

# **WOMEN STEREOTYPING IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION: THE UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN IN PERSPECTIVE**

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## **Abstract**

A tradition where some women think that certain disciplines are not to be studied by women is referred to as Stereotype. Stereotypes may have been responsible for women's underrepresentation in certain fields, like the philosophy of education, and consequently have contributed to the insufficient number of women's representation in this field (philosophy of education). This paper interrogates women's stereotyping within the context of the philosophy of education as an academic discipline. It argues that not many women are represented in the field, since 2014, the percentage of women's involvement in philosophy has been fluctuating from the range of 30- 33 per cent and it seeks to delve into the subtle biases and stereotypical assumptions that female students encounter while pursuing the philosophy of education as a course of study. The article proposes a pervasive undercurrent of gender-based stereotyping, which manifests in various forms where female students feel marginalised, underestimated, and sometimes subjected to the biased expectations of both peers and instructors. These stereotypes not only impact their academic experiences but also contribute to a broader gender gap within the domain of the philosophy of education.

**Keywords:** Bias, Higher Education, Philosophy of Education, Stereotyping, Women

## **Introduction**

A stereotype is when people have an untrue or unfair view of a thing and their representation of such a thing. Stereotypes can be a perceived character by a group of people.<sup>1</sup> A situation where women display an attitude of belief that affects their mindset and directly or indirectly affects their choices in the course of study in the institution of learning. The University of

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<sup>1</sup> National Humans Right 2014, Gender stereotyping and Women's Rights Office of the High Commissioner.

Ibadan (UI) is a research institution since 1948<sup>2</sup>, formerly recognised as University College Ibadan. It is a heterogeneous university with different ethnic groups in the admission of students and staff employment into various departments, irrespective of race, age, gender, tribe, social class, physically challenged persons, and religion.

The education of an individual is important for self-actualisation and it is also essential for the needs of society. This is why an institution's philosophy informs the facet of such an institution in its level of development. As such, the educational philosophy of such an institution is designed to meet the needs and aspirations of the citizens and society at large. Women are part of society, and the need for their required education is a necessity as well as the right to participate in any area of interest of their choice. This is one of the reasons the national policy on women's access to education stipulated the guiding principle of reorienting the public on the proper understanding of societal norms and values as they affect the roles of males and females towards educational development.<sup>3</sup>

Women are nation builders, Purity Udjoh and Anthony Onyishi supported this as they mentioned that Nigerian women irrespective of their religion, ethnic group or place of abode are talented, gifted and hardworking<sup>4</sup>. The challenge of not having the presence of these hard-working and talented women in the field of philosophy of education calls for concern therefore, this paper argues on the number of women stereotyping in the philosophy of education, noting that the number of women represented in the study of the philosophy of education is limited. The record has it that since 1970 the involvement of women in philosophy has increased slowly, however, research suggests that the gender gap in philosophy is significant although,<sup>5</sup> in 2014, the percentage of women's involvement in philosophy has fluctuated which ranges between the range of 30-33 per cent<sup>6</sup> but to the writer's knowledge, no research has reviewed the number of women's involvement in philosophy of education.

In the past, the record has it that canonical philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, John Locke, John Dewey, and R. S. Peters, just to mention a few, were great Western philosophers whose thoughts were expressed on ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. In Africa, men in philosophy, the likes of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Jones Akinpelu, Aliu Fafunwa, Awolowo, Jim Nesi Omatseye, Owan Enoch, Kola Babarinde, and a host of others have also expressed their perspectives which have been very dominant in this field of human

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<sup>2</sup> Folola, T 2023 Ibadan in Ibadan: The University and the City" department of History the University of Texas at Austin. 2023 p.226

<sup>3</sup> National policy on gender in basic education 2006 Federal Ministry of education Nigeria P. 8

