

GENDER ISSUES IN EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A Book of Readings

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A Publication of the Association for Promoting Quality Education in Nigeria
(APQEN).

Volume 8

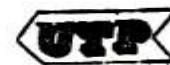
First Published in 1996

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ISBN 978-31616-5-2

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University Trust Publishers

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GENDER ISSUES IN TEACHING AS PROFESSION

BY

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Introduction

Teaching has had a long history. Infact teaching started with man himself. It was and still is the desire of every parent to bring up his offspring in a desirable manner. So starting from birth, some pattern of behaviour is consciously imparted to the off-spring. These efforts are referred to by many psychologists as child-rearing practices (Durojaiye, 1981). Parents had since recognised that this task is enormous and needed trained hands. This recognition led to apprenticeship schemes and other forms of attachments in order for young people to learn a trade. The same awareness encouraged Nigerian indigenes to embrace formal schools when they were introduced into Nigeria. Teaching was then regarded as a "noble profession". It was a thing of pride to be a teacher. Both men and women who had opportunity to become teachers were converted in the society because they were seen as lacking nothing. Today in Nigeria, the economy has become depressed. Teachers seem to be more seriously affected among other civil servants. A mass exodus is witnessed in the teaching profession. With the UPE Scheme launched in September, 1976 as reported by Obinaju (1996), one is tempted to think that the mass exodus warranted the "Crash Programme" of the 1970s. This crash programme occasioned mass training of primary school teachers so that these teachers could fill vacancies existing in the numerous primary schools at the time.

In the 1990s, another disturbing trend is witnessed. At enrolment into any teacher training programme, especially those geared towards training teachers for the primary schools, more females are seen showing interest. Does it mean that teaching suits women more than men? In order to address this issue, some research questions were drawn up. These include:

1. Men and women, who are actually more in number in the teaching profession?
2. What are factors contributing to what has been observed in No. 1 above?
3. In teachers' perception, who (among male and female) should do the job?
4. Is the decision to initiate into the teaching profession gender based - At least considering the exigencies of the present socio-political and economic realities in Nigeria?
5. Given the option, would teachers want to continue with their profession or

would they want to opt out?

METHODOLOGY

Population & Sample:

The population for the study comprised teachers in primary and secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. A sample size of 400 teachers was randomly drawn for the study. This includes 215 females and 185 males.

Instrument

An author designed questionnaire was constructed and validated by measurement and evaluation experts. The instrument sought to find out the sex of the respondents, the level of education where he teaches, his opinion on other gender issues concerning teaching as a profession. At the end, the instrument tried to assess the respondents' willingness to continue in teaching. Reasons were sought, should the response be negative.

Results

Data obtained revealed that female teachers were more in number especially at the primary school level of education.

Table 1: Table showing disparity in Gender between Primary and Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

Types of schools	No. Available	Gender of Teachers Observed		Total no of Teachers
		Male	Female	
Private	230	1224	2457	3,681
Public	1,070	5723	8511	14,234
Secondary	241	3064	2642	5,709
TOTAL	1,541	10,014	13,610	23,624

Figures as at January 1996

This difference as shown on Table 1 is correctly perceived by teachers themselves. From the responses obtained 88.8% respondents perceived that women were more in number in the teaching profession in both primary and secondary schools in the state. 9.7% of them perceived that both gender were

equally represented while only 1.5% perceived that men were in the majority. Reasons advanced for this occurrence included the following:

Table 2a: Table showing perceived reasons for female majority in the teaching profession from female respondents (N = 215)

S/No.	REASONS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSE
1.	Women are more interested in teaching because teaching gives them more time to attend to their children and other household chores	45.1
2.	Comparatively, women find job satisfaction in teaching because by their nature, they are more capable of handling children and children's behaviours	30.2
3.	Men want more money than women that is why they don't settle down in teaching	14.9
4.	Women were discriminated against educationally in the past. When the "Crash programme" of the 1970s came, more women were found embracing the programme than men	5.1
5.	Women devote more time to teaching. They settle down more.	5.1
		100%

Table 2b: Table showing perceived reasons for female majority in the teaching profession by male respondents (N = 185)

