

Institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in Nasarawa state institute for vocational and technical education: A survey of evidence

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Abstract

A glance at most institutions and organizations in Nigeria shows imbalance in the area of gender. Most policies in most organizations are not gender sensitive. This study examines the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in Nasarawa State Institute of Vocational and Technical Education as a means of achieving sustainable development in Nasarawa State and Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Descriptive statistics was used in the analysis of data. Findings indicated the availability of policies or procedures in place that promote gender equality at the vocational institute indicating that gender mainstreaming has been institutionalized in the institute. Findings equally revealed the strategies of gender mainstreaming adopted in the institute to include incorporation of gender sensitive content into curricula, equal access to training opportunities, providing gender-sensitive material and resources among others. Findings also revealed that a gender issue that has not been attended to is that there is no access to child care facility at the center. It was recommended that Stakeholders and gender advocates should constantly visit the institute for facility check and appraisal of the affairs of the institute to ensure they always conform to the philosophy of gender mainstreaming. It was also recommended that individuals who are gender sensitive should be the ones to be appointed at management level in order to sustain the achievement so far.

Keyword: Gender mainstreaming, institutionalization, vocational Skills, technical education, equality.

1. Introduction

Gender injustice has a long and complex history. It can be traced to ancient patriarchal societies where the male gender dominates (Elson, 2010). From time past, gender inequality assumed different forms ranging from exclusion of women from education and employment, the denial of women property and inheritance as well as the subjugation of women in the sphere of politics. In different parts of the world, women are confronted with different forms of discrimination and violence of different degrees. This violence could be sexual assault, domestic violence and so on.

In recent decades, there have been different calls, campaigns and agitations for gender equality and equity. These different calls have culminated into the initiative and appearance of gender mainstreaming. The concept of gender mainstreaming came into limelight in the 1990s as a paradigm shift about development and human rights issues; specifically, those bordering on issues of women. The term was first used in the Beijing platform for action. The vision of gender mainstreaming is to encourage gender equity and to make sure women are treated fair in all ramifications of life (Terrell, Tucker & Michel, 2016). Gender mainstreaming is a policy making approach which emphasizes the need to incorporate gender perspective in policy making. The goal is to discourage gender inequalities in all aspects of policy making.

As part of efforts to equip the citizens with the needed skills geared towards self-reliance which could help in reducing the rate of unemployment in Nigeria and Nasarawa State, the immediate past Governor of the state, Umaru Tanko Almakura built the Vocational and Technology Institute, Lafia. However, it was commissioned and named as Wing Commander Abdullahi Ibrahim Vocational and Technology Institute,

Lafia by the present Governor, Abdullahi A. Sule. The researcher's observation shows that different skills including tailoring, carpentry, and electrical skills are on offer in the institute but the degree of adherence to the philosophy of gender mainstreaming in the institute is unknown to the best of the researcher's knowledge.

This study therefore assesses the level of the adherence to this philosophy in the institute by unraveling the gender mainstreaming strategies that are adopted, and uncovering gender issues that may have not been attended to at the Technology Institute.

2.1 The concept of gender and gender mainstreaming: An overview

The concept of gender is sometimes seen as different from sex. This is because sex is perceived as biological characteristics which include genetics, anatomy and physiology which define humans as either male or female. However, it is worthy to note that there are people who have both male and female characteristics. The concept of gender on the other hand is seen as a social construct which pertain to roles and responsibilities associated with being a girl or boy as well as women and men. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), Gender is something that we do, not something that we are born with or possess. Additionally, we do it (Butler, 1990). This implies that the idea of gender places greater emphasis on the roles that people play. According to Eckert and Mcconnell-Ginet (1996), gender builds on biological sex but exaggerates biological difference into domains in which it is completely irrelevant that sex is the result of nature, which is simply given by biology, whereas people tend to think of gender as the result of nurture, as social and therefore fluid. indeed, it seems that people's perceptions of computer-generated speech are based on whether they think the voice is male or female. We practically cannot move forward without taking gender into mind, according to Eckert and Mcconnel-Ginet (1996), who claimed that gender is so embedded in our social practice, in our perception of ourselves and of others (Nass, Clifford, Moon, Youngme, Green & Nancy, 1997). Despite the fact that biological sex still plays a role, it is evident that gender places greater emphasis on roles.