<sup>4</sup> Udjoh Purity and Onyishi Anthony, 2024. "Empowering Nigerian Women as tools for nation building" AAPS Conference 2024. Retrieved July 26<sup>th</sup> 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Carolyn Dicey Jennings & Eri Schwitzgebel 2017 "Women in philosophy: Quantitative Analyses of specialisation, prevalence, visibility and generational change" Public Affairs Quarterly 31(2)

<sup>6</sup> Kostas Theologou, Spyridon Stelios & Simon Iliadi 2018 "Is the lack of women in philosophy a universal phenomenon? Exploring women representation in Greek department of philosophy" Hypatia, A Journal of feminist philosophy vol 33(3)

knowledge; the relevance of women has not been very encouraging, like the way it is making waves in other fields of study.

The challenges of having fewer women in the field of philosophy of education have not made many women express their thoughts to be on the list of renowned philosophers of education in Africa, hence, one could ask, if stereotyping is a challenge in having women's active participation in the philosophy of education. A stereotype would be seen as a perceived character by a group of people.<sup>7</sup> Women's stereotyping is a practice that could be a fixed pattern of behaviour and belief found among women in society, like false beliefs, false assumptions, and groundless ideas.<sup>8</sup>

This article is aimed at critically analysing the role of the philosophy of education as a course of study and how it affects women's representation, the subtle biases and stereotypical assumptions that female students encounter while pursuing the philosophy of education as a course, the state of diversity and inclusiveness of women in the philosophy of education, and further seeking solutions to these issues and their implications for education. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations will require the attention of policymakers, educators in the field, philosophers and concerned groups in the society.

### Understanding Stereotype

Stereotypes are a way of representing and judging other people in fixed, unyielding terms<sup>8</sup> Women stereotyping is a practice that could be a fixed pattern of behaviour and belief found among women in society like false beliefs, false assumptions, and groundless ideas.<sup>10</sup> When something is stereotypic or stereotyping that would mean that the character of that thing or person is valence. Stereotype is not just any generalisation of assumptions about a thing or a group rather it could be involved in widely held images of socially obvious groups, stereotypes are also seen as cultural entities that are widely held by persons in the culture or society in question and widely recognised by the person who may not themselves hold stereotype.<sup>9</sup> For example, the saying that philosophy is abstract or that philosophers do not believe in God. Another example is the assumption that Nigerians are corrupt, which implies that having a bad experience with a corrupt individual from Nigeria should not make all Nigerians corrupt. This premise cannot be said to be a valid statement, because it is seen as a generalised statement. When one says X group is stereotyped in a particular way, that is to rather say that X has an attribute of a certain sociocultural context of salient images. However, we may generalise issues and concepts but these issues may be false and misleading like in the case of seeing women as weaker vessels or beings than some of their

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations Human right 2014 Gender stereotypes and stereotyping and women's right" office of the high commissioner. <sup>8</sup> Ibid 2014

<sup>8</sup> Michael Pickering 2015 "Stereotyping and Stereotypes" The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence. B, 2004 Stereotypes and stereotyping: moral analysis *Philosophical paper* Vol 33, No3 P.252

male counterparts meanwhile some men are rather seen to be weaker than the women. The issues of stereotypes may affect the attitude toward women's representation and performance. To improve women's enrolment and participation in philosophy of education, there will be need to understand the role of philosophy of education.

### **Philosophy of education and women under-representation**

To understand the philosophy of education, the concept will be briefly analysed. Philosophy has a comprehensive system of ideas about human nature and it helps in guiding the human ways of living, that is why the quest for truth lies in the origin of philosophy, when humans wonder about issues that borders on questions like; why are there male and female creature? Why is a gender considered superior to the other? Can life be fair? Does life really mean anything? What is knowledge? Why do I know what I know? How do I know that I know? All these are questions seeking for understanding, which is seeking for the truth and the search for wisdom.

