

## **Promoting A Gender Friendly Curriculum For Sustainable Development In Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The sustainability of socio-economic development in Nigeria will rely so much on the way men and women move along in their stride for national development and growth especially if the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would be workable and realizable in Nigeria. There is no gainsaying that women are the heartbeat of men's strength and success, and, therefore, the engine room for development in the families which is a microchips of the society. The existing curriculum in secondary schools in Nigeria is limited in scope, devoid of gender friendly concepts/ topics that would address the needs of female students in marriage vis-à-vis life after school which involves children upbringing and how women can excel in their chosen career and also succeed as a mother /wife. The focus of this paper therefore, is to design, incorporate and promote a gender friendly curriculum that will reduce the problem of gender stereotyping and also suggest some coping strategies for career women on how to balance the challenges of motherhood with careers for sustainable development in Nigeria. Furthermore, the paper will provide a new action plan on how to eliminate gender disparity among students in secondary schools in Nigeria.

**KEYWORDS:** promoting, gender, curriculum, sustainable development, stereotyping, microchips, motherhood.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

A curriculum is a set of courses, coursework or topics offered in schools. A curriculum in simple term is the aggregate subjects/ courses and topics that are being or should be offered in schools. Since when Nigeria got independence, teachers (both males and females) have contributed immensely to the overall socioeconomic growth of Nigeria, hence, their inputs on the national development cannot be underestimated because through them, the implementation of education programmes and policy and curriculum has been translated and as well implemented in the interest of the nation's education system. In the context of this paper, curriculum is defined as all the learning experiences acquired by the students in the school that will make them to be self-reliant, useful to themselves and the society at large. By this definition, it is expected that the education that students acquire in school should assist them in coping with the challenges of life in due course.

The issue of school curriculum in Nigeria over years has become a national discourse. Many are grappling on what and what should be part and parcel of the curriculum and what should not. A well developed and gender friendly school curriculum should serve the purpose of addressing problems and as well improve programme that can lead to the successful implementation of school curriculum. It is very important to have proper gender friendly curriculum that will cater for the needs and aspirations of both female and male students in order to equip them cope with the happenings and challenges in their environment.

On the basis of this, curriculum designers /or developers should focus not only on the subject matter which is the cognitive aspect, but also incorporate some concepts /topics into the Nigeria secondary school curriculum that will assist women cope with life and marital challenges. It is observed that the present curriculum is devoid of some topics that could empower women to cope with some issues in marriage, thereby leading to increase in rate of divorce and separation in marriages. To overcome these challenges, some topics/ concepts are proposed in this paper to be incorporated into the secondary school curriculum if properly implemented would make women overcome some challenges which normally lead to divorce and separation in

marriages. To this end, there is every need to review the present secondary school curriculum in Nigeria and promote a gender friendly curriculum by incorporating women education programme and to ensure the actualization of the Sustainable Development Goals for 3 for 2030.

Curriculum experts have argued that curriculum making either at the level of development, design, implementation or reformation needs the inputs of critical stakeholders if it is to be relevant, meaningful and adequate to meet the needs of the people for whom it has been put together, that is why, Dewey (1897) contends that education is a social construct which is a part of society and should reflect the community. In this sense, curriculum is the thrust of education vested with force thereby integrating societal trends, traditional values and individual expression.

In this conception of curriculum, Bobbitt (2008) affirmed that curriculum is the course of deeds and experiences through which learners become the adults they should be for success in adult society. In other words, curriculum encourages the entire scope of formative deed and outside school for the purposeful formation of adult members of society.

However, curriculum may refer to a well-defined and prescribed course of studies, which students must fulfill in order to pass a certain level of education that is, curriculum is being construed as learning activities that makes up a particular system of education.

In Nigeria for instance, secondary school curriculum is designed to encourage all students to achieve their intellectual and societal potential as well as to understand the relevance of learning in their daily lives. It is important to note that it is one thing to develop or design curriculum, it is another thing to implement it effectively.

Due to some deficiency in the present secondary school curriculum which did not address the issue of gender education, there is the need to incorporate some topics into the Senior Secondary School curriculum to enable women cope with the challenges of motherhood ahead in marriage.

