

# 8

---

## Gender Issues in Entrepreneurship Education: Vocational Technical - Education in Perspective

---

By

HOGAN USORO, Ph.D  
*Department of Vocational Education,  
University of Uyo,  
Uyo.*

ALICE GABRIEL ETUK  
*Department of Vocational Education,  
University of Uyo,  
Uyo.*

and

ANN EMANI DIJEH  
*Department of Home Economics,  
University of Uyo,  
Uyo.*

### Abstract

*This paper discusses gender issues in entrepreneurship education with a focus on vocational-technical education in Nigeria and some African nations. The gender issue is about women's poor representation in entrepreneurship and vocational education. Entrepreneurship education is any form of education that assists an individual to develop technical, business management and personal entrepreneurial skills for independent living. Gender issues in entrepreneurship education are those inherited from the age-old gender problems of vocational education. The identified causes of gender issues in both forms of education include cultural, physiological, economic, religious and those generated by women themselves. Entrepreneurship education aims at personal and national development and is devoid of gender restrictions. To address the gender issues, the government should encourage increase in enrolment of females in vocational programmes*

*through lowering admission requirements for them, award scholarships, offer free books and mount enlightenment campaigns to educate females.*

Definitions of entrepreneurship and the philosophy of entrepreneurship education do not in any way imply gender bias. This form of education is for everybody. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) is an equal opportunity document in the Nigerian system of education. It is also devoid of sex bias. The issue of gender problem in entrepreneurship education and also technology education is artificial, culturally – based and appears to conflict with the fundamental human rights.

It is instructive, at this point, to review the background of gender bias in education in Africa as well as Nigeria. Women (as well as the handicapped) represent huge untapped resources for national development. Their status of being an untapped resource stems from their hindrances to education. These hindrances hinge on economic, cultural, physiological and religious factors. Limited parental resources (economic), early marriage(cultural), early pregnancy, child bearing and sexual harassment (physiological) have been cited as factors that hinder female education in Nigeria as well as other third world nations (Egunjobi, 2005 and Fapohunda, 2010). In many societies, the education of women according to the same sources is not considered important because girls do not normally pay back in full measure the money invested in them.

Religious practices have also been observed to hinder women from participating in education. Purdah and Sharia systems in the Northern part of Nigeria have kept women out of the education scene. Furthermore, a special protective measure aimed at protecting women and enhancing their effectiveness has turned around to work against them. For example, International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions banned women from night work, underground work and stipulated maximum weight a woman should carry. Usoro, Ibritam and Usoro (2009) and Fapohunda (2010) reported that some employers have used maternity protection and welfare facilities at workplaces as reasons to discriminate against women and spend less in their education. Women have also been observed to block themselves from educational endeavours. As Fapohunda (2010) observed and reported, women who are married to well placed men in life sometimes lack the will to pursue education for their own enlightenment. In the light of the foregoing, women's poor representation in education can be easily imagined.

### **Female Education in Nigeria**

According to 2006 census, there are 74 million women in Nigeria. Of this population, about 61% suffer from intellectual poverty. Achume (2004) explained the

status of women education in Nigeria over four decades ago. About 38% of primary school learners were girls while only 9% of undergraduates were female students. This figure rose to 25. 5% by 1974 and the students were mainly enrolled in such courses as education and social sciences. In 2005, the total full time enrolment of females in the universities stood at 75, 548 as against the male population of 168, 217 (Federal Office of Statistics, 2006). The early education curriculum was a very limiting one to the disfavour of women. The curriculum focused on the training of women as teachers, nurses and clerks. There were no women in medicine, politics, engineering, law and environmental studies (Achume, 2004 and Federal Ministry of Education, 2009).

In the light of the foregoing, the consequence was the shortage of qualified women for top level leadership posts. It is to be noted and regrettably observed that up to the present, majority of women are not being trained or employed in job areas that are likely to enhance their chances of competing for positions in the public milieu. This low level of women education has aggravated the gender imbalance that has been existing for several decades. Interestingly, the plight of women education in Nigeria has led to the provision of gender issues in the national policy on education (FRN, 2004) for improving women participation in education (Babalola, 2007; Federal Ministry of Education, 2009; Owenubi and Idjewe, 2011).

