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The Contributing Factors to Gender Stereotype in Business Education: Maximising the Potential of Education to Change Gender Norms and the Way Forward

ABSTRACT. It is a common knowledge that a gap continues to exist between the males and females in occupational, educational and general career aspirations as a result of socio-cultural stereotypes which imposes a serious limitation not only to the effort of women empowerment but also on their contribution to national development. In Nigeria, the case is not different. However, in attempt to teach Business Education courses in the classroom, we have become aware of gender differences among Business Educators in their interests to participate in real-life learning tasks required to become entrepreneurs and lifelong learners upon graduation. There is need examine the contributing factors to gender stereotype in Business Education and maximising the potential of education to change gender norms and the way forward. This paper used content analysis which explore the concept of Business Education, gender stereotype, gender stereotype in Business Education, the contributing factors to gender stereotype and maximising the potential of education to change gender norms. This study concluded that gender equity in Business Education is yet to achieve sustainable level due to cultural believes and norms such as tradition and culture, parents' attitude toward children business education, masculine image in business education, societal believe and social influence. The paper suggested among others that families are advised to always give to their daughters same treatment given to their sons by reintroducing roles among both sexes at the home front, also, cultural and unscientific beliefs like the fable that educated women are proud, domineering submissive and therefore incapable of being good wives should be exposed through sensitization campaigns by all stakeholders including women themselves. Instead of remaining a tool in the hands of men, women should think seriously and work towards positive achievements in the society.

KEYWORDS: business education, education, gender, norms and stereotype

Introduction

Education defined as a system where teaching, learning, administration of public services, research processes and community service take place through proper utilization and management of educational resources for individual growth as well as national development (Nwabueze & Nwokedi, 2016). It is seen as an instrument for bringing about the needed change in individuals for optimal improvement in the society they belong. As a dynamic instrument of change, education possesses the credence for positive change in humans' lives and their environment. It is through education that, societal values, norms, culture, needs and aspirations are inculcated and transferred to the people for quality improvement and societal development. Education proffers solution to individual and societal problem, and reduces business obstacles.

However, in attempt to teach Business Education courses in the classroom, we have become aware of gender differences among Business Educators in their interests to participate in real-life learning tasks required to become entrepreneurs and lifelong learners upon graduation. The word gender usually refers to as a social construct that establishes and differentiates status and role between men and women particularly in the way they contribute to, participate in and are rewarded by the economy as well as most social institutions (Ametefe & Ametefe, cited in Edokpolor, 2019).

The controversy over gender equity and equality has, over time become a recurrent and hydra-headed global discourse. It is a common knowledge that a gap continues to exist between the males and females in occupational, educational and general career aspirations as a result of socio-cultural stereotypes which imposes a serious limitation not only to the effort of women empowerment but also on their contribution to national development. In Nigeria, the case is not different. Men continue to dominate at different levels of education, employment, career, entrepreneurship and other well-rewarding professions. A lacuna persistently exists in terms of rights, status, privileges, and advantages of men and women in Nigeria. It is also pathetic to remark that the female gender is discriminated against in many spheres of human activity and across nations of the world owing to reasons that are very complex, ranging from cultural stereotype to some socio-economic reasons that have no basis in objective reality.

Avgeri (2015), articulated that any form of inequality which disadvantages one gender over the other remains a serious impediment towards attaining sustainable development. Having equitable access to leader-

ship positions and resources creates a common platform through which male and female are well able to significantly contribute towards effective utilisation of resources towards a common development agenda (African Union 2014). By virtue of gender equity being a cardinal ingredient for sustainable development, this research seeks to provide a detailed understanding as to what challenges affected its attainment in educational leadership. Numerous cases have highlighted the errors within the education systems that disempower women by continually nurturing patriarchy and schooling girls to conform through reinforced stereotypical messages (Alayan et al; Bettach and Hassan, 2018; Islam and Asadullah, 2018; Jaafari and Cadi, 2018; Ombati and Ombati, 2012; PanWorld, 2017 and Perasso, 2017). This study will explore the concept of Business Education, gender stereotype, gender stereotype in Business Education, the contributing factors to gender stereotype and maximising the potential of education to change gender norms.

