

**GENDER AND LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER
EDUCATION: THE ISSUE OF THE GIRL-CHILD**

A PAPER PRESENTED BY

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AT

**THE HIGHER EDUCATION RESOURCE SERVICES (HERS)
WEST AFRICA HELD AT OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNVIERSITY
CONFERENCE CENTRE, ILE IFE**

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2015.

PROTOCOL

PREAMBLE:

Permit me to express my profound gratitude to the organizers of this programme, the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) West Africa. This conference is coming at a time when there is need for more women to occupy leadership positions and exhibit managerial skills.

Let me also thank the Local Organizing Committee for granting me this opportunity to participate in gender discussion as I speak specifically on 'Gender and Leadership in higher Education: The Issue of the Girl Child. It is therefore a great privilege for me to be a part of this historic gathering to deliberate on issues of gender and leadership.

As a 'girl-child' myself who was greatly deprived, I have a passion for the girl-child development. Over the years, we have tried to reach out to the girl-children from various platforms – especially through our Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) – the Women in Total Girl Development (WIT-GIRL) and the Centre for Gender Studies, University of Uyo. One cardinal area of our work has been to prepare the girl child for future leadership. This is essential because Nigeria appears committed (hopefully) to gender mainstreaming as a developmental strategy for the economic and social transformation.

INTRODUCTION

There is need for clear comprehension of some concepts in this discourse: Gender and Leadership in Higher Education.

The Concept of Gender

There are pockets of serious misconception about the concept of gender. The general tendency about gender issues is to see them as woman issues. Gender is a definitive concept for both males and females and refers to their socially constructed roles and associated behavioural expectations.

The concept of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of Nigeria society is our local means of domesticating the content of the 1995 United Nations Platform for Action.

Leadership in Higher Education

The definition of a leader from available literature depicts one initiating interaction with other members of a group and is capable of moving the group towards a predetermined goal. In other words, a leader must be an individual who first perceives the needs of the group far ahead of others, and therefore plans and solicits the cooperation of all others in the process of the realization of the needs. A leader should therefore be a Role Model.

Broadly speaking, therefore leadership could be seen as a process in which ones actions, words and thoughts influences the actions, words and thoughts of others and propel them to achieving specified goals. From the foregoing, it is obvious that leadership is not gender specific and any sex with the required leadership qualities can and should aspire to leadership positions. Unfortunately, this has not been the case as in many aspects of society, including higher education, where men have dominated leadership positions and this trend may not change in a long while to come because of gender-based issues that have denied the girl child equal rights and equal opportunities with the boy-child.

Some have attributed the rarity of women in leadership positions to marked difference in leadership effectiveness between male and female and have therefore concluded that women are not good leaders and as such should be restricted to their unremunerated roles of wives, mothers and free care givers. However, studies by Anderson and Hanson (2011), and Rosabeth Moss Kanter, among others show that differences in leadership style, performance and leadership effectiveness could not be directly linked with the sex of a leader.

Higher Education or tertiary level of education is an optional final stage of formal learning and to many people it is considered as an extremely important level. It is the stage where one is expected to have relevant exposure for improved career opportunities and therefore stand out to lead. Perhaps for such reasons the males feel they cannot bear the risk of handing over the driver's seat.

Statistics on the gender gap in higher education leadership around the globe generally and in Nigeria in particular, has an interesting twist. In the words of Morley (2011), the enrolment of women in higher education now exceeds that of men worldwide, and has increased six fold during the last forty years as a result of the expansion of both

capacity and opportunity. The number of women enrolled in tertiary institutions has grown almost twice as fast as that of men since 1970 (UNESCO, 2010). A UNESCO global gender parity index that computes the ratio of female-to-male enrolment in higher education is now 1.08 meaning that there are slightly more women undergraduates than men enrolled worldwide. Globally, the number of female students rose six fold from 10.8 to 77.4 million between 1970 and 2008 (UNESCO, 2010). This is a very cheering news and one expects to see a commensurate increment in the number of women occupying top leadership positions. Unfortunately, we are yet to witness such significant increases in the figure as most people in academics and most leaders in higher education are predominantly male. You can count the number of Vice Chancellors who are females. Even the few sitting Vice Chancellors are persecuted by government functionaries and some greedy politicians to extinction. This under-representation reflects not only continued inequalities between men and women, but missed opportunities for women to contribute to the future development of universities.

We need more women Vice Chancellors, Registrars, University Librarians, Bursars, Deans and Provosts, Heads of Departments and Units, etc. One is then forced to ask, what is the issue with the girl-child? Why has the dramatic increase in the girl child enrolment over the last forty years not translated to substantial increment in the number of women occupying leadership positions in the society and especially in higher education?