### **Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is a drive based on creativity, feeling of independence and propensity to own a business in order to make monetary profit. This feeling is in each individual as a mustard seed awaiting manifestation. Hisrich and Peters (1986) defined an entrepreneur as an innovator, an individual who takes risks and develops something new. They pointed out that Eli Whitney and Thomas Edison developed new technologies and were unable to finance their inventions. They were capital users (entrepreneurs) and not providers (venture capitalists). Even though the definitions of entrepreneurship contain similar notions such as newness, creativity, risk taking etc. each definition appears restrictive since entrepreneurs are found in all professions in life. It is apparently a member of each family of occupations. It is also a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. The wealth is created by individuals who assume the major risks in terms of equity, time and or career commitment or provide value for some product or service.

### **Functions and Importance of Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is a kind of behaviour that includes: a) Initiative taking b) the organizing and reorganizing of social and economic mechanisms to resources and situations to practical account c) the acceptance of risk or failure

The above functions and importance of entrepreneurship are hinged on three types of skills covered by entrepreneurial exploits reported by Hisrich and Peters(2008: 20). These skill areas are:

1. Technical skills 2) Business skills 3) Personal skills.
  - a. **Technical skills:** involve such things as writing, listening, oral presentations, organizing, coaching, being a team player and technical know – how.
  - b. **Business management skills:** include those areas involved in starting, developing and managing any enterprise. Skills in decision making, production, control and negotiation are essential in launching and growing new ventures.
  - c. **Personal entrepreneurial skills:** include inner control or discipline, risk taking, innovativeness, persistence, visionary leadership and being change-oriented. The foregoing skills and objectives form the basis of the modular approach to an entrepreneurship curriculum. It is to be noted that all the functions, importance and skills areas in entrepreneurial endeavours are subsumed in vocational education functions, philosophy and skills which impose no gender restrictions.

### **Entrepreneurship Education**

Any form of education that assists an individual to develop the above three occupational behaviours is entrepreneurship education. It is also education that emphasizes the dignity of labour, encourages self – reliance and stimulates creativity. It is expected to develop in the recipients the needed skills for self – reliance and prudent participation in the world of work (Hisrich and Peters, 2008). Entrepreneurship education is a new phenomenon in Nigeria. It is not yet offered as a programme of study in tertiary institutions in Nigeria rather it is offered as a service course in vocational education areas (FRN, 2008). Interestingly, the various arms of government in Nigeria have made efforts towards offering entrepreneurship education in form of training given by both federal and state governments to farmers in the recent times (Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Agriculture, 2010). Entrepreneurship education is also a programme of study designed to provide individuals with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities and the insight, self – esteem, knowledge and skill to act on them. It is education that focuses on a collection of formalized teaching that informs trains and educates anyone interested in business creation or small business development (Egboh, 2009). Sequel to the foregoing, Egboh (2009) and Hisrich (2008) identified the goals and objectives of entrepreneurship education and training as follows:

- a) Provide meaningful education for the youth which could make them self – reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and be independent;

- b) Provide youths with the skills and support necessary to help them establish careers in small businesses;
- c) Provide youths with training and skills that will make them creative and innovative in identifying or uncovering new business opportunities.

In the United States of America (USA), entrepreneurship education is relatively new, but it has not been fully embraced in the Nigerian system of education. To introduce a course in entrepreneurship education into the Nigerian system of education, it is prudent to adapt the American objectives as provided by Hisrich (1986). These objectives are 15 and stated as follows:

- 1) Demonstrate an understanding of the roles of new and smaller firms in the Nigerian economy.
- 2) Demonstrate an understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of different types of enterprises.
- 3) Demonstrate knowledge of the general characteristics of an entrepreneurial process.
- 4) Assess the student's own entrepreneurial skills
- 5) Demonstrate an understanding of the entrepreneurial process and the product planning and development process.
- 6) Demonstrate knowledge of alternative methods for identifying and evaluating business opportunities and the factors that support or inhibit creativity
- 7) Develop an ability to form, organize and work in interdisciplinary terms.
- 8) Demonstrate knowledge of the general correlates of success and failure in innovation and new venture creation.
- 9) Demonstrate knowledge of the generic entry strategies for new venture creation
- 10) Demonstrate an understanding of the aspects of creating and presenting a new venture business plan.
- 11) Demonstrate knowledge of how to identify, evaluate and obtain resources
- 12) Demonstrate knowledge of the essentials of :
  - a) Marketing planning
  - b) Financial planning
  - c) Operations planning
  - d) Organization planning
  - e) Venture launch planning
- 13) Demonstrate knowledge of how to manage and grow a new venture
- 14) Demonstrate knowledge of the managerial challenges and demands of a new venture launch.
- 15) Demonstrate an understanding of the role of entrepreneurship in existing organizations

Sequel to the foregoing goals and objectives of entrepreneurship education, it is possible to plan strategies for achieving them.

