



## GENDER BALANCED CURRICULUM FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This study is focused on Gender Balanced Curriculum for entrepreneurship and sustainable in Nigeria. It examined the concept of entrepreneurship education, the origin of entrepreneurship education, the practices of entrepreneurial education, importance of educating a girl-child; concept of gender inequalities and gender disparity. It also examine the factors responsible for lack of girl-child education. The education of the Girl-child should be taken seriously by all education stakeholders. The paper finally discussed the Gender Balanced Curriculum for Entrepreneur and sustainable development in Nigeria as an indispensable weapon for curbing the challenges on gender education. Some recommendations aimed at equipping the girl-child with entrepreneurship skills for a better tomorrow was suggested.*

**Keywords:** Education, Gender, Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Development.

### INTRODUCTION

Education involves the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the society. It can also be seen as the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live, develop self and contribute to the development of society (Adebayo, 2005). Education should be seen as human basic right for all and not generalized or sectionalized. In recent years, popular media and researches have given attention to the girl-child and education (Cambell and Sander, 1997). Education according to Orhena and Udoye (2014) is not for the purpose of white-collar jobs alone, but for individual and societal development, the development of any nation hinges on the social and economic contributions of her-citizens. Hence it is desirable that everyone should have it including the girl-child. Vocational and entrepreneurial training plays a major role at promoting community and national development (Oguntunji 2013). Entrepreneurship education facilitates the acquisition of applied skills and basic scientific knowledge. It is a planned programme of courses and learning experiences that begin with exploration of career options, supporting basic, academic and life



skills, and enabling achievement of high academic standards and leadership preparation for industry continuing education (CTE, 2009).

Occupational skill, can be achieved through entrepreneurial education Okorie (2001) asserted that vocational and entrepreneurship education can be perceived as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of educational process involving acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. One will not be wrong to submit that challenges in girl education is robbing the nation of some contributions their female graduates would have made to the economy.

The female or girl-child in Nigeria from historical, social and economic records has unequal access to education in relation to her male-child counterpart, that is insecurity, insecurity of a girl-child education start at home when the parents give preferential privileges to the male child, with out giving the girl-child and the male-child room for healthy competition.

The girl-child is neglected right from birth. According Uyanga (2010), parents are disappointed whenever the first born to the family is a girl and worse still when all children born to the family are girls. Uyanga further observed that the father in such a family feel there will be none to propagate the family lineage or take leadership of the family after his (father's) death.

Insecurity of girl-child education is further intensified by the family/parents when they make her to become the bread winners of the family by exposing her to the dangers of hawking goods in order to provide a livelihood for the family, instead of going to school. Effect of early marriage of girl-child can not be over emphasized as a challenge to girl- child education. Other forms of insecurity of a girl-child include rape, sexual harassment by male classmate and male teachers, kidnapping etc. The reason could be the early sex role of the girls-child, which influenced the conceptualization of their later status and occupational inclination. In most cultures in Nigeria, the girl-child only plays a subordinate role to the male child.

The main objective of this paper therefore, is to sensitize the stakeholders in girl-child education which include, the parents, teachers, proprietors/proprietresses of schools, policy makers, governments and especially the girl-child of the importance of vocational entrepreneurship education and how this type of education can be used to take off the challenge facing girl-child education for sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Concept of Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship curriculum education is simply the act of being an "entrepreneur" or the process of undertaking innovation, finance a business in an effort to transform innovations into economic goals".

Kolawole (2009) opined that entrepreneurship can be described as the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas to create wealth. Kolawole (2009) further explained that entrepreneurship entails the willingness and ability of one to acquire educational skills to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage a business enterprise that will boost the growth of the economy thereby sustaining the level of development. Ikeme and Onu (2010) posited that, entrepreneurship is generally a process of creating something new. Doing this involves a lot of time and effort devoted to ensuring that the tasks at hand and the resultant effects include, monetary and personal satisfaction as well as independence.



Gana (2011) defined entrepreneurship education as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on identified opportunities, to contribute to national and sustainable development.

### **The Origin and Status of Entrepreneurship Education**

The Origin of Entrepreneurship Education as a result of the failure in the instability of the political environment as well as lack of consistencies in the social-economic policies in mid 1980's, entrepreneurship education in Nigeria came to lime-light. There was lime-light rate of youth and graduate unemployment (Arogundade, 2011). This knowledge and skills gap made entrepreneurial education to be introduced in order to re-focus and give orientation to students and graduates of tertiary institutions towards entrepreneurship education. such acquired knowledge and skills would prepare them for the challenges of self-reliant and thereby create employment, reduce poverty and generate wealth.

