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Gender Studies in Nigeria: Growth and Institutional Contexts of Semi-autonomous Centres

By Adedeji Adebayo¹

Abstract

The study discussed a micro-level dimension of the institutionalization of Gender Studies (GS) in Nigeria, emphasizing the growth of semi-autonomous centres over the last two decades. It focused on a case study of one particular centre; the Centre for Human Rights and Gender Education (CHURGE), based in Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED) in the southwest of the country, offering an analysis of how funding, institutional politics, and a dearth of specialist researchers have shaped the evolution of GS in 21st century in Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative research approach with samples purposively selected among researchers at CHURGE. Although there are merits obtainable in having academics from diverse backgrounds work on gender issues, the study concluded that there is the need to employ the services of specialist researchers to enhance the activities of the centre.

Keywords: Gender research, Gender studies, Institutional context, University centres, Qualitative research

Introduction

Gender Studies (GS) has continued to grow as an academic field globally. In many contexts, this growth has been noticed both in the expansion of traditional disciplines and as an independent academic discipline with autonomous structure—research institutes and centres—for knowledge production. Although the process of institutionalization of GS has been extensively studied, there is ample evidence of the domination of gender knowledge production by the United States and European perspectives (Henderson 732). According to Kehinde Okanlawon, the particularities and complexities of this area of study have been less studied in Africa in general, and in Nigeria in particular (642). Therefore, this article will examine a case of one centre, the Centre for Human Rights and Gender Education (CHURGE), based in a small university in the southwest geopolitical zone of the country, offering an analysis of how institutional politics, a dearth of specialist researchers, and the adoption of practices from other African universities have shaped the evolution of GS in 21st century Nigeria. In Nigerian universities, the establishment of GS programs is usually an afterthought. However, the case of CHURGE remains unique, as the centre has been an integral part of the institution from inception.

In the United States, GS as an academic field of study emerged from the expansion of Women's Studies (Jaschik; Stoehr 23). The respectability which GS has achieved over the

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years has increased its institutionalization, and now, can be found in hundreds of institutions under different monikers including Women and Gender Studies; Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and so on (M. Pereira 180). Mapping the evolution and institutionalization of GS in Europe, with specific reference to Portuguese academia as a case study, M. Pereira noted that, up until the turn of the 21st century, GS faced pervasive criticism about its legitimacy as an academic field of study (189). However, the story changed afterwards as a result of new academic governance which made sure that institutions of higher learning look inwards to address the issue of funding. In Africa (South Africa and Nigeria for example), both women activists and those in academia played important roles in the mobilization of women, and articulation of what is to become GS in institutions of higher learning (Odejide; Gouws 43). Also, at the supranational level, gender issues have remained very active. The recognition of its growing resource value has ensured more space and opportunities for its increased institutionalization in academia.

In Nigeria, discussing gender outside colonial experience as well as the realities of post-colonial domination would be difficult (Steady 313). For example, in the southern part of Nigeria, Nina Mba and Oyeronke Oyewumi contended that patriarchal ideologies were not well pronounced until the colonial period because, to some extent, equality was discernible even in leadership roles (36; 14). However, this line of argument cannot be conveniently sustained in the face of empirical lived realities of people. As noted by Bibi Bakare-Yusuf and Funmi Bammeke, although Oyewumi, for instance, was able to establish evidence of plurality in people's culture, her argument which amplified a peculiar "logic of practice" appears to have been "problematically undertheorized" and subjectively interpreted to arrive at such conclusions (3; 61)

Prior to the works of African feminists and scholars alike, the GS literature reflected a Eurocentric perspective. This perspective was applicable not just in academia, but in other components of colonial society, a heritage that endured beyond political independence. Since gender matters in everything people do, it then becomes hard to think of any collective or individual actions where it might not be implicated. As such, Michael Kevane puts it as a "set of shared and evolving discursive habits that prescribe and proscribe behaviour for persons in their social roles as either men or women" (14). These prescriptions or proscriptions have concomitant effects on decision-making about the actions of people the world over, albeit to a varying degree.