### **Traditional Role of Women in Nigeria Society**

Women's role in Nigeria differ according to religious and geographical factors. In the pre-colonial period, women played a major role in social and economic activities. Division of labour was along gender lines, and women controlled such occupations as food processing, mat weaving, pottery making and cooking. *The place of an average Nigerian woman was in the kitchen*, historically in the typical traditional African society such as Nigeria, women are not only perceived as inferior to men but are marginalized and have no equal rights with men.

There is no gainsaying that women are the heartbeat of men's strength and success, and therefore the engine room for development in the society. The sustainability of social economic development in Nigeria will depend so much on the way women are carried along with men in their stride for national development and growth especially if the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are to be achieved in Nigeria. George et al (2016) asserts that women all over the world are in one-way or another discriminated against and / or marginalized. This is evident in their representation in all sectors of global economy. Education of women is a powerful instrument of public action and catalyst for economic and social change (UNESCO, 1998).

### **Principles for Developing Gender Friendly Curriculum**

Gender fair curriculum is one of the ways which ensures that interest of boys and girls are equity represented or considered and protected with regard to content, instructional materials, teaching methods and evaluation techniques (UNICEF, 2012).

In developing gender fair curriculum, acceptable principles for gender sensitivity are applied. It requires comprehensive review of the existing curriculum. Gender equality and gender equality can be enhanced in the educational system through curriculum development.

Gender fair curriculum plays an important role in constructing equal and respectful relationships formal curriculum of which school play vital roles in students learning about gender relations and developing a sense of self. Curriculum is fundamental to change and should be continuously examined or reviewed and adapted to ensure it is appropriate, relevant and functional. Curriculum reforms should incorporate principles of gender equity into all aspects of curriculum development and delivery. Connell (1994) posited that by recognizing existing best practices and through constant monitoring, schools will ensure that both girls and boys experiences and outcomes of schooling are positive and relevant to their aspirations, hence, gender equality and equity will be achieved.

Developing gender friendly curriculum requires creating gender awareness which will enable people to understand that there are culturally and socially determined differences between men and women based on learned behaviour which affects their ability to access and control resources. The awareness is for school heads, teachers and parents. They should realize that special attention should be given to the way education is delivered to both male and female students to avoid a situation where some teachers will be valuing boys and girls differently, and also for curriculum planners/ designers to realize the importance and role of women outside the school system so that new topics/ concepts will be incorporated into the curriculum that will enhance the

performance of women outside the system either in coping with stress of motherhood / childbearing or how to tolerate parent in-laws.

When the awareness has been created, the next step is gender analysis. This involves the review of the activities of boys and girls, men and women with regards to curriculum contents and learning experiences, instructional materials, teaching methods, assessment procedure to identify areas that need to be incorporated into the secondary school curriculum when these areas are identified, the whole process of curriculum development will be adopted to integrate carefully selected contents that are capable of enhancing performance of women in their daily activities as mothers and professionals in their chosen fields.

Connel (1994) enumerated the principles for developing gender friendly curriculum as follows:

1. Review the existing programme vis-à-vis their goals and objectives for gender responsiveness including integration of gender issues as contents
2. Incorporate range of experiences (both inside and outside the school), knowledge, skills, competencies, supportive of gender sensitive attitudes and perspective.
3. Pictures / stories of successful females and males people in the society should be incorporated.
4. Teaching methods should be aligned with instructional policies as it concerns gender equality. Example is the use of posters, charts and science resources
5. Teaching methods should be investigated to ensure that they are transformative regarding gender sensitivity and learning. Teaching method should address both cognitive and affective domains.
6. Ensure that examination and other forms of assessment through the course are not gender biased. They should develop benchmark for assessing key competencies which would benefit both girls and boys.
7. There should be provision for formative and summative evaluation of the programme.
8. Assessment strategies for gender learning to conclude gender awareness, self-assessment triangulation of learner, teacher and supervisor learning gender awareness. This is to ensure that gender equity is reflected in the curriculum and implemented appropriately. Also, learning environment that is conducive for boys and girls, necessary infrastructure and facilities that can support effective learning should be provided.
9. There should be workshops for tracing of gender sensitive resource persons (pedagogies) with the aim of creating a more equal situation in schools (Nilson, 2007).
10. Curriculum development personnel should be retrained through workshops, seminars and conferences for gender equality exposing them to the content, processes and principles of gender sensitivity.
11. The trained persons should work with curriculum development personnel. Their role should be to work with gender equality issues in the pedagogical practices in order to increase the quality and goal to fulfilment within the field of education. With this training, every school should have at least one gender pedagogue who will see to issues that have to do with gender equality. This can be compared with guidance counsellors in different schools.
12. Teachers and school guidance counsellors should be given gender awareness training in order to interpret and implement the gender fair curriculum so developed.

