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Higher Education Management: Breaking the Gender Glass Ceiling

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Abstract

University management is multidimensional, involving the stewardship of human, material and financial resources required for short and long term institutional, and by extension societal, success. Qualification to management positions in institutions of higher learning requires years of training, volunteerism and community service. More often than not, entry to the top management in higher education institutions is confined to the male gender, since they are presumed to have the optimal requisite skills. In this paper, illustrations are drawn from the University of Uyo where a respectable percentage of the top management staff consists of the female gender. The paper explores the enabling environment, which is considered to be dependent on capacity building of individuals, significant achievements and the impact these women have made towards effective leadership at the institutional level. On the other hand, the challenges faced by these women towards their effective leadership, have equally been examined. Based on these experiences, lessons have been drawn for other aspirants to top management positions to learn from. Consequently, the paper concludes that capacity building, among other tangential factors, is indispensable to those who seek to occupy management positions in higher educational regardless of the gender.

1 Introduction

Higher Education Institution, henceforth, HEI, in Nigeria entails education at tertiary institutions which would normally include universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics. These higher education institutions have specific mandates, particularly for training, research and development. In order to achieve the respective mandates of the various institutions, a management team must of necessity be put in place in order to ensure that the institutional set goals are met. Higher education management therefore entails management of human, material and financial resources, with the ultimate goal of achieving the

set mandate of the particular institution. In this paper, management shall be restricted to human managers of resources and we shall draw copious examples from universities, and the University of Uyo, in particular.

Management in any guise is complex but management in a higher educational institution is even more challenging, involving the management of human and financial resources. It involves staff recruitment, promotion and discipline. Staff recruitment in higher education institutions is by no means a uniform process. Various categories of staff are engaged in higher education institutions. Some of these include academic staff of different ranks, senior administrative staff, middle level administrative staff and junior staff category. Beyond staffing, management affects student admissions and enrolment; again no uniformity is expected in the category of students to be admitted but a national bench mark in performance index of the undergraduate, graduate and sometimes non-degree students of different gender (in most Nigerian HEIs) drawn from disparate faculties.

Apart from the human component of management in Nigerian HEIs, there is the crucial management of financial resources which involves strategies to attract funding as a critical component in the successful management of HEIs. Income generation emanate from various sources, both internal and external. External revenues include government allocations, (corporate) organisations, external (research) grants, communities and philanthropists. HEIs, especially government owned, have experienced decreased funding from their sponsors making it imperative for HEIs to turn to complementary sources of funding, including internally generated revenue, to perform their duties and functions. Internally generated revenues which are monies generated within the HEIs comprise students tuition, where applicable, taxes, charges, and levies.

Income generated through whatever means must also be judiciously managed in consonance with the mandate of a specific HEI. This, in fact, is the crucible of the management function. The management team of HEIs must ensure that the approved expenditure conforms to its mandate. Expenditure in HEIs extends to staff development and training, acquisition of material resources, movable and immovable assets, teaching, learning and research equipment.

Management as detailed above, complex as it is, cannot be said to be straightforward. Within the present operational conditions, the complexity of HE management appears to be further compounded when Shehu (2005:6) concludes that it "... has become a heart-breaking business." This is underscored by strike action by the staff unions, students' riots, academic and political blackmail and in recent times, kidnapping of HEI staff, their spouses and children. Management in Nigeria's HEI is multidimensional and multifaceted!

2 The role of HEIs in Nigeria

Nigeria has over 300 HEIs across the nation, underscoring the importance of HEIs in national development. The Federal, State and private individuals and organisations are keen on establishing more HEIs. HEIs generate knowledge and information through their research activities. Such knowledge and information are disseminated to various groups and areas in the society, which are useful in human development of individuals and groups for the overall improvement of the society. Products from the HEIs feed the manpower needs of the nation, who also proffer solutions to national/societal problems. HEIs are indispensable to sustainable growth and development of any nation. Therefore, it is vital that the management of such institutions, from which so much is expected, be visionary, effective, efficient and resourceful.

Given the preceding, it seems logical to expect that HE management should not be lopsided; it should be holistic and balanced in all ramifications, including gender, in order to synergise all the variables for optimal achievement of institutional goals. Globally, however, as we shall later show, males are over-represented in HE management in Nigeria and elsewhere. To achieve equity and balance, more women should be encouraged to aspire to managerial positions through gender friendly enrolment, recruitment, appointments, elections and promotion policies.

3 Core Management Staff in HEIs

Our illustrations in this paper are largely drawn from the University as a microcosm of an HEIs. In the university setting, the core management staff comprises the following:

- The Vice Chancellor
- The Deputy Vice Chancellor(s)
- The Registrar
- The Librarian
- The Bursar
- The Director of Works
- The Provost, College of Health Sciences
- The Chairperson of the Committee of Deans and

An extended management team can, at the discretion of the Vice Chancellor, include the Dean of Postgraduate School, Deans, Directors and HODs.

Most HEIs' conditions of service set out the qualifications for getting to the echelon of management therein. Several years of training and professional development are required in order to qualify for consideration as a management

staff. It takes a minimum of 20 to 25 years to become a Professor. A minimum qualification of a good first degree is required and to have an edge in the glut of first degree holders, the possession of one or more higher degrees is definitely an advantage. In addition, administrative and management skills and experience from occupying various such positions count in the overall consideration.

Since Higher Education Management seems to favour the male gender, women seem to be at a disadvantage in the selection process, and as observed in Ezeigbo (2013), African women seem to have the fewest rights and privileges. This encompasses both enrolment and staffing. Fewer women pursue postgraduate degrees for various reasons including marriage, reproduction and nurturing families, which are legitimate reasons. But women must also remember that the period when the male colleagues are pursuing higher degrees and gaining (prerequisite) experience for top management jobs, is the same period that also coincides with the reproductive years of the female counterpart. More males are therefore admitted to HEIs and consequently, more males are employed because of the prerequisite qualifications. Thus, the males get to the top more quickly and by sheer numbers.

4 The Road to HEM

The road to occupying the top management positions in HEIs rightly begins with the admission process starting at the pre-primary school level. With free education at the primary level, enrolment for male and female pupils appears to be at par. However, at the inception of fee paying levels, starting from the secondary school level, the males appear to have the upper hand, especially when and where family resources are scarce and need to be prioritised in a male-child preferred society. Female students begin to drop out of school on account of inability of the parents to train the girl-child and/or the willingness of parents to invest in female education. What is the ratio of male and female pupils that make it to the secondary schools? What ratio of males and females make it to HEIs? What disciplines are there more men than women and vice versa?

We now turn our attention to the admission figures per gender in the universities with particular focus on figures drawn from the University of Uyo. The graphs showing admission/enrolment figures in all the Faculties certainly speak louder than words. The figures span 2008/2009 to 2012/2013 session to accommodate five- and six-year programmes such as those in Agriculture, Law, Engineering, Environmental Studies and Health Sciences.

