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## GENDER AND DISTRIBUTION OF ROLES: THE IMPLICATIONS ON ENROLMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Nigeria is a male dominated society. Men hold all the power. Roles are distributed base on gender. Women in a country like Nigeria live a stereotyped life. Jobs and professions that command high social respect and economic stability are taken up mostly by men, women opt for those that are less demanding. This paper examines the implications of the roles assigned to people based on their gender on the enrolment in teacher education in Nigeria. The effect is not only significant but also negative. It is suggested that gender should be deemphasized whenever roles are distributed. The prominence given to men should be reduced to ensure objective assessment of both sexes. This will create equal opportunities for both male and female. Choice of career and academic pursuit should be a question of ability and not issue of gender.*

### INTRODUCTION

Gender constitutes one of the major discussions in the recent times. Adepeko and Olugbamigbe (2012) observe that “gender today is interrogating almost every facet of human endeavours be it social political, economic, religious or educational”. The discussion on gender is prominent in most academic conferences. In the political arena, it has become an everyday campaign mostly from the women wing to create awareness on the disparities in the treatments of male and female sexes in society. According to Oduyoye (2001) “The contemporary articulation of women’s experience that suggests that human rights have tended to mean men’s right”. The practice is as old as the universe. This has made the women to suffer a kind of set back in almost every spheres of life. Men are everywhere. Until very recent times, women are only seen and not heard in patriarchal societies.

A discussion on gender cannot be driven home successfully without mentioning sex (male and female). Human beings are born either male or female. Green (1972) submits that “The sex of the human Organisation is fixed at the instant of conception”. The process is purely biological. Gender on the other hand is socially construed. This is highly influenced by culture. Akanbi (2004) submits that “sex is biological determined” while “gender is socially and culturally determined. The features to determine sex are both constant and also universal while those of gender differ and change depending on certain factors such as: culture, social setting, religious belief and age.

The male sex attracts greater prominence in every patriarchal society. A boy in such an environment is made to see himself as superior to a girl. The girl is humbled and grows up to admit a submissive position while the boy grows up to see himself as the controller. According to Akorede,

Dare, Adeniranye and Olajuyigbe (2012) “The relationship of the sexes has been fraught with varying levels of subjugation at almost all spheres of human interaction. The pendulum of this oppression swings in the favour of male gender against the female gender, who due to heavy socio-cultural learning has been described as the silenced other”. This impression affects everything in the lives of both of them. Edewor (2001) observed that “society places men and women in particular gender roles and creates two worlds – an inferior world for women and a superior one for men”. So, the man issues out instructions while the woman obeys. In some situations the obedience is without questioning even when it bothers on issues that affect the interest of the woman. This has a lot of implications in the modern period: socially, economically, politically and educationally.

### **GENDER AND DISTRIBUTION OF ROLES**

Afolayan (2012) submits that “male children were given access to education while their female counterparts were left to domestic chores, kept as maids, learnt a trade or made to work to keep their brothers in school”. The emphasis on the male sex provides greater opportunities for men while women remain at the background for a very long time. The situation has witnessed very little change in favour of women in the recent time. The major reason that afford men the greater opportunities is that duties, responsibilities and assignments are given based on gender. This is better pictured in the home. Domestic activities such as sweeping, washing, and cooking are reserved for the girls. The boys on most occasions listen to stories from the father and follows him around while the girls help the mother in the kitchen. In some occasions, the boys are either outside playing football or in the sitting room watching a film.

In this vein, Akanbi (2004) observes that “gender is socially constructed for the purpose of allocating power, duties, responsibilities, statuses and roles in any given social milieu”. Depending on the social setting culture and belief, the male gender is favoured highly at the expense of the female gender in allocation of roles. For example in Yoruba land, kingship positions are for the princes. The princesses can only be regents. This explains that positions of authority are the reserves of men. The wives obey their husbands. The man is the head of the family. As a result women suffer subjugation, prejudice and discrimination in every sphere of life. Desirable attributes are expected from the man. Any women found exhibiting one, is simply described as behaving like a man. A man behaving otherwise is simply corrected to stop behaving like a woman. So the life of a woman in an environment like Nigeria is a stereotyped one.

Adekunbi (2001) suggests that “The African woman has to discard the negative beliefs about life and about herself which she has been made to live with”. There are frantic efforts in the recent periods to ensure a change. In this regard, Adeleke (1996) observes “some achievements among blacks as far as their freedom from sexual, racial and class oppression are concerned”. The result is not yet satisfactory. In support of this, Usoro (2012) submits that “ethnic disposition to women and leadership is a world phenomenon that is damaging to the female gender. In spite of modernity and civilization, the female gender is consistently marginalized in public sphere”. For instance, some questions can still be asked like: how many women are at present members of cabinet both at the federal and the state level in Nigeria? How many women are members of the various houses of legislation (senate, representative and assemblies? How many vice chancellors, provosts and rectors are women in Nigeria? What happened to the women professors? Any women Inspector General of Police in the history of the nation? There is no end to these questions. The number of women in such positions is still insignificant compared to that of men. The answers to such questions reveal the ambivalent impression about women due to distribution of roles based on gender.