By the mid-1970s, the increasing activism of feminist organizations in different parts of the world had attracted international attention. The first conference of the United Nations Decade for Women which was held in Mexico City in 1975 stimulated conversations on women and GS as an academic field of research in Nigeria. The following year, the country organized its first women's conference which led to the formation of the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) in 1977. The association's establishment made it clear that the role of women in the academia and political as well as intellectual developments on the continent of Africa could no longer be ignored (Odejide). According to Bammeke, Women's Studies also gave birth to GS in Nigeria. As an academic field of study, Women's Studies emerged fully in the 1980s (61). However, in 1996, the advantages of the concept of gender to feminist theory and methodology was brought to the fore at the first national workshop of *Network for Women's Studies in Nigeria*. This workshop, which was held under the title "Setting an Agenda for Gender and Women's Studies in Nigeria", brought together teachers and researchers in the general area of women and GS as a national think tank (Mama 1).

Courses and publications across different faculties as well as students' theses and projects from universities of the participants were also documented to aid the development of GS curriculum (C. Pereira 111-129). The NWSN considered this strategy worthwhile and thus

ensured the process of its legitimization by the National Universities Commission, as the practice of accrediting courses demands in Nigeria (Odejide 460). The specific case of the establishment of the Benue State University's centre for GS underscores the contributions of international organizations to the development of gender as an academic field of study. For example, the humanitarian activities of the Food Foundation and Social Science Academy in North-central Nigeria provided a lens to see through the experiences of women in an area prone to different shades of ethnic violence.² Their experience in this geopolitical zone built a collaborative intervention that eventually led to the establishment of a GS centre at the university in 2001.

Besides, the development of GS in Nigeria (especially those issues that directly concern women) was never devoid of political patronage. C. Pereira noted that the first ladies, from the wives of the national leaders to those at the state level, at one point or the other, sought partnership with women's organizations and GS centres such as the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS), an umbrella for women's organizations across Nigeria, and the Women's Research and Documentation Centre (WORDOC) to serve as think-tanks for the initiation of women friendly programs. For example, working with the NCWS, the late Maryam Babangida had significant influence, which helped gain support for some of her programs such as the "Better Life Program for Rural Women (BLP)" (Dadunduro and Adenugba 30). Since then, the academic study of women's issues and gender has continued to be part of the fight for women's rights and gender equality.

Over the years, academic disciplines, most especially in the humanities and social sciences, have incorporated gender discourses into their curricula (Pereira 111-121). However, as an independent academic field of study, GS is relatively new. In the case of Nigeria with over 190 universities³, only about twenty⁴ of these institutions of higher learning have GS or Women's Studies either as a standalone centre, or as an independent program in a centre. While it is important to emphasize the difference between GS and women studies, a very thin line divides the two (Bammeke 61). In Nigeria in many cases, both Gender and Women's Studies are either merged, or either combined or separately merged with other academic fields.

The establishment of GS programs increased at the turn of the 21st century when tertiary institutions started establishing specialized centres, many of which partly focused on gender research. Amina Mama noted that during the final years of the twentieth century, the rising tide of development retarding occurrences in the political, economic, and religious spheres in the region spurred feminist thinkers to strengthen research into these experiences that affect women's lives in horrific and asymmetric ways when compared to the men. Feminist scholars then began to work collaboratively to build an intellectual community around the question of justice and social equality. Between 2000 and 2002, the Africa Gender Institute

² <https://bsum.edu.ng/w3/genderStudies.php>. Accessed 1/04/2020

³ The total number of universities in Nigeria (federal, state, and privately owned) was retrieved from <http://nuc.edu.ng> on 28/04/2021.

⁴ These centres include Benue state University's Centre for Gender Studies; University of Port Harcourt's Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies; University of Jos' Centre for Gender and Women Studies; Bayero University Kano's Centre for Gender Studies; University of Abuja's Centre for Gender and Security Studies; Ekiti State University's Centre for Gender and Development Studies; Centre for Gender and Child Development of the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, South-East of Nigeria; Centre for Gender Studies, University of Benin; Federal University of Technology Owerri's Institute for Women, Gender and Development Studies; Federal University Dutse's Centre for Gender Studies; Federal University of Technology Akure's Centre for Gender Issues in Science and Technology; Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye's Centre for Gender Studies; Ahmadu Bello University Zaria's Gender Policy Unit; Tai Solarin University of Education's Centre for Human Right and Gender Education. Other Universities with budding centres for gender studies are Ladoko Akintola University of Technology; Ogbomoso, Delta State University's Gender Study Group, University of Ilorin and Abia State University. Budding in the sense that there are gender research groups as well as gender mainstreaming offices but without specific centres dedicated for research.