S/No.	Reasons	Percentage of Response
1.	Teaching is dull, not lucrative, and lacks incentives	31.9
2.	Women don't have as much need for money as men, they are supported financially by their husbands.	21.6
3.	Women like teaching because teaching enables them to have time for their families	14.5
4.	Women's poor qualification can only lead them to professions such as teaching	10.8
5.	Women have lower opportunity to acquire education.	5.9
6.	Society thinks that teaching is for women	7.2
7.	Teaching is a cheap profession to attain. Men would prefer more challenging professions.	4.3
8.	Women are by nature humble so they can endure all the hardship involved in teaching.	3.8
		100%

Research question 3 sought to find out who among men and women should be teachers as perceived by teachers themselves. 90.9% of the respondents agreed that both gender were necessary in the profession. While 9.1% thought that it should be restricted to one gender. Infact the 9.1% believed that teaching should be exclusively for women.

Table 3: Reasons for choosing teaching as a Career

S/N	REASONS	PERCENTAGE RESPONSE		
		M	F	TOTAL
1.	Love for teaching/love for children	12.3	21.5	33.8
2.	Parents decision	0	7.7	7.7
3.	Just by chance	13.8	7.7	21.5
4.	Lack of another job	1.5	4.6	6.1
5.	I admired teachers those days when I was young	1.5	0	1.5
6.	No reason	7.7	21.5	29.2

In order to ascertain whether the decision for the choice of career was influenced by the respondent's gender, 78.3% of the subjects responded in the negative while 21.7% responded positively. Out of the 21.7% who responded positively, 14.5% were women.

Reasons advanced for gender based decision by male respondents included:

1. Women are supposed to be character builders so teaching should be left for them.
2. My being a man makes me to influence the young ones to be humble but masculine and enduring in their endeavours.
3. As a man, I needed a lucrative job.

On the other hand, women saw teaching as:

1. Giving them more time to take care of the family and children.
2. As a duty to be involved in character moulding of children.

In the perception of teachers therefore, the decision to be a teacher for those currently in service had not been gender based. However, those who feel it should be gender-based are of the opinion that teaching is a woman's job, and suits them more than men.

Table 4: Percentage of Willingness to continue in the teaching career (N= 400)

S/N	REASONS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
1.	Willingness	15.1%	9.5%	24.6%
2.	Lack of willingness	24.7%	39.7%	64.4%
3.	No response	-	10.9%	10.9%

Table 5: Reasons sought from those who would want to opt out of teaching include:

S/N	REASONS	PERCENTAGE RESPONSE		
		M	F	TOTAL
1.	Poor conditions of service for teachers	21.6	24.3	45.9
2.	Poor and irregular income	8.1	13.5	21.6
3.	Teaching is not lucrative and command no respect	21.6	5.4	27.0
4.	To gain experience in other fields	0	5.4	5.4

Discussion

Table 1 shows that females are more in the teaching profession especially at the primary school level. This has also been correctly perceived by respondents who have equally advanced reasons for this occurrence. It is not uncommon to hear families deciding that their wives should be teachers so that they have enough time to take care of the family and children after school. More over, teachers often have holiday periods when they could stay back at home. According to Hargreaves (1980) every human being is pleasure seeking. Rogers (1969) also sees the average human being as rejoicing over an on-coming holiday period. This means that men would like to also relax during these holidays except that there seems to be other pressing reasons why they would forfeit this pleasure time.

Generally, men are supposed to be the bread winners for the family. It is not surprising therefore to note the third reason on table 2a and the first on table 2b with their high percentages of response.

Although the result of this study indicates that the decision to be a teacher for those currently in service was not gender based, it also indicates that, in the near future that decision will be gender sensitive. Teaching as seen on Table 2b not being lucrative, dull lacking incentive has been reported as only suitable for women as these women do not have need for much money. They are reported to have other sources of support - their husbands.

This notwithstanding, respondents saw the need for a gender balanced profession as both genders are needed to bring up the child as a balanced personality. Erikson (1968) proposes a balanced personality, who has been able to resolve all developmental conflicts, as the ultimate in all educational endeavour. Therefore, the current trend of teaching, tilting towards being dominated by women should be checked.

Furthermore, there is indication from findings that given the option 64.4% of those currently in service would opt out of teaching. According to them the occurrence is as a result of poor condition of service, poor and irregular income and other reasons advanced on Table 5. This is a lot more alarming when the higher proportion of those who would opt out are women (See Table 4). From the foregoing, it seems to be a consensus that with the present condition of service, teaching suits women more than men. One therefore dares to ask, if women form the higher percentage (39.7%) of those who would opt out of teaching, WHO THEN WILL TEACH. This situation calls for an urgent rescue strategies for the teaching profession, if it must rise above its present predicament.