Based on this, Butler (1990) argued that gender still requires labour and that parts of gender can deteriorate if they are not consistently performed at all societal levels. Bornstein (1998) asserts that gender is merely a framework used to excuse inequalities. For his side, Ortner (1990) offered a more challenging view of gender, pointing out that different axes of social value or prestige are clearly at work in a particular society, with males dominating some and women dominating others.

Gender mainstreaming according to European Union (2016), is not a policy aim in itself, but a technique to promote gender equality. This is attributable to the fact that equality between women and men is recognized by the European Union as a fundamental right, a common value of the EU and a vital condition for the fulfilment of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion. Gender mainstreaming frowns at inequality on the basis of gender and therefore makes public support more viable and make sure inequalities are not perpetrated and encouraged. The Institute for Gender Equality (2016) further states that, avoiding the establishment or perpetuation of disparities that can negatively impact both men and women is not the only goal of gender mainstreaming. It also entails examining the current state of affairs in order to pinpoint disparities and reverse the processes that gave rise to them.

The European Union provided two dimensions of gender mainstreaming which include;

Gender representation in a policy area: This dimension highlights that addressing the issue of representation requires examining how men and women are represented in the workforce, in decision-making processes, and as policy beneficiaries.

Gender responsive content of the policies: This dimension highlights the fact that quantity is significant, it is vital to also evaluate how gender relates to the content of policy measures, in order to have a clearer understanding of ways both women and men would gain from them. Furthermore, a gender-responsive policy according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (2016), ensures that the demands of all people irrespective of gender are impartially addressed. In other words, gender mainstreaming promotes the interests of both sexes rather than just women.

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (2016) defines gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing how planned actions, such as laws, policies, or programs, would affect men and women in all fields and at all levels. It further states that gender mainstreaming is a strategy for integrating the concerns and experiences of both men and women into the planning, execution, monitoring, and assessment of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal domains to ensure that men and women benefit equally and that inequality is not maintained.

2.2 Gender mainstreaming in Education and Vocational Education and Training

Gender mainstreaming in vocational and high schools is a strategy to integrate gender differences at all stages in teaching-learning process for achieving gender equality and equity. It is crucial that the issue of gender mainstreaming be institutionalised in schools across all levels. Opportunities for women and men to properly develop their potential, especially technical skills, should be open without being inhibited by gender bias (Nurhaeni & Kurniawan, 2018).

Technical and vocational education and training connect the worlds of education and work. Unfortunately, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization lamented that gender bias is still prevalent in the provision of technical and vocational education and training, influencing the courses and occupations that are open to men and women. This contributes to the persistence of gender inequality in work and society. The International Labour Organisation (2015) states that poverty and inequality persist despite economic growth and technological advancement, and that this inequality may be in the area of technical education and training.

Technical and vocational education and training programs are often gender biased due to broader gender inequalities and stereotypes, which affects women's access to and participation in specific occupational areas (ILO, 2015). To promote gender equality in technical and vocational education and training, UNESCO (2016) suggested that this can be achieved by filling knowledge gaps in understanding the issue in various economic and cultural contexts, promoting policy learning, and providing policy.

According to UNESCO (2016), there is a gender inequality challenge in technical and vocational education and training because technical courses are very popular among male students and rarely seen in female students, and only a small fraction of female students attend technical and vocational education and training. Gender mainstreaming in vocational education has a continuing role in facilitating female as human resource, and contributes to the effective developing strategy to achieve a better gender equality (Rahayu

& Aryanti, 2021). UNESCO also states that special attention should be placed on improving the monitoring and evaluation of gender equality in technical and vocational education and training.

According to Johnsen and Kendrick (2005), both developed and developing nations struggle with the under-representation of women in technical and vocational education and training, as well as gender bias in curricula and classroom methodology.

2.3 Theoretical Justification

The gender development theory was developed by Ester Boserup who is considered as the proponent of the theory. The theory was introduced in 1970. Other proponents of the theory include Naila Kabeer, Sylvia Chant, and Andrea Conwall. This theory focuses on the importance of addressing gender inequality in order to promote sustainable development. The basic tenets of the theory is that gender is a social construct, meaning it is a socially constructed concept. The theory further states that gender roles are learned and therefore can change over time. The theory also states that a cause of poverty is gender inequality and that it is also a barrier to development. The theory therefore recommended that gender equality is essential for sustainable development.