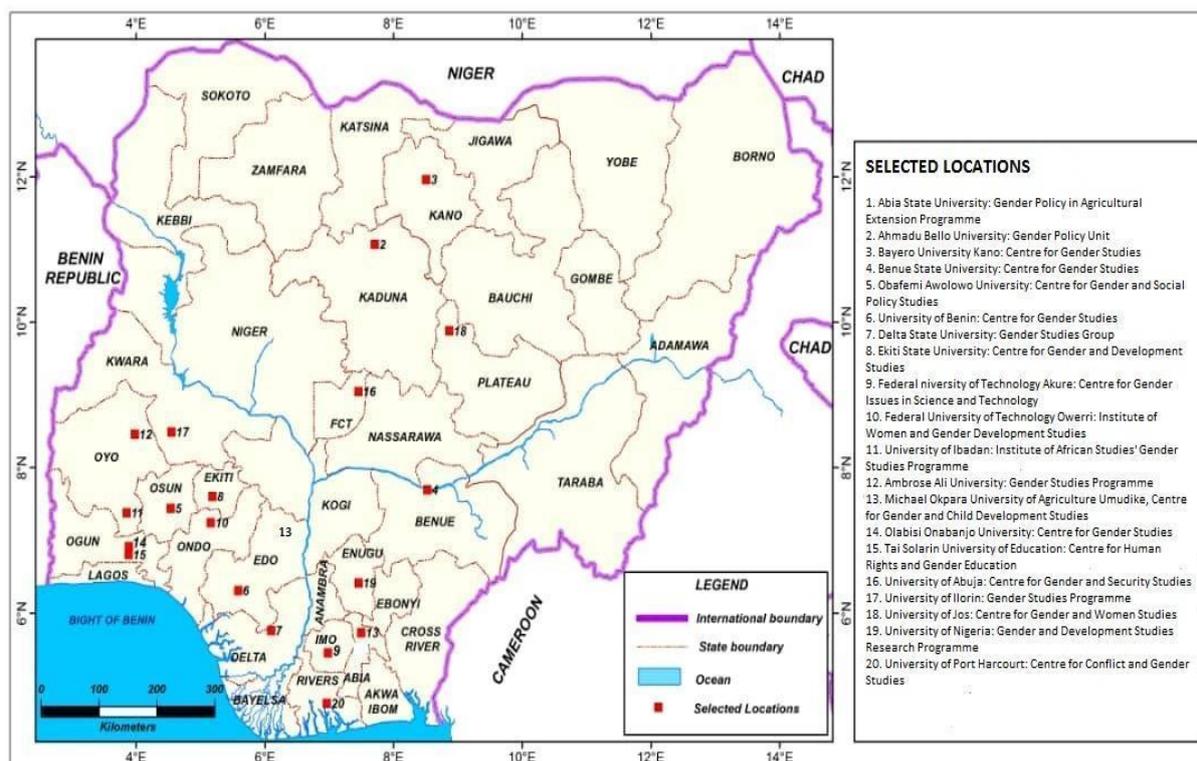
(AGI) documented thirty dedicated units doing some forms of teaching and or research in Gender and Women's Studies. AGI, therefore, leveraged on the little achievements and structures of these units to foster a more critical African feminist discourse, which led to a significant pan-African feminist forum in 2002 at the University of Cape Town, South Africa (5-6).

Furthermore, an important issue that has continued to dominate public discourse in the world, particularly among policymakers and members of academia, is the issue of gender sensitivity and equality. For example, in the case of Michael Okpara University's Centre for Gender and Child Development, the need to establish the centre was reinforced by the continuous abuse of women and the increasing cases of vulnerable children⁵. However, for this centre and many others combining other areas of research such as Security Studies, Human Rights Studies, Development Studies and so on, it is expected that the individual units would eventually mature into independent centres of their own.

Just as in the case of India (Rege 40), the academic study of women and gender issues in Nigeria has long been part of the fight for women's rights and gender equality, with feminist scholars often at the forefront of campaigns for social change (Awe and Mba 859). However, the development of this academic field is shaped by the institutional context in which it develops, both within the sector of higher education as a whole and the micro-level context of individual universities and colleges where, in addition to government's funding, institutions are required to source for funds internally. The impact of institutional context is nowhere clearer as in Africa, where universities have long struggled with structural under-funding and exclusion from international networks. Having a centre that addresses gender research appears lofty and trendy. However, beyond that, there is the need for a specialist understanding of its operations in terms of methodological training and research focus. While GS centres have continued to increase in number over the last two decades, this article argues that the structural configuration of these centres in terms of research expertise, administration, and funding have greater implications for gender knowledge production.

