

UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN



THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY-EIGHTH (298TH) INAUGURAL LECTURE

**“TWO WINGS, ONE BIRD: WHY EDUCATION
CANNOT FLY WITHOUT GENDER EQUALITY”**

By

**PROFESSOR PATRICIA AGNES
OVIGUERAYE ETEJERE**

B.A. (Ibadan); PGDE, M.Ed., Ph.D. (Ilorin)

**DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION,
FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA**

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Chairmanship of:**

The Vice-Chancellor

Professor Wahab Olasupo Egbewole, SAN
LL.B (Hons) (Ife); B.L (Lagos); LL.M (Ife); Ph.D. (Ilorin);
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My Lords Spiritual and Temporal,
Members of my Family,
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Gentlemen of the Print and Electronic Media,
Students of Educational Management and other Students present,
Great Students of the University of Ilorin,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Preamble

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I give gratitude to Almighty God, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, who has given me the privilege to present this 298th Inaugural Lecture today, Thursday, 5th March 2026, in our ‘Better by Far’ institution, the University of Ilorin. Through this lecture, I truly acknowledge God’s faithfulness in my life, for He has been my help, as stated in the Holy Bible:

“I will lift mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” (Ps. 121: 1-2)

This Inaugural Lecture is the 9th in the Series of Inaugural Lectures in the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education. The first Inaugural Lecture in the Department, titled "*Cosmetic Politics and the Challenges of Education for National Development*," was presented by Prof. Aderemi Dada Olutola on 7th January, 1983. After this, seven other professors have presented theirs; the last was on 2nd May, 2024, by Prof. Yunus Adebunmi Fasasi, with the title "*Holding Education Accountable for Resources and Results*." The Inaugural Lecture for today is titled "**Two Wings, One Bird: Why Education Cannot Fly without Gender Equality.**"

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, I would like to give a brief background to my academic journey before I delve into the lecture proper. My sojourn in the realm of education started very many years ago – precisely in the early sixties in faraway Accra (Ghana), where our parents had migrated to, as my father was in the paramilitary at that time. My parents, late Chief Ambrose Ejebose Erigha and late Madam Victoria Edeguare Erigha, were very interested in their children's education. They were ready to make sacrifices and endure hardships for their children's education. My father, especially, would always look forward to having his children getting first to fifth position in their examinations. To ensure we performed well in our various schools, they enrolled us in 'evening classes,' also known as 'lessons' or 'coaching classes' in present-day Nigeria.

I spent only four years at a local primary school in the Adedeinkpo Area of Accra, Adedeinkpo Primary School, after which I attended a middle school (with boarding facilities) for a year and then a secondary boarding school – both in the Central Region of Ghana – from 1966 to 1974. Being a girls' school and a mission one for that matter, Holy Child Secondary School was run by the Holy Child Society with the motto "ACTION NOT WORDS". The teachers were a mixture of foreign and Ghanaian teachers, including the Reverend Sisters. Having completed the two-year Higher School Certificate course (popularly known as the Sixth Form in those days) in June 1974, my parents arranged for me to be brought to Nigeria because they had earlier departed for Nigeria due to Ghana's Aliens Compliance Order in 1969. It is worthy to recall that the interval between the waiting period

(i.e. June 1974 and September 1975) and the admission into university was gainfully spent in the classroom, where for the very first time in my life, I taught English Language at a remote school in Delta State, St. Clare's College, Okpara Inland, not too far from my hometown.

Teaching without a teaching qualification continued during the mandatory National Youth Service, which was undertaken at Ajibode Grammar School, Ibadan. Even though my first-degree qualification in English was a single honours degree from the University of Ibadan, the teaching profession was always a 'pulling force' at any 'vacant' opportunity! I taught English Language and French (French was one of the subjects I sat for in the West African School Certificate examination many years ago). The school climate at Ajibode Grammar School was also cordial, with a large percentage of female teachers. The school was a mixed school, and the learners co-operated with the teachers to achieve a good standard.

The Vice-Chancellor, Sir, with the assurance that I am a full-fledged Nigerian, and not an 'alien', my academic journey proper began in September, 1975 when I stepped on the soil of the oldest university in Nigeria, the University of Ibadan, from where I obtained my first degree in English. Although I had a short spell of teaching a year before I started my university education, it was not until the mandatory national service year (1978-1979) at Ajibode Grammar School, Ibadan, Oyo State that I experienced what teaching looked like.

