



GENDER SENSITIVITY IN TVET FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

In order to remove obstacles to development in the nation created by sexism, gender sensitivity is very important. In the society today, women find it more difficult than males to access market activities, political power, or health and educational inputs. Women have the same rights as men and ought to have the same chances. This paper discusses the challenges faced by women in the society today, their contribution to the development of the nation, the few numbers in leadership roles, the gender gap affecting development and possible solutions for the nation's development. It also highlights technical, vocational and educational training, which play vital roles in advancement a society. There is a budding capacity to be a worldwide pioneer if the country embrace and invest heavily in technology and innovation while involving both gender equally in developmental goals.

Keywords: Technology, Innovation, Gender, National Development, Sensitivity, Advancement

Introduction

Women play a major role in the society; considered major pillars in the smallest economic unit, which is the family, and birth both the female and male. This infers that women contribute greatly to the nation's development. Although, the diverse special qualities women possess are being narrowed down to insignificance due to ignorance and lack of appreciation of the efforts they make. It is therefore greatly essential to make emphasis on the need to empower Nigerian women in order to be gender sensitive. Technical, vocational and educational training is important in closing the gender gap in Nigeria. Hence, providing alternatives and procedures that protect women's rights and increase their entitlements in the society. (Fasia, 2017)

In Nigeria, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, women make up on average just 22% of the total number of Environmental, Engineering and Technology university graduates each year. Research has shown that there is a creation of improved, excellent and relevant tools when the developers and innovators fully represent the diversity of the societies we live in. In addition, without taking proper action steps, 90% of the jobs in the next 10years will require technology skills and knowledge. Non-representation of women as technology users and developers will leave the country behind in tomorrow's world. National Bureau of Statistics has it that women make-up roughly a fifth of the total number of people working in information and communication technology sector. (Women's Technology Empowerment, 2016).

In some Nigerian culture, men control the fertility of their women; which means that childbirth may limit their ability to engage in productive activities. The provision of reproductive health services is not sufficient to ensure women's ability to access them or make the most of the opportunities. In cultures where men perceive the decision over when and when not to have children as the absolute decision for the male and large number of children a sign of male fertility and power, it becomes more important subject when masculinity is threatened. (Sarah Bradshaw, 2013)

With unequal gender and generational relations existing within most of the households in major cultures in Nigeria, the male gender is believed to be the 'head' of the family; the concept of a woman going to work is therefore interpreted as the man's inability to make provision for the family and cater for their needs. This makes some men reluctant in allowing their wives to be working class personality or pursue their career interests and thus reducing women's working class population. However, when women get involved in jobs or are working class personalities, it improves their ability to make quality decisions in the best interests of the households. Albeit, it may lead to dispute between couples, especially when the wife earn more than the husband does or the woman is gainfully employed and the man unemployed. (Sarah Bradshaw, 2013)



Women play a major role in the society by combining their career with domestic chores as wives and mothers, thereby neglecting their contribution to the development of the society or nation. In some organizations, women find it difficult to gain employment in industries due to several factors. Enhancing women's interest in technology and research could bring about the development and innovation developing countries desire. (Okeze Ruth, 2019)

Conceptual Clarification

Gender

In Nigeria today, gender is a very significant concept when it comes to leadership and positions. There are definitely different meanings and perspectives when defining gender. An instance that it is set of socio-cultural beliefs, which state the functions and roles vital to both gender aside from their biological functions. As a social construct, gender also define and differentiate the functions, rights, roles and necessary obligation of men from women, due to the biological difference of both sexes, which form basis of social norms that define what is termed as 'good behaviors' for women and men, and also determine the diverse social, economic and political power between them. (Ikegbu E.A, 2018)

Leadership

Mamadu, carefully articulated different views on what leadership is all about. Leadership is an "ability of a person in a group to persuade, inspire or influence the attitudes, behaviors and actions of others on the activities of the organization so that the group members can work cooperatively towards achievement of common goals". In a well-structured society, leadership should not be for a particular sex or selected group. Any individual who is qualified and meets the necessary criteria should be encouraged and given a fair chance irrespective of his or her class, race, gender and ethnicity. (Mamadu, 2009)

