

Strategies for Curbing Gender-Stereotypes in Classroom Instructional Activities: Implication for Principals in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

This paper focused on strategies for curbing gender stereotypes in classroom instructional activities: implication for principal in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was 237 principals and 2948 teachers. The sample of the study was 400 respondents, using Yaro Yammane formula. Questionnaire was the instrument used to get information from the respondents. The findings of the study revealed that gender stereotypes were prevalent in public senior secondary schools and that principal supervisory strategies were used to curb gender stereotypes in classroom instructional activities in public senior secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. It was therefore recommended by the researchers that: every teacher should avoid using derogatory gender stereotypes remarks on students during classroom instructional activities, school management should adopt effective supervisory styles that will encourage and promote gender equality in school that the school principals should not take supervision as fault finding but that it should be regard as guidance for teachers improvement. Principal supervisory style should be such that is gender friendly, so as to encourage and guide teachers during teaching.

Keywords: Strategies, Principals, Gender, Stereo-types, Instructional, Activities.

Introduction

Gender inequality has been a global issue for a long time yet alleviating it seems unachievable. Jacreen (2008) opined that gender inequality is deeply entrenched in many societies. Ifegbesan (2010) maintained that gender stereotypes exist in all human endeavors, in professions, careers, institutions families, political parties and public institutions. The Nigeria government although a signatory to many international and regional human rights organization documents that women in Nigeria are still continuing to be victims of various harmful practices (Nwagbara, 2003). It is therefore imperative for the government to make sure

that this scenario is alleviated and that schools management should make sure that women have received quality education through quality instruction.

Ensuring quality instruction at all levels of education is one of the core objectives of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004). This can be achieved through effective classroom interactions which create equitable chances for either student's gender to acquire the right knowledge of the subject matter, positive attitudes, values, acceptable behaviours and have equal opportunities for participating intelligently in making rational decisions for their own well-being (Nnamani and Oyibe, 2016). This implies that,

classroom interaction should among other things create the desired equal opportunity and understanding for both students' gender as good as this may sound studies have revealed that there are gender-stereotypes in the classroom instructional activities. Ifegbesan (2010) studied "Gender-Stereotypes Belief and Practices in the Classroom and researcher found out that most of the teachers promote gender stereotypes in schools. Odunaike, Ijaduola and Epetimehin (2013) conducted a study on "Teachers' Gender and Professional Achievements in Secondary Schools in Ijebu-ode, Ogun State, Nigeria." The study established that female teachers are more committed to the teaching profession than the male teachers. Consequently, the female teachers more often than not, occupy higher positions and invariably get more involved in school decision-making than their male counterparts.

Ogheneakoko and Akpochafo (2015) in their study on "Gender Difference among Social Studies Teachers' Competences found out that there was no significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers' competences in the use of the inquiry method in upper basic schools. The male and female Social Studies teachers demonstrated the same level of competence. Evans-Oninna (2016) studied "Issues and Challenges of South Eastern Nigerian Women in Educational Management in the 21st Century" and found out that major challenges of women in educational management include long working hours, dealing with different natures of subordinates lack of authorization and marginalization .

Afu, Gbobo, Ukofia and Itakure (2017) studied the "Effect of Gender Imbalance in the Enrolment of Students in Public Secondary Schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria" and discovered that parents/guardians were significantly

responsible for gender imbalance in the enrolment of students. Okeke (2007) equally observed that, the Nigerian school curriculum is not gender fair since its contents reflect mainly the concerns of males as science oriented and that there is masculine images in the curriculum and that female students suffer discrimination from their teachers. These actions automatically put the girls in a disadvantaged position in classroom interaction especially in science related subjects. Ironically, some vocations and professions regarded as men's for instance engineering, medicine, aeronaut, pilot etc. while others are regarded as women's profession (catering, typing, nursing home economic instructor etc.). An average Nigerian girl goes to school with these fixed stereotypes, hence the school principal's policies; rules, culture, and working relationships, among others, have to be such that have influence on both students and teachers positively irrespective of gender. Anastasia (2016) maintained that for the principal to achieve this and also alleviate gender differences in secondary schools he should apply supervisory leadership styles, these style include: Directive Supervisory Style which is characterized by a top-down decision-making process, where the decision is made from the top (principal only), and all the others below are expected to fall in line and follow. In this context, the principal instructs teachers not to use any derogatory gender stereotypes comments in classroom instructional activities, the teachers obey the. The primary objective of this supervisory style is to obtain immediate compliance of teachers to any directive regarding classroom instructional activities. The principals keep close watch on the teachers to see that they are not gender discriminatory in class.

