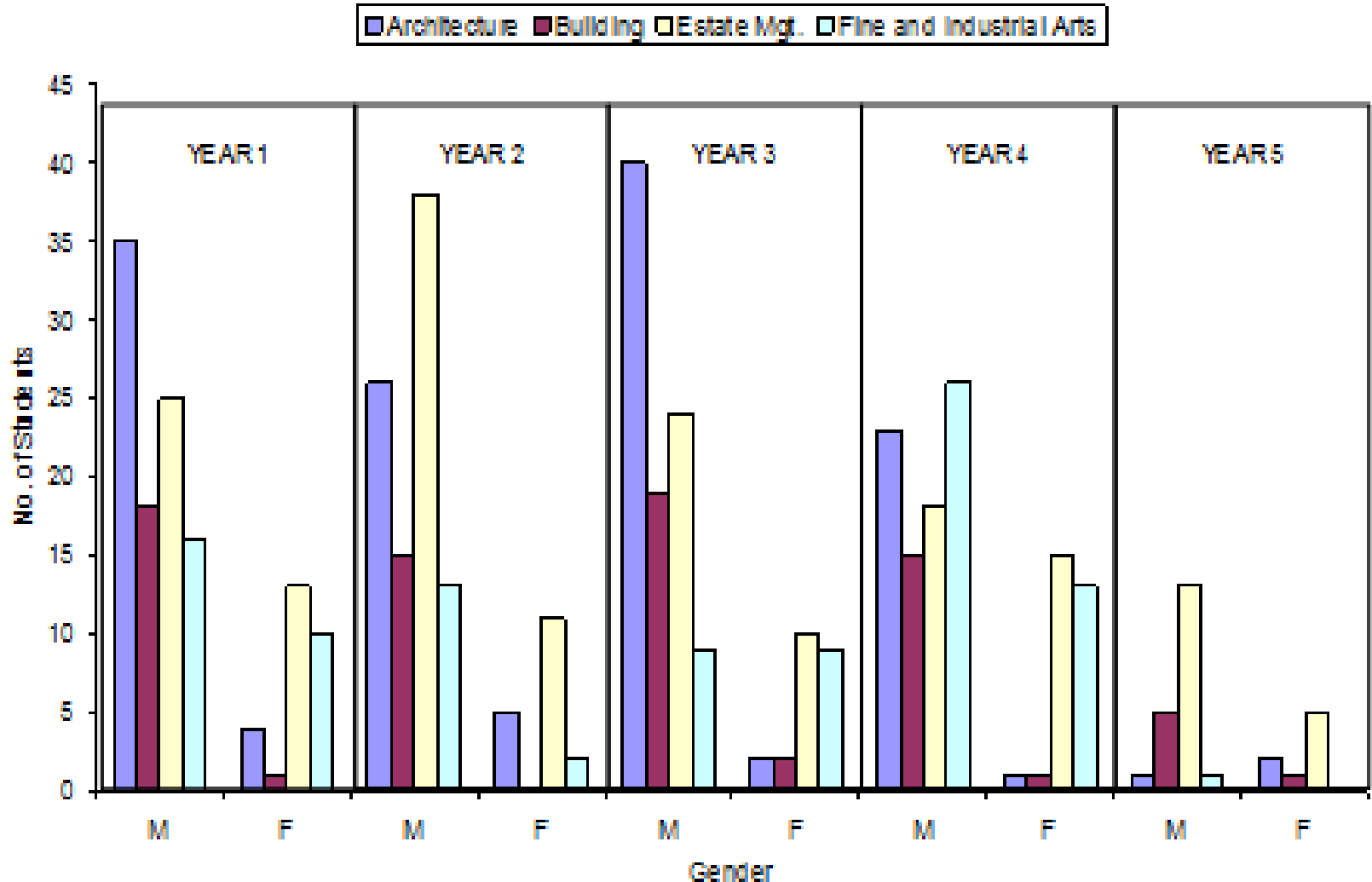
Enrolment Figures in the Faculty of Clinical Sciences