Lukman and Oviawe (2010) identified the following as strategies to be adopted to achieve and sustain a functional entrepreneurial education in Nigeria. They are:

- a. Institutional seminars and workshops on entrepreneurial skills development
- b. Internship to provide students with opportunity of experimental practice with small business organizations.
- c. Practical entrepreneurship counselling – students need counselling in this form of education as in other forms. Teachers must be entrepreneurial counsellors.
- d. Regular visitation to entrepreneurs in the community. The importance of this strategy is self – explanatory.
- e. Employment of qualified and competent teachers of entrepreneurial skills. Skills acquired by students depend on the qualification, competence, concern and devotedness of teachers. Entrepreneurship education plays a contributory role in national development.
- f. Teaching strategies favour the use of project method, field trips, case studies and linkage with community entrepreneurs.

It is also possible to plan strategies for promoting entrepreneurship with secondary school curriculum capitalizing on over 30 entrepreneurship/trade subjects identified in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) and by Lukman and Oviawe (2010). The strategies for promoting entrepreneurship education at secondary school level include:

- a. Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles.
- b. Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub – professional grades.
- c. Inspire students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence.
- d. Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the dignity of labour, and appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and lives as good citizens.
- e. Provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

The implementation of the foregoing strategies and upon successful pursuit of the entrepreneurship education curriculum, the youth are likely to develop cognitive, affective, perceptual and psychoproductive skills for self – reliance or entrepreneurial exploits. Social and political stability is apt to emerge when the youth (males and

females) are properly settled with occupational skills in the identified vocational – technical trades.

Faced with daily stressful situations and other difficulties, the possibility exists that the entrepreneur will establish a balance between ethical exigencies, economic expediency and social responsibility, a balance that differs from the point at which the general business manager takes his or her moral stance. The question to raise at this point is: can stressful nature of entrepreneurial work hinder females from emerging in entrepreneurship education for eventual participation in the endeavour? The ensuing sections may shed some light on the answer to the above question.

### **Comparison of Entrepreneurial Skills with Vocational Education Skills**

The entrepreneurial skills as already noted include technical skills, business management skills and personal entrepreneurial skills, whereas the vocational education skills include cognitive skills, psychomotor skills, affective skills, and perceptual skills. The skills of vocational education constitute a balanced work behaviour which is very suitable for entrepreneurial occupations, and are highly prized by employers of labour. They do not differ from those of entrepreneurship except on semantic bases.

### **Male Versus Female in Entrepreneurial Characteristics**

1. There has been a significant growth in female self – employment with women now starting new ventures at three times the rate of men elsewhere, but in Nigeria, the percentage of women who venture into business is lower than those who are involved in ventures by virtue of their marriage.
2. The characteristics of both male and female entrepreneurs are generally very similar, but female entrepreneurs differ in terms of motivation, business skills and occupational backgrounds as illustrated in table 1.

**Table 1: Tabular Comparison between Male and Female Entrepreneurs**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Male entrepreneurs</b>	<b>Female entrepreneurs</b>
Motivation	Achievement – strive to make things happen Personal independence – self – image as it relates to status though their role in the corporation is unimportant Job satisfaction arising from the desire to be in control	Achievement – accomplishment of a goal Independence – do it alone
Departure point	Dissatisfaction with present job or outgrowth of present job Discharge or layoff Opportunity for acquisition	Job frustration Interest in and recognition of opportunity in the area Change in personal circumstances
Sources of funds	Personal assets and savings Bank financing Investors, loans from friends and family	Personal assets and savings Personal loans
Occupational background	Experience in line of work Recognized specialist or one who has gained a high level of achievement in the field Competent in a variety of business functions	Experience in area of business Middle management or administrative level experience in the field Service related occupational background
Personality characteristics	Opinionated and persuasive Goal oriented Innovative and idealistic High level of self confidence enthusiastic and energetic	Flexible and tolerant, goal oriented Creative and realistic Medium level of self confidence

	Must be own boss	Enthusiastic and energetic Ability to deal with social and economic environment
Background	Age when starting venture 25 – 35 Father was self employed College educated – degree in business or technical area (usually engineering) First born child	Age when starting venture 35 – 45 Father was a self employed College educated – degree in liberal arts First born child
Type of business started	Manufacturing or construction	Service related – educational services, consulting or public relations