Philosophy as a field of study is seen as the root of all other disciplines, and every discipline needs a philosophy to stand. Every discipline (course of study) can be influenced by the philosophy, as it draws its materials from philosophical bases. It is designed to help students improve on their intelligence thereby enhancing their ability in making decision and avoiding faulty reasoning in problem solving environment. This is therefore, stating that there is need to study philosophy of education as it seen as a prerequisite to decision making through critical thinking, women are not to be left behind in the sphere of affairs that brings about positive change.

Philosophy of education tends to address issues of education in the aspect of certain fundamental principles like the methodologies, educational goals, practices, its polices as they affect human nature and values. In the paper "Introduction: philosophy of education and philosophy" Harvey posited that philosophy of education is that branch of philosophy that handles philosophical issues on human nature, the aims and problems of education,<sup>10</sup> with this exposition that states that philosophy of education is to address the problem of education, thus the issue with women stereotype can be handled by promoting individuality regardless of gender thereby implementing the educational policies that focus on personal self-actualization. The challenge of women stereotyping has become a phenomenon where a few women have been involved in this course of study.

The philosophy of education critic the general body of education as it contributes to curriculum development. It leads to the development of philosophical ideas that are gender neutral, hence the place of biases and stereotypes are eliminated. It is involved in the critical evaluation and systematic reflection on general theories. The rational function of philosophy of education is embodied by increasing the student's ability to critical thinking. There is an empowerment of critical thinking that enhances women's engagement in challenging stereotypes.

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<sup>10</sup> Siegel, H. 2010 Introduction: Philosophy of education and philosophy" University of Maimi pg 1

Another role of philosophy of education is to solve educational problems through philosophical processes with an affirmative policy to increase women's representation in academics. Philosophy of education has made more emphases on critical thinking to be taught in schools by teachers because knowing and understanding subject matters is not as adequate as teaching critical thinking due to its importance to knowledge and skill building.

Diversity and Inclusiveness, the philosophy of education has been involved in tackling the issue of diversity and inclusion. The educational environment helps to admit and promote people from diverse tribes and cultures irrespective of age and status thereby, combating against oppressive education.

### **Under-representation of women in the philosophy of education in tertiary Institutions**

Why are there few women in the philosophy of education? the feminist nature of a woman comes with compassion, nurturing and softness, the prestige of a woman is saddled with the responsibility of caring, which has left a lot of women to be found in female-dominated fields of studies like Early childhood education, Nursing department, Secretarial studies, guidance and counselling, home management to mention but a few. Adedevoh supported this, in a paper where it was argued that women are seen to be very supportive in nurturing and building the future of people by being agents of change.<sup>11</sup> It was also argued by Sander cited by Arjun Sckhar and Parameswari<sup>12</sup> that some courses like STEM and other related male-dominated professions like Pilots, soccer-games, construction, (and philosophy of education not being an exception) have made many women feel uncomfortable to venture and explore in the supposedly male-dominated profession. This is reflected in the thought of Reinking and Martins<sup>13</sup>, they mentioned that women are also encouraged to choose art and nursing courses due to their soft nature. Gender bias in the society sometimes restricts people from achieving their dreams because the societal norms have regarded some disciplines to be suitable for only men.

Individual beliefs and interests which play a significant part in women choosing a vocation or choice of discipline are other possible factors responsible for the non-enrolment in the department. There have been extensive research articles on gender stereotypes, Gender stereotype relates to how people usually devalue the effort and performance of women who are found in the position assumed to be for men, in such instances, women's hard work is often mistaken for luck. The intimidation of female students has made a lot of women feel

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<sup>11</sup> Adedevoh, I.O "Feminist professionalism and educational leadership, an approach to capacity building in Nigeria university, the Nigeria society 4(2) cited by alozie, O.C, Adikwu, V.O & Ossai, O.V "Stereotype and women empowerment in Nigeria: The Need for a paradigm shift in role of counsellors & school psychologists. The educational psychologist Vol 11, NO.1 pg 167.