FACULTY OF AGRIC

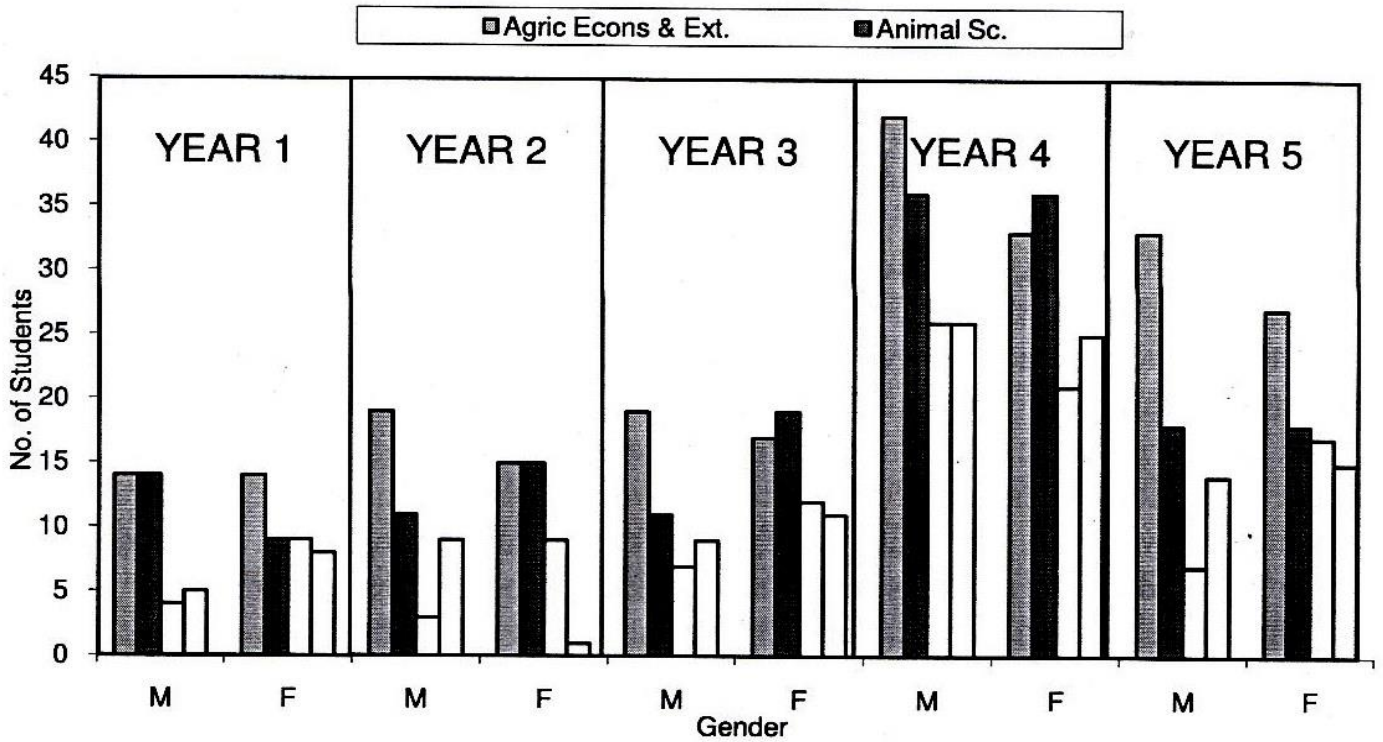


Figure 1: Enrolment for the Departments of Agriculture & Extension and Animal Science by Gender

FACULTY OF AGRIC

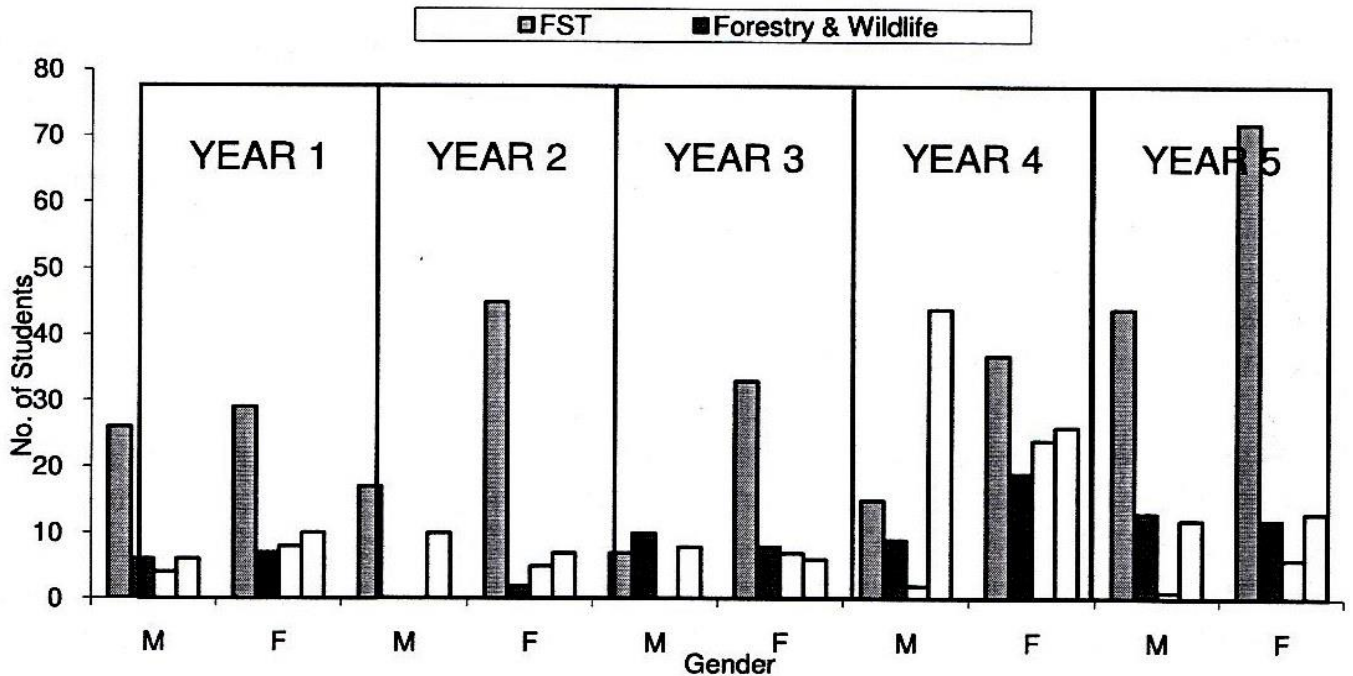


Figure 2: Enrolment for the Departments of FST & Forestry & Wildlife by Gender

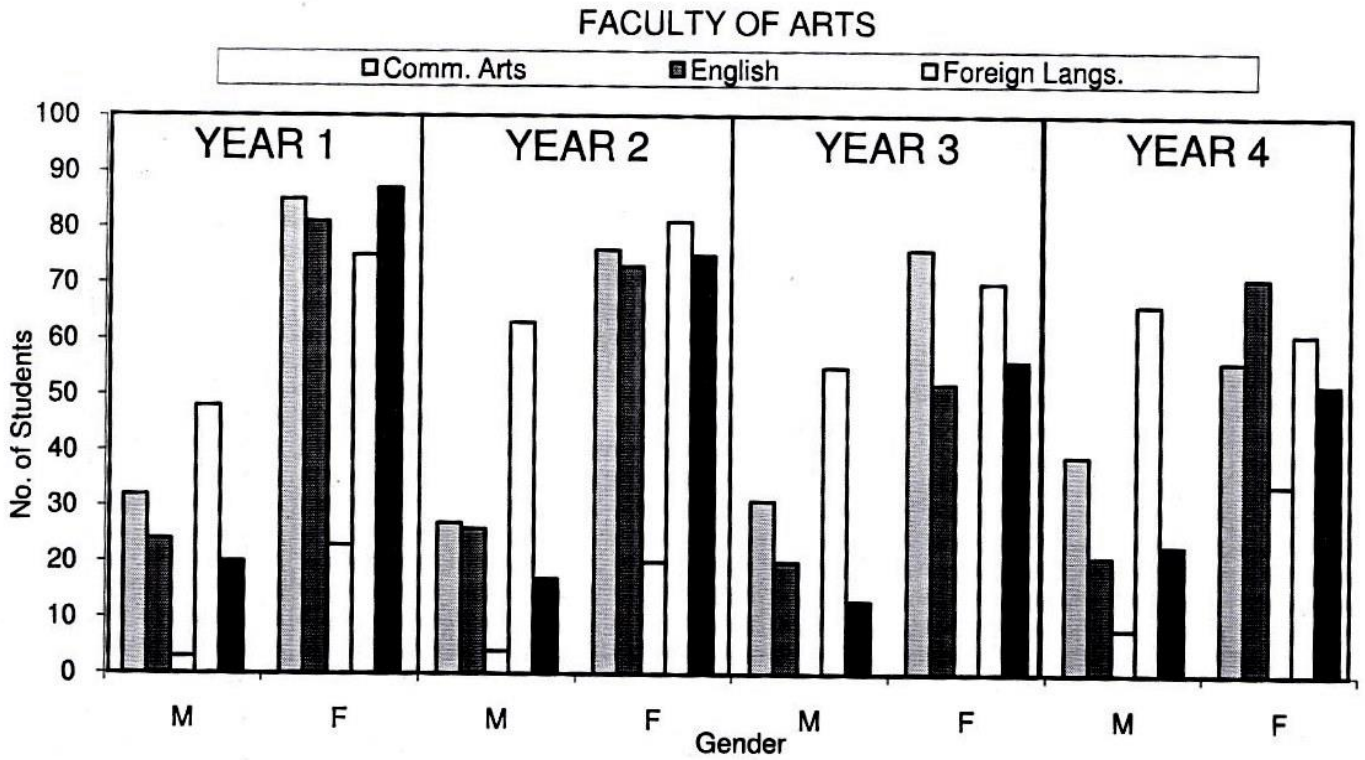


Figure 3: Enrolment for the Departments of Communication Arts & English by Gender

