

Women Leadership Positions in Education in Nigeria : Challenges and Prospects

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Introduction

Women make up sizeable number and percentage of population in Nigeria yet, they are in minority in terms of occupying key leadership positions in general and education in particular.

Nigerian women have continue to contribute their quota to the development of the nation but their potentials have not been fully tapped owing to some challenges they are facing which is structural and systemic, consequently leading to bias, stereotype and low status of the women.

- Nigerian women labour under considerable stress because they are overwhelmed by the responsibilities in their lives , both those created by the society and those created by them, but they do not enjoy the due recompense of elevation to the degree the men enjoy in every aspects of societal life.

Conceptual Clarification

Women. By women in this context is meant the adult female population with tertiary education and higher qualification. Women are mothers, wives, workers and entrepreneurs, no country can raise its standard of living and improve the well being of its people without approximately half of it's population, the women contributing to the national effort .

- **Leadership.** In time past there was the general belief that certain people are born with some natural traits that made them grow to occupy leadership positions. It was also believed that these traits were more among men than women, a culture created where by leaders are evaluated by muscularity criteria.
- **Education.** Education of women can be seen as the high standard of living obtained by them from formal tuition in various subjects which is given to them to enhance their awareness of themselves and the capacity to relate to and exploit their environment.

Leadership Traits

A woman is basically purposeful, relentless, prudent, honest, hardworking, passionate, coordinate, a unity factor, loving and meticulous. These qualities enable her to coordinate and keep the home and at the same time maintain a job. Swam (2010), noted that women leaders are more assertive and persuasive, have stronger needs to get things done and are more willing to take risks than male leaders. Women have the ability to see what men don't, do what others wont and keep pushing their ideas and ideals as leaders.

- The underrepresentation of women in senior administrative positions in academia in higher institutions in Nigeria therefore, is worrisome in that it results to waste of the administrative talents of women. Also with all the leadership traits of women, one wonders why women are relegated to the background in educational leadership as seen in the statistics of Nigerian universities and colleges of education in the table:

Table 1: Women in Educational Leadership Position in Nigerian Universities

No. of universities	No. of male vice-chancellors	No. of female vice-chancellors	No. of male Registrar	No. of female Registrar	No. of male Librarian	No. of female Librarian	No. of male professors	No. of female professors	No. of male Bursars	No. of female Bursars
151	139	12	108	43	96	55	10574	1669	127	24

Source: National University Commission, Nigeria (NUC, 2018)

Table 2: women in educational leadership position in Nigerian colleges of education

Colleges of education	Male provost	Female provost	Male registrars	Female registrars	Male Bursars	Female Bursars
143	131	12	116	27	128	15

Source: National Commission for Colleges of Education, Nigeria (NCCE, 2019)

From the table, it is clear that gender more than age, experience, background or competences determines the leadership role an individual is assigned in education in Nigeria. Therefore, gender is a hindrance in the upward movement of women to leadership position in Nigeria.

Challenges

- The patriarchal settings in Nigerian society which is structural and systemic
- Gender inequality issue and lack of drive on the part of the women
- Women leadership style versus men leadership style
- I-don't-want-the-role factor.

- It is important to note that the situation in northern Nigeria is far more serious than in the southern Nigeria, this is mostly due to cultural and religious factors. In the northern Nigeria which is predominantly Muslims, it is only recently that women are allowed to go to school and work. The discrimination against women is glaring and the effect so inhibiting that even women who attempt to climb the educational ladder of leadership are themselves not at all very comfortable. Indeed in some cases they have to seek the consent of their husbands before accepting any leadership positions, if not they could be prevented from working altogether.

Prospects

- Even in the face of challenges women face in contemporary Nigeria, a small percentage of them still come out of their shells to vie for and rough it out in the competition and struggle for key leadership positions with the male counterparts, sometimes successfully as can be seen in the table above.

still

- On the academic front there are women who are trail blazers and excellent leaders such as Prof. Grace Alele Williams, Prof Dora Akunyili , Prof. Rukayya Rufai to mention a few

- With the emergence of various associations in higher institutions of learning such as Association of Women In Colleges of Education (WICE), Association of Women in University (AWU), Association of Women in Polytechnic (AWP), women are being encouraged to assume leadership positions in higher institutions.

- The government is also trying in the funding of personnel in higher institutions for professional and academic development ,but this is not regular.

Recommendations

- Review of the Nigerian constitution to provide equal legal and human rights by eliminating all gender discriminatory clauses and making sure they are enforced
- Educational institutions must create and implement leadership development programmes that include gender diversity and transformational leadership in order to change preconceived ideas, biases, and assumptions about women leadership abilities
- Women must help coach and mentor other women especially through professional associations like WICE, AWU and AWP through leadership education programme.
- Every aspiring female should build up her knowledge and skill base . This help to promote self confidence. The I-can-do spirit is enhanced when we learn more know more and are good at what we do
- It is our wish and prayer that this laudable and growing organization, Women Leading Education should not relent in the good work of enhancing leadership spirit in women with the hope that one day their voices will be heard in Africa and Nigeria in particular.
Thank you