Concept of Business Education

Business education could be seen as a subject studied in secondary schools as 'Business Studies' and also, a course studied at both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in tertiary institutions. It is a course of study that equips the young ones with the needed business skills and entrepreneurial talents to actively be involved in series business firms for growth of self and satisfaction of others. According to Tuscany Academy (2013), business education entails teaching students the essentials, rudiments, assumptions, and methods of business. Education in this discipline takes place at various stages starting from the secondary education to institutions of higher education or university education. The courses under business education in tertiary institutions at undergraduate levels include: Accountancy, Business Administration (BBA), Entrepreneurship Education, Vocational/Business. Business education could be seen as a subject studied in secondary schools as 'Business Studies' and also, a course studied at both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in tertiary institutions. It is a course of study that equips the young ones with the needed business skills and entrepreneurial talents to actively be involved in series business firms for growth of self and satisfaction of others. According to Tuscany Academy (2013), Business Education entails teaching students the essentials, rudiments, assumptions, and methods of business. Education in this discipline takes place at various stag-

es starting from the secondary education to institutions of higher education or university education. Business education involves teaching students the fundamentals, theories, and processes of business (MacIntosh, Beech, Bartunek, Mason, Cooke & Denyer, 2017). Business education in Nigeria has its roots in the development of entrepreneurship and vocational studies. In its evolution, business education was not initiated by the Nigerian government, rather came into being through the significant contributions of several Nigerian entrepreneurs who were into one business or the other. It is an aspect of education that has to do with the teaching and learning of subjects, whose disciplines are related. Business Education is an area of education that deals with the study of the subject of related disciplines. It is a combination of two disciplines dealing mainly with the art of shorthand writing, typewriting, accounting, business mathematics, secretarial duties, and commerce and office practice. The field of study offers every individual an opportunity to develop those abilities, skills and understanding of the vocational opportunity available. Business Education plays a significant role in Nigeria's economic growth and development. It improves personal qualities and builds the attitudes of individuals that are necessary for adjustment to personal and employment situations, and also provides knowledge, skills and competence for individuals to function well in office occupation and also create jobs for themselves and others (Amoor & Udoh, 2008). It involves teaching students the fundamentals, theories, and processes of business.

Principles and Objectives of Business Education Amoor (2010) noted that, business education has significant roles in the economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the learners, thereby, enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others, and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems. The primary goal of business education as stated by Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh (2015) is to produce competent, skilful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work; it can then be opined that business education is an impetus and sine qua non to national transformation, because economic development usually engenders national transformation. Business education primarily centres on preparing people for roles in enterprises such as being an employee, entrepreneur and employer or self-employed to guarantee economic development and thereafter, national transformation.

The objectives of business education as provided by Nwuzoh (2016) include: giving the necessary information and guidelines for starting up a business, giving proper orientation in dealing with business risks, pro-

viding the necessary background for teaching business studies, developing the necessary skills for office occupation, promoting national economy and development, and development of entrepreneurship schemes. These entrepreneurship schemes include the identification of viable business opportunities, provision of skills for financial management, utilization of proper marketing skills, and proper acquisition of business management skills.

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Ubulom (2003) stated the objectives of business education as follows:

1. produce well-qualified and competent graduates in business education who will be able to teach business subjects in the secondary schools;
2. produce business graduates who will be able to inculcate the vocational aspects of business education into society in the secondary schools;
3. produce graduate business teachers who will start the so much desired revolution of vocational development right from the Nigerian primary and secondary schools;

4. develop teachers who will engage in professional studies of business education;
5. produce strong advocates and promoters of viable industrial and business enterprises; and
6. enable graduates of the programmes to have an intelligent understanding of the interesting complex of the business world.

