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Opinions and Strategies in Mainstreaming Gender Studies in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract

This study investigated the preparedness of Nigerian Universities in mainstreaming Gender education as a general studies (GSS/GST) course. The study tried to provide data on benefits of mainstreaming gender education and strategies for successful mainstreaming of gender education. Cross River University of Technology, Calabar – Nigeria and University of Calabar, Calabar – Nigeria were used for the study. Subjects for this study were one hundred and thirty eight (138) lecturers, fifty (50) of which were heads of department. In addition, one hundred and sixty two (162) students were used making a total sample of three hundred (300). The questionnaire used sought the opinions of administrators/HODs, lecturers and students on the benefits or otherwise of inclusion of Gender Studies in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data. Findings show that the inclusive of Gender Studies in the GST/GSS program would be a welcome idea because it will help bridge the gap between inequalities as well as promote general development.

Introduction

Gender mainstreaming is identified as a policy initiative arising from the World Conferences on women beginning in Mexico City in 1975 and culminating in the fourth World Conference in Beijing 1995. The *platform for action* agreed at Beijing, to which the Nigerian Government was one of 189 signatories (Platform action, 1996:1) articulates gender mainstreaming in the following terms:...government and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively (United Nations, 1996: 11).

Progress in closing up the gap in mainstreaming a gender perspective would determine the level of achievement of the Millennium development Goals, for no society can truly prosper if it leaves the talents of half of its population behind. The National Planning Commission, Nigeria (2004) confirms that “factors contributing to poverty in Nigeria include problems in the production sector, widening income inequality, weak governance, social conflicts and gender.” Too often however, gender issues have remained a separate issue or are incorporated only limitedly in education, health, governance, etc.

In terms of implementation, gender mainstreaming involves the organization of policy processes as it moves gender equality concern into everyday policies and into the activities of the actors ordinarily involved in policy-making. Gender mainstreaming bureaucracies, established in over one hundred countries, now represent a significant challenge to a traditional policy-making worldwide. This is evident in that mainstreaming seeks not only to emancipate women, but rather to change the existing social structure, which is gendered, to one which does not disadvantage anyone, male or female (True & Mintrom, 2001: 27).

Education is an important tool to everybody, which is why it has severally been regarded as a right. Today, gender education and related issues are generating a lot of concern globally. Pursuant to this concern, the educational administrator needs to partner with curriculum design experts, guidance counselors and other stakeholders to mainstream gender education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The Nigerian university system must take up the challenge of globalization to meaningfully address its mirage of problems. It is against this background that the study seeks to find out the preparedness of Nigerian universities in

mainstreaming gender education as a General Studies (GSS/GST) course. General studies abbreviated as GSS or GST in some tertiary institutions in Nigeria exposes new students to various areas of discipline to enhance effective training and acquisition of general knowledge outside a one's area of discipline.

Statement of the Problem

The need for mainstreaming gender education in our tertiary institutions cannot be overemphasized especially in the face of meeting with the Millennium Development Goals(MDG)'s goal3: "Promote Gender equality and Empower women; target 4: eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education not later than 2015"

A critical examination of tables (i) and (ii) and the accompanying charts (i) and (ii) below sharply highlights gender disparity of students' yearly enrolment in two universities especially in the Sciences and Engineering faculties.

This paper therefore seeks to investigate the preparedness of Nigerian tertiary institutions in mainstreaming gender education as a GST/GSS course. It also examines opinions and strategies in mainstreaming gender studies in our tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

1. Does successful inclusion of Gender Studies in tertiary institutions depends on the type of existing programmes in the institutions?
2. Will the introduction of Gender Study in Nigeria tertiary institutions reduce the poverty level in Nigeria?

Methods

Research design used in this study was survey inferential design. From the University of Calabar and the Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Nigeria, three hundred (300) questionnaires were administered to respondents who were 138 lecturers and 162 students. Of the 138 lecturers, fifty (50) were administrative heads of departments who take part in the University's decision making which includes students' yearly enrolment. The sample was made up of 153 males and 147 females. The questionnaire,

developed and face validated by the researchers was the main instrument used for data collection. It sought responses on the subject's personal data and opinions from eight vary items. The instrument was personally administered by the researchers and responses were subjected to frequency counts and percentages analysis.

Results and Discussion

Results from Table 3 revealed that (258) of the 300 (100%) respondents believe that successful inclusion on Gender Students should begin with a course in the general studies (GST/GSS) programme. On the contrary, 42 (14%) of the responses did not accept inclusion of Gender Study at that level. Again, it was generally denied that Gender Studies be introduced as an elective course or as a separate field of specialization in the University by 60%. The answer to research question on whether or not successful inclusion of Gender Studies in tertiary institutions depends on the type of existing programmes is therefore in the affirmative. This is in consonant with the enlightenment and awareness that has created in the minds of people. This finding agrees with Carney (2004) who observed that gender mainstreaming is the first strategic policy on gender equality introduced in the Republic of Ireland and adds that is it better to co-ordinate it rather than have twelve different departments dealing with critical areas of concern.