After independence in 1960, various change took place which resulted in the creation of vocational schools all over the country. The policy statement on education in 1925 helped to up lift the image of vocational education in Nigeria. The government now took an active part in the provision of vocational and technical education by establishing trade training centres and technical institutions in the country. The third National Development Plan (1975-1980), the government paid much attention to vocational education by establishing vocational schools, giving grants for vocational education students, expanding those already in existence, giving bursaries to students at all levels, establishing more Colleges, Universities and Colleges of Technology to the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 System of Education in view of modernization goals of the nation. These Vocational and Technical Education Colleges have aspects of entrepreneurship in their curricular. There are adult skill and social training institute and other

Job-finding centres established by private bodies in order to restructure the economy of the nation.

### **Importance of Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills innovation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety or settings. Entrepreneurship education according to Paul (2013) is structured to achieve the following objectives and benefits:

- To offer functional education for the youth that will enable them to be self-employed self-reliant;
- Provides graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities;
- To serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development;
- Offers tertiary institution graduate, with adequate training in risk management, to certain bearing feasible;
- Reduces high rate of poverty;
- Creates employment generation;
- Reduces rural-urban migration;
- Provides graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized business;



- It inculcates the spirit of perseverance in entrepreneurs which will enable them to persevere in any business venture they embark on and
- Creates smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy;

### **The Practices of Entrepreneurial Education in other Countries**

Entrepreneurship education is being put into practice in other countries to cater for gender balance curriculum. In the United Kingdom the department of education introduced national guidance on enterprise learning. It was made available to students instructor and make known to all students in secondary schools making enterprise as component of the statutory. Work-related learning in all secondary education in England (Nwadiani, 2011). For instance, pupils at the age (14-16) have enterprise education incorporated as being compulsory. Similarly, every pupil from P1 through S6 in Scotland has a privilege to participate in enterprise activities each year and in addition, pupils in S5 and S6 have the right to case studies in terms of local and Scottish business.

In China, by 1986, training skilled personnel and increasing vocational and technical knowledge became highly prioritized. Vocational and technical skills were considered dominant for meeting the modernization goals in China. Though there was no entrepreneurship education, but the vocational and technical education have aspects of entrepreneurship-skill acquisition. Other adult skill and social training institutes and also job-finding centres was available for reason of restructuring the economy and urbanization, the government remodeled vocational education towards workers in modern manufacturing and service industries and training rural labourers moving to urban areas (Endurance, Ene and Chukwunonso, 2016).

### **Importance of Entrepreneurship Based Curriculum Education In Nigeria**

Vocational and entrepreneurship education has the capacity to harness the right quantity, quality and combination of resources that are consistent with profit making under risks and uncertainty. Essien (2010) defined entrepreneurship as the totality of self-asserting attributes that enable a person to identify latent business opportunities, together with capacity to organize needed resources with which to profitably take advantage of such opportunities in the face of calculated risks and uncertainty.

Vocational and entrepreneurship is a key driver of the economy. Wealth and a high majority of jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially-minded individuals, many of whom go on to create big businesses. There is high creativity and freedom for people who are exposed to this education and also higher self-esteem and an overall greater sense of control over their own lives. Ojicfo (2013) asserted that many experienced business people, political leaders and educators believe that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on local and global scales. Ojicfo further explained that it is with this mindset that national standards for vocational and entrepreneurship education was developed to prepare individuals to succeed in an entrepreneurial economy.

Vocational and entrepreneurship education is a life long process, starting from elementary school and progressing through all levels of education. The standards and supporting performance indicators are a framework for students to use in building appropriate objective learning activities and assessment of their target audience. Ojeifo (2013) also believed that using



this framework, students will have progressively more challenging educational activities, and experiences that will enable them to develop the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial opportunities.

Vocational and entrepreneurship education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviour, skills and attributes in widely different contexts. It can be portrayed as open to all (both male and female, young and old). The propensity to behave entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. Different individuals will have a different mix of capabilities for demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes. These behaviours can be practiced, developed and learned, hence it is important to expose all students to vocational and entrepreneurship education.

Vocational and entrepreneurship education skills and attributes benefits to self and society, even beyond their application to business activity. Obviously, personal qualities that are relevant to this education such as creativity and a spirit of initiative can be useful to everyone in their working responsibilities and in their day to day existence.

#### Gender Issues in Education

There are several evidences of gender inequality and gender disparity in education. According to Mangrwat (2005) gender inequalities in education is the most pervasive violation of human rights. Its forms, according to her, are both subtle and blatant, and its impact on the social-economic, political and cultural development of the people of nation profound. According to her, a number of factors have been identified as being responsible for the low enrolment, poor retention rate, poor performance and general neglect of the girl-child on early childhood education programme.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) introduced by federal government in 1999 was an educational innovation to universalize access to and ensure quality in basic education for every Nigerian child of school going-age. In spite of all efforts made at all levels of government to increase girl-child education, there is still a huge gap in male and female children's access to school education in Nigeria.