Ubulom in Chinyerem (2022) stated the objectives of business education as follows:

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Gender Stereotype

Gender can be seen as the socially determined roles and relationships between male and female human beings. It refers to a socio-cultural stratification of male and female individuals, and this stratification follows societal norms and values' considerations that define the roles male and female individuals play in the society for sustainable development (Mukoro, 2013). Gender can be seen as a social/psychological difference between men and women.

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2013). Gender can be seen as a social/psychological difference between men and women. In a traditional Nigerian setting, female and male gender roles are seen as mutually exclusive, and this implies that, some professions like carpentry, engineering, woodwork, metalwork and automobile engineering technologies are always regarded in some quarters as no-go-area for women, while nursing and catering profession are seen as exclusive areas for women

A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives. Gender issues abound in all spheres of the society. The educational condition of girl-child vis-a-vis the boy-child constitute an important gender issue in Northern Nigeria. For instance, Irene and Nuhu (2012) established that gender is a very significant factor in the career choice of senior secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis of Nigeria. To them, this implies that there is a tendency of sex-stereo-typing in the career choice of senior secondary school students. More so, the authors asserted that female students tend to go in for careers that are feminist in nature while their male counterparts also opt for career that are masculine in nature. This assertion was supported when Behrend, Thompson, Meade, Grayson and Newton (2012) demonstrated that women tend to place more importance on comprehensive patients care than do men, thereby supporting that women place more importance to their career decisions.

Gender Issues in Business Education

Business education has to do with the type of education that gives the individuals (male and female) what they need to succeed in either a small scale or large scale business. This type of education can be formal or informal. Formal business education in Nigeria historically was not a government initiative, but was introduced through the efforts of Nigerian entrepreneurs whose advocacy pushed the government to make it a part of our schools. Business Education enables one to know the business to venture on as well as how to make that business succeed (Nwuzoh, 2016). Business Education is all about teaching the learners the fundamentals of business, concepts, theories, practices and business processes. Business Education

which is a phase of Vocational-Technical Education (VTE) is seen as one of the most powerful instruments known for developing entrepreneurship skills, creates employment and makes the beneficiaries self-reliant in modern societies (Ikpe & Undie, 2014). It is also used in laying the foundation for commercial growth and development globally.

Education increases the upward socio-economic mobility of gender in business education; creates an opportunity for them to work outside the home; and enhances husband-wife communication (Ajala & Alonge, 2013). Girls and boys go to school to acquire education for the society to move forward. Rufa'I (2000) stated that, educating the children increases knowledge opportunity for them to advance and improve for global competitiveness. The most important thing is that everybody has to be educated and acquire knowledge and skills to improve the quality of life as a human being (Adamu, 2014). When this is obtained, then both boys and girls will be equipped with new knowledge, skills and ideas of negating the whole issue of gender inequality, parity, discrepancy and disparity in schools.

Gender equity: Gender equity requires equal enjoyment by women and men of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Gender equity does not mean that women and men become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances become equal (Wijk & Francis in Chinyerem, 2022). Both men and women should be giving equal opportunities to become literate and participate in general life activities. Gender equity means that, males and females have equal opportunities to realize full human rights and contribute to economic, social, cultural and political development, and as well benefit from it (Oragwu & Nwabueze, 2015). Equity is the building block of equality in education (USAID in Chinyerem, 2022). It is the process of treating males and females fairly and just. To ensure fairness, measures must be available to compensate for economic, educational and social disadvantages that prevent men and women from operating on a different level.

Gender equity implies placing equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for men and women, as well as boys and girls. Equity does not mean that, women and men will become the same but, women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female (United Nations in Chinyerem, 2022). It is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and when the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and

men are equally valued and favoured (Afu, Gbobo, Ukofia & Itakure, 2017). The principle of equity of men and women is a fundamental principle of international human rights law.