Permit me to use the University of Uyo as a case study here:

- University of Uyo Enrolment Statistics for Five Years (2010/2011-2014/2015) Academic Session

ADMISSION	2010/2011		2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/2014		2014/2015	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<i>Total No. of Under-Graduate Students Admitted</i>	2,405 58.8%	1,686 41.2%	1,747 46.6%	2,002 53.4%	3,137 62.1%	1,917 37.9%	2,247 54.3%	1,888 45.7%	2,911 55.6%	2,327 44.4%
TOTAL	4,091		3,749		5,054		4,135		5,238	

Source: UNIUYO Admission Unit (2015).

- **The Top Management in the University of Uyo - 1991 - 2015**

With the inception of the University of Uyo in 1991 and 2000, of the core management team, comprising the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Registrar, the Bursar and the University Librarian, only two were females, viz., the Bursar and the Librarian. Between 2000 and 2005, there was only one female core management staff, who was the University Librarian and that was for only a part of that period. From 2005 to 2010, there were two females in the team, viz., the first ever female Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) and the University Librarian. However, from 2010 to date, the University of Uyo has witnessed a respectable percentage of females currently in top management positions. The ratio is 3:3 with three females (the Vice Chancellor, the Registrar and the Librarian) and three males (the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration), the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) and the Bursar) (Ekpo, Urua and Etuk 2014: 130). This is instructive, it appears if more women are visible, many more will be attracted to the top position. The problem is how to break the "glassy top".

The University Governing Council has 16 internal and external members with 10 males and 6 females. At the Faculty level, there are more Deans, up to four out of twelve from one that previously between 2010 and 2014; this period has also witnessed an increase in the number of female Directors of academic and administrative units in the ratio of 7 (females) to 10 (males). The number of female professors has also witnessed an increase up to 22 females compared to 122 male professors (18%) in 2014. Prior to this time such numbers were non-existent because there was nothing to report; but today the story is different. However, we must underscore the fact that this story is not a happenstance (Ekpo, Urua and Etuk 2014: 130)!

Table II: Other senior positions in the University

Academic Staff	No. in Management Position
Male – 1116	92 (65.25%)
Female – <u>335</u>	<u>49</u> (34.75%)
1, 451	141
Non-Teaching Staff	
Male – 79	45 (51.72)
Female – <u>65</u>	<u>42</u> (48.28)
144	87

- The consequence of poor enrolment which translates to the paucity of senior female staff ricochets to the administrative heads of HEIs. Presently, of the 40 Federal Government owned universities, only two are headed by women, viz., University of Uyo in Akwa Ibom State and the Federal University in Lafia, Nasarawa State, a paltry 5%! The national scenario is as presented below.

Table III: Heads of Universities in Nigeria by Gender (2015) Extrapolated from NUC Data

Federal (40)	Female VC (%)	Male VC (%)
	2 (5%)	38 (95%)
State (40)	Female VC	Male VC
	5 (12.50%)	35 (87.50%)
Private (61)	3 (4.92%)	58 (95.08%)
Overall (141)	10 (7.09%)	131 (92.91%)

The percentage of female heads of HEIs is quite insignificant compared to the males. In the federal government owned universities, a whopping 95% (38) are headed by males while only 5% (2) are female-headed. The picture in the private universities is quite similar to those that we find in Federal institutions – a mere 4.92% of the 61 private universities are run by female Vice Chancellors while the

remaining 95.08% (58) are headed by males. Out of 40 state owned universities, 87% (35) universities are headed by males while 12.5% (5) are run by females. Although the percentages appear to be slightly better for state owned universities, the picture is still skewed against females as head of universities. Overall, when we consider the headship of all 141 universities in Nigeria as at 2015, male representation still stands at 92.91% while the females are at 7.09%, still within the single digit. If government was sincere about encouraging women in leadership of higher institution, the Vice Chancellorship positions would have been equitably shared for the recently established Federal Universities.

The Higher Education Sector for a long time has been dominated by men and major decisions affecting even women and girl-children are taken by men. Of late, African tertiary institutions especially universities have been very keen on gender mainstreaming in the operation of their core functions of teaching, research, community development and administrative systems. A critical look into these efforts will show that the process at best is merely ad hoc and according to the whims and caprices of the individual lecturer or administrator. Very few institutions have well structured gender policy that spells out ways of integrating gender into the overall functions of the institutions.

Female Under-Representation in Higher Education Institution

Although women have been involved in higher education, either as faculty members or administrators, the number that actually rises to the top is negligible. Women are found more as caretakers and clerical staff, usually at the lower cadre in HEIs in Nigeria. Female participation in academics is poor. This poor female enrolment as students in higher educational institutions in Nigeria is germane to the paucity of female representation in the management of higher education institutions in Nigeria because low percentage in enrolment nationally translates to a low percentage in and even more under representation at the senior management level. A very negligible percentage (4%) of the academic staff are in the professorial cadre. Professors and Associate professors, 10% senior lecturers and the Assistant lecturer cadre, 15% as far as academic staff in universities is concerned. Even at that, this representation is spread thin in the Faculties of Science, Pharmacy, Agriculture and Environmental Studies.