Source: Hisrich and Peters (2008)

A close view of the comparison of the characteristics of male and female entrepreneurs indicates the following: men and women appear to have similar reasons for starting a business. Both have a strong interest and experience in the area of their venture. However, men and women entrepreneurs differ in start – up financing. Men often list investors, bank loans or personal loans in addition to personal loans as sources of start – up capital while women usually rely solely on personal assets or savings. This points out a major problem for women entrepreneurs. Men and women differ occupationally. Personality-wise, men are more confident, less flexible and less tolerant than women entrepreneurs. Men like manufacturing, construction or high technology fields while women prefer service-related ventures. The question again to raise is: Do the above male – female characteristics in terms of entrepreneurship indicate the reasons for gender imbalance in the world of entrepreneurs with respect to vocational – technical education in Nigeria?

### **Gender Issues in Vocational/Technology Education in Nigeria/Africa**

It is worthy of note that challenges in gender issues in vocational education laid the foundation for the transitional development of gender issues in entrepreneurship education. The major purpose of technical and vocational education (TVE) is to provide skilled manpower in applied sciences, engineering technology and commerce to operate, maintain and sustain the nation’s economic activities for rapid socio – economic development. Technical – vocational education is designed to impart the

necessary skills and competencies leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and technologists who will be enterprising and self-reliant, thus having the greater potential to generate employment, reduce poverty and eliminate the “area boys’ syndrome”. Unfortunately, these objectives have by far not been realized due to long periods of system’s neglect and discrimination. The Federal Ministry of Education (2009) provides the following reports:

1. There are 159 recognized technical colleges offering trades at NTC/NBC level (19 Federal, 137 state and 3 private) with a total enrolment of 92, 216 (86.1% male and 13.9% females) in 2005
2. In 2005, there were 2730 teaching staff comprising of a) 2,285 (83.7%) males and b) 445 (16.3%) females. Student – staff ratio was 1: 35. The standard ratio is 1 : 25 indicating the need for more qualified staff. Owenvbiugie and Idjawe (2011) reported gender disparity in trades practices. Out of 2542 apprentices who enrolled in vocational trade programmes, 2215 (87%) were males while 327 (13%) were females. Reasons for this disparity have already been reported in this paper.

Gender imbalances in vocational/technology education in Nigeria have been an issue of serious concern to educators, women themselves and other stakeholders. In the recent agricultural training offered by the Akwa Ibom State Government to farmers, men were considered first before females in both training and financial benefits. This kind of practice has a contributory effect on the already serious gender imbalance in the affairs of the State and Nation.

Usoro, Usoro, Ibritam and Udofia (2009) identified causes of male students’ dominance over female counterparts in the Nigerian technical colleges to include:

1. Low enrolment of female students in the Nigerian technical colleges is rooted in gender, parental interest, teachers, government and nature of technical education factors.
2. Sex factor was identified by 70% of the subjects as the principal factor responsible for low female enrolment in technical colleges.
3. Girls are attracted to certain vocational subjects and repelled by others such as building, auto-mechanics, welding (Osugwu, 1980)
4. Traditional societal prejudice against education of women in Nigeria.
5. Out of 604 students admitted into the engineering programme, in the University of Benin, 589 were males while only 15 were girls (Nwachili and Egbue, 1993)

There are also gender problems in sub – Saharan Africa. Wheldon and Smith, (1986), African Conference on the Education of Girls (1993), The Federation of African Women Education (FAWE) (1995), and Klasem (2002), have painted a sad picture of female education in Africa. Wheldon and Smith (1986) reported that out of

9000 students enrolled in the 20 Ghanaian technical institutions, only 10% (900) were females.

In Swaziland, girls generally tend to avoid technical subjects. Wheldon and Smith (1986) reported that of the students who wrote examinations, 228 were in technical drawing, 176 in woodwork and 108 in metal work. They were all boys and vocational education is offered at tertiary level only. In Zambia, gender plays a significant role in enrolment. During 1988/89 admission into technical education in the University of Zambia, only 65 out of 741 students admitted were females. About 36 million girls in sub-Saharan Africa are out of school and those already in school are poorly served. A greater percentage of girls (64%) than the boys drop out of school without attaining full literacy. Four times as many boys as girls continue to the tertiary level of education. The foregoing constitutes the background of gender issues surrounding the development of entrepreneurship and vocational education in Nigeria and Africa.