Questionnaire items in table (iv) seek opinions on the benefits of inclusion of Gender Studies in tertiary institutions which will positively affect the poverty level in Nigeria. The table depicts that women will be encouraged to benefits from higher education by the inclusion of Gender Studies in tertiary institution to an 86% extent. In the same vain, 83% and 81% favour the option that inclusion of Gender Studies will change negative options about job stereotypes and promote economic empowerment of both men and women. Finally, results show that opportunities for women at school and at work places will be encouraged with the introduction of Gender Studies in tertiary school in Nigeria. It can therefore be concluded that poverty will be reduced through the benefits derivable from introduction of Gender Studies in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Strategies for Integrating Gender Studies

1. Organizing sensitization workshops: Innovative practices do not just happen. It requires creation of a climate of trust, support and

encouragement along with sensitivity to the fact that change is most often accompanied by the fear of the unknown (Dean and Persall, 2001). Thus, an excellent way to begin this process is for administrators in tertiary institutions to be sensitized with the components of Gender Studies so that they will assist the teachers, other staff members and students to get interested in this novel and important programme.

2. Support from parents and other community members: Promoting positive attitudes towards the study of the course must be taken to parents and community members. Consequently, information about the course and objectives should be given wide publicity by the educational leaders. Administrators have the unique opportunity not just to circulate information about mainstreaming Gender studies but also to obtain public support and confidence through the local media.
3. Take the bull by the horn and introduce gender education as a field of specialization. Monitoring and evaluating the programme through observing discrepancies and relevant corrections that must be affected for students and measuring if the programme has achieved the predetermined goals and objectives can be done by a consonant analysis of students' reactions to test questions.
4. Government management of tertiary institutions should include gender mainstreaming in medium-term plans, programme budgets and multi-year funding frameworks.

Implications

This study will increase awareness and sensitize the general public on the need to mainstream gender education as a GST/GSS course which would help create a conducive ground for the smooth take-off of the programme in the tertiary institutions. In view of the fact that for some years now, higher education in Africa with particular reference to universities have shown interest in mainstreaming gender education into their core courses. This has resulted in the introduction of gender courses in faculties and departments thus, it is not uncommon to find a university with several gender based

courses spread in faculties of education, social sciences, law, theology, medicine, etc. which, very often are handled haphazardly without much commitment from lecturers, students and even the university management. It is the belief of the researchers that the inclusion of gender studies as a unique course in tertiary institution will now be the concern of all.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper examined the issues involved in gender mainstreaming in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It submits that since men and women are actively involved in nation building, both should be equally represented in policy-making and implementation. This can be evidently done through receiving of such enlightenment and knowledge in the gender studies class.

Mainstreaming gender education in the GST/GSS programme in our tertiary institutions with full commitment on the side of the Government would reduce inequality, poverty and under development faster than just having a Women Affairs department on Equality.

Finally, the educational administrators, who are the leaders of their schools are uniquely positioned to initiate quality administration and curricular change/ innovations that reflect the contemporary nation's needs and aspirations as well as move their institution towards greater effectiveness.

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Table 1: Students' enrolment trend by faculty/department and by gender for 2005/06 and 2006/07 sessions, Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH), Calabar – Nigeria

FACULTY DEPARTMENT		MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
		2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
Science	Chemical Science	19	55	11	38	30	83
	Physics	41	53	5	3	46	56
	Maths/Statistics	24	40	4	11	28	51
	Computer Science	46	52	10	39	56	91
	Biological Sciences	30	53	22	71	52	124
	Total	160	253	52	162	212	415
Education	Foundations & Admin	50	85	40	133	90	218
	Curr. & InstructionalTech.	62	134	47	121	109	255
	Total	112	219	87	254	199	473
Environmental Sciences	Architecture	31	58	2	6	33	62
	Mass communication	16	66	58	80	74	146
	Urban/Regional Planning	12	41	6	10	18	51
	Visual Arts Technology	10	35	8	37	18	72
	Estate Management	36	39	16	20	52	59
	Total	105	237	90	153	195	390
Engineering	Electrical/Electronics	127	199	7	11	134	210
	Civil Engineering	76	122	8	11	84	133
	Mechanical Engineering	96	135	5	10	101	145
	Total	299	456	20	32	319	488
Management Science	Business Administration	57	78	33	44	90	122
	Accountancy	103	96	35	40	138	136
	Total	160	174	68	84	228	255
Agriculture/ Forestry	Forestry/Wild Life	12	9	0	3	12	12
	Animal Science/Fisheries	5	11	1	10	6	21
	Agronomy	5	6	3	2	8	08
	Agric Econs/Ext. Services	12	14	3	4	15	18
	Total	34	40	7	19	41	59

Source: Admission Office: Cross River University of Technology, Calabar – Nigeria.

