

Creating Gender Awareness for Empowerment Towards Sustainable Development Among Female Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

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ABSTRACT

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) declared by political leaders from around the world marked the rally-point to achieve concrete goals in poverty reduction, food access, education, gender equality, health and environmental sustainability. Promoting gender equality and empowerment is the third millennium development goal; this implies that capacity building for women remains central to development and offers a lens through which to deconstruct gender-related processes and issues. Many workshops/conferences have and are still being organized in Nigeria on developing and empowering women. The focus has always been on women who are already in their adulthood, but efforts could also be extended to female undergraduates at the adolescent and early womanhood stages of life. The purpose of this study was to 'catch them young' through advocacy. Sensitizing young girls/women on the need to develop their potentials; the need to be creative and focused to overcome all challenges that undermine their efforts at becoming industrious and resourceful are issues of the moment. The design of the study was a quasi experiment. The population comprised of all female students in Faculties of education in Port-Harcourt metropolis in Rivers State. The sample size was two hundred female final year students. Technique was stratified random sampling and the female students were assigned into four groups. The female students were given a pre-test and then were engaged in workshops/seminars on entrepreneurial education and women empowerment for sustainable development in four areas: importance of girl-child education; women empowerment; entrepreneurial skills for women; and training and development of women. Each group was exposed to the same treatment and thereafter was given a post test to assess their level of understanding. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation and Pearson moment correlation coefficient. The results of the posttest revealed increase in understanding and elimination of misconception on women development and empowerment; and increase in interest on developing entrepreneurial skills for self reliance. It was recommended that such sensitization workshops/conferences should be organized across some other schools to create the desired awareness among young adolescent/women.

Keywords: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); Women Empowerment; Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); Capacity building; Poverty Reduction.