Gender inequality: Gender inequality in education refers to the disparities in access to education between males and females. Gender inequality in education seems to be higher in developing nations than advanced nations. At the early 1940's, male children are given more rights to education than the female ones. They are seen as the stronghold of the family than the female children. Initially, the male children were sent to school while the female ones were given out in marriages. Most Nigerian parents erroneously believed that sending girls to school may interfere with their marriage, which they consider to constitute the primary mission of a female child (Nwideduh in Chinyerem, 2022). This really made the women to have set-backs in development and capacity building. But in recent times, female children are more likely to have access to school; they remain in school and achieve success in education for economic growth and development. They are more likely to be seen in office works such as lecturing in tertiary institutions, teaching in primary and secondary schools, working in banks, serving in hospitals as doctors and nurses, etc. (Oragwu & Nwabueze, 2015).

Gender disparity: Looking at gender disparity in different zones, human beings exist as male and female, and are involved in educational activities (both staff and students) for individual and national development. Gender disparity in education has been among the contemporary issues that exist in educational institutions among staff and students. Male and female students in various educational institutions perform differently in academic programmes. The male and female students take on educational subjects, which can be measured through assignments, homework, research, tests and examinations. Educational researches had shown that female students are not very good in science subjects because, they lack analytical and visual-spatial skills that are needed for abstract reasoning in science (Acker & Oatley in Chinyerem, 2022). It is usually seen in various schools that boys perform better in science subjects than girls in essay tests, scientific practicals and examinations. Disparities in educational sector can be examined in terms of gender, location, family background, income level and religious background in different educational zones (Arisa, 2017).

Disparity can be seen as differences between individuals or groups of people within an environment. It could be seen as a great difference be-

tween people living in an area (Nwabueze & Iremeka, 2018). It can equally be seen as lack of equality or similarity, especially in a way that is not fair. Disparity may also be seen as inequality or disproportion of different phenomena. It is the condition or fact of being unequal, as in age, rank, or degree. Gender disparity means unbalanced spatial structures in some areas, zones or communities among male and female citizens from different home backgrounds. They are manifested in different conditions of life as well as in unequal economic and development potential among people of different ages, gender, family background and religious background.

The Contributing Factors to Gender Stereotype in Business Education

The issues of gender participation in Business Education in Nigeria is a reality but the fact remains that there is no policy or public pronouncement by government that appear to support or encourage such an ugly trend of event. Gender participation in most cases is made by those who appear to be very myopic in reasoning and in complying with their tradition and culture. In the light of the devastating impact of gender participation in societies, the following factors are being identified.

1. Tradition and Culture: The tradition and culture of some societies are dehumanizing to the extent that they inhibit the rights of women to education in Nigeria, when one talks of inequality one quickly remember his or her tradition and culture that show that way of life. It is certain that culture and tradition are to be protected but to an extent. This implies doing away with those parts that are discriminating in nature especially to the females. Ali (2013) contends that some of those odd practices have imposed un-progressive and specific roles on the females to deprive them of economic, political, social and human resources. The obvious reason being that they are afraid of their daughters and are duly protected against danger by not sending them to school in most part of the country, both the culture and certain family traditions restrict women from participating in certain occupations.

2. Parents' Attitude toward Children Business Education: The major problem about gender participation in its entire ramification in the modern society is rooted to parental upbringing and orientation which is predicated on the patriarchal society where the men dominate almost every sphere. Many gender stereotypes have evolved in favour of the male

gender. Parents play a significant role in shaping the direction or path that their children will follow in their later life. Family processes of interaction and communication, as well as beliefs and attitudes influence what the child learns about work and work experience (FAWE cited in cited in Robert *et. al.* 2014).