Gender Leadership in Nigeria

Leadership in the country Nigeria is obviously gender biased in the sense that majority of leaders in both private and public sectors are of the male gender. A particular challenge faced by women is in influencing policies, strategies and conclusions both at the national, state, local and community level is the fact that men mostly design them. With the advent of recent technological advancement and the record of giant strides taken by a few females given the opportunity, it is obviously necessary that women should be allowed allocation of positions of authorities in the country and rather than being seen as second class citizen, as is the case presently in Nigeria. Women should be able to contribute to policies and decisions on issues that affect them and the society. Women, who chose engineering career, should be encouraged to get involved in the design of technological innovations, especially those primarily meant for women including the field of health sciences and medical innovations. (Angela Nakafeero, 2013).

Women in Business

It should be of note that the male gender have a better chance of chance of accessing loans than the females, which is partly because of their lack of property rights hindering them from providing basic collateral to acquire loans. Despite efforts made to strengthen their property right through the Land Administration Act, the ownership of lands remains dependent on patrilineal inheritance system, which demands that only male descendants can inherit lands and landed properties from the fathers. Based on this fact, women are known to own only about 4 percent of the landed properties in the North-East and just 10 percent in South-South and South-East. This calls for the intervention of relevant institutions to implement this law to enable women access finance easily; financial institutions also need to make their products more gender sensitive. Keystone bank's 'Pink Account' and Access bank's 'W initiative' are some good examples. (Women's Technology Empowerment, 2016)

Gender Parity in Corporate Sectors

Nigeria is not an exception to the global challenges in gender parity. There is an apparent deficit of women in the formal sector (they make up to 20 percent) as the majority find themselves in the informal sector. Although the number of women in the corporate sector has increased lately, they still are not majorly in executive positions and on company boards, (only 11.7 percent of board directors in the country are women). Many of these companies are not aware of the copious benefits of having a board of both sexes diversely. Based on research, there is a positive correlation between women in senior corporate roles and a company's financial performance. (Women's Technology Empowerment, 2016)



Possible Solutions

Counselling: Counsellors in Nigeria should engage in gender sensitivity counselling while also working on bringing further awareness in order to promote development in the nation. Women have really made great contribution in the nation's development that cannot be overemphasized. It is possible to eliminate these cultural barriers over time through the development of gender sensitivity counselling activities.

Civil Society Groups: The civil society groups have an important role of putting pressure on government to implement policies that promote gender parity; which is the national gender policy and calling on companies to incorporate gender diversity into their codes of conduct. They can also embark on campaigns to make politics safer and inclusive of women as a means of encouraging female political participation.

Number of Women in Technology: Enhancing the girls' interest in architecture and engineering could drive more innovation and problem solving skills. A country like Nigeria will explore her potential to be a global economic power if she incorporate, fund and support technology and innovation, with equal level of contributions from and involvement of both genders. Women's voices are essential to the problem solving and innovation that is at the heart of technology. There is need to do more, as both society and an industry, to encourage girls to engage in mathematics and science courses in schools. Support should be given to women pursuing environmental and engineering degrees in the universities and provide them with opportunities to thrive in their workplaces. The society should support government's efforts to build a strong foundation for science, technology and innovation in the country. There is a need to have a well-structured and long lasting plan for the women and productive efforts, from schools, to universities and workplaces, to encourage women into technology careers. Research by PwC into over 2,000 school and university students shows the gender gap in technology starts early in their education and carries on through every stage of women's lives. Girls are less likely to study science and technology subjects at school, and this gap continues through to tertiary institutions. Over a quarter of women students say that they lack interest in pursuing a career in technology because they view it as too male dominated. There is urgent need for talented women role models in tech to challenge this perception. (Sheridan Ash, 2017)

Conclusion

For Nigeria to attain inclusive and sustainable development, gender equality needs to be part of the government's agenda and made as a priority by industries and civil society. This gender sensitivity is important, because any society that fails to harness the energy and creativity of its women is at a huge disadvantage in these modern days. Nigeria has the potential to break even and become a leading voice in innovation and technology on the off chance that the nation adopts the incorporation of both sex in formative objectives.

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