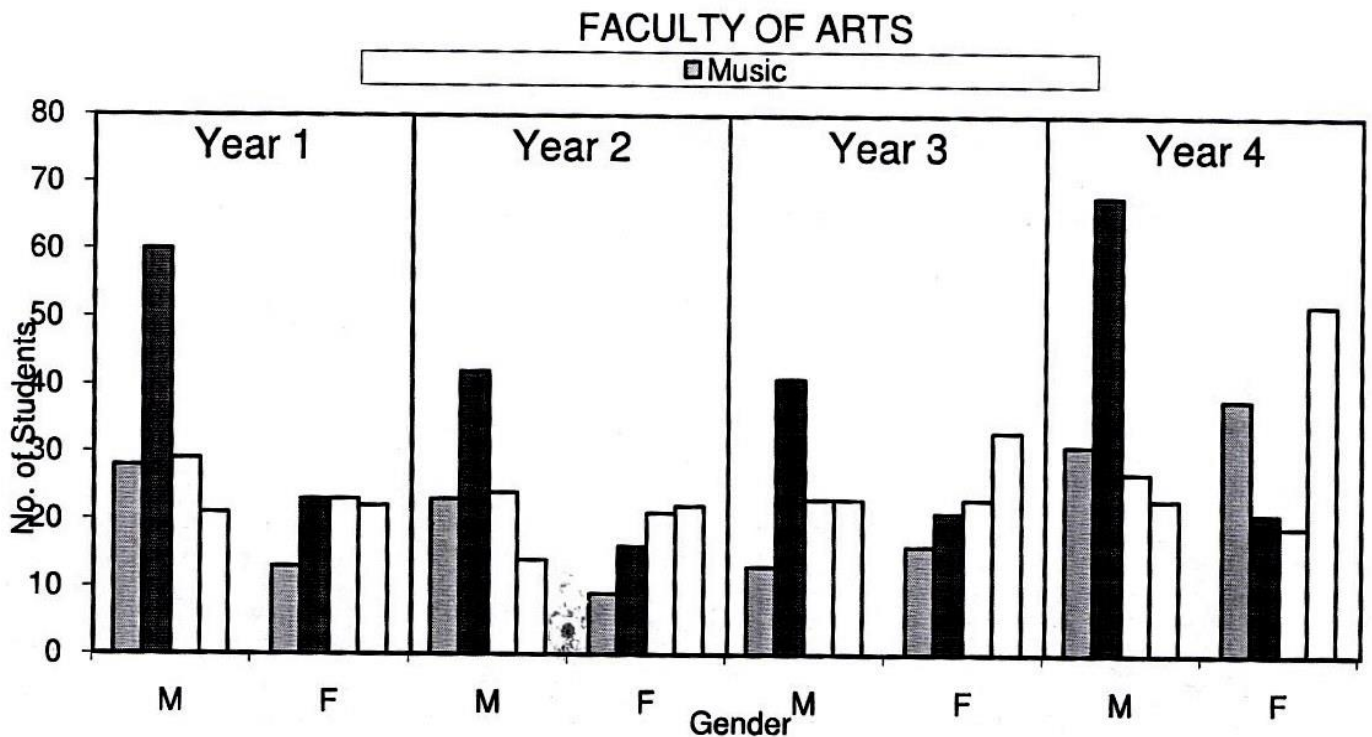


Figure 4: Enrolment for the Department Music by Gender

FACULTY OF BASIC MEDICAL

■ Anatomy ■ Biochemistry

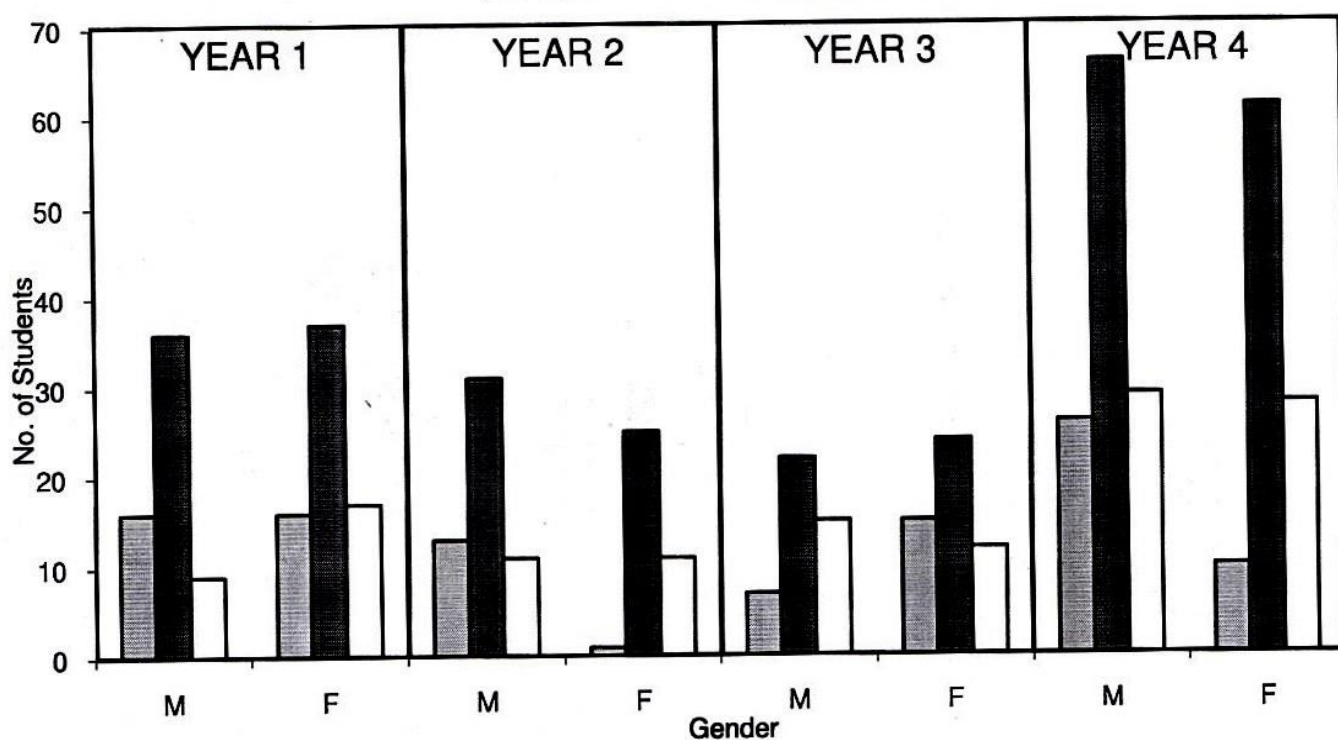


Figure 5: Enrolment for the Departments of Anatomy and Biochemistry by Gender

FACULTY OF BUSINESS ADMIN.

■ Accounting ■ Banking & Finance ■ Business Mgt.

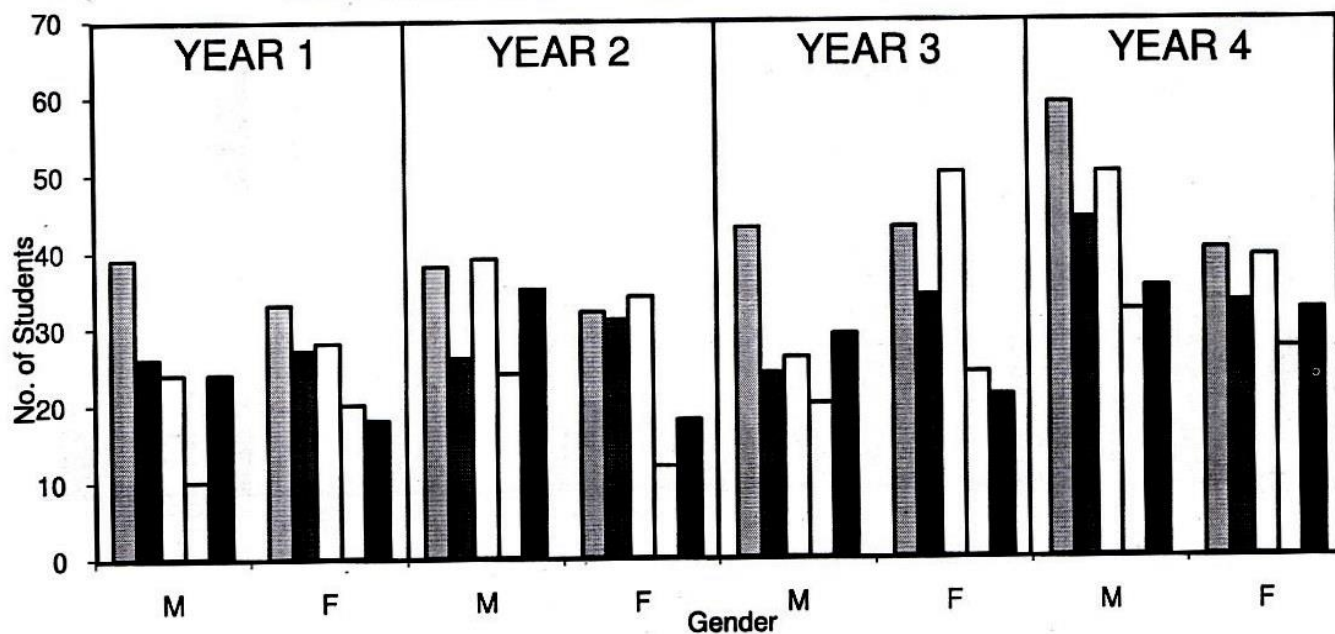


Figure 6: Enrolment for the Departments of Accounting and Banking & Finance by Gender