Table 2: Students' enrolment trend by faculty/department and by gender for 2005/06 and 2006/07 sessions, University of Calabar, Calabar – Nigeria

FACULTY DEPARTMENT	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
Science Botany	55	43	37	27	92	70
Pure/Applied Chemistry	35	63	74	31	109	94
Genetics/Bio-Technology	48	30	74	54	122	84
Geology	20	33	12	19	32	52
Maths/Stat/Computer Sc.127	63	63	57	37	184	100
Microbiology	75	36	89	42	164	78
Physics	213	96	55	30	268	126
Total	573	364	398	240	971	604
Education Adult/Cont. Education	9	17	11	22	20	39
Curr. & Teaching	137	103	107	79	244	182
Edu Admin & Plannin	35	30	35	26	70	56
Edu. Found/G&Counseling	35	25	48	30	83	55
Voc/Special Education	63	73	69	81	132	154
Total	279	248	270	238	549	486
Soc. Sciences Economics	56	58	32	32	88	90
Geography/R. Planning	30	40	10	18	40	58
Political Science	45	43	18	19	63	62
Sociology	28	30	24	41	52	71
Total	159	171	84	110	243	281
Arts Eng/Literary studies	30	29	52	43	82	72
Hist/International studies	18	26	32	36	50	62
Modern Lang./Trans. Studies	7	15	16	25	23	40
Linguistics	13	16	43	36	56	52
Religious Stud/Philosophy	37	34	12	28	49	62
Theatre Arts	13	20	23	30	36	50
Total	118	140	178	198	296	338

Source: Department of Academic Planning, University of Calabar, Calabar – Nigeria.

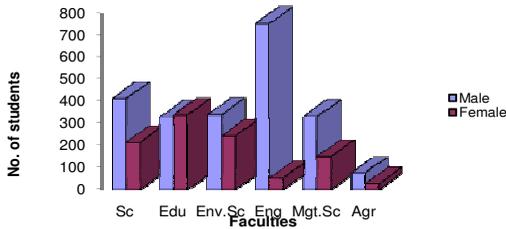
Table 3: Responses on type of programme for inclusion of Gender Studies in tertiary institutions in Nigeria (n = 300)

Item	Responses		Total
	YES (%)	NO(%)	
Gender studies should be introduced as a course in the General Studies programme in the university.	258 (86)	42 (14)	300
Gender Studies should be introduced as an elective course for all students in the university.	111 (37)	189 (63)	300
Gender Studies should be a separate field of specialization in tertiary institutions.	111 (37)	189 (63)	300
Gender Studies should both be introduced as a component of GSS and as a separate field of specialization in the university.	177 (59)	123 (41)	300
Mean Responses	164 (54.67)	136 (45.33)	300

Table 4: Responses on benefits of inclusion of gender in Nigerian tertiary institutions (n = 300)

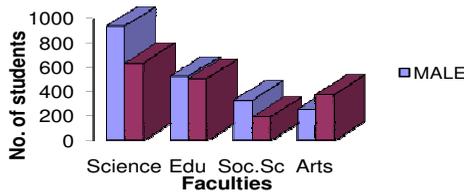
Item	Responses		Total
	YES (%)	NO (%)	
Introduction of Gender Studies programme in the university will encourage more women to benefit from higher education.	258 (86)	42 (14)	300
Inclusion of Gender Studies in the GSS/GST programme will change a lot of negative opinions about job stereotypes.	249 (83)	51 (17)	300
A course on Gender Studies in tertiary institutions will help promote economic empowerment for both men and women.	258 (86)	42 (14)	300
Introduction of Gender Studies in the universities will encourage people to give women more opportunities at school and work places.	243 (81)	57 (19)	300
Mean Responses	254 (84)	46 (16)	300

Chart 1: Students' enrolment trend by faculty and by gender taking 2005/06 and 2006/07 sessions together; Cross River University of Technology, Calabar – Nigeria



Source: Admission office, Cross River University of Technology, Calabar - Nigeria

Chart 2: Students' enrolment trend by school session in the chosen faculties and by gender; University of Calabar, Calabar – Nigeria.



Source: Department of Academic Planning, University of Calabar, Calabar – Nigeria.