Instead of taking a women-only approach to development, the gender development theory highlights the importance of taking a gender-sensitive approach. Gender roles in development policy and practice need to undergo a fundamental societal revolution, according to proponents of gender development theory (Asante, 2000). When the idea of gender and development is adopted and applied into policy aimed at establishing equality through changing traditional gender roles and gendered expectations.

Looking at the argument of gender development theory, it shows women's empowerment is a pivotal to achieving gender equality and sustainable development. It further goes to state and advocate that for gender mainstreaming to be effective especially in vocational and technology training institutes both men and women must be involved in the process of gender mainstreaming as such, gender mainstreaming should be an integrated and ongoing process, rather than a one-time initiative or one-gender initiative.

3. Methodology

The study used survey research design, which enables the generation of specific primary information from its original sources and the collection of representative samples. Because there were 186 people in the study, a census was carried out. Since sampling was unnecessary due to the small population, the researchers chose to conduct a census. The researchers employed a questionnaire that they personally administered in order to collect data. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows a summary of the socio-demographic data of the respondents that participated in the study. In the category of marital status, analysis of data shows that 111 representing 59.7 percent of respondents were single while 68 representing 36.6 percent of the respondents were married. Analysis of data also shows that 7 representing 3.6 percent were divorced. On gender, analysis of data shows distribution of respondents based on gender. In terms of gender distribution, more males than females (52.7 vs.47.3) participated in the study.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Data of Respondents. N = 186

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	111	59.7
Married	68	36.6
Divorced	7	3.6
Gender		
Male	98	52.7
Female	88	47.3
Category of Respondents		
Staff	66	35.5
Students	120	64.5

Source: Field survey, 2024.

The next variable shows distribution of respondents according to category of respondents. Here, respondents were asked if they are staff or students. Analysis of data shows 66 representing 35.5 percent were staff while 120 representing 64.5 percent were students.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents on Institutionalization Of Gender Mainstreaming

S/N	Institutionalization of gender mainstreaming	Rating (%)					Mean	STD
		SA	A	UD	D	SD		
1	There are policies or procedures in place that promotes gender equality	70 (37.6)	46 (24.7)	10 (5.4)	32 (17.2)	28 (15.1)	3.53	1.504
2	There are specific programmes and services available for female	50 (26.9)	79 (42.5)	7 (3.8)	32 (17.2)	18 (9.7)	3.60	1.309
3	There are specific programmes and services available for male	66 (35.5)	50 (26.9)	12 (6.5)	20 (10.8)	38 (20.4)	3.46	1.553
4	There are male and female staff members and administrators	90 (48.4)	75 (40.3)	6 (3.2)	7 (3.8)	8 (4.3)	4.25	.999
5	facilities and services are available to both male and female	50 (26.9)	70 (37.6)	11 (5.9)	36 (19.4)	19 (10.2)	3.52	1.341
6	Curriculum and course content take into consideration gender equality	49 (26.3)	51 (27.4)	8 (4.3)	42 (22.6)	36 (19.4)	3.19	1.518

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 2 shows the rating of the Institutionalization of gender mainstreaming. The finding indicated the availability of policies or procedures in place that promote gender equality at the vocational institute.

Using a Likert scale of 5, all the mean ratings were above the average of 2.5. This indicates the high mean rating that the respondents accorded each of the variables on the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming at the wing Commander Abdullahi Vocational Training centre Lafia. Policies and

procedures in place that promotes gender equality recorded a mean score (mean = 3.53, std = 1.504) this indicates that majority of the respondent are of the opinion that policies and procedures that promotes gender equality are in order, a similar opinion was attributed to other variables like programmes and services designed and are available for both genders, the score (mean = 3.60, std = 1.309) and (mean = 3.46 std 1.553) were all above the average mean which indicates a high score of acceptability by the respondent signifying that programmes and services are available for all gender at the centre. Consequently, a very high mean score (mean = 4.25 std = .999) was attributed to the fact that the centre has an evenly distribution of man power or staff both at the training and the administrative arm. For the availability of facility and its utilisation (mean = 3.52 std = 1.345) also indicate a high rating showing that both genders have access to facilities at the centre at their disposal for training without any discrimination or restrictions, respondent also accepted on a high degree (mean = 3.19 std = 1.518) that curriculum and course content are taking into consideration as its affect gender mainstreaming.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents on Strategies for Gender Mainstreaming

