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# HARNESSING GENDER EDUCATION: OVER-COMING BARRIERS TO GIRLS EDUCATION IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING (TVET) IN NIGERIA

BY

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## **Abstract**

*This paper discussed harnessing gender education: for overcoming barriers to girls' education in TVET in Nigeria. It makes an attempt to discuss how the male gender education especially in TVET concept in Nigeria was dominated over the female gender. It further discussed on how African tradition in the olden days have posed some barrier to girls education mostly in science and technology. Girls were underrepresented in major occupation related to technical, vocational and educational training (TVET) concept in Africa. Some definition of terms like sex, sex role, sex-link, gender, gender role and gender stereotyping on female gender as related to career by traditional and religious beliefs were discussed. Impediments to the provision of vocational education to the female in Nigeria were examined. Factors that hinder female performance on TVET concept were analyzed. Way forward and the recommendation were made following by conclusion of the work.*

**Keywords:** Harnessing gender education, Overcoming barrier, Technical vocation

## **Introduction**

In African tradition, education was dominated by males that passed through certain traditional academic rites and were able to puzzle the people with big traditional grammar, idioms, proverbs and ideas. Such people or male children were allowed to represent their communities in matters that concerned their territories because they were considered to be knowledgeable, full of ideas and wisdom.

African males have been seen to be very explorative, innovative and generative. As such, they were seen as very promising in intellectual achievement in the areas of technical vocational and training institutions. African traditions in the olden days have posed some barrier to girls' education mostly in sciences and technical education. According to Nnachi (2011) males were chosen for almost everything required by the communities for survival and repute. Girls were underrepresented in major occupations related to technical vocation, educational training. All over the world, mostly in African countries, seminars and conferences held with the aim of harnessing gender education and to control the energy or potential power of both males and females in improving the economies of the nation (Africa) or to provide better service to the society in Africa.

TVET Education for girls in Africa can be a ladder out of poverty and a way to break the cycle of abuse and violence on girl children. Okoro (2012) cited that; in view of improvement of girls' participation in science and technology, "The Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) has commissioned a research study on the participation of girls in Science Technology and Mathematics Education (STME) in Nigeria and the result was published. The notion that educating girls has a lot of benefits which include helping to reduce poverty, prevent diseases, intervene violence and political instability, meaning educating girls' children is to educate the nation whereas educating a boy or male child is to educate an individual should not be underestimated.

## **The Concept of Gender**

Gender refers to culturally constructed distinctions between femininity and masculinity, based on these distinctions, individuals are born female or male, but they become feminine or masculine through complex developmental processes that take years to unfold. However, in this paper, gender is considered as a social connotation built on the assumptions based on the biological nature of the sexes.

Gender role refers to the operational function expected by female and male in the societies. In many societies for example, a man is expected to be at the head, to lead or direct, whether he is capable or not, whereas the woman should be under a man's umbrella. According to Okolo (2012), in Igbo land, a woman's role is to wash plants, sweep the house, cook food and take care of the children while men should be out there making money and acquiring materials and bearing the family responsibilities.

Gender stereotypes refer to a widely held belief about females and males' abilities, personalities and social behaviour. These are social constructs separating the roles and psychological identities of males from those of females. Examples of gender stereotypes, a man may be expected to climb a palm tree, cut bushes for farming and to defend the community at war. In some communities, the male child should wrestle to bring honour for the family.

## **Effects of Gender Stereotyping**

Traditionally and professionally, gender stereotyping has made technical, vocational educational training as masculine affairs. Such professions as engineering and building technology are regarded as masculine as such, accorded with respect and prestige. These notions handicap the feminine from such profession. Because of gender stereotyping, females are seem to concentrate their choice of profession on small variety of occupation which are typically female e.g. home management, fashion design, and hotel management etc.

Gender stereotyping is a barrier that makes the girls underrepresented in Technical Vocational Educational Trailing in Nigeria. Let us consider this scenery, whereby a male child in his early age is given toys like motor cars, computer toys, gun and other complex games machine to play with, with the intension of developing the cognitive operational activities in the boy, so that he will get acquainted with the scientific world. The objective of the parent is to motivate the interest of the boy in science and technology education. Whereas the girl is given a puppet with hairs to play with and a designer pan or cans with the intension of manipulating the girls' ideas on plating and cooking as well as artificial tread and needle for netting. According to Nnachi (2011) despite the huge pressures mounted against females in their careers, more and more females were getting into different careers in United State and in Africa in 1960s.

## **Technical, Vocational Education Training for the Females**

TVET refers to a system that prepares individuals for jobs which are mostly based on manual and practical activities. TVET is both traditionally and academic in nature and obviously related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation that could help to solve some problems of white collar jobs in African societies. Dadons (2018) see vocational education as training purposely designed for useful employment in trade, industries; agriculture, business and home making as well. According to National Philosophy for Education (2014), the emphasis on vocational education is to prepare one for self-reliance.

Through TVET concept, the females may explores their potential abilities in finding new ways to harness the sun's energy to heat homes, such as to help her, the family and the nation at large. TVET concept will also contribute in molding and shaping the girl-child to be good citizens and economic competencies (Dadons and Tofit, 2018). Thus, educating and empowering the females through TVET concept is one of the catalysts towards societal development, as well as education and national development of the present and future generation. A 16 years old girl from Niger said "Give us books to read not Husband" cited in (Girls-education-Africa-we-want 2063).