To achieve the objectives of this study, an analytically enhanced qualitative research method was used. In-depth interviews were conducted with researchers and administrative officers affiliated with the centre. They included two former directors, the current director, a research fellow, and two administrative officers. Moreover, the study reviewed the centre's official records and grey literature. The article is divided into five sections. The first section will discuss Nigerian universities as a site of gender knowledge production. The second and third sections will discuss the functions of CHURGE and how it sources funds as well as its challenges with regards to research, publications, and restructuring. The fourth and fifth sections will discuss gender and leadership positions and how fellows are enlisted at the centre respectively.

⁵ <https://mouau.edu.ng/centre/cgcd>. Accessed 12/11/2019

Map: Location of Universities with Gender Studies Centres or Programs

Source: Adedeji Adebayo (2021)

Nigerian Universities: A Site of Production of Gender Knowledge

Although the Nigerian educational system cannot be absolutely separated from the legacies of colonialism (Odejide 453, Imam 183), it has over the years evolved with some of its own peculiarities. In Nigeria, there are different structures and institutions that provide post-secondary education. For example, a secondary school certificate holder would have the choice of direct admission into the university or opt for institutions that provide lesser certifications such as the polytechnics, monotechnics, or colleges of education (Federal Ministry of Education 41-47). This choice, which is dependent on several factors, would include the number of passes (grades A to C) a student obtains in the final examination as well as their score in the JAMB⁶ examination. In any case, Odejide noted that the university still remains the major site of knowledge production in general and gender dynamics in particular (45).

Central to the development of GS in Nigeria is the activism of women's organizations from the colonial through postcolonial period (Bammeke 61). As an academic field of study, it forms part of an intellectual area that has opened a more critical discourse on gender issues and

⁶ The Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board is a Nigerian entrance examination board for tertiary institutions. It conducts entrance examinations for prospective undergraduates into Nigerian institutions of higher learning.

the position of both women and men in Nigerian society. Adetowun Ogunshye and Bolanle Awe were the first set of academics who initiated serious research into women's status in Nigeria. This began with Ogunshye's work on *The Role and Status of Women in Nigeria* (1960), and some of Awe's works, for example, *The Iyalode in the Traditional Yoruba Political System* (1977) and *Women in Historical Perspective* (1992) (Odejide). As the first female professor in Nigeria, Ogunshye's trajectory was heavily shaped by women's activism. According to Sara Panata, her commitment to improvement of women's lives transcends national boundaries, and as a member of the International Alliance of Women (IAW), her most notable achievement was the organizing of the first international conference of West African women entitled "The African Woman Designs her Future" at the University of Ibadan in 1960.

Often referred to as the matriarch of feminist history in Nigeria, Awe's work in the field of history became more identified with women's issues. Much of her works accentuate the role of Nigerian women in the country's political history with specific focus on Yoruba women in the southwest of the country⁷. Among other accomplishments, she was the founding chair of the Nigerian National Commission for Women (NNCW) and a member of the founding committee of the International Federation for Research in Women's History (Olawale 2). The interest of many of the pioneers of GS in Nigeria was stimulated by the involvement of Ogunshye and Awe in the activities of women's organizations such as NCWS (Odejide). The formation of AAWORD also played an important role in the growth of GS. This it does by facilitating research and activism through workshops and trainings especially by African women scholars⁸.

As part of the activities of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), the Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Ibadan organized a conference on rural women and agriculture in 1986. The success of this conference necessitated the establishment of the WORDOC a year later. WORDOC has continued to play an important role in women and gender research with empirical information for local and international researchers (Odejide). Moreover, another organization that amplified gender discourse in Nigeria was the Women in Nigeria (WIN), founded in 1983 at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Kaduna State. The organization immediately became a significant force which challenged the subordination of women on the basis of class and gender in the country. Although the name suggests that it was a women's organization only, men who were interested in women's issues, some of them with Marxist ideologies, were also accommodated (Madunagu 667). Since then, GS has become more fully formed in Nigerian universities.