FACULTY OF CLINICAL SCIENCES

■ Medicine & Surgery

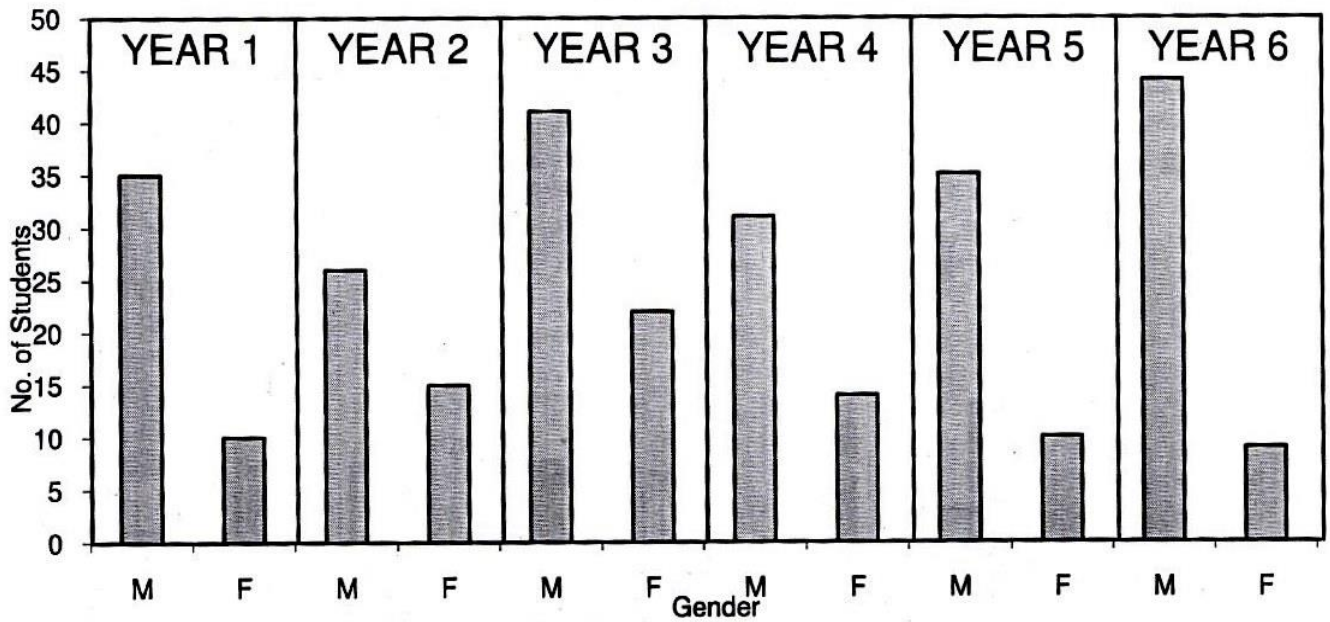


Figure 7: Enrolment for the Clinical Sciences (Medicine & Surgery) by Gender

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

■ Curriculum Studies

■ Early Childhood Spe. Edu.

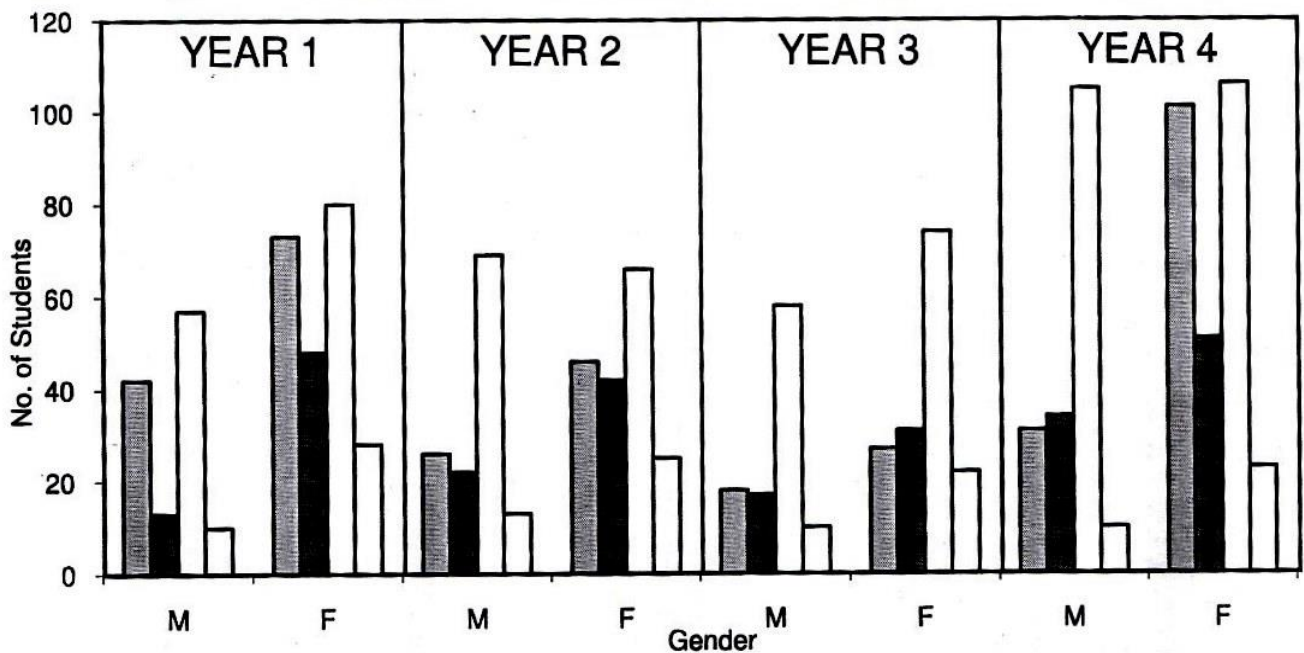


Figure 8: Enrolment for the Departments of Curriculum Studies and Early Childhood by Gender

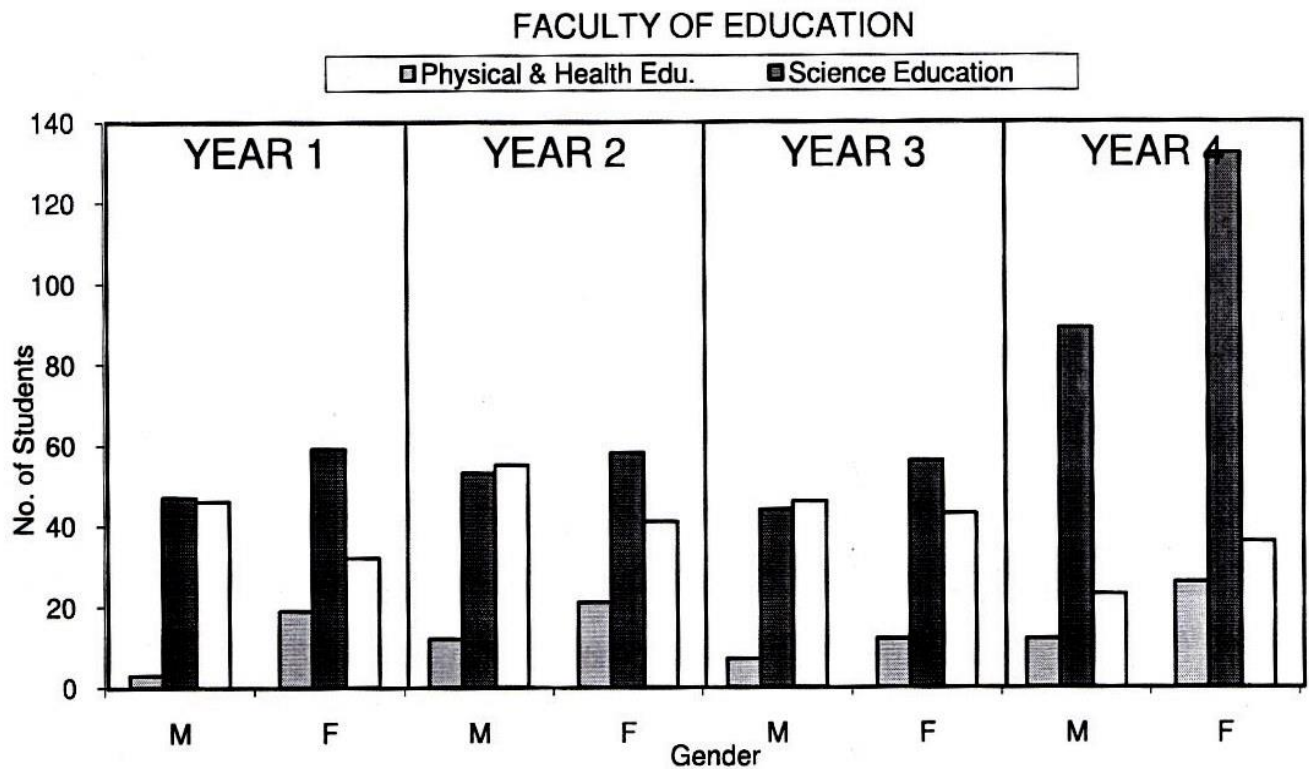


Figure 9: Enrolment for the Departments of Physical and Health Education and Science Education by Gender