Research by Derbyshire (2002) show that education for girls is the singular most effective way of reducing poverty. In Oni (2001), a study conducted by the American Association of University Women reveal that teachers tend to focus more attention on boys, directing more encouragement to them, while girls are often overlooked in classes. The goal of improving female education does not entail neglecting or suppressing boys. If girls and boys are placed on an equal pedestal, relatively increase appreciation for girls will also benefit boys by informing them the strength, capabilities and contribution of girls and women.

Traditional teacher training trends to cater for boys interest and behaviours as a means of keeping classroom order by making the boys as class captains. Boys generally act out their frustration in a manner often disruptive to the classroom. In contrast, girls predominantly repress their frustrations by withdrawing from school.

There are also several cases of gender inequality in education. Record has it that between 1999-2003, there were six women ministers out of forty-four cabinet members among whom were Dr (Mrs) Ngozi Okonjo former Minister of Finance, Dr (Mrs) Obeageli Ezekweili former



minister of Solid Minerals, Mrs Obog Rita former Minister of Women Affair. In legislature arm of government, there was only one female speaker of the House of Assembly (Benue) state out of thirty six and one deputy speaker in Lagos. In the thirty six state House of Assembly, only fifteen members were women. Out of the seven hundred and seventy four local government chairpersons, only nine were women, one hundred and forty three female councilors out of eight thousand, eight hundred and ten. At the national assembly, three out of one hundred and nine Senators were women and twelve female members of the house of representative out of three hundred and sixty members.

From the above, the percentage of women representative is a far cry from the expected 30% representation of the affirmative principles as well as the contents in the national policy for women. There has not been any positive action from any arms of the government to implement the gender equity. The national policy on women is just a policy document.

### Importance of Girl-Child Education

Education is central to development and improvement of the nations' welfare. It empowers people and strengthens nations. It is a powerful equaliser, opening doors to all to lift themselves out of poverty. Education also promotes economic growth, national productivity and innovation and values of democracy and social cohesion.

Investing in a girl-child education benefits the individual, society and the world as a whole. Primary education plays a catalytic role for those most likely to be poor, including girls, ethnic minorities, orphans, disabled people and rural families, education in fact is a powerful tide that lifts all boats. When we educate a girl child and she becomes a mother, with the education available to her, she will be able to know reliable family planning method to use and have fewer and healthier babies than women with no formal education.

Mother's education is a significant variable affecting children education attainment and opportunities. A mother with a few years of formal education is considerably more likely to send her children to school. Although education is very important for every child whether boy or girl but an African proverb says "If we educate a boy, we educate one person, if we educate a girl, we educate a family and a whole nation and this is because any woman educated always ensure she sends her children to school" Ejikeme, (2000).

Children of educated women are less likely to die before their first birthday. Girls who receive an education are less likely to contract HIV & AIDS and thus less likely to pass it onto their children. Primary education alone helps reduce infant mortality significantly, and secondary education helps even more. The Girls Global Education Fund reports that when a child is born to a woman in Africa who hasn't received any education, he /she is likely to die before the 5th birthday BBC News (2006).

Educated women are more likely to participate in political discussions, meeting discussions and decision making which in turn promotes more representative effective government.

In the past, education has not necessarily been a priority for the girl child because of cultural beliefs, poverty and so on. It is believed that the place of the girl-child is in her husband's house. The male child was considered to be superior to the girl-child in many aspects especially education and that is why in most cases; only the male child had access to education.

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Mothers are usually the first teachers to their children, you cannot give what you don't have, so a mother that is not exposed to formal education has little or nothing to give to her children. We have seen vibrant and successful women in Nigeria like Prof Dora Akunyili, Mrs Faridi Waziri, Prof Rukiyatu Rufai, Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala who confirmed the saying that 'What a man can do, a woman can do even better'

Education will also help the girl child to develop civic sense and learn to respect, love her fellow human beings and to be a good and patriotic citizen. It will also make her to think, question and judge independently.

**The factors responsible for low rate of girls' education include the following:**

**Economic factor:** Nigeria as a developing nation is characterized with very harsh economic condition. Majority of the populace are so poor that they are left with no option than to choose who goes to school amongst the children. In this case, the girl-child is always disadvantaged preference is given to the male children who are considered the breadwinners; (Obasi, 2006). Due to poverty also, girls are being withdrawn from schools, sent to urban centers to work as maids, while in some other cases they are withdrawn from school and pushed into hawking, petty trading or even work in the farms to support the family. (Okafor, 2010).