In spite of the awareness and the development in the modern period, most women irrespective of their achievements still find it very difficult to assert themselves in the midst of their male colleagues. The simple factor is that they are few in number. This is in addition to other obvious factors which are already endemic in a male dominated society.

### **TEACHER EDUCATION**

A teacher is a person who has passed through a prescribed set of training to enable him imparts desirable knowledge, information and skills. A teacher teaches having undergone certain levels of pedagogy. He/she is knowledgeable enough in his area(s) of specialization to initiate a change in behaviours of his/her pupils/students having interacted with them on a skill following certain rudiments or methods.

Teaching is the major task of a teacher. It has been described by various people in different ways. From the modern perspective, teaching “is an attempt to help someone to acquire or change an attitude, knowledge, idea, skills or appreciation, setting the stage so that someone can learn” (Orungbemi, 1993). In teaching, two groups of persons are involved. The teacher and the learners. They both interact with learning materials. In the process, an experience is presented to ensure a change in behavior.

Teacher education refers to the training that is given to a person to be able to perform the task of a teacher. A potential teacher undergoes such

training in institutions such as National Teacher Institute (N.T.I.), Colleges of Education and some Universities. On successful completion of the training, certificates such as grade two, National Certificate in Education (N.C.E.) and Bachelor degree in Education (B.A. Ed, B.Sc. Ed or B.Ed) are awarded as the case may be.

### **THE IMPLICATION OF GENDER AND ROLE DISTRIBUTION ON THE ENROLMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

The enrolment in teacher education in Nigeria is gradually decreasing year in year out. This is more pronounced in the Colleges of Education. The interest to become a teacher in Nigeria depreciates on daily basis. Many parents for a very long time show little or no enthusiasm to sponsor their children/wards to become teachers. Every serious and brilliant child in primary and secondary schools sees himself or herself as potential medical doctors, journalists, lawyers, accountants, engineers and other professions of high value in the nation. Even the dull ones want to end up their careers as civil servants in the ministries, local government or end up as uniform person (either military or para-military).

The enrolment in the teacher education in the present Nigeria has much to be desired. The situation is almost getting out of hand in the Colleges of Education. It seems every effort to encourage students to come for teacher education in Colleges of Education yields little or no meaningful results. Many of those who come for the training are either there out of frustration or they could not meet the requirements of other disciplines/professions. The present work examines one of the major factors that led to the low enrolment militating against teacher education in Nigeria as a nation.

The situation becomes more confusing particularly when one discovers that more primary and secondary schools are established in addition to the already existing ones. Teachers are needed in all these schools whether public or private. Very few people wants to be teachers despite the much needed services of teachers in the various schools. This paper takes a look at the effects of distribution or roles based on gender on the enrolment in teacher education. The observation is that majority of practicing teachers and the potential ones in training most especially in Colleges of Education are females.

This type of discussion becomes very necessary in this crucial period if the observation of Ngonebu (2002) is something worthwhile. She observes that “gender issues themselves affect all aspects of the society to the extent that access of women to certain professions in higher institutions is constrained by these same sex-role stereotypes” (Ngonebu, 2002). Considering this fact most men on

most occasions consider teaching as women profession. In time past, male students who opted for teacher education are subjected to ridicule among their mates. The situation though has improved; however not still an encouraging one.

An investigation into the intake of students to School of Vocational and Technical Education in Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo between 2003/2004 to 2008/2009 academic sessions (six sessions) shows “an imbalance enrolment pattern in favour of the female students in all departments...” (Adepeko and Olugbamigbe 2012). This further gives credence to the fact that most male students do not always feel comfortable when they are left only with a choice to go for teacher Education. One of the major reasons is that, the social and economic status of a teacher in a country like Nigeria is considered not very appropriate for men. Male students feel more at home studying courses that are not within the scope of teacher education.

It is a traditional belief that however educated women is, she will always end up in the kitchen. Although there is moderation to this opinion in the present dispensation, the age long impression that a female child will end up as a wife in another family to raise children has long affected the education of women in a country like Nigeria. This is one of the fallouts of role distribution based on gender. Many women grow up to see themselves and one another in the same perspective. As a result, most of them who are opportune to move beyond secondary school education opt for a profession that will allow them to really face and carry out their functions as wives and mothers.

So, the best option for them is teaching. A teacher is believed to have more time to stay at home since there is no ‘call to duty’. No overtime, no special duty, no shifting as they exist in other professions such as: medicine, engineering etc. Consequently, the enrolment in teacher education faces a lot of challenges because only female students admire it while male students see it as a second option. Some male students go extra mile to stay at home until they gain admission into the department and even University of choice. The major reason is to satisfy the societal expectations from men.

