

Vocational Education and Gender Equality in Nigeria: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract : This study investigates the challenges and opportunities for gender equality in vocational education in Awka South, Anambra State, Nigeria. Recognizing the critical role of vocational education in economic development, the research aims to evaluate the current state of gender equality, identify key barriers faced by female students, assess the impact of government policies, and explore opportunities for enhancing gender equality in this sector. Ten vocational schools within Awka South were randomly selected, and a total of 1,000 questionnaires were distributed among students, with 991 completed and returned, yielding a high response rate of 99.1%, and the retrieved data were analyzed using SPSS. The findings indicate significant gender disparities in vocational education enrollment and participation, with male students overwhelmingly outnumbering female students in most technical and engineering-related programs. Key barriers identified include cultural norms discouraging females from pursuing technical fields, economic constraints, lack of female role models, and social stereotypes regarding gender roles. Despite various government policies aimed at promoting gender equality, their implementation and effectiveness remain inadequate, as reflected in persistent gender disparities. However, opportunities for improving gender equality were identified, such as implementing gender-sensitive curricula, expanding mentorship programs for female students, and adopting best practices from other countries. The study recommends enhancing access to vocational training resources, implementing gender-sensitive curricula, expanding mentorship programs, and strengthening the implementation and monitoring of government policies. Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions is essential for achieving gender parity in vocational education, thereby empowering female students and contributing to Nigeria's socio-economic development.

Keywords : vocational education, gender equality, barriers, government policies

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