<sup>12</sup> Sander, J. 2005 "Gender and Technology in education: A research review Seattle centre for Gender equality cited by P.M, Arjun

Sckhar and J, Parameswari "Gender stereotype in education" Periyar University, Salem, Tamilnadu, India, P.3

<sup>13</sup> Rethinkings, A.S & Martins, B. 2018 "The gender gap in STEM fired theories, movement and ideals to engage girls in STEM. Journal of a new approach in Educational Research 7(2) 148-153

marginalised, this unfortunate stereotype has made them feel inferior to their male counterparts, and this has made a lot of women suffer from disorientation and low self-esteem.

Taking a case study of personal experience, being the only female student among other men in this field of study has been an issue of concern, as a post-graduate student of philosophy of education.

I was the only female among the five (5) men during my master's programme, and I am still the only female among 3 men in the unit as a PhD student. The current 2022/23 session students have no registered students in the philosophy of education. Another case is the case of the retired professor Oluremi Bamisaiye who was the only female in the unit (Philosophy of Education) until after her retirement, in the year 2007, there has not been any woman to replace her. One will wonder why the department has lacked students especially female students to be enrolled, the non-enrolment of students in the department will affect the employment of staff into the field of study.

### **How stereotype affects the psychosocial and emotional character of women**

Internalised stereotypes can cause low self-esteem, low self-esteem is one emotional challenge women face when confronting stereotypes, in a situation where women feel incapable of expressing their hidden potential, it hurts the numbers or percentage of women enrolment in the field of study and (philosophy of education) thereby affecting and bringing down their confidence and lower their self-esteem. There is also less participation when women think that they are not as competent enough as their male counterparts, it affects their confidence and their drive to achieve academic heights as individuals which invariably affects the percentage of women's representation in the field of study.

### **The Effect of Stereotypes on the Educational Status of Women**

Personalised stereotypes can lead to reduced academic and professional pursuits. Stereotypes can bring about self-judgement making the individual feel inadequate in their abilities to express the great potential in their academic and professional ambition. In cases where the percentage of men to women is like a ratio of 1:10, the presence of more men to women in the field (philosophy of education) will directly or indirectly affect the scheme of work, topics, course contents and even the designing of the curriculum. The gender role in curriculum design is very obvious that the female's contribution will be very minimal due to the majority of male philosophers coupled with the fact that the course content that is relatively gender biased with the thoughts and ideas of mostly men, it is less interesting and the perspectives of more men will supersede their female counterparts thereby limiting the number of female representation in the field.

Moreover, the leadership position and role may sometimes be considered more suitable for men looking at women as inadequate to handle crucial issues as they are perceived to be too sentimental to handle certain matters. Women stereotype causes the underrepresentation of women thereby limiting the access of women to women's mentorship, the fewer women, the

more limited access to mentorship and networking that will lead to career advancement. However, this may not be the case as usually assumed because the philosophy of education is a discipline that is open to all (male, female, all tribes, all religions and people from all works of life) People are free to express their academic prowess, no one is marginalised, and no topic is treated with levity. It is based on that, that is there is a curriculum.

The curriculum is designed and influenced based on the history of the society, the needs and how relevant the content will be to the individual and the society at large. Mzankomo stated that according to the reconstructionist, the curriculum should meet the needs of the individual and the society<sup>14</sup>. Another critique is that the limited number of women in the field to serve as role models and mentors to younger women is not enough reason not to have more women in the philosophy of education because other professional women should be seen as an encouragement to younger women because of their great achievement and recognition in the society.

Placing too much emphasis on role models and mentorship will pin down the abilities of individuals in their academic ambitions. More so, these biases in the evaluation for promotion to hold leadership roles may be from the empirical perspective because one may argue that there are ethical rules or principles guiding the conduct of the institution to be objective and individual's performance and merit will rule out biases.