Conclusions:

Based on the finding of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Women out-number men in the teaching profession in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Teaching has been adjudged to be non lucrative, dull and lacking incentives.
3. In teachers perception both genders are needed in the teaching profession to bring about a balanced child.
4. For those currently in service, the decision to be a teacher had not been gender based.
5. Findings indicate that in the future the decision to be a teacher will be gender based, if conditions are not improved.
6. More serving teachers would prefer other professions to teaching.

Recommendations:

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made.

There is need for teaching to be a gender balanced profession. This is necessary because children in schools are made up of both boys and girls. Apart from the lessons taught in class, boys need to learn other extra-curricula lessons

from the male teachers just as girls would look up to some female teachers for their extra-curricula lessons. If teaching is left for only female teachers, there is the impending danger that we will be systematically feminizing our boys as a majority of "significant others" from where our children would be drawing inputs will be women.

Moreover, men who are in teaching have expressed their reasons as being in the profession by chance. Those who took a decision and love teaching for its sake are few. This is another danger as the crop of those who would form a "model" for our young ones are those who only by chance found themselves in the profession. Of course, we would not be expecting the best from this group of people. Teaching, as seen by Oyeniyi (1994), is "a job for a person whose mind is alert, whose intelligence has to be superior and whose opinion should be pontific". Can we describe those who could not take a decision about their career with the above statement?

Thus, there is the need to revitalize teaching by responding to complaints found on Table 5. We know that government is trying its best to pay teachers' salaries as at and when due, but the bargaining power of teachers is still low. Other benefits like leave grants, special subject teachers' allowances and transfer transport fare which used to be paid to teachers are now far fetched. These should be re-introduced as incentives to motivate people (both men and women) to embrace teaching as their profession and remain in it. Other incentives should also be introduced to lure especially males whose reason for enlisting in any profession seems to be the monetary and other material rewards. It would not be too much if a decision to pay double salary to teachers at the end of the year as a bonus is taken and implemented. This will increase teachers bargaining power at a time many people are shopping for their families at Christmas.

Another way of raising teachers worth is by referring to teachers for most of the political appointments available. It is a well known fact that teachers provide diverse qualified man-power which suit several ministerial positions. The teaching profession is therefore a correct pool from where to draw when an appointment is to be made. With the present situation, where teachers are scarcely appointed, and the public even the students perceive this as such, the status of the teacher will continually be looked down upon.

In the past, teachers used to be a reference point as far as discipline is concerned. Today, the situation has changed.

If you ask a school age child in Nigeria today if he or she would want to pursue a career that would lead to teaching, the most likely response would be "no". Even the adults feel those who go into teaching do so as a last resort after failing to secure a place in any of the other professions. And the children have been taught, through examples and precepts, to

look on teachers as scum.

(Oyeniya, 1994: V)

This may be probably as a result of the behaviour of teachers themselves. Teachers no longer watch what they do so as to merit the confidence of the society. There is need for serving teachers to retrace their steps. Parents too need to be advised not to challenge teachers when discipline problems arise between their children and teachers. The Ministry of Education needs to always take steps to defend teachers in such cases. This has to be so because if teachers shy away from their responsibility at discipline because of perceived insecurity, their status is placed at further jeopardy.

Serving teachers also have a duty to perform to increase the worth of teachers so that the profession could entice both men and women of "Superior" intelligence and "alert" mind. Serving teachers can carry on a campaign where they would collectively fight against devaluation of teachers. Such campaigns should include "War against poor and non commensurate pay" by such bodies as the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) for services rendered to them by teachers. Teacher can also form themselves into co-operative societies to execute self-help projects which will alleviate suffering for teachers. Teachers should also ensure that their code of ethics are obeyed by them. They should learn to do their work happily and complain less about their poor state but rather think of ways of improving what is at present by their efforts. By so doing they will be helping to portray the profession in a better light than what obtains at present.

These measures would restore the needed respect to the teaching profession. When the respect is restored, both men and women of proven intelligence and alert mind would be interested, enlist and remain in teaching.

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