Although the numbers are still poor, there is more female representation in the Humanities, Education and Social Sciences. In the University of Uyo, there are Departments with all male staff and not a single female academic or senior administrative staff. On the other hand, a department such as Human Ecology and Dietetics (formerly Home Economics) has a higher representation of female staff traditionally. Is this under-representation the making of the administration? Yes and no.

What Is The Issue With The Girl-Child?

A powerful cultural ideology has emerged in Higher Education reform suggesting that leadership is the essential ingredient in successful organizational transformation. One has to control the tap to avoid flooding and subsequent mopping of the spilled water. The girl child must be empowered to lead.

Africa is a highly patriarchal society where men dominate nearly all spheres of women's life. Culturally therefore, women and girls are in subordinate position. The girl-children need to know their rights and be properly educated on how to assert these rights. The mothers must learn to share house chores equitably between the boy-children and girl-children. No one should be made a "beast of household burden". Our girls need qualitative education that can empower them to negotiate intelligently for their right with all due respect to elders and societal norms.

They need to know that leadership is all about excelling in one's role. They need to know that leadership lifts people from the life they have to the life they could have. It involves the ability to contribute meaningfully; and creative ideas that can move any organization or group of people from one level to the other higher levels. They need to understand that men who were there first will not willingly want to let go their positions. They need to know that leadership calls for superior argument. Such abilities must be sustained with the following leadership qualities:

- **Set one's priority right:** Based on one's aspirations and status in life, there is always a beginning. Setting a goal and watching to achieve that goal is the starting point. Creates a chance for improvement and ability to excel. Without priorities, one is bound to be satisfied with any form of level in life. If one does not stand

for something, one is bound to fall for everything. Leadership is all about excelling in one's abilities.

- **Identify one's interest and career aspirations:** God has endowed everyone with some special interest, talent and skill which will lead to one's career in life. In order not to be a jack of all trade and master of none, such areas of interest should be identified, pursued and developed.
- **A display of self actualization characteristics:** The girl child must discover the requirements for a chosen career and work towards obtaining those requirements before the need to utilize them arises. She should overcome the various yardsticks that will frustrate one's ability to become self actualized.
- **Reject self pity and accept hard work and dignity:** The girl child must have a positive mindset of working hard to attain respect and dignity rather than dropping her head for self pity.
- **Work towards the advancement of other people's lives:** The nomination to leadership is a direct consequence of impacted by those who have benefitted from one's advancements. Leaders are not leaders when they occupy leadership position, they are considered leaders because they have led others while in waiting to be "leaders."
- **Stay current and updated to remain focused:** The world is a dynamic environment that changes by the second. As such the girl child needs to identify authentic information about the environment she finds herself to be able to make meaningful contributions. Such information is not obtained from watching African magic twenty four hours. She should have a trainable spirit to unlearn unprofitable habits.
- **Submit to good mentorship** under a well tested and renowned mentor or personality in the society. The girl-child must be made to understand that it is not everyone who made it to the top that is a good model. A mentor must be a model with high qualities and standards as a girl-child. She should have a dream and not allow any body to kill her dream.
- **Taking stock of one's strength and weaknesses:** This involves self examination of one's performance. It creates an opportunity for one to develop confidence in one's ability.

Working hard to improve one's weakness will ensure that the loose ends of one's effort are taken care of.

- **Ability to spot and identify talents** in others and to share responsibilities. Women working with other women can still excel without pulling down one another.
- **Be a good follower** for a start and a good team player, remaining loyal while contributing your quota.
- **Recognizing the role of a fellow woman** in one's leadership circle. Focus on your assigned task and appreciate the value of your role.
- From the Biblical view point, every woman is created from the refined product of man – a man's rib. There is therefore an ingrained resilient power in every woman and if she is God-fearing, she is expected to be a builder of home and community.
- One's inner mind and strength as a woman should make the girl-child to generally develop independent living.
- The girl-child should develop relative managerial skills as this will reduce dependence on others for financial strength. This will foster their independence in taking vital decisions without being unduly influenced or biased.
- The girl-child should be taught to develop and display leadership qualities from whatever point she finds herself. This means from childhood, a child should be trained to become a leader. Let every mother show the girl child the key to leadership which will develop her influence from wherever she is in the society. Leading up, leading access among peers and leading down to carry the subordinates along.

What Needs To Be Done?