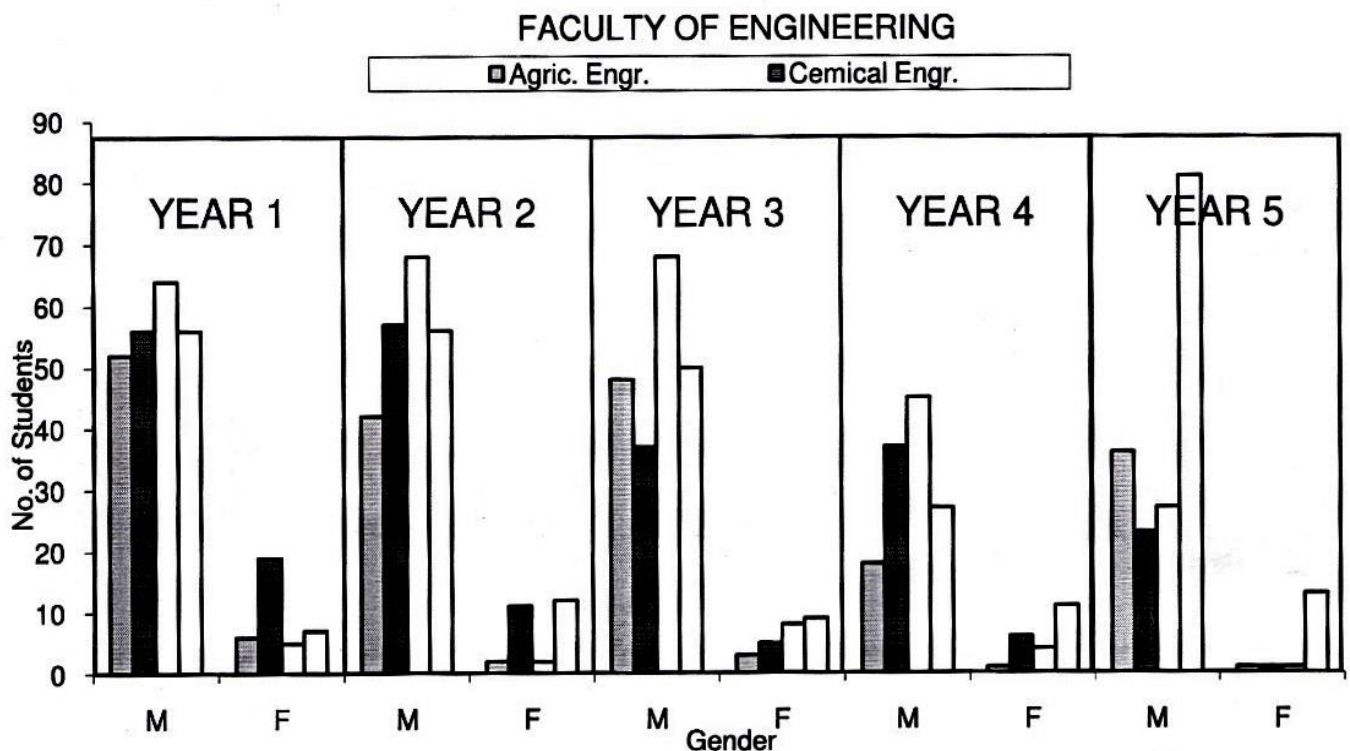


Figure 10: Enrolment for the Departments of Agriculture Engineering and Chemical Engineering by Gender

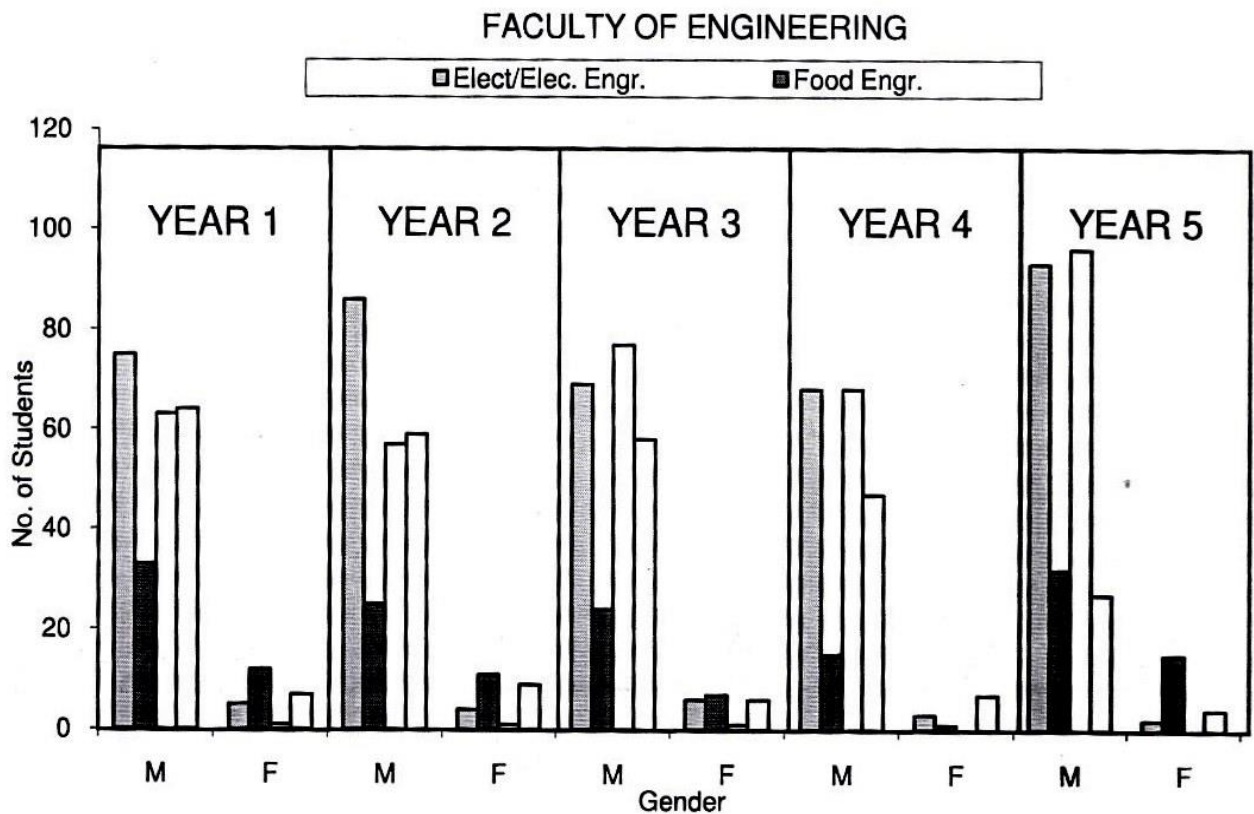


Figure 11: Enrolment for the Departments of Elect/Elect Engr. and Food Engr by Gender