Amina Mama was the first to comprehensively review African scholarship in GS. C. Pereira noted that her review in the book *Women's Studies and Studies of Women during the 1990s* captured several developments across a range of themes and disciplines, including politics and the economy (2). From that point, scholarship in this regard has increased. While women's issues still dominate GS in Nigeria, the discipline has since embraced other gender components. For example, Adebisi Ogungbesan's work on men, masculinity, and domestic violence in selected Ugandan and Nigerian novels explored gender issues from the masculine lens. Also, queer discourses began to grow at the beginning of the new millennium. Some of the few scholars who have initiated important research on LGBTQ in Nigeria include Matilda Kerry, Olusegun Sangowawa, Sola Ogundipe, Lai Oso, Jide Jimoh, Kehinde Okanlawon, and Steve Aborisade. Much of their works, Aborisade's for example, mirror the experiences of individuals who identify as queer, from their homes being the first major hurdle to purposeful living to their immediate community and the state where there is a heightened level of pressure to conform to the binary classification of sexual categories (Aborisade 121-128). However,

⁷ An ethnic group in West Africa; the majority of its people are found in Nigeria and Benin Republic, with minor extractions found in Togo, Ghana, and Ivory Coast.

⁸ <http://www.afard.org>. Accessed 13 December 2018.

Okanlawon noted that momentum in this regard has suffered some setbacks since the enactment of the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) in 2014 (641).

CHURGE: Funding, Functions, and Activities beyond Academics

The history of Tai Solarin University of Education, Nigeria's first university of education, dates to 1978 when the Ogun State⁹ government established the Ogun State College of Education. By design and as it stands today, a college of education in Nigeria provides the minimum entry into the teaching profession at the culmination of a three-year program which leads to the award of the National Certificate of Education. As a result of the increasing need for teachers to be trained and absorbed into the primary and post-primary levels of education in the state, the government of the state in 1999 entered a partnership with the University of Ibadan to award degrees in Teacher Education. Soon after, the process of upgrading to a specialized university was initiated with the College renamed Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED) in January 2005. Presently, Tai Solarin University of Education operates a collegiate system where departments are grouped into colleges, which are semi-autonomous.

CHURGE was established in 2005, as a training, service, and research centre. To ensure its autonomy, it was registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission, Nigeria¹⁰. As such, the centre is designed to operate not as a typical academic unit but as a civil society organization as well. This template of operation is common with centres in universities as they are meant to ensure that activities within the "gown" are expressively felt in the "town". In other words, it is expected that research and other activities of this centre attain high environmental presence. The centre's four main responsibilities are to create awareness on human rights and gender education, capacity building in humanitarian services, run professional and academic programs, as well as provide internal and external linkages for partnerships and affiliations. Administratively, the Centre has a management team, which sees to its day-to-day activities. The team which is comprised of a director, who must not be below the rank of a senior lecturer, a senior program officer, and few other administrative staff who report to a board of trustees which meets quarterly or as the need may arise advises the University Council and the Senate through the Vice Chancellor on issues affecting the centre.

Funding is one big challenge that inhibits the development of GS in Nigeria. With respect to this, CHURGE is expected to generate funds to run its programs. According to Professor Ewumi (the current director of CHURGE), the university's expectation that the centre be financially independent has made it reach out to corporate organizations and liaising with several other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to solicit funding. One of such NGOs is the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC)¹¹. The centre and JDPC which shared close geographical proximity have continued to work together on Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the university community and its closest major town of Ijebu Ode. In fact, contemporary studies and actions of domestic violence, for example, appear to be emerging from NGOs rather than from the university. As such, it is important for a centre like this to work in tandem with them. Even though this financial strategy is not bad in itself, donor-driven agendas could overtake gender research in terms of intellectual content and orientation (Bammeke, 63). This could undermine or trivialize important research engagements capable of addressing the challenges of the lived experiences of men and women.

⁹ Ogun is a state in southwest Nigeria. It was created as one of the federating units on the 3rd of February 1976.

¹⁰ The Corporate Affairs Commission is an autonomous government institution charged with the responsibility to regulate the formation and management of companies as well as incorporated trustees in Nigeria.

¹¹ Justice Development and Peace Commission is a ministry of service of the Catholic Church established to cater for all the people that are in need within her jurisdiction, irrespective of religion, culture, race, or gender. It has branches in many cities of Nigeria.

Research, Difficulties over Publishing, and the Challenge of Restructuring

Between 2008 and 2015, the centre's inventory reveals that it has published three journals and two joint books of readings. For example, in 2008, under the directorship of Dr. M. A. Ogundipe, CHURGE produced its maiden journal, *HURAGE: A Journal of Human Rights and Gender Education*. In 2010, the second edition of the journal, which was in conjunction with the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana was produced. This was borne out of the commitment to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between both the Nigerian and the Ghanaian universities in 2005 to disseminate reports of research works done in the area of gender, human rights, and other related issues in the world. From the first publication in 2008, which was three years after its establishment, the publication of the journals at the centre has followed an intermittent pattern, and since 2014, there has been a temporary halt. This intermittence was due to several factors which include paucity of funds and the need to restructure the centre to be better able to meet its objectives.