S/N	Strategies for gender mainstreaming	Rating (%)					Mean	STD
		SA	A	UD	D	SD		
1	Incorporate gender sensitive content into the curriculum	91 (48.9)	52 (28.0)	12 (6.5)	20 (10.8)	11 (5.9)	4.03	1.234
2	Equal access to training opportunities	101 (54.3)	60 (32.3)	9 (4.8)	9 (4.8)	7 (3.8)	4.28	1.024
3	Providing gender-sensitive training material and resources	58 (31.2)	69 (37.1)	11 (5.9)	31 (16.7)	17 (9.1)	3.65	1.320
4	Building capacity of staff on gender sensitive issues	81 (43.5)	82 (44.1)	10 (5.4)	7 (3.8)	6 (3.2)	4.21	.994
5	conduct gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation of training programs	110 (59.1)	50 (26.9)	7 (3.8)	11 (5.9)	8 (4.3)	4.31	1.079
6	creating a supportive and inclusive institutional culture for both gender	98 (52.7)	50 (26.9)	5 (2.7)	23 (12.4)	10 (5.4)	4.09	1.238
7	Establishing gender sensitive policies and procedures	69 (37.1)	89 (47.8)	8 (4.3)	11 (5.9)	9 (4.8)	4.06	1.043

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 3 presents the ratings of respondent on the strategies for gender mainstreaming, all the variable indicates a very high mean score above the average of 2.5 in favour of all the variable presented. The incorporation of gender sensitive content into the curriculum has a mean rating of (mean = 4.03 std = 1.234),

the respondent also gave a very high rating when asked on the accessibility of the training activities, if there was equal access (mean = 4.28, std = 1.024), more so, the table indicated (mean = 3.65, std = 1.320) by respondents on the provision of gender training material and resources, about the building capacity of staff and on gender sensitive issues the table indicated (mean = 4.21, std = .994) also, the conduct of gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation of training programs (mean= 4.31, std= 1.079), creating a supportive and inclusive institutional culture for both gender (mean = 4.09, std = 1.238) and the establishing of gender sensitive policies and procedures the table indicated (mean = 4.06, std= 1.043). all the variables indicated on the table has a mean score above 3.0 in favour which shows a high acceptability.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents on gender issues that has not been attended to

S/N	The following gender issues has not been attended to in the vocational and technology institute	Rating (%)					Mean	STD
		SA	A	UD	D	SD		
1	lack of access to child care facilities which can prevent women from attending training programme	111 (59.7)	50 (26.9)	7 (3.8)	12 (6.5)	6 (3.2)	4.33	1.038
2	Lack of transportation to and from the facility	60 (32.3)	94 (50.5)	7 (3.8)	15 (8.1)	10 (5.4)	3.96	1.082
3	insufficient female role model and mentors in training programmes	16 (8.6)	31 (16.7)	11 (5.9)	70 (37.6)	58 (31.2)	2.34	1.306
4	Insufficient male role model in training programs	35 (18.8)	29 (15.6)	9 (4.8)	57 (30.6)	56 (30.1)	2.62	1.513
5	Insufficient female trainers and instructors	15 (8.1)	25 (13.4)	11 (5.9)	54 (29.0)	81 (43.5)	2.13	1.323
6	Absence of adequate policies and procedures to address issues of sexual harassment	30 (16.1)	23 (12.4)	15 (8.1)	52 (28.0)	66 (35.5)	2.46	1.478
7	lack of gender sensitive career counselling and guidance	61 (32.8)	84 (45.2)	6 (3.2)	13 (7.0)	22 (11.8)	3.80	1.294

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 4 indicated ratings on the issues that may have not been attended to in the vocational and technology institute, lack of access to child care facilities which may prevent women from attending trainings has a mean response above the average of 2.5 on a linkert scale of 5 (mean = 4.33 std= 1.039). This shows that respondents believes that there is no access to child care facility at the centre and therefore, there is much hindrance for mothers with children in accessing the facility.