Role distribution based on gender further stresses the reason why works and activities that required much energy are always reserved for men while the less tedious ones are seen to be women’s works. Merish (2001) in Mbagwu (2002) observes that “land clearing and ploughing are men’s responsibility whereas planting, weeding, harvesting and marketing are women’s responsibility”. This equally affects choice of careers; most especially that both men and women view the situation in the same directive. The women have been made to believe and they happily take it up like that until the recent time. It is important to note that the awareness that

‘what a man can do a woman can do and do better’ has not changed the impression with most people, women inclusive.

This is further justified by the observation of Olaleke, Olajide, Olawuyi and Iroju (2012) that “the general perception was that women predominantly were created to combine fewer task with domestic affairs as daily occupational schedules”. This impression about women is as old as the universe. The implications of this are much in the modern period. The academic endeavour at the receiving end is teacher education. The enrolment in the discipline suffers decline yearly because male students do not want to be teachers. To worsen the situation, women are on daily basis encouraging themselves and one another to go for courses that have for long been considered as highly tasking and involving which, ‘only men can do’.

The emphasis on a male child in patriarchal society like Nigeria has relegated women almost to the background. According to Christian (1989) “the value given to sons, however, indicates the ambivalent status of women”. Most parent, in the past did not see any good reason sending their daughters to schools. As rightly observed by Aidoo (1981) “no one expects a woman to perform well in any other areas apart from cooking, sewing and other so-called feminine activities”. For a very long time, the gender polarity was already established. The religious doctrine and beliefs do not excuse women from this stereotyped life. For example the bible do not usually recon with women. It is in the bible that Jesus fed five thousand people without counting the children and the women. (Matthew, 14:13-21). The thirteen child of Jacob was not mention as one of the children of Jacob talk less being a tribe. All along it was twelve children/tribe of Isreal. (Genesis, 49:28).

For example, the bible has it that Jesus fed five thousand people without counting the children and the women. God punished Adam and Eve for the sin they committed. The punishment of Adam has to do with activities to provide food for the family while that of Eve relates to child bearing and love for her husband. The influence of these social impressions and religious beliefs have kept the woman to a corner for a long time. When it comes to a choice of career, they opt for those they feel will be considered appropriate in the society they belong.

It is necessary at this juncture to ask questions like: how many women are drivers? How many women are motorcyclists? (popularly known as Okada). How many women are roadside mechanics, vulcanizers and panel beaters? People only talk of ‘market women’ not ‘market men’. There are so many women who are tailors and caterers. It is the same direction in careers that deal with academic activities. In this vein, Kolawole (1998) submits that “limited in career choice to teaching was an outgrowth of the myth that women had no aptitude for better profession”. So, the

enrolment in teacher education is more favoured in the midst of female students than the male students. The result is low intake into teacher education.

The distribution of role based on gender is registered in the mind of everybody, women inclusive, in male dominated society. African women happily admit their roles as wives and as mothers. Their relevance in transmitting social and cultural values gives them joy and satisfaction. This is more pronounced at home and during traditional festivals, annual celebrations and ceremonies. This is coupled with the fact that they attach much importance to their homes.

The average African woman does not want her home to brake. She does everything humanly possible to defend and guide her home. Most African women have more or less surrendered to fate because “ethnic disposition to woman and leadership is a world phenomenon that is damaging to the female gender. In spite of modernity and civilization, the female gender is consistently marginalized in public sphere” (Usoro, 2012). So, many female students feel safer to choose teaching as their profession. It is believed that this will help them not only to secure a good husband very easily and timely but also creating a conducive atmosphere to really maintain a peaceful and desired home. The effect of this on teacher education is low intake since men’s choices are without restrictions.

## CONCLUSION

Nigeria is a patriarchal society where male chauvinism tarries. The importance attached to a male child in almost every community in the nation explains the reason why men dominate everywhere. Men lead while women follow. Little modifications and change of attitude to women gender have been recorded in the recent time because of the various awareness and series of campaign by women elites and their male symphatisers.

However, the age long role distribution based on gender has done a lot of damage not only to the women but also to the social, economic and political life of the country. The damage is felt more significantly in the areas of education and choice of careers particularly the teacher education. The enrolment in teacher education keeps decreasing because male students see it as women reserve. Most women happily take up teaching as a profession for obvious reasons which are purely social and cultural.

The situation in the recent time in Colleges of Education, in Nigeria has gone worse. The reason is that women brace up daily and encourage one another to face the challenges posed to them by patriarchy and male chauvinism. A trail has proved that women have the natural ability and the required intelligent quotient to do well in activities and professions that have been long considered the reserve of men. The patriarchal impression about women particularly in the aspects of assigning roles

and giving position of authorities call for a redress to help better development and achieve better result in the nation most especially in the teacher education sector.

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