### **Stereotypical Assumptions and women's involvement in philosophy of education**

Stereotypes can be generalised beliefs, ideas, assumptions or views of people about things or a group of people based on their race, sex, rights, and nationality. Stereotypes can be good but when it becomes a negative phenomenon, it affects the social, religious, cultural and academic lifestyle of the people. Philosophy of education may be facing this challenge due to the following assumptions;

The orientation of students and the stereotypical assumptions that the philosophy of education is characterised with content that seems too abstract to understand, on the contrary, the philosophy of education is an applied aspect of education, and the method of teaching is carried out with contemporary examples that will make the learning experience effective. It is argued that gender, male and female have different thinking patterns in the processing and handling of issues. Claiming that women tend to be intuitive and emotional while men are perceived to be logical and analytical in problem-solving. According to Tripodi, where he explained the canonical tradition that described women to be more emotional and intuitive while the men were perceived to be rational in their thinking thereby making men traditionally suitable for such field of study such as science and philosophy.<sup>15</sup> This was also

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<sup>14</sup> Eunice Mzankomo 1996 "Curriculum and Society: A leaders perspective" A mini-Dissertation Rand Afrikaans University. P.1

<sup>15</sup> Tripodi. V, 2017 The value of diversity and inclusiveness in philosophy. An overview, p.3-17 <sup>18</sup> Valian. Valerie, 1998 Why so slow, The advancement of women MIT press 1998.

supported by Valian, who argued that philosophy of education has been traditionally made for men, there-by making women to unconsciously accept the negative perception which is expressed as an internalised stereotype.<sup>18</sup> One might argue that there have been women who have made significant contributions to the field of philosophy of education, there are women like Grace Alele-Williams, the account of Professor emeritus Oluremi Bamisaiye, and Hauwa Mahdi who have written on issues concerning moral education, gender equality and education for sustainable development. To also mention the South African philosopher with interest on Ethics and Social Justices Mpho Pheko, as well as Sophia Oluwole, the yoruba philosopher whose interest was on African philosophy and a host of other few women who have expressed their academic thoughts.

Philosophy of education may not be seen as a career prospect compared to another field of study, however, studying philosophy of education is said to be useful only when one plans to go into lecturing. Nevertheless, the philosophy of education is very important when it is introduced in secondary school, it will enlighten the students on critical thinking skills, logical and rational reasoning in problem-solving which is vital for every individual in any organisation, The majority of students especially girls and women as undergraduate and postgraduate students are unaware of the role philosophy of education play in the society, this can be one of the factors for women underrepresentation in the course of study. A stereotype is where the mindset of women has been traditionally fixed to place more value in other fields and that their place and role in the society should not exceed such fields as childcare, nursing, and homemaking rather than in fields that will require the intelligent capability which has also contributed in the limited numbers of women representation in the field of study.

### **The Benefit of Diversity and Inclusiveness of Women in the Philosophy of Education**

The University of Ibadan is known as a heterogenous institution and unbiased in the enrolment of students and staff has a lot to do to ensure that there is a balance for equal representation in various departments, especially philosophy of education for the sake of this research, this will promote diversity in the area of race, age, religion, status as well as a different perspective, especially from the women folk. The need to enrol students in the Department of Philosophy of Education is very important to fill the gap of women's absence in the department, their ideals, thoughts and perspectives will enrich and promote the advancement of knowledge. The presence of women in the department will encourage younger generations, there will also be more opportunities for women to express their talents in the field in any sphere of life can bring about development. According to Anderson where he argued that the female gender is important in philosophy as their perspective will be highly recommendable and relevant to the improvement in the aspect of curriculum development and design, the content to be taught in the class that will be gender sensitive and their role of mentorship<sup>16</sup>. The philosophy of education is liberal and its principles can be applied to promote diversity and inclusiveness in the educational system taking into

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<sup>16</sup> Anderson, E 1995 Feminist epistemology and philosophy of science” Philosophy of science, 65(4) pp. 59-61



consideration that everyone is to be given equal and fair treatment where the right of no man will be infringed.