The lack of transportation to and from the facility the table also indicates (mean = 3.96, std = 1.082) which implies that transportation to the center could be a challenge to women, also the lack of gender sensitive

career counselling and guidance indicated a mean point above the average mean of 2.5 (mean = 3.80 std = 1.294), this also could imply that there are no significant sensitive career counseling and guidance provided for students at the center. however, the table shows respondent happens to disagree with some of the variables tested, (mean = 2.34 std = 1.306) indicates the level to which respondents disagree when ask if there are insufficient female role models and mentors in training programmes, when same variable was tested as regard male (mean = 2.62, std = 1.513) also showing that a higher percentage of respondents that disagree that there are insufficient male role models in training programs, talking about female trainers, the table has a result (mean = 2.13 std = 1.323) indicating a higher percentage of respondent disagreeing that female trainers are insufficient at the centre. Also, the table was able to show (mean = 2.46 std = 1.478) which also disagree to the fact that policies and procedures that addresses issues on sexual harassment were not in place at the centre.

4.1 Findings

The finding indicated the availability of policies or procedures in place that promote gender equality at the vocational institute. Findings indicate the high mean rating that the respondents accorded each of the variables on the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming at the Vocational Training centre Lafia. Majority of the respondent are of the opinion that policies and procedures that promotes gender equality are in order. Also, findings also reveals that programmes and services are available for all gender at the centre. Findings also revealed a fair distribution of man power or staff both at the training and the administrative arm. For the availability of facility and its utilisation, findings show that both genders have access to facilities at the centre at their disposal for training without any discrimination or restrictions. Findings also revealed that respondents agreed that curricula and course content take into consideration gender equality. On the strategies of gender mainstreaming adopted in the institute, the incorporation of gender sensitive content into the curriculum has a mean rating of (mean = 4.03 std = 1.234), the respondent also gave a very high rating when asked on the accessibility of the training activities, if there was equal access. On the provision of gender training material and resources, findings also revealed a high rating by respondents meaning gender training material are made available as a strategy for gender mainstreaming. About the building capacity of staff and on gender sensitive issues, the conduct of gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation of training programs, creating a supportive and inclusive institutional culture for both gender and the establishing of gender sensitive policies and procedures all the variables indicated on the table has a mean score above 3.0 in favour which shows a high acceptability by respondents. It therefore means the above-mentioned strategies are adopted to aid the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in the vocational institute.

On gender issues that have not been attended to findings revealed that respondents believe there is no access to child care facility at the centre and therefore, there is much hindrance for mothers with children in accessing the facility. The lack of transportation to and from the facility the result also indicates (mean = 3.96, std = 1.082) which implies that transportation to the center could be a challenge to women, also the lack of gender sensitive career counselling and guidance indicated a mean point above the average mean of 2.5 (mean = 3.80 std = 1.294), this also could imply that there are no significant sensitive career counseling and guidance provided for students at the center.

Findings also revealed that a higher percentage of respondents disagree that there are insufficient male role models in training programs, higher percentage of respondent also disagree that female trainers are

insufficient at the centre. Majority of respondents also disagree to the fact that policies and procedures that addresses issues on sexual harassment were not in place at the centre.

5. Conclusion

To ensure that both men and women have equal opportunities, it is clear that gender mainstreaming must be institutionalized in every organization including the vocational and technology institute. This can be achieved by implementing policies and practices that address the needs of both genders. Vocational and technology institutes can play important role in the enhancement and promotion of gender equality. This will not only be of importance to the staff and trainees of the vocational institute but will help in the achievement of the goal of gender mainstreaming which is the equality of both men and women.

Management should sustain the tempo of the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in the institute. Stakeholders and gender advocates should constantly visit the institute for facility check and appraisal of the affairs of the institute to ensure they always conform with the philosophy of gender mainstreaming. Individuals who are gender sensitive should be the ones to be appointed at management level in order to sustain the achievement so far. Management of the institute should make provision for a child care facility.

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