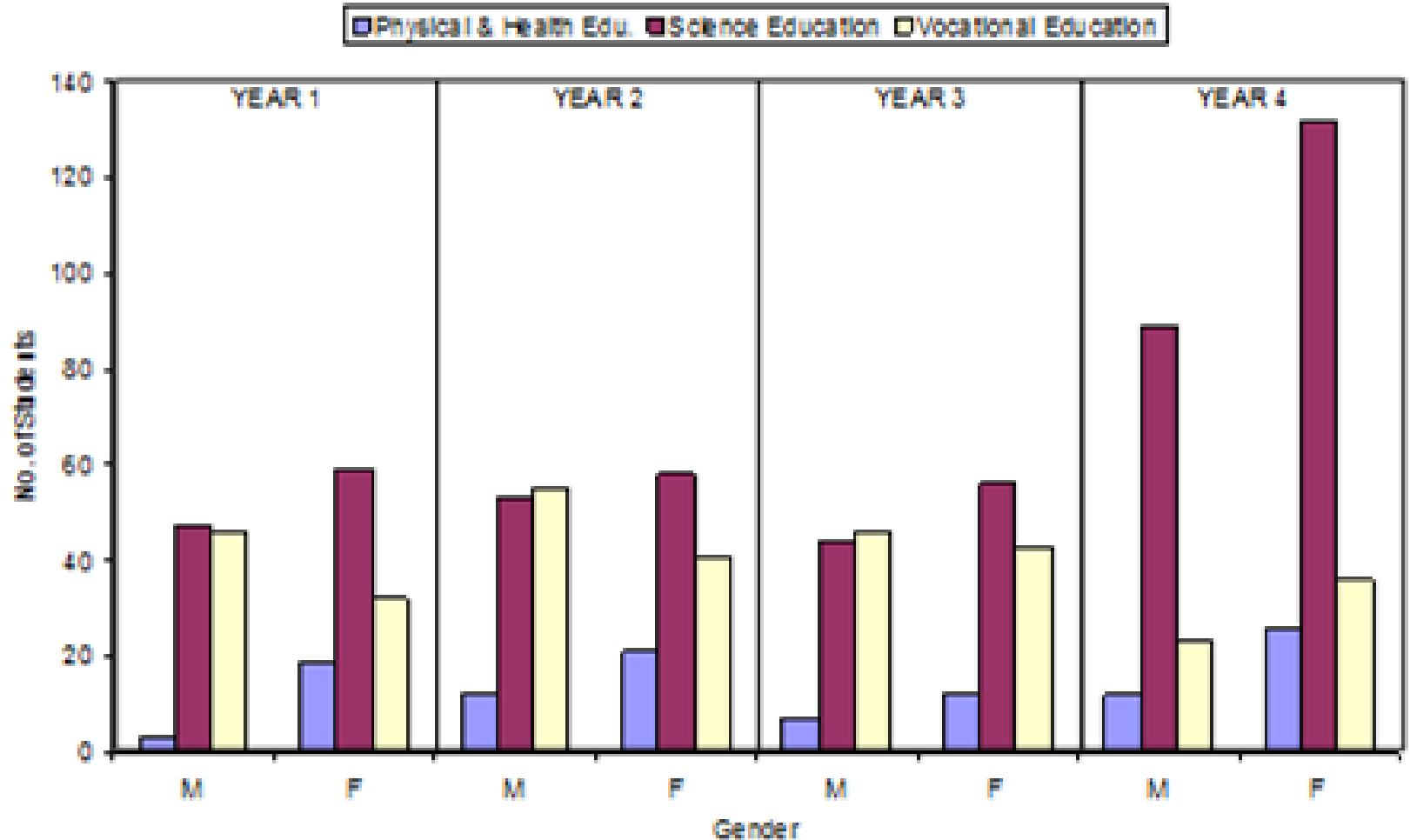
Enrolment Figures in the Faculty of Engineering




Enrolment Figures in the Faculty of Environmental Studies




Enrolment Figures in the Faculty of Education





Considering the tables above, it shows that educational enrolment by gender is skewed in favour of the males. In teasing out the differences, in almost all the faculties, apart from the Faculty of Arts and Education (traditional women bastions), we observe that males outnumber the females by far.



The reasons for this disparity are varied but since this is not our focus today, we shall simply mention a few including lack of encouragement in the pursuit of higher education, financial constraints, marriages, child birth and care, support of the professional growth and development of the spouse, etc.

IMPLICATION

The implication of the above enrolment figures is that those who *ab initio* have the requisite qualifications will be the ones *prima facie* qualified for employment opportunities where such qualifications and skills are required. This is why I consider education to be the key to closing the inequality gap between genders. Let the women be encouraged to acquire education and skills at all levels.

THE GLASS CEILING PHENOMENON

- # Target the glass ceiling and smash it.
- # Catch the girl-children young and assist in their intellectual development.
- # Act as role models and mentors.
- # Provide equal opportunities right from homes:
 - *sharing of household chores,*
 - *inheritance, and*
 - *building your daughters.*

ADVOCACY

There is nothing as powerful as role models in making people who once thought they are just ordinary to do what can be considered extraordinary things.

Unfortunately, women are judged in collective terms not on an individual platform which is why Clare Boothe Luce declared that *“Because I am a woman, I must make unusual efforts to succeed. If I fail, no one will say, she doesn’t have what it takes. They will say, women don’t have what it takes.”*

A d v o c a c y *Contd.*

Therefore, women who have scaled the 'glass ceiling' should endeavor to 'clone' themselves exponentially as it were by encouraging more younger women to aspire to the top. Of course, both men and women are susceptible to lethargy, lack of ambition and lack of self-worth.

A d v o c a c y *Contd.*

As they say, you can only take a cow to the river but you cannot force it to drink therefrom. Therefore we do not expect that every woman will aspire or get to the top just as not all men aspire or get to the top. But equal opportunities should be provided for all to get there!

MUTUAL RESPECT

In the process we have the responsibility as mothers and teachers, in and outside the classroom, to teach boys and men as well as our daughters and women to treat each other with respect. If it entails creating the Ministry of Men Affairs and Social Development, so be it. The young girls' mind must be trained to believe that they can excel in any field of endeavour given an equal opportunity and a level playing field, regardless of their gender.

CONCLUSION

It might sound oppressive of women to request men to wait while the women attempt to move higher so as to catch up with the men. The chaos in Nigeria education 'policy' at one time was the presumption that some parts of the country would slow down for another part to catch-up! Of course, it did not work. What we must do is to get involved in raising a generation of girls who are empowered.

Conclusion Contd.

We need more role models among mothers and teachers who can “look down the ladder” to encourage the young ones to come up. We need to work on embedded personal and institutional mindsets that women cannot occupy certain positions or that we cannot take higher responsibilities.

Conclusion Contd.

We have to learn to reject self pity and accept hard work and dignity with a positive mindset. That way, equality for women will translate into progress for all.



THANK YOU

FOR

LISTENING