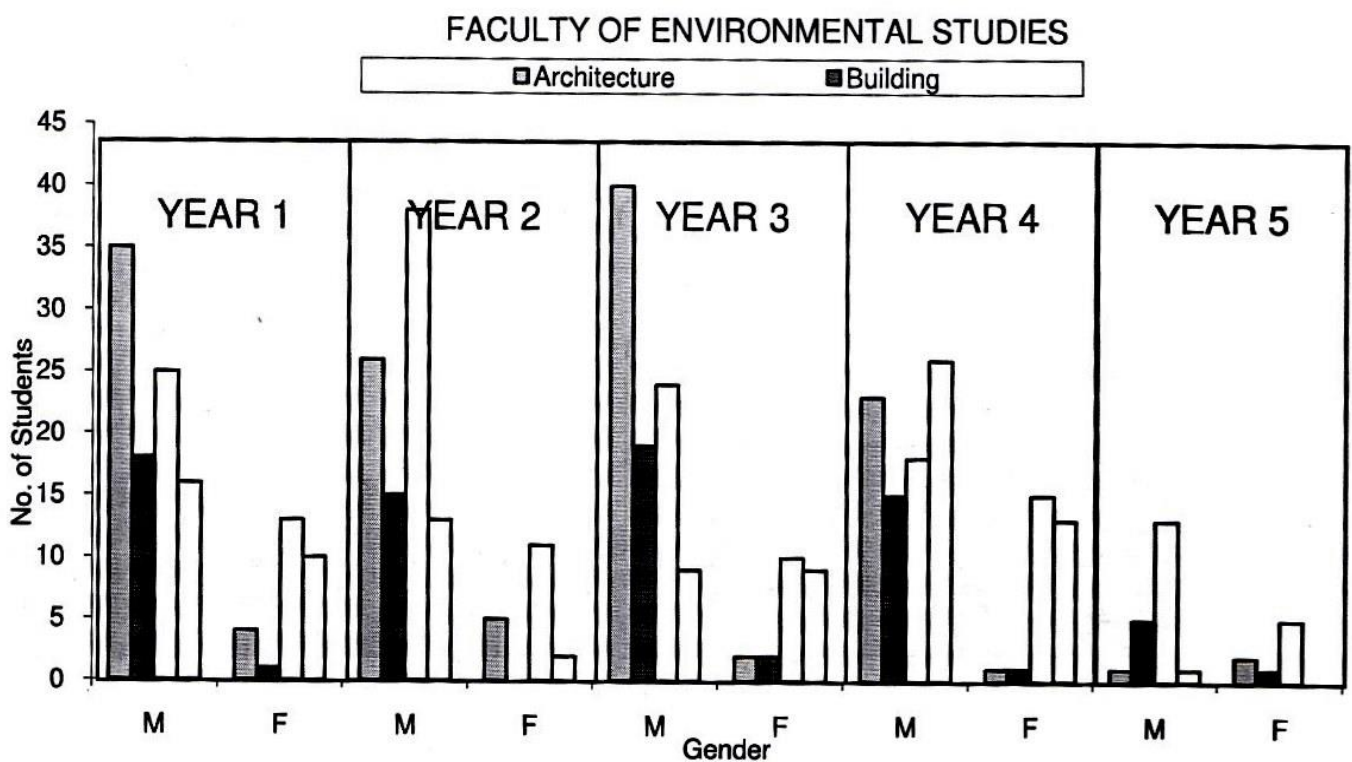


Figure 12: Enrolment for the Department of Architecture by Gender

FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

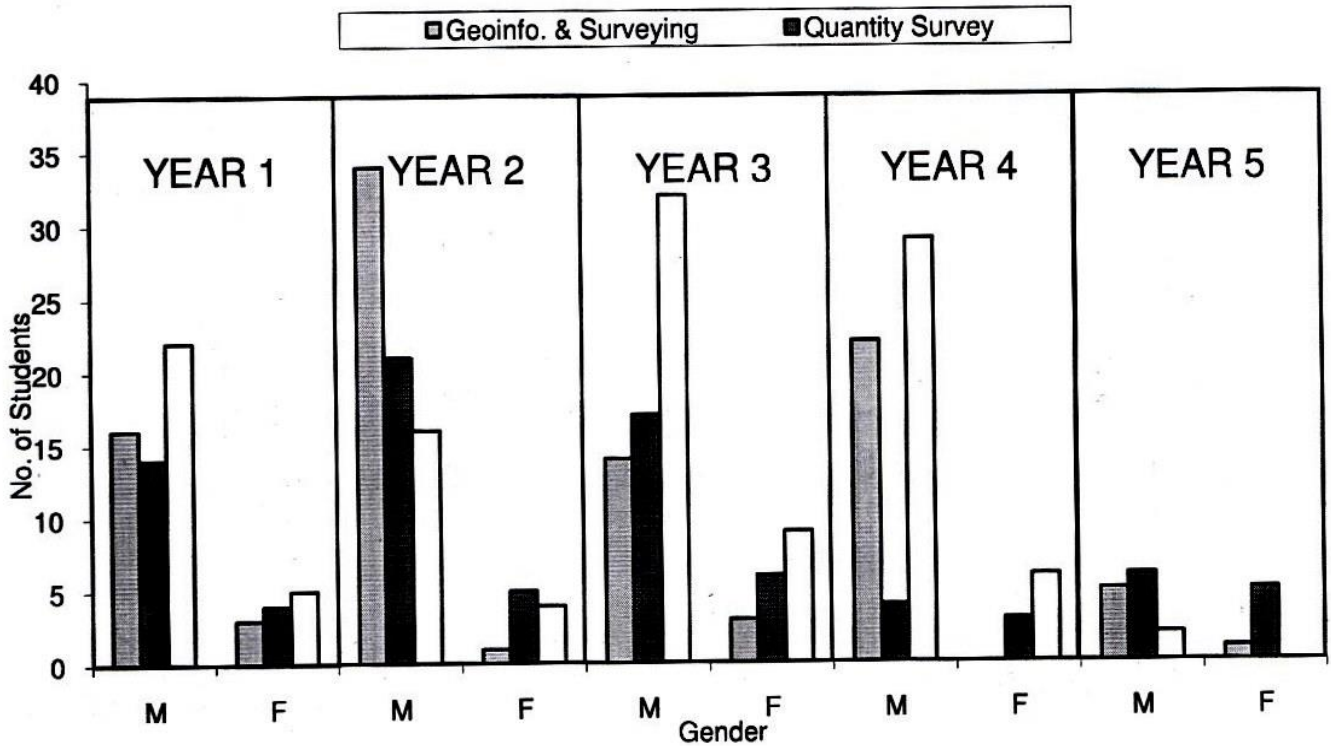


Figure 13: Enrolment for the Departments of Geoinformatics & Surveying and Quantity Surveying by Gender