### **Gender Issues in Entrepreneurship Education Vis-a-Vis Gender Challenges in Vocational/Technical Education in Nigeria**

In the light of the foregoing write-up about entrepreneurship, its functions and skills as well as objectives, vocational education, its objectives, skills offered etc. the former is apparently a form of the latter. From this standpoint, it is conceivable that the gender issues or challenges of vocational- technical education are also those of entrepreneurship education. The gender issues in vocational education are as old as vocational education itself which happens to be the oldest form of education on earth. It became formalized before entrepreneurship education. Gender issues in entrepreneurship education are, therefore, inherited challenges passed on by vocational education. Strategies adopted to reduce or eliminate gender issues in vocational education imply reduction of gender imbalance in entrepreneurial education and real entrepreneurial exploits in Nigeria and Africa.

### **Conclusion**

Entrepreneurial education is a form of vocational education which contributes to personal and national development. It is devoid of gender restriction or bias.

### **Recommendations**

1. Governments should increase enrolment of females in vocational education programmes via lowering admission requirements for them and awarding scholarships to kindle females' interest in the programme.

2. Females in the programme should be promised instant jobs upon completion of their training.
3. Government should mount enlightenment campaigns to educate females about their much needed contributions towards national development via vocational education and training.

### **References**

- Achume, R. N. (2004). Barriers to Access to Leadership Positions in Higher Institutions with Special Reference to Nigerian Women. *Nigerian Social Scientists* 7 (1).
- Baba lola, Y. A. (2007). *Promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment through Business Education*. A Paper Presented during ABEN Conference at Abakaliki, Enugu State.
- Egboh, S.H.O. (2009) *Entrepreneurship Development for Employment and Wealth Creation*. Benin City: Edo State: Ehis Printer.
- Egunjobi, L (2005). *Women Empowerment Perspectives and Prospects*: Ado Ekiti: Fountain News papers and Publishing Company Ltd.
- Fapohunda, T. M. (2010) Information Technology and Women Education in Nigeria. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Research Development (MULJORED* 15 (14))
- Federal Ministry of Education (2009) Draft 2: *Roadmap for Nigerian Education Sector*. Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Federal Office of Statistics (2006). Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos:NERDC Press.
- Federation of African Women Educationists (FAWE) (1995). *Girls and African Education*. Ouagadougou, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Hisrich, R.D. & Peters, M. P. (2008) *Entrepreneurship*. New Delhi; India: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited.

- Klasem, S. (2002). *Low Schooling for Girls, Slower Growth for All? Cross Country Evidence on the Effect of Gender Inequality in Education on Development. The World Bank Economic Review* 6 (3) :313 – 317.
- Lukman, A. & Oviawe, J. I. (2010). Strategies for promoting Entrepreneurship Education in Secondary School Curriculum. In Iloputaife, E. C. Maduwesi, B. U. & Igbo, R. U. (Eds) (2010). *Issues and Challenges in Nigerian Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishing Coy Ltd.
- National Commission for Colleges of Education: *Minimum Standards for Nigeria Certificate in Education*. Garki, Abuja, Nigeria: Government Printing Press.
- Nwabuchili, C & Egbue, N. (1993). *Sociological Foundations of Education*. Onitsha: Mid – Field Publishers Ltd.
- Osuagwu, D. A. (1980). *Factors Associated with Vocational Interest among a Group of Nigerian Secondary School students*. Unpublished Masters Degree of Education Thesis. University of Ibadan.
- Owenvbiugie, R.O & Idjawe, E. E. (2011). Gender disparity in the acquisition of technical – Vocational skills in senior secondary schools in delta state: The Way Forward. *Journal of education, health and technology research* 1 (1).
- Pan - African Conference on the Education of Girls (1993). *Education, Girls and women in Africa*. Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.
- Ukpong, D. (2003) *Essentials of sociology of education for colleges and universities*. Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria; Assurance Publicaton Network.
- UNICEF (2002). *Girls' Education in Nigeria*: Online Resource.
- Usoro, H. S. U., Usoro, M. Ibritam, K. & Udofia, W. U. (2009). Causes of Male Students' Dominance over Female Counterparts in the Nigerian Technical Colleges: A Case Study of Abia State Technical Colleges. *Journal of National Association of Teachers of Technology* 7 (1).
- Wheldon, A. E. & Smith, A. C. (1986). Gender – Based Differences in O – Level Subject Choice and Performance in Swaziland. *ER Bulletin*, 7: 65 – 77.