At the end of the National Youth Service Corps scheme, I was employed by the then Kwara State Education Management Board (now Kwara State Teaching Service Commission) in October 1979. I taught English Language and Literature in the senior classes while I was being transferred from one school to the other. Specifically, I taught at Ansarul-Islam Secondary School, St. Anthony's Secondary School and Government Day Secondary School, Kulende - all in Ilorin. My gratitude to the Kwara State Government for this magnanimous gesture. I rose to the position of Director in 2005 before I left the Kwara State Teaching Service Commission for the University of Ilorin. While I was teaching at the secondary school level, I enrolled for and completed the Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Education

(PGDE) in 1985, Master programme in Educational Management in 1990 and Ph.D. programme in 2003.

The Vice-Chancellor, Sir, my sojourn in this '*Better by Far*' University, the University of Ilorin, started in November 2005 when I was employed and accepted on transfer of service as a Lecturer II officer in the Department of Educational Management where I have taught, researched and engaged in community service until I became a Professor in 2022.

Introduction

Having joined the Department of Educational Management, where I had earlier acquired my Master and Ph.D. qualifications, I felt elated and excited; it was a dream come true. I had taken up the Lecturer II appointment at a time when there was an acute shortage of staff, and so the workload was very heavy. There was no room for complaints, and for six years, I had to bear the burden of being the least ranked on the staff list until 2011, when the University recruited more lecturers in the lower cadre. This relief in workload did not last for long because there was a hike in student enrollment in both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. At the beginning of my career at the University, the female staff was 50%, but with the passage of time, this percentage became lower and lower when more male staff were recruited into the department, with the present rate being 40%.

On the whole, the social atmosphere was cordial, with an undertone of healthy competition, as we strive to fulfil our tripartite mandate of teaching, research and community service. Throughout my 20 years of service at the university, while I have observed and experienced that the female academic staff are always ready to prove their mettle, I have also noticed that the university authorities are not equally ready to favour or discriminate against any staff based on gender.

So, the journey continued. Nevertheless, there may have been some subtle, insignificant, and unusual happenings, which were sometimes seen as gender bias, but which were ignored for academic peace to reign. In spite of the few challenges that female academics may have faced along the line, they have made some giant strides. Promotions from Lecturer II to the highest

academic rank, the Professorial cadre, have been achieved under strict conditions and guidelines. It is, therefore, not surprising that such promotions have also led to my appointment into certain administrative positions such as Head of Department, Acting Director, Faculty Representative, Co-ordinator of Postgraduate programmes, Sandwich coordinator, etc.

Looking back at the past years, the challenges and experiences have contributed to shaping me into what I have become today. The road has always been rough, and the journey was equally tough. As a fresh Ph.D. holder, I came in like a 'greenhorn', ready to work and be bombarded with work. From year to year, enrolment was getting higher and higher, the classes grew larger and larger, and teaching became cumbersome. With this number, level advising was becoming more and more tedious, while project supervision became more difficult. On the flip side of the coin, research and publications suffered a setback at the beginning, but as I got used to the system, I became more stable, and the promotions gained momentum from Lecturer I to the Readership position, where there was a blockage due to no vacancy. Was it a matter of gender bias? Certainly not.

The Metaphor of “Two Wings, One Bird”

The Vice-Chancellor, Sir, it is worthy to note that the title of this inaugural lecture, **“Two Wings, One Bird”: Why Education Cannot Fly without Gender Equality**, is a metaphor. Metaphors serve as intellectual bridges between abstract concepts and lived realities. In this lecture, the metaphor “Two Wings, One Bird” is used to frame the relationship between education and gender equality in an intuitive yet analytically powerful way (Etejere, Oluwalola, Awodiji & Sagaya, 2023). In this metaphor, education is conceptualised as a bird. Like a bird, education is designed to move, to rise above limitations, to traverse boundaries, and to carry individuals and societies towards new possibilities. Education enables mobility, innovation, and transformation, providing direction and purpose for national development (Kayode, Oduwaiye, Etejere, Adaramaja & Kutu, 2018). Gender equality represents the two wings of the bird: male and female. Each wing is essential, functional, and complementary. Neither wing is superior, and

neither can fulfil the task of flight alone. The strength, balance, and coordination of both wings determine the bird's capacity to fly effectively (Etejere, Oniyangi, Azeez & Amana, 2015).

The critical question, therefore, is: what happens when one wing is weaker or rendered invisible? The answer is both simple and instructive. A bird with one wing or constrained wing may flap energetically, but it cannot achieve stable flight. It may move in circles, struggle to gain altitude, or remain grounded despite visible effort. Translated into educational terms, when one gender is disadvantaged in access, participation, leadership, or opportunity, the entire educational system becomes inefficient and fragile (Etejere *et al.*, 2023). Progress becomes uneven, outcomes are compromised, and sustainability is threatened. This metaphor challenges the misconception that gender equality is a marginal or secondary concern in education (Etejere, 2008). Instead, it asserts that gender equality is structural, foundational, and non-negotiable. Education cannot fly on one wing.