Participative supervisory style is more than just promoting harmony among teachers, the school principal who adopts

participative supervisory style aims at establishing consensus and building commitment among teachers. The participative manager (principal) is inclined to have a willingness to listen to every teacher, recognizing that every teacher has ideas that should be considered in the classroom decisions. They ask the teachers what they would like to do, and opens the floor for discussion. The school principal encourages teachers and students' participation in school activities irrespective of gender. This style encourages cooperation among teachers and students, so that they are willing to work together regardless of gender marginalization ideology.

Coaching supervisory style as the term implies involves a lot of coaching and mentoring. The coaching style aims to contribute to the long-term professional development of teachers. Teachers are guided on ways to apply some gender stereotyped-curriculum materials in classroom instruction in such a way that both male and female students are made to feel important and treated equally. The principal that adopts coaching supervisory style is often refers to as "developmental" manager, since his/her focus is on the professional development of the teachers. The principal has great willingness to help teachers and encourage them to further develop their strengths and improve on their weaknesses, to increase their job performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the strategies principals can adopt for curbing gender stereotypes in classroom instructional activities. Specifically the study determined:

1. gender stereotypes prevalent in public senior secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State
2. supervisory strategies the principals applied to curb gender stereotypes in

classroom instructional activities in public senior secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

1. What gender stereotypes are prevalent in public senior secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What supervisory strategies can the principals use to curb gender stereotypes in classroom instructional activities in public senior secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Methodology

Design of the Study: The design for the study is survey.

Area of the study: Akwa Ibom State was the area of the study. Study was carried out in public senior secondary schools (SSS) in the state.

Population for the study: Population was made up of all the principals and teachers in the public secondary schools in the state. Available evidence from the Ministry of Education in the state put the number at 237 and 2948 for principals and teachers respectively.

Sample for the study: A random sample of 400 (principals 100 and teachers 300) was drawn for the study. Sampling techniques included multi-stage, purposive and random sampling.

Instrument for data collection: Questionnaire was used for data collection. It was developed based on literature review and the research questions of the study. It was validated by three experts in educational administration and two experts in gender studies.

Data collection technique: Four hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed to the principals and teachers sampled for the study. They instructed them on how to fill the questionnaire. After one week of distribution of the instruments researchers

went back to retrieve the questionnaire. All the 400 copies were retrieved.

Data analysis technique: Data were analysed using mean (\bar{X}). Decisions were based on mean scores of 2.5 and above ($\bar{X} \geq 2.50$)

which was considered "agree" while 2.49 and below were considered as "disagree".

Findings

Table 1: Gender Stereotypes Prevalent in Public Senior Secondary Schools N=400

S/N	Indicators of Gender Stereotypes Prevalent in Public Senior Secondary Schools	\bar{X}	Decision
	In your school, teachers posited that male students are :		
1	more intelligent than the female ones	3.08	Agreed
2	more outspoken and brave while their female counterparts are expressionless weak and naïve.	3.29	Agreed
3	outdoor individuals while females are homely and reserved	3.08	Agreed
4	strong and dominant with leadership traits while the female are weak with servant traits	2.45	Disagreed
5	science and engineering based whereas female are Arts and Home economics based	2.36	Disagreed
6	mathematically inclined while female ones are languages inclined	3.22	Agreed
7	logically convinced while females can be convinced through persuasion	3.32	Agreed
8	very decisive in decision making whereas the female ones can waiver in making decision	3.16	Agreed

Table 1 shows that some of the respondents agreed to the items in table 1 with the mean scores of 3.08, 3.29, 3.08, 3.22 and 3.16 respectively that in their schools, teachers posited that male students are: more intelligent than the female ones, more outspoken and brave while their counterparts are expressionless and weak, outdoor individuals while female ones are homely and reserved, mathematically inclined whereas the females are languages inclined, logically convinced while females can be convinced through persuasion and very decisive in decision making whereas the female counterparts can wavier in

making decision. Some of the respondents disagreed with items 4 and 5 with mean scores of 2.45 and 2.36 respectively that teachers referred to male students as strong and dominant individuals with leadership trait while the females ones are weak with servant traits and male students are being science and engineering based whereas females are art and home economic based. All the respondents agreed with the sectional mean score of 2.99 that gender stereotypes are prevalent in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Supervisory Strategies the Principals can use to Curb Gender Stereotypes in Classroom Instructional Activities N=400