3. Masculine Image in Business Education: The masculine image associated with technical and vocational education and science related fields has been attributed to be among the reasons for non-participation of women in these fields in addition to lack of confidence in their scientific capabilities (Lohan & Faulkner cited in Robert, Ab Rahim, Azim & Abdullah 2014). In terms of professional teaching women prepare most in the field of secretarial, catering, hotelier and nursing (Egun & Tibi cited in Robert *et. al.* 2014). Most of these programs do not cater for modern technological demand and thus fail to generate employability for women. This, therefore, results in very few opportunities for women's socio-economic independence, thus further accentuating inequality in the society. The National Policy on Education (FME cited in Robert *et. al.* 2014) do not discriminate between sexes, rather they emphasis freedom, equality and justice.

4. Societal Believe: In Nigerian society, women are restricted from participating in activities meant for men, especially those involving physical prowess because women are seen as the weaker sex. Thus, while males are expected to go into such jobs that involve physical strains, logical thinking leadership and competition, women are expected to go into such jobs which are of lower status and less strenuous such as teaching, nursing, secretarial jobs etc. (Aguete & Agwagah cited in Robert *et. al.* 2014).

5. Social Influence: Social influence is also a strong factor as some parents are known to restrain girls from demonstrating their natural skill and developing their talents, rather than training girls along a stereotyped line of behavior. The other issue includes sexism in the curriculum which systematically causes girls to go into separate areas of the curriculum for boys. Girls may decide to take traditionally "feminine" subjects like cookery and also congregate in the arts disciplines, while boys gravitate towards technical, mathematical and scientific subjects. In fact girls, who desire to study science, are encouraged by their teachers to take biology, excluding physics or chemistry needed for technical and vocational education program.

6. Socio-Cultural Orientation: The dominance of male culture over women is a tradition which socialized women into believing that technical and vocational education is difficult and it is a taboo for her to venture into

occupation in the male perspective (Nsofor cited in Robert *et. al.* 2014). Gender stereotyping is the constant portrayal, such that as in the media or in books, of women and men occupying social roles according to the traditional gender division of labor. There is no doubt this kind of expectation of gender occupational roles could depress their intellectual development, undermine their confidence and dampen their aspirations. In line with the above, Nsofor cited in Robert *et. al.* (2014) observed that from socio-cultural orientation, women generally believe that they are weaker vessels and that rough and tough jobs are meant for boys. This induced wrong perception and negative feelings of women towards technical and vocational education.

Maximising the Potential of Education to Change Gender Norms and the Way Forward

Schools with an explicit commitment to gender equality can accelerate changes in gender norms by instituting new, gender-egalitarian practices. These include the following:

Changing the school environment, a growing body of literature highlights the importance of a gender-equitable school environment for gender norm change, as highlighted by Marcus & Page (2016). As well as gender-equitable curriculum content, teachers' practices within the classroom and the wider organisation of the school can foster principles of gender equality that, in turn, challenge assumptions about the 'naturalness' of gender roles.

Addressing gender bias in textbooks, curriculum and textbooks are important avenues of maintaining and reproducing structural inequalities, mainly based on class, race, ethnicity and gender differences and intersections of gender with other social markers (Southworth, Cleaver & Herbst, 2020). Curriculum and textbooks are indeed used to perpetuate patriarchy through inculcating male superiority with the help of school textbooks while relegating women in the fringes of societal life. In the view of Haleema Masud (2017), authors (male or female) should be sensitized towards gender biases and trained to be more gender sensitive in their writing, language, illustrations and content of the textbooks that can help in improving the status of girls and women.

As a step forward, there is a need to empirically document and create greater awareness of women's contribution to national development, in

both the informal and formal sectors of economy. Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009) note that rural Nigerian women take the lead in agricultural development of the country making about 60–80% of the labour force, yet their contribution is hardly noticed and therefore are rarely involved in decision-making in agricultural issues or rural development. It is noteworthy that women do most of the domestic and care work which is not computed in the GDP (Makama 2013). However, as Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009) note, women in agriculture and civil society have been defending and echoing the cause of women farmers. Thus, in national and regional media as well as academic curricula, case studies, role models, and statistics of women's productive contribution to national development may be highlighted.