FACULTIES OF LAW AND PHARMACY

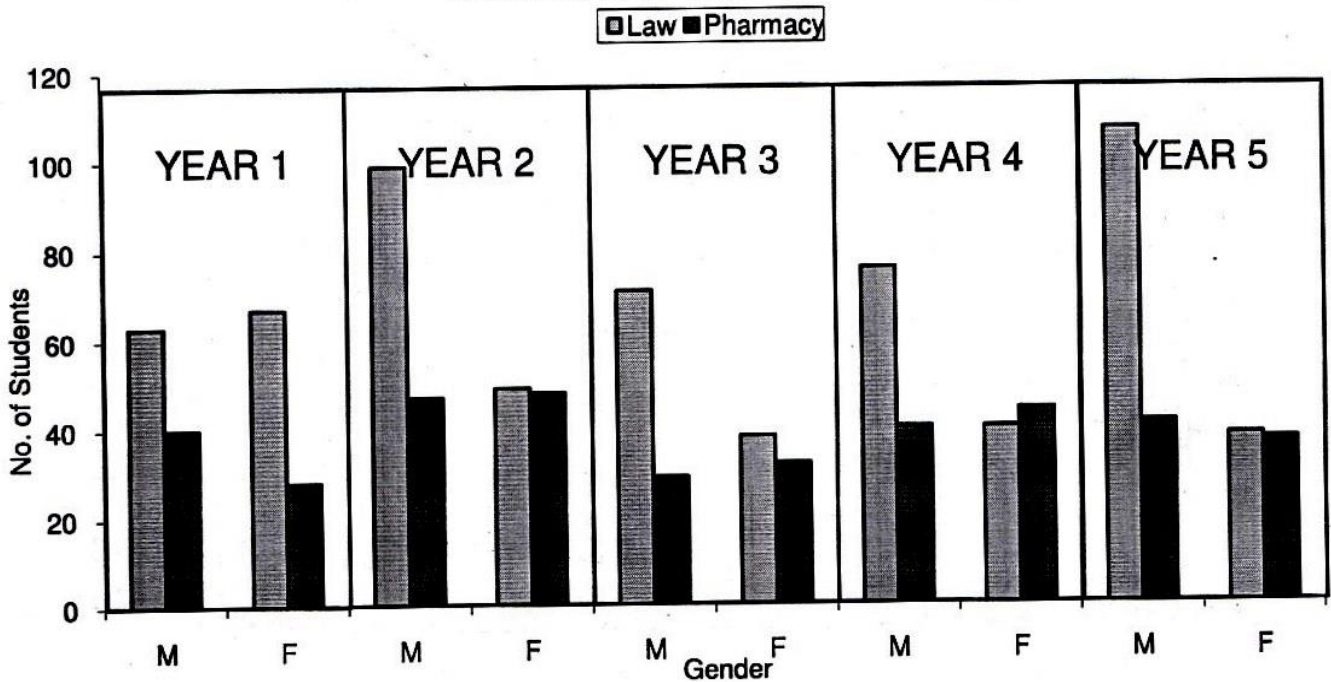


Figure 14: Enrolment for the Faculties of Law and Pharmacy by Gender

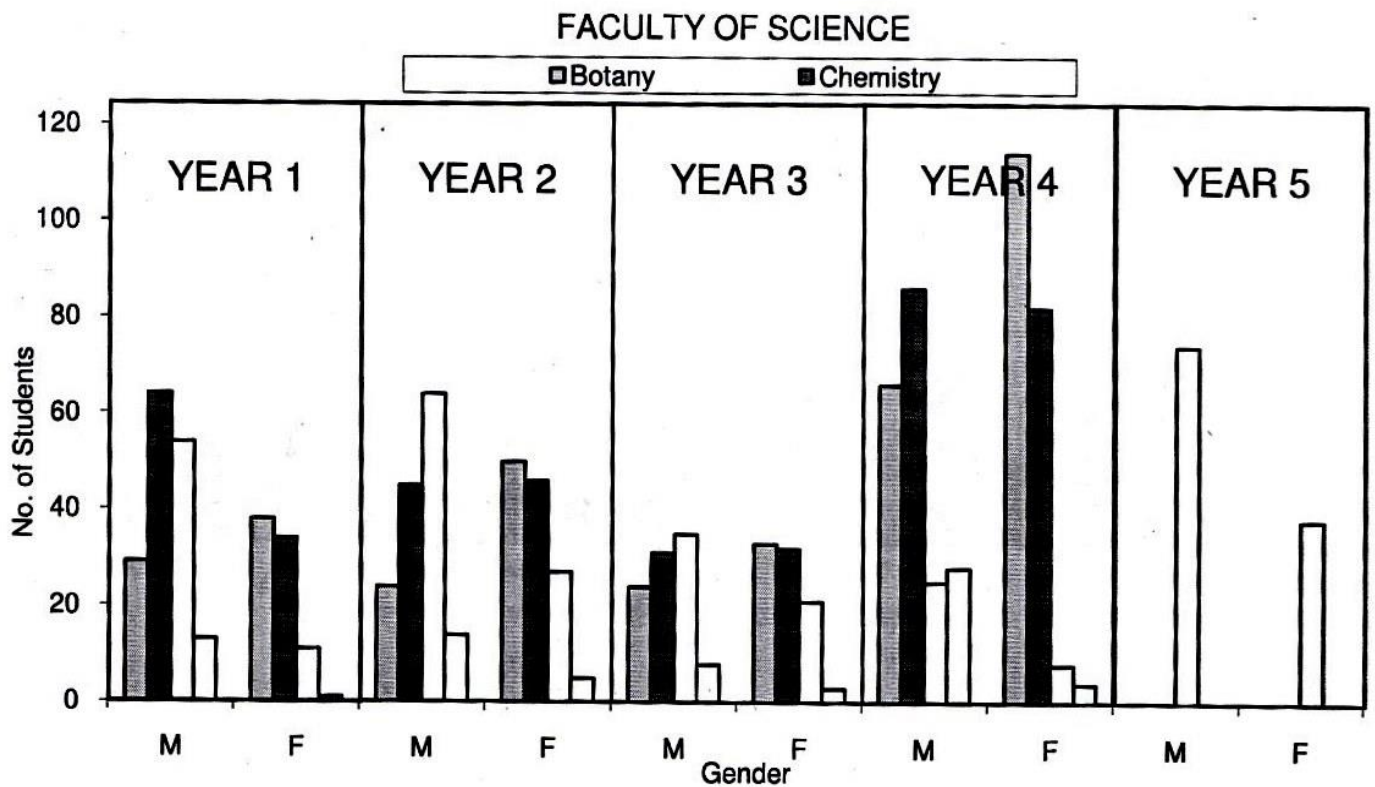


Figure 15: Enrolment for the Departments of Botany and Chemistry by Gender

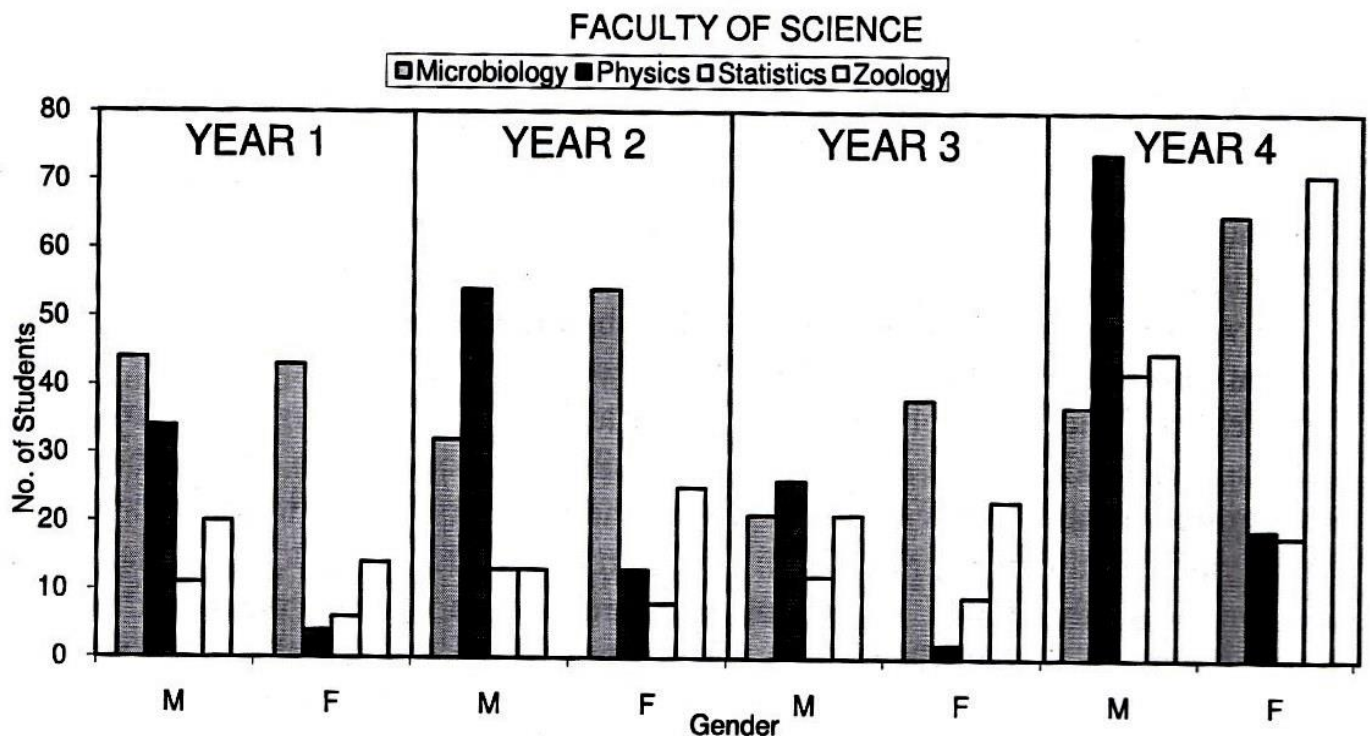


Figure 16: Enrolment for the Departments of Microbiology and Physics by Gender

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

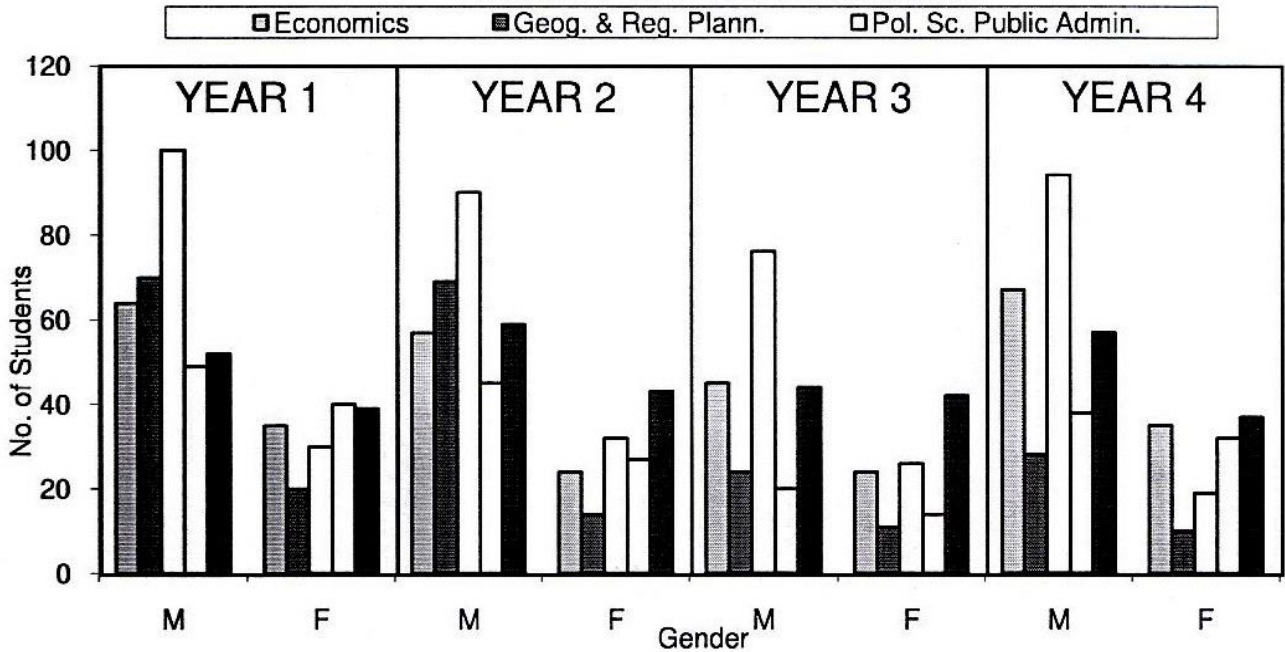


Figure 17: Enrolment for the Departments of Economics, Geog. & Reg. Plan. and Political Science by Gender

Apart from Education and the Arts, the traditional bastion of female constellation, nearly or almost all the other Faculties in the University of Uyo are predominantly populated by more male students than females. Apart from the 2012/2013 session where there was a slight spike to female advantage in the Faculty of Law, the other four years from 2008/2009 session show a marked gap in favour of male over female enrolment. This pattern is common to the other Faculties viz., Sciences, Agriculture, Engineering, Social Sciences, Environmental Studies, Clinical Sciences and Basic Medical Sciences. The picture seems to be a reflection of what obtains across the country.

Given the pattern of data, it is clear that the male gender is over-represented in student enrolment in nearly all the Faculties while the female gender is under-represented. Student enrolment obviously translates to obtaining the prerequisite training and qualification necessary for possible employment in HEIs, where this is desirable. It also implies that the higher the numbers, the better the chances of employment and career progression for the male gender. Consequently the fewer the numbers, the fewer opportunities there are for employment and career progression. If a significant number of women *ab initio* do not have the qualifications required for employment in HEIs, then it is clear that getting to management positions in HEIs is completely out of the question. Female under-representation in HEIs is a direct consequence of poor enrolment and certification.

5 Female Under-representation in HEM

Although women have been involved in higher education, either as faculty members or administrators, the number that actually rises to the top is negligible. Women are found more as caretakers and clerical staff, usually at the lower cadre in HEIs in Nigeria. Jibril (2005) observes that female participation in academic staffing is even poorer than female enrolment as students in higher educational institutions in Nigeria. This point is germane to the paucity of female representation in the management of higher education institutions in Nigeria since a low percentage in enrolment translates to a low percentage in and even more under representation at the senior management level, a *sine qua non* for higher education management. Jibril (2005) further shows that women constitute just 4% of the professorial cadre (Professors and Associate professors), 10% senior lecturers and 15% at the Assistant lecturer cadre as far as academic staff in universities is concerned. Even at that, this representation is spread thin in the Faculties of Science, Pharmacy, Agriculture and Environmental Studies. Although the numbers are still poor, there is more female representation in the Humanities, Education and Social Sciences. In the University of Uyo, there are Departments with all male staff and not a single female academic or senior administrative staff. On the other hand, a department such as Human Ecology and Dietetics (formerly Home Economics) has a higher representation of female staff traditionally.

The consequence of poor enrolment which translates to the paucity of senior female staff ricochets to the administrative heads of HEIs. Of the 40 federal government owned universities, only two are headed by women, viz., University of Uyo's Professor (Mrs.) Comfort M. Ekpo in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State and Professor (Mrs.) Eka Braide of the Federal University in Lafia, Nasarawa State, a paltry 5%! We present the national picture in Table 1.

Table 1: Heads of Universities in Nigeria by Gender (2013) extrapolated from NUC data

<i>Federal (40)</i>	<i>Female VC (%)</i>	<i>Male VC (%)</i>
	2 (5%)	38 (95%)
<i>State (39)</i>	<i>Female VC</i>	<i>Male VC</i>
	5 (12.82%)	33 (87.17%)
<i>Private (50)</i>	<i>Female VC</i>	<i>Male VC</i>
	3 (6%)	47 (94%)
Overall (129)	10 (7.8%)	118 (92.18%)

7 Top Management in the University of Uyo – 1991 - 2014