By 2014, the need to restructure the centre was introduced by the Vice Chancellor¹² at the University's senate meeting. She observed that there was the need to domicile the institute's program in a department that shares the closest research connection with it, such as in Social Sciences or Humanities. This practice is common with centres of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research. In the case of India for example, women's studies has been heavily dependent on the existing structure. John noted that the idea of being a "catalyst" and not an independent discipline had meant that it must find ways of drawing faculty from departments with interest and capacities (24).

Alademerin emphasized the need to have a centre with a more specific research focus as it is obtainable in universities elsewhere. For him, the process of restructuring the activities of the centre to allow for specialization, expertise, and links with external agencies is very important. He explained further that:

... At the University of Pretoria [for example], they have two centres. They have the Institute for Gender Studies¹³, maybe they call it institute for women studies or something like that [...], I have forgotten, and then they have the centre for Human Rights... I remember in 2014, we had a senate [meeting], and such discussion came up. The Vice Chancellor asked that [s]he should be well guided on which department should [*sic*] host the centre. In the course of that, there were so many Heads of Departments that actually wanted to own CHURGE. The political science said it was their own prerogative, the social studies said it was their own prerogative, counseling psychology said it was their own prerogative, so many departments, even early childhood and so on and so forth. So, on the basis of this entire scuffle, we could not really agree, and so, the Vice Chancellor just stepped down the discussion. But now, I think efforts are being made to actually reposition the centre so that the centre can be an arm of a department, so that they can now float certificate courses¹⁴.

Alademerin's observation with respect to the University of Pretoria is quite instructive. The University's Centre for Human Rights is based in the Faculty of Law and serves as both an academic department and a non-governmental organization. Its objectives among other things cover the promotion of women's rights¹⁵. Also, there is a GS program which is domiciled in

¹² The Vice Chancellor at the time was Professor Oluyemisi Obilade (2013 -2018). She is a professor of Adult Education and Women's Studies from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, South-West Nigeria.

¹³ University of Pretoria: Institute for Women and Gender Studies.

¹⁴ Interview with Professor Edward Alademerin, Former Director, CHURGE, 5 October 2018.

¹⁵ <https://www.up.ac.za/centre-for-human-rights>, accessed 12 September 2018.

the Department of Sociology. Then, it means that there are two centres, units, or departments working on the issues of human rights and gender. This for him would allow for a more focused research engagement. With regards to the question of which department at TASUED would be most suitable to host the programs of the centre, the inability of the senate to agree suggests one or two implications: one, a department requesting that CHURGE be domiciled in it would be doing that to expand its research focus and give more visibility to what it does; or second, the status of the centre as an autonomous unit would in a way indirectly expand the capacity of such department to generate funds. As such, the departments scrambled for the right to absorb the centre.

Additionally, Alademmerin noted that the leadership structure obtainable at the Centre for Human Rights in the University of Pretoria favours the recruitment of experts in these fields. As can be gleaned from the interview, recruitment to the post of the director of a centre is by both internal and external advertisements; an eligible candidate within and outside the university is by this measure encouraged to apply for a five-year renewable tenure. However, this is not the case at the CHURGE where a director can only serve for a three-year single term. As explained by Ewumi, to be considered for the position of director, a candidate must have expressed interest through research and publications on gender and human rights issues. An outgoing director would then recommend two candidates from which the university would choose one¹⁶. These directors who take additional responsibilities are provided with minimal support staff, with very little infrastructure and have no reduction in their existing duties.

Ewumi plans to establish academic programs gradually. The centre hopes to float a new diploma program as well as short courses on different aspects of gender education. However, it would have to approach the senate for approval, and then domicile such programs in a particular academic department. Up till the period of this study, the centre was yet to be domiciled in any of the university's departments. Dapo Oke explained:

We want to start with diploma, and then we present to the university senate... We want to have a kind of gender mainstreaming, a policy on gender education in the university. Currently, we have someone on sabbatical, a professor from a reputable university¹⁷. The centre's director and the senior program officer have equally gone for a kind of four weeks training on gender education. We just came back and we were issued certificate on that. This would give us a kind of more insight about gender education¹⁸

For TASUED, the establishment of CHURGE is premised on the need to address the growing worldwide concern of the objective of providing human rights and gender education to all. As earlier noted, GS in contemporary times appears to be one area of research that is so trendy, and this has attracted the curiosity of many researchers. This has also led to the enrichment of the curriculum and the development of GS programs. While this is encouraging on the one hand owing to the fact that gender issues are important development issues, the objectivity of research and programs in this regard calls for more objective scrutiny.