Moreover, enlightened and egalitarian interpretations and practices of religion and culture, such as highlighting and showcasing female entrepreneurs, businesspersons, and leaders in early Islamic and Christian traditions and African customs, may be needed to eliminate patriarchy and inequality as a way forward towards women empowerment and development (see, for example, Syed and Van Buren 2014). This may be achieved by engaging and promoting egalitarian community leaders and conducting community meetings and events to promote gender equality. Concurrently, the government should safeguard the interests of women by enabling and implementing their participation and presentation in national and regional parliaments (by reserving quotas for women in party tickets and elected parliaments) to develop an inclusive culture at the decision-making level. This would include participation in politics, access to employment, and access to land, agriculture machinery, and credit. Women's contribution in the informal sector should be acknowledged in the national statistics for gender and national development.

While cultural and religious norms are indeed a major cause of gender discrimination, there is an urgent need for legal reforms. The government should introduce and implement positive actions in education, grant women employment and political representation, create robust mechanism with a specific focus on inclusion and empowerment of women. As Gberville et al. (2014) pointed out, discrimination against women in Nigeria affects their performance and unless gender discrimination in employment and leadership is not abolished, development will remain an evasive objective. Although the Nigerian government has adopted various international and national anti-discriminatory laws, they have not been implemented. The country has failed to implement gender equality poli-

cies in employment as women are still marginalized in private and public sector where most of the female employees are appointed at lower or junior positions (Olufemi and David 2011).

Action research on marginalization and its effects is encouraged to enable meaningful dialogues to create gender inclusive workplaces and social settings. This is in line with Collins et al. (2015, 14) suggestion for advocacy as an additional strategy to the four crucial human resource development professional practices: 'relating, learning, changing and organising' which were proposed by Bierema and Callahan (2014, 429) as a new way of thinking towards human resource development (HRD). Collins et al. define advocacy as 'learning, changing and organising on behalf of others', in this case.

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Conclusion

This paper presented gender issues in business education with major focus on the concepts of Business Education, Objective of business Education, gender Stereotype, gender stereotype in business education, the contributing factors to gender stereotype in Business Education and maximising the potential of education to change gender norms and the way forward. Business education has actually offered very many persons

(male and female) an opportunity to develop their abilities, skills and understanding of the entrepreneurial supports available for everyone. Business education has indeed played significant roles in the lives of male and female citizens such as rapid growth of individual businesses, economic growth and national development. The programme has indeed, improved students' personal qualities and as well, built their attitudes, which are quite important and necessary in helping them adjust to both personal and general lives for global competitiveness. The need to ensure parity, equity and gender equality both at home and especially in the educational sector cannot be overemphasized. The problems girls and women face in their attempt to achieve parity with their male counterparts in educational opportunities are real and daunting. Since the problems of cultural bias, negative perception of the value and societal abuse of the girl-child are more pervasive and deeply rooted in the society. This study therefore posits that gender equity in Business Education is yet to achieve sustainable level due to cultural believes and norms such as tradition and culture, parents' attitude toward children business education, masculine image in business education, societal believe and social influence.

Suggestions

Based on issues of gender equality and education, this paper have suggested the following;

1. Families are advised to always give to their daughters same treatment given to their sons by reintroducing roles among both sexes at the home front.
2. Cultural and unscientific beliefs like the fable that educated women are proud, domineering submissive and therefore incapable of being good wives should be exposed through sensitization campaigns by all stakeholders including women themselves. Instead of remaining a tool in the hands of men, women should think seriously and work towards positive achievements in the society.
3. Training programmes that aim to improve productivity and employability to ensure equality of opportunity and enhances gender equity in technical education.
4. All harmful cultural, religious and social based institutional practices which are anti-female should be legislated against and decisions reached fully implemented.

5. We have suggested also that, religious leaders and teachers must be robustly engaged and use to debunk the myths surrounding the education of women and changing time and dynamics due to cultural and religious reasons, in which women experience multiple forms of discrimination, oppression and violence.

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