With the inception of the University of Uyo in 1991 and 2000, of the core management team, comprising the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Registrar, the Bursar and the University Librarian, only two were females, viz., the Bursar and the Librarian. Between 2000 and 2005, there was only one female core management staff, who was the University Librarian and that was for only a part of that period. From 2005 to 2010, there were two females in the team, viz., the first ever female Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) and the University Librarian. However, from 2010 to date, the University of Uyo has witnessed a respectable percentage of females currently in top management positions. The ratio is 3:3 with three females (the Vice Chancellor, the Registrar and the Librarian) and three males (the Deputy Vice Chancellor Administration, the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic and the Bursar).

The University Governing Council has 16 internal and external members with 10 males and 6 females. At the Faculty level, there are more Deans, up to four out of twelve from one previously between 2010 and 2014; this period has also witnessed an increase in the number of female Directors of academic and administrative units in the ratio of 7(females) to 10 (males). The number of female professors has also witnessed an increase up to 22 females compared to 122 male professors (18%) in 2014. Prior to this time such numbers were non-existent because there was nothing to report; but today the story is different. However, we must underscore the fact that this story is not a happenstance! This is what we discuss in the next section.

8 How did These Women Get To The Top?

Part of the methodology was with the use of interviews of the female achievers. Consistently, across the board, there were commonalities including self-motivation and setting of personal goals, self-selection (Dines, 1993), being focussed, professional development through trainings, workshop and conference attendance, publications, volunteering to serve in committees (Usoro, 2013), networking through membership of professional groups and involvement in other legitimate things men do to get to the top. Observe that these are the same things that we pointed out men did to get to the top! These women started a reconstruction of their attitude and mind set to re-orientate them to succeed.

Obviously, these women did not make these achievements 'on a platter of gold'. They faced a number of challenges including societal prejudices from male and female colleagues, family members; having to juggle between family and professional responsibilities, which men do not often have to contend with); sexual harassment; breaking the glass ceiling; discriminatory appointment and promotion policies and career disruptions to raise and nurture families; male

resistance to women leadership and management. Even the description and the language of advertisement to these top positions are sometimes discriminatory. These women overcame the odds and made it to the top of the management team and or the apex in the career. Certification is a prerequisite and must be emphasised. Professional qualification and skills are the primary ingredients required by any gender to be in any top management position. All supported by motivational gender group talks, conferences, workshops as well as the motivation of seeing other women professors and female Vice Chancellors making it to the top.

8.1 Lessons to be learned

There are important lessons that women, especially younger women starting out a career in higher education institutions must learn if they aspire to get to the top. Other lessons include setting goals and priorities early, determination to succeed, perseverance and staying focussed, managing time well, continuous self-development and improvement.

At the institutional level, equity should be provided for all in education, appointments and promotion. Early entrants to career in higher education institutions should be mentored by women and men who have made it to the top.

9 Conclusion

The implication is quite clear. The problem must be tackled from the root, the very foundation of the educational ladder to the apex, i.e., enrolment from the pre-primary, the primary, the secondary and up to the tertiary institutions. Women must be given every encouragement to enrol in school, but more importantly, beyond enrolment, women must be encouraged to remain in school to acquire the relevant training and skills requisite for the top leadership positions in the higher education institutions. In addition to training and certification, women must show sufficient self-promotion by championing their own cause and showcasing what they are outstanding at, asking for credit they deserve as they move up the ladder. In other words, women must believe in themselves and have enough self-confidence that goes with top management positions. That way, women would have been prima facie primed for leadership.

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