Gender and Leadership Positions

¹⁶ The directors of CHURGE since its establishment are Prof. M. A. Ogundipe; Prof. O. O. E. Balogun [Political Science Department; Prof. T.J. B. Oluwatimilehin; Prof. E. A. Alademmerin; Prof. A. M. Ewumi [Current Director].

¹⁷ As at the time of the field research in October 2018, Professor S. O. Odebode from the department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development and the Coordinator of the Gender Mainstreaming Office of the University of Ibadan is on Sabbatical at the Tai Solarin University of Education.

¹⁸ Interview with Mr. Dapo Oke, Senior Program Officer, CHURGE, 4 October 2018.

Despite the expansion of women's rights and the dramatic increase in their formal employment over the last four decades, men still significantly outpace women in leadership positions across every sector in the world. In the educational sector, they tend to leak out the leadership path more easily than the men, especially at the mid-point in their career (Olutayo and Adebayo 1076). This concern has warranted different corrective efforts both locally and internationally with gender research centres playing an important role with respect to policies formulations. According to Alademerin:

A lot of researchers are coming for one thing or the other and that has not actually slowed down the pace of research at the centre. The only thing I can say is that, if the university is well positioned, and the centre is well positioned, there are lots of researches that we can carry out in the area of primary education, secondary education, even tertiary education. Now, there was a kind of gender audit which I initiated at the centre. That is, trying to know the ratio and percentages of the various positions as occupied by males or females, to know how many of the deans are males, how many of the deans are females. How many HODs [Heads of Department] are males, how many HODs are females. How many males are in the senior cadre of deputy registrar, assistant deputy registrar, which is what we call a university wide gender audit. We have actually started here, but you know all these things, when you actually start it, you may not conclude it in the next two, three years... There was no way we could have finished all of them before I left office. That notwithstanding, despite the fact that we started it here, I got the idea from the University of Pretoria... We discussed at length and she gave me details of how to go about it. In one of my own academic collaboration outside the university, I sold the idea to some other universities and they have really done excellently well¹⁹.

According to the Ethiopian Civil Service University, gender audit is “a tool to understand to what extent gender related policies and their implementation are contributing to gender equality”. It is a form of assessment that can help with gender mainstreaming. Basically, the aim of gender audit is to make an organization more gender-sensitive and responsive (Drucza, Tsegaye, Abebe, Giref and Abebe, 2018). In the context of TASUED, and perhaps, other universities in the country, having an audit of members of staff when it comes to gender is necessary as it would reveal the asymmetric gap which appears to favour men. Also, an audit of this nature would drive policies that can promote gender equality, especially in the university system.

With respect to the relevance of research being carried out at the centre to the Nigerian society, Alademerin noted that Nigerian society is very hostile to gender parity in public spaces, educational and political institutions inclusive. For example, while countries like Rwanda, South Africa, and Ethiopia are expressing promising strides with regards to equal gender political representation, Nigeria falls at the bottom of the ladder of disproportionate women's political representation on the continent. In both the upper and the lower legislative chambers of the Nigerian National Assembly, women constitute about 6% and 7% respectively²⁰. Thus, knowledge production in gender remains an important academic endeavour. Not only that, but research in this direction should also be a reality testing experience capable of addressing societal concerns.

As a global phenomenon, the upward mobility of women in their careers and in leadership positions has also attracted the centre's attention in many ways. For example,

¹⁹ Interview with Professor Edward Alademerin, 5 October 2018.

²⁰ Interparliamentary Union Database. <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>, accessed 3/01/2018.

articles addressing issues of gender, leadership, and the leaky pipe that affects women's upward mobility in their careers have been published. Also, in providing internal and external linkages for partnership and affiliations, the centre collaborates with appropriate agencies and organizations to organize conferences, seminars, and workshops on contemporary issues in human rights and gender-related issues with the ultimate goals of creating necessary awareness towards the World's Sustainable Development Goals' objectives. Furthermore, according to Ewumi, the centre in conjunction with the Student's Affairs Division organizes orientation programs for newly admitted students at the beginning of every academic session. As part of the program, students are sensitized about their rights, sexual harassment, rape, and so many other gender-related issues. The centre equally reaches out to secondary schools to organize programs that address issues affecting girls. As drawn from the centre's annual report, in 2017, it joined two prominent associations; the Society for Water and Sanitation (NEWSAN), Ogun State chapter, and the Nigeria Network of NGOs (NNNGOs) in a bid to foster a cordial working relationship with other civil society organizations.