**Socio-cultural factors:** A lot of cultural and backward practices in Nigeria continue to bring set back to girl-child education. Odu in Okafor (2010) discovered that the Nupes prefer traditional education to western education since the former will enable the girl perform her full role as a mother to her children which according to them has great impact on the society. Umar in Obasi (2006) also noted that certain cultural and traditional practices like female circumcision, early marriage are to say the least unprogressive because they can lead not only to absenteeism, distraction but also to eventual dropout of School.

• **Political factor:** Our leaders in Nigeria have so far succeeded in paying lip services to the continuous campaign on girl-child education. Obasi (2006) noted that despite Nigeria's signatory to various international conventions on the right of the children generally, so far very little has been achieved. They commented that the formation of the United Nations almost six (6) decades old and the terrible situation of children world-wide which lead to the establishment of UNICEF have not yielded much result.

• **Socialization pattern:** in traditional Nigerian society women are assigned with the role of managing home while men are considered as the brain or bread winner of the family. The coming of western education then witnessed the enrollment of boys in schools while the girls remain at home to cater for the younger ones and perform domestic chores. Apeji in Jekayinoluwa (2010) remarked that in northern Nigerian, the myth of women inferiority continued to flourish because traditional customs of educational biases have conditioned both sexes to believe that the male is superior both mentally and physically. When women education was eventually considered for girls it was limited to informal education centered on domestic science, motherhood, craft and home management.

• **Religious misconception:** in Nigeria, both Christian and Islamic doctrines encourage women to be taught more in areas that make them good mothers and wives but the purdah system practiced in Islamic religion was the extreme case of shielding women from science and western civilization. Girls are subjected to bondage, denied the opportunity of gaining knowledge and



skills in science like the boys all in the name of religion. These affects women participation in science adversely and national development (Maduagwu and Mohammed in Obasi, 2006).

• **Early marriage:** For fear of shame of unwanted pregnancy from the girls if allowed to go through the long period of western education, many parents take the option of early marriage for their girls. Offorma in Ifijeh (2011) noted also that some families justify the denial of girls of their right to education based on their believe that women who are at the same level of education as the men may not find marriage partners among their countrymen and may end up marrying foreigners. For such families, early marriage is best way to prevent this and at the same time preserve traditions.

### Gender Balanced Curriculum and Entrepreneurial Development in Nigeria

Curriculum is a programme of studies, activities and guidance should be balanced to cater for both male and female child. The gender balance curriculum must be dynamic and responsive to cope with the constantly changing nature of the society; the learner, the teacher and the subject taught. The curriculum should be programmed in such a way that skills acquired should reflect gender interest to learn particular knowledge, skills and values which will be of benefit for entrepreneurial and sustainable development in Nigeria. The goal of improving female education does not entail neglecting or suppressing boys. If girls and boys are placed on an equal pedestal, relatively increase appreciation for girls will also benefit boys by informing them of the strength, capabilities and contribution of girls and women. Traditional teacher training trends to cater for boys interest and behaviours as a means of keeping classroom order by making the boys as class captains. Boys generally act out their frustration in a manner often disruptive to the classroom. In contrast, girls predominantly repress their frustrations by withdrawing from school.

There is need for community participation in the planning and management of entrepreneurship education so that those who had hitherto been gender biased would see the need for the education of the girl-child and will work toward its achievement in sustainable development.

### Conclusion

Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both boys and girls and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationship between men and women and promoting gender equity education systems. It is time therefore to begin to do the right thing-to train and educate our girls in entrepreneurial. It is time to stop the insult of poverty and dependence and minimize the culture of begging by maximizing the resource in women. It is time to train and re-train the girl-child. If something is not done urgently the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will suffer a major setback. Educating the girl child is a social development policy that works and a long term investment that yields an exceptionally high return.

Although the federal government has promulgated laws and legislations on universal basic education it is time to make thee legislations effective by making our primary schools centres of learning, equipped with the right kind of resources and manpower for effective learning. All barriers must be eliminated to enable all girls to develop their full potential through equal access to education.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Thus, this paper recommends that:

1. There should be awareness, mobilization of parents and communities on the importance of entrepreneurship education to the girl-child;
2. The content of entrepreneurship education should be made more relevant to the girl-child so that she will be motivated to learn;
3. The government should tackle and improve on the issue of insecurity in Nigeria. The issue of chibok girls is actually a nightmare to parents that their daughters were taken away by "boko-haran". At least in schools, if security is guaranteed by the government, it will go a long way to impose confidence to parent to enable them send their female children to school and;
4. There is need for community participation in the planning and management of entrepreneurship education so that those who had hitherto been gender biased would see the need for the education of the girl-child and will work toward its achievement.



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