There is an urgent need for a multi-layered interventions. These should start with the pre-school girl child. We sometimes wait until she begins to work at which time, it may be getting late. A critical look at these intervention strategies will demonstrate the roles we all could play in nurturing female leaders:

1. The Change and Chain interventions
2. Leadership programmes

3. Gender mainstreaming
4. Affirmative action, quotas and targets
5. Protective laws and regulations
6. Mentoring

Change Interventions

In one of my works (Ekpo, 2012), I observed that a girl child is a carrier of great potentials but highly vulnerable to under utilization or non-utilization because of lack of empowerment for proper positioning. Number one change intervention that will position the girls for leadership role is education. Education is a major instrument of empowerment, change and development. It is recognized by the international community as a fundamental human right and the key to unlocking embedded potentials and thrust open the door to both intellectual and economic wealth. Considering the change intervention strategy, Morley (2013), discussed three areas needing change as women, organization and knowledge. The change intervention though receiving high profile visibility, wide media coverage and policy initiatives is still faced with stiff oppositions from the traditional society.

- Early and forced marriages
- Adolescent peer pressure
- Parents low literacy level
- Religious restrictions
- Poor self esteem
- Low economic power, etc.

Effective use of this change strategy is not a one-shot education as we currently received in either secondary schools or universities. There is the need for chain educational interventions. There is need to:

- fix the women - enhancing women's confidence and self-esteem, empowerment, capacity-building, encouraging women to be more competitive, assertive and risk-taking;
- fix the organization - gender mainstreaming, institutional transformation e.g. gender equality policies, processes and practices, challenging discriminatory structures, gender impact assessments, audits and reviews, introducing work/ life balance schemes including flexible working; and finally

- fix the knowledge - identifying bias, curriculum change e.g. the introduction of gender as a category of analysis in all disciplines, gender and women's studies.

Create opportunities for training and retraining to build confidence in women. Even as a career lady, create opportunity for continuing professional development to master skills.

Exposure To Leadership Programmes And Training

Every potential woman leader needs capacity development programmes to support their development.

Many governmental and non-governmental organizations run workshops and seminars on leadership. Girl children should be encouraged to attend. This is the "fixing of women". In 2014, 30 University of Uyo students (male and female) took part in one of such programmes organized by a leadership group, "Impact Your World Leadership Initiative". The overall national winner Miss Imabong Udom now a medical doctor came top and had a prize that included a trip to London. Imabong has such an unassuming personality that one may never have picked her out of the group to lead.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender Mainstreaming has been defined as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes in any area and at all levels. (UN, 1997), it is therefore a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. A girl child wears different faces because of different religions, traditions, cultures, socio political and economic practices of different countries of the world.

In Africa and especially in Nigeria, we can identify 3 types of girls due to the existing discriminatory conditions. There is a girl-child conditioned by:

- religious discriminations;
- traditional and cultural discriminations; and
- socio-political as well as economic discriminations.

Government policies must address girls from these three discriminatory blocks so conditioned and the girls themselves must be willing to be liberated from ignorance placed by religious bodies and socio-cultural inhibitions, (child/forced marriage, rape, violence and human trafficking, etc.). The key to this liberation is qualitative education. Laws addressing major challenges that exploit young girls should be enacted and enforced.

The first step in gender mainstreaming is to identify the ways the status quo has been designed to open the system up to accommodate both men and women equitably. It could entail re-designing the curriculum and providing gender friendly learning environment.

Affirmative Actions And Gender Policy

Affirmative Action will equalize the educational and employment opportunities for both gender if systematically deployed, but in practice, what is gotten is a "mere tokenism" to the female gender. Affirmative action is still a subject of controversy. Many feel quotas and targets in operation are discriminatory but as observed by Morley where gender segregation is entrenched minority groups would be given opportunity to enjoy some kind of privileges.

Mentoring

The intervention strategy has been recognized as a winning formula for women's career development. Though a large scale survey carried out in USA found out that mentoring was not translating unto promotion for women because it lacked sponsorship. Sponsorship was said to be more readily extended to the male than female mentees.

This is as should be expected. No one gives from nothing. We give what we have. Female mentors operate from lean resources.

For us at the University of Uyo, this strategy has been very effective in mobilizing the girl-children and motivating them to develop their leadership qualities.

Some impacting programmes of Women In Total Girl Development (WIT-GIRL) have been adjudged highly supportive. Programmes like:

- Annual Star Girl award;
- Mother – Daughter fora;

- Business Incubation;
- Talks on Communication Skills; and
- visit to schools for health talks, career counseling and leadership role talk.

Conclusion

Going by our experience at Uyo, it will take the women who are role models to put on persistent and persuasive effort in advocacy for the girl-child's training and development.

This is a worthy task.

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