Based on the above guiding principles for developing a gender friendly curriculum, this study proposed the following topics to be incorporated into the Nigeria secondary school curriculum in National Values, a subject which is taught in Junior Secondary School to enable female students who will not be able to continue with the senior secondary school education benefit from the proposed topics.

The proposed topics are:

- 1) How to tolerate in laws in African setting
- 2) Moral upbringing of an African Child
- 3) Coping with the stress of motherhood and career
- 4) Reproductive health education: abstinence rather than safe sex
- 5) No to violence against women
- 6) Computer literacy programme

### **Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Women: Search for a New Paradigm**

The Nigerian society is structured around men culturally, economically and politically that they see the females as people that:

- 1) their place is in the home
- 2) their offices are in the kitchen
- 3) regarded as second class citizens
- 4) should be seen and not heard
- 5) should bear, nurture and care for children
- 6) should work in the farm
- 7) are not capable of doing anything right or meaningful
- 8) should not participate in decision making even in things that concerns them
- 9) should not have share in inheritance

Whereas, the 21<sup>st</sup> century women need to be empowered academically, economically and politically in order to cope with the challenges of life by:

- giving woman the freedom to make choices
- granting them rights of ownership and control over productive resources
- granting them rights to own their income
- giving them opportunities to be financially viable.
- giving women land rights
- mainstreaming them into politics and ensuring they participate in decision making at the local, state and national levels (Kapoo, 2011).
- their offices are in the kitchen

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) gave a trajectory leading for a search for a new paradigm in gender education. Gender equality is one of the 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) aim to ensure that there is an end to discrimination against women and girls. Empowering women and promoting gender equality is crucial to accelerating sustainable development. Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, but it also has multiplier effects across all other development area.

With the efforts of the United Nation partnering with UNDP, more girls are now in school compared to 15 years ago, and most regions especially, the South West and East regions of Nigeria have reached gender parity in primary education. The SDG(s) aim to build on these achievements to ensure that there is an end to discrimination against women and girls everywhere. There is still gross inequalities in access to education in some regions such as the North East and West Regions of Nigeria and significant gaps between men and women in the labour market.

## **II. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Emendo (2014) had posited that since no person can become successful in any field of endeavor beyond the scope of information he / she has, women should avail themselves the opportunity to accessing and utilizing information without delay. No information should be hoarded from them especially in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Women should become computer literate to be able to access information without relying on anybody. Women generally should start from the homes to use gender equality principle in child upbringing in order to abandon stereotyped roles for boys and girls. All the suggested topics in the paper should be incorporated into the Junior Secondary School Curriculum on National Value so as to prepare them for future challenges in marriage and increase their confidence through basic education. women need to build social networks in order to have more support and greater opportunities to effect change in their communities and homes. Also, it will enable them share experienced and learn better coping strategies. Promoting gender friendly curriculum will empower women by exposing them to healthcare awareness, knowledgeable about family and how to prevent domestic violence which is in agreement with Omoniyi (2020), who posited that women in rural communities should be empowered and exposed to literacy education in order to access healthcare delivery so as to prolong their life expectancy.

Inculcating gender friendly curriculum is a right step in the right direction because it enhances female potentials and helps them to thrive educationally, economically, socially and politically.

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