Traditionally and culturally, in Nigeria society, early and force marriage permit the Nigeria parent to marrying off the girl child against her will, without her consent before reaching maturity, mentally and physically. Parents in Nigeria can spend any amount on the male child to educate them in TVET concept but feel cheated to educate the female child with the feelings that it is a waste of money and resources. Considering these facts, the paper is not condemning marriage, but however, the female or girl child should be properly trained to acquires the skills that will enable her to care for herself, family and society at large, to alien with the notion that if you educate a girl-child you educate the nation.

## **Impediments to the provision of vocational education to the females in Nigeria**

The barrier to females in TVET begins from the cradle or womb. Dandons and Tofit (2018) stated that most families celebrate the birth of boy more than that of a girl child. In assertion to this, in some communities or families, the birth of a boy brings joy and jubilee to the family e.g. congratulation, you are a strong man to bring forth a son as a first child, whereas the birth of a girl-child brings disharmony in the family e.g. members of the family may ask “Wetin she born? Well! Nah woman” Ah! The man is a weaker vessel to allow the woman to overpower him, madam: welcome O! Thank God for safe delivery.

All these comments summarizing to the facts that female is a property to another family and loss to her original family, whereas the male is a property that will famous the name of the family; therefore he deserve the best education. Despite, the fight against barrier to female’s education in TVET. In some areas in Nigeria, it is still difficult for most of the females today to be provided with technical vocational educational training that harnessing technology to provide better service to the society. Girls are still suffering more dissemination in regards to educational opportunities than the males.

### **Factors that hinder female performance in TVET in Nigeria**

**Traditional Beliefs:** It is very obvious among some culture in African countries especially in Nigeria that females should not be trained in science and vocational education. Their assumptions are that, females should be trained informally to become good wives and mothers in future. Training a female child in TVET institution is like wasting their money and resources on another man’s property. Therefore, it is unnecessary as the girl would be married to another man later.

**Socio Economic Factors:** The socio-economic status of Nigerian parents seems to affect the TVET education of the females only, not of the males. In a situation where parental resources are deficit, the female may be deprived completely from formal education. Some considerate parents may like the female-child to be trained in domestic-science education. According to Azunwena and Ekwere (2009), the female gender who is from low socio-economic class is being exploited by the high socio-economic class and thereby denying them the right to education.

**Sexual Harassment of Female Student in TVET:** Sexual harassment occurs when the male gender wants to have sex by all means with the female gender. In this case, the science teacher or male student may use their advantaged position to force the female student into a sexual relationship in assertion to these facts. Njoku (2006) stated that some of the teachers and male students who are more in science class intimidate and sexually harass the few female in science class, thus discourages them, this action tend to affect their performance in science and technology or may discourages them to drop out from the science discipline.

**Teachers Expectation from Female and Male Gender in the Science Class:** Tutors in science and technology are seem to be part of the gender divided society; because most of them encourage gender stereotyping ideology of what should the female activities and profession. Opara (2006) opined that, if the male students in science class are not doing well in the class, the tutors will encourage them by all means to wake up or to improve in their study, having knowing that the male in science are the future scientists and engineers. No encouragement for the female gender in the science class who are not doing well. Because, traditionally and religiously, they have nurtured the belief that, female role is to take good care of their home and child bearing. The male science teachers, that care may advise them to

choose domestic science or Art discipline to encourage them to be a good cook and fashion designers or hair dressers.

### **Conclusion**

This paper viewed technical, vocational and educational training in Nigeria as education that is mainly for the male gender in the past. TVET concepts were seen as very promising in intellectual achievement for male gender as such, educating the female gender was a waste of money and resources.

However, for overcoming the barrier to girls education in TVET concept in Nigeria there is the need of educating the female gender in TVET as a ladder out of poverty and ay to break cycle of abuse and violence in some clarification of the terms enable the reader of this paper to understand now some words were used to differentiate the sex, sex role and gender roles and stereotypes from female and male gender. An attempt were made to identify those factors that hinder the female gender performance in TVET concept in Africa, as well as the effect of gender stereotyping in Africa. An attempt was made to find a way out and recommendations for overcoming the barrier to female gender in science and technology were suggested for implementation.

### **Way forward/Recommendations**

Value re-orientation in practical science activities should be considered in preschool children, so as to build up their early knowledge in science and technology. This may also encourage gender equality.

All levels of education both gender should be encouraged to synthesize scientific ideas and activities that can provide better service to the African societies.

The Government should make Technical, vocational and Educational Training (TVET) to become interesting and promote gender equality education through the provision infrastructural facilities in science and technology.

Science teachers should be adequately employed to teach the science base education, not in abstract to scare the female gender in science class but to make it practical to encourage gender equality.

TVET management should equip the counseling psychology's unit in order to give appropriate counseling services to girls in science and technology; they should be encourage to explore their potential abilities in technical, vocational activities as their counterpart. Together we shall transform Nigeria to technological world by 2063 vision.

A special grant should be set aside for award of scholarship to females in TVET with potentials abilities in science and technology.

Parents should be encouraged to educate their female child in science and vocational education to explore their potential design and not to give them out in early marriage.

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