S/N	Indicators of Supervisory Strategies the Principals can use to Curb Gender Stereotypes in Classroom Instructional Activities	\bar{X}	Decision
	To curb gender stereotypes, your principal:		
1	established the culture of using rules/regulations on both male and female students	3.17	Agreed
2	related cordially with both male and female students during class teaching interactions	2.98	Agreed
3	warned teachers not to use derogatory gender comments in classroom instructional activities	2.93	Agreed
4	committed both male and female students to willingly carry out school activities	3.08	Agreed
5	encouraged both male and female students to cooperate with the teachers during instructional activities period	3.24	Agreed
6	mentored both male and female teachers on how to disseminate instructional activities for male and female students to understand the learning experiences	2.98	Agreed
7	encouraged male and female teachers to attain professional development training to improve on instructional activities for male and female students to benefit equally in the class.	3.19	Agreed
8	guided teachers on how to apply gender stereotype curriculum materials without being biased	3.10	Agreed
9	encouraged teachers to improve on their weaknesses so as to help male and female students to perform well academically	3.06	Agreed
10	emphasized on teachers to keep up with their strengthened areas so as to help both gender to overcome learning difficulties	3.16	Agreed

Table 2 shows that all the respondents agreed with the items with mean scores of 3.17, 2.98, 2.93, 3.08, 3.24, 2.98, 3.19, 3.10, 3.06 and 3.16 respectively that to curb gender stereotypes their principal: established the culture of using rules and regulations on both male and female students; related cordially with both male and female students during class teaching interactions; warned teachers not to use derogatory gender comments in classroom instructional activities; committed both male and female students to willingly carryout school activities; encouraged both female and male students to cooperate with the teachers during instructional activities period; mentored male and female teachers on how to disseminate instructional activities so that male and female students understand the learning experiences encouraged male and female teachers to attain professional development training to improve on instructional activities for male and female students to benefit equally in the class

equally, guided teachers on how to apply gender stereotype curriculum materials without being biased encouraged teachers to improve on their weaknesses so as to help male and female students to perform well academically and emphasized on teachers to keep up with their strengthened areas so as to help both gender to overcome learning difficulties. All the respondents accepted that principals have used supervisory strategies to curb gender stereotypes in classroom instructional activities in public secondary school in Akwa Ibom State. Discussion The finding of this present study proved that gender stereotypes were prevalent in public senior secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The finding of okeke (2007) corroborated with this present study finding, the researcher found that the Nigerian school curriculum is not gender fair, that its contents mainly reflect concern for males in subjects such as sciences, mathematics, engineering and other science related subjects. On the other hand the researcher lamented that females were made

to offer arts and home economics subjects and other home based subjects.

The second finding revealed that the principals applied supervisory strategies to curb gender stereotypes in classroom instructional activities in public senior secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. (See Table 2) Anastasia (2016) found out in his study that the principals used directive supervisory leadership style to curb gender stereotypes in classroom activities. This is because this supervisory leadership style warrants the principals to keep close watch on the teachers and to see that they obey instruction which will help them to improve in teaching and be gender friendly. Under this leadership style Anastasia (2016) maintained that teachers also comply and cooperate with their principals.

Conclusion

From the findings of the present study the researchers concluded that gender stereotypes are prevalent in public senior secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State and that the principals applied supervisory leadership strategies to curb gender stereotypes in classroom instructional activities in public senior secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

Due to the study findings the following recommendations were put forward:

1. Every teacher should avoid using derogatory gender-stereotypes remark during classroom instructional activities.
2. School management should adopt effective supervisory styles that will encourage and promote gender equality in school instructional activities.
3. School principals should not take supervision as fault findings but as guidance to teachers improvement in instructional delivery.
4. Principal supervisory style should be gender friendly, encouraging for

guidance and improvement of teachers teaching.

5. School principals should organize seminars and workshops for teachers on gender discrimination sensitivity in order to update their knowledge on strategies to reduce gender discrimination in schools.
6. School curriculum should be regularly reviewed by curriculum experts such as Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to alleviate cases of gender discrimination and marginalization.
7. Government at all levels should place priority on the education of every child irrespective of gender.

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