The inclusion of people from diverse spheres of life will help to tackle the issue of ethics and moral education, the presence of women will serve as an edge to bridge the gap of immoral matters, and it will encourage the enhancement of moral issues rather than putting more concentration on just and rationality with more focus on training intelligence and critical thinking.

One of the purposes of education is for self-actualisation, there is a need for every woman to attain this goal, regardless of this purpose, the national policy on education advocates for social justice, and equality and highlights education as an instrument for development. This highlight brings to mind that, social justice and equality in any sphere of life can reduce stereotypic assumptions among women and aspiring students of philosophy. The gap in the philosophy of education could lead to limited perspectives because the presence of stereotypes can limit the perspective of female philosophers and the diversity of ideas and thoughts that will not be recognised will make educational issues incomplete.

In addition, this stereotype can result in not recognising the women's contribution to the philosophy of education thereby making it detrimental to the field and other aspiring younger female students. Only a few numbers of interested students register in the field of study, the minimal number of total registered students during admission into the department will eventually affect the employment of staff in the same department hence resulting in the under-representation of women in the philosophy of education. The absence of women can lead to a vacuum in their knowledge expression which will affect younger aspiring female students in the field of study, the representation of the female gender in the philosophy of education will be highly important and recommendable to improve the content and design of the curriculum.

There will be an increase in the number of registered and aspiring females through mentorship to improve student's interests and academic pursuits. The philosophy of the University of Ibadan is liberal and its principles can be applied to promote diversity and inclusiveness in education, especially in philosophy of education thereby bridging the gap.

### **Critique**

The active participation and domination of men in the philosophy of education in the University of Ibadan has become historical which has made diversity and inclusiveness of the perspective of women to be lacking thereby making educational issues limited to tackle and improve the system.

The issue of bias in philosophical thoughts and theories may unintentionally fail to tackle genderrelated educational issues in the field of study. Inclusive practices may result in possible solutions to educational issues like mentoring other women encouraging diverse perspectives and promoting the works of female scholars which can be discouraged if the policy of inclusiveness is not considered but placing too much emphasis on this support

system (mentorship) will undermine the ability of personal autonomy and responsibility. The presence of stereotypes and these assumptions discussed above may not necessarily be responsible for women's non-enrolment and under-representation in the philosophy of education as a discipline, the lack of student enrolment is not limited to only females, both men and women are faced with these challenges of life choice or the choice of course to study as a discipline.

### **Conclusion and recommendation**

This methodology of literature review indicated that the philosophy of education unit University of Ibadan as an institution will need to put certain measures in place as this paper reviewed and has brought to the limelight the under-representation of women in the field of philosophy of education. Women stereotyping in the philosophy of education in the institution is a challenge. This is reflected and evident that there is a lack of female presence as role models (mentorship) which acts as a barrier to women's participation and academic progress. The number of students enrolment into the department is very minimal, especially the female students, there is also a lack of sensitisation or awareness programmes to enlighten the populace about the department.

As a matter of paramount concern, it is imperative for the unit (philosophy of education) and the university as an institution to put proactive measures to combat his challenges by ensuring that there is a balance in staff employment to fill the gap of women's under-representation. The issue of stereotypes can be tackled when teachers of philosophy of education who tend to value inclusiveness and equality can work on student's mind-set thereby transforming their fixed mindset and encouraging them to get involved in the deconstruction of stereotypes in any environment. There is also a need to create more awareness of this course from secondary school, there are so many people (students) who are unaware of philosophy of education as a course of study.

The need to make provision for scholarships can also increase the number of students enrolment into the department and finally, this paper is strongly advocating for women's role as mentors to encourage and empower younger aspiring students.

However, this methodology review identifies gaps in the articles and suggests future research areas that scholars may want to examine to enrich and increase the numbers of women representation and break down stereotypes in the philosophy of education.

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