Enlisting Fellows at CHURGE

At CHURGE, the eight fellows are equally divided along gender lines. These research fellows are drawn from different academic departments in the university. From the account of Ewumi, parameters considered for membership as fellows include interest, and the capacity to contribute to the centre through research works. Although courses in social sciences (economics, sociology, and political science) and humanities (history and literature) have had a stronger impact on the development of GS and have formed the pool from where faculty members are drawn (John, 26), these cognate areas of knowledge do not form the primary consideration for drawing fellows. Gouws noted a similar pattern in South Africa where gender and women's studies programs draw expertise from different departments based on the commitment to teaching gender subjects (45). The limited knowledge of the theories and methodologies in GS by some of these researchers according to Bammeke have often led to trivializing "a serious exercise of knowledge production" based on their assumption that it lacks "intellectual rigour" (62). The table below detailing the academic profiles of the current research fellows at the centre supports this trivialization argument.

Table 1: Research Fellows' Academic Profiles

Name and Gender	Academic Qualification(s)	Department	Specialization(s)
1. Prof. M. A. Ogundipe(M)	B.Ed. (Econs), 1980 M.Ed. (Educational Management) 1987 Ph. D. (Econs of Education), 2000	Educational Management	Economics of Education
2. Prof. E. A. Alademerin(M)	NCE (Agric), 1983; B.Sc. (Vocational Agriculture.) 1991 M.Ed. (Vocational. Agriculture.) 1997 PhD. (Vocational. Agriculture), 2001	Agricultural Science	-Agricultural Program Impacts Evaluation, Poverty - Sustainable livelihoods.
3. Prof. J.T. Oluwatimilehin(M)	B.A. (Rel. Studies) 1983 M.A. (G&C) ²¹ , 1986 Ph.D. (G&C), 1987	Counselling Psychology	Counselling Psychology
4. Prof. Abosede Ewumi (F)	N.C.E. (Rel Studies/French), 1988; B.Ed. (G&C) 1994 M.Ed. (G&C) 2000 Ph.D. (Applied Psychology) 2010	Counselling Psychology	Adolescence and Counselling Psychology
5. Prof. Folashade Sulaimon(F)	B.Ed. (Eng/Rel. Stud) 1987 M.Ed. (ECE) ²² 1997 Ph.D. (2004)	Educational Foundation and Instructional Technology	History and Policy of Primary Education
6. Prof. Gbenga Oworu (M)	NCE (PHE) ²³ 1981 B.Ed. (PHE) 1986 M.Ed. (Evaluation). 1993 M.Ed. (Sport Admin). Ph.D. (Sport Admin). 2009	Human Kinetics and Health Education	Sports Administration
7. Dr. A. O. Ekine (F)	B. Sc. (Food Sc. & Tech.) 1986 M. Ed. (Early Childhood Educ.) 2002 PGDE 1999. Ph.D (Early Childhood Educ.) 2010	Educational Foundation and Instructional Technology	-Gender -Science, early childhood education -Teacher training
8. Dr. V. E. Yonlofoun (F)	Grade II Cert. (1978) NCE (Hist./Rel. Stud) 1984 B.Ed. (Educ./Hist.) 1987 M.Ed. (Inst. Admin.) 1993 Ph.D. 2003	Educational Management	Institutional Administration

²¹ Guidance and Counselling.²² Early Childhood Education.²³ Physical and Health Education.

Source: Adedeji Adebayo (2021), Compiled from the university's website and personal interviews.

Conclusion

The construction of gender categories has continued to perpetuate inequality all over the world. This concern has been recognized by stakeholders in the educational sector, especially around research and curriculum development. However, for Nigeria, after over three decades, the development of GS as an academic field of study still appears stunted. Many of the scholars who are based in African institutions (Nigeria in this context) do gender research from the prism of their primary discipline. While this is not out of place when looked at from the multidisciplinary nature of the field as an academic discipline, GS has over the years become fully formed in methods and approaches and well documented in other places outside Europe and North America. Although there is a sizable level of contributions of many African scholars to gender discourses globally, the study still appears amorphous, and thus, requires refining in methodology, content, and curriculum.

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