Theoretical Foundations of Two Wings, One Bird

The “*Two Wings, One Bird*” metaphor is firmly grounded in established theoretical and empirical frameworks that emphasise inclusion, equity, and justice in educational development. Feminist theory, particularly liberal and social feminist perspectives, provides a foundational lens for understanding gender inequality in education. Feminist scholars argue that unequal access to educational opportunities and leadership positions is not a result of biological differences but of socially constructed norms, institutional practices, and power relations. This theoretical position is strongly supported by Etejere’s empirical studies on female participation and attrition in postgraduate education in Nigerian universities, which revealed that socio-cultural barriers, institutional constraints, and gender stereotypes significantly restrict women’s educational advancement and leadership trajectories (Etejere, 2008, 2009). Feminist theory, therefore, advocates for the removal of these structural barriers to enhance women’s educational participation and leadership, thereby strengthening both the educational system and its leadership capacity.

Closely aligned with this is the principle of gender mainstreaming, which emphasises the systematic integration of gender perspectives into policy design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Gender mainstreaming does not treat gender equality as a stand-alone programme, but as a cross-cutting concern that must inform all educational decisions. Empirical evidence from **Etejere** and Oluwalola (2021) demonstrates that principals' gender leadership practices significantly influence teachers' job performance, while **Etejere**, Shittu, and Ibrahim (2022) established a strong relationship between principals' gender and management effectiveness. Within the metaphor, gender mainstreaming represents the intentional strengthening and balancing of both wings to ensure effective institutional flight, improved organisational performance, and sustainable educational development.

A critical distinction must also be made between equality and equity in educational development. Equality focuses on providing the same opportunities and resources to all, while equity recognises existing disparities and seeks to address them through targeted support. Equity, therefore, becomes the mechanism through which true equality can be achieved. **Etejere**, Oniyangi, Azeez, and Amana (2015) demonstrated that education plays a transformative role in challenging and reshaping pre-conceived gender stereotypes among secondary school students, while in the study by Adeniyi-Egbeola, Oluwalola, and **Etejere** (2021), it was revealed that inclusive education practices significantly enhance teachers' responsiveness to diverse learner needs. An educational system that ignores equity consequently weakens one wing while assuming both are equally strong, thereby undermining sustainable educational progress.

At the global level, this metaphor aligns closely with international education and development frameworks, particularly UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 4 emphasises inclusive and equitable quality education, while SDG 5 prioritises gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. These goals are mutually reinforcing, as progress in one depends on progress in the other. Supporting this synergy, **Etejere**, Sofoluwe, and Onasanya (2013) highlighted the role of

ICT, gender inclusivity, and globalisation in enhancing equitable access to education and promoting sustainable development. Education cannot achieve inclusivity without gender equality, just as gender equality cannot be sustained without education.

Framing the Argument: Two Wings, One Bird

This inaugural lecture advances a central proposition: *Gender equality is not an optional enhancement to education but a fundamental prerequisite for its effectiveness, equity, and sustainability.* This argument is anchored in the metaphor of “*Two Wings, One Bird,*” which conceptualises male and female participation as interdependent forces required for educational systems to function fully and be relevant to society. Education, like a bird, can only achieve lift, stability, and forward motion when both wings are equally strong and harmoniously engaged. Where either wing is weakened through structural discrimination, socio-cultural constraints, or institutional exclusion, the system’s capacity for transformation is significantly diminished (**Etejere, 2008**). The long-term consequences of such an imbalance include reduced institutional effectiveness, weakened human capital development, and compromised national development outcomes (**Etejere, 2013**).

Empirical evidence from Nigerian educational contexts further demonstrates that systems which marginalise women experience inefficiencies in talent utilisation and leadership renewal (**Etejere, 2008**). Conversely, institutions that integrate gender equity into policy frameworks and organisational culture record improvements in staff motivation, institutional commitment, and organisational performance (**Etejere & Oluwalola, 2021**). Comparative academic analyses also confirm that inclusive systems benefit from enhanced innovation, productivity, and sustainability (**Etejere et al., 2023**).

Gender Inequality across Educational Levels in Nigeria

Gender Inequality across Educational Levels in Nigeria: Gender inequality manifests in complex, layered, and persistent forms at the basic, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. Although enrolment rates for both boys and girls have improved significantly over recent decades, substantial disparities persist in retention, academic achievement, postgraduate participation, and leadership representation (**Etejere, 2008**). Longitudinal evidence

further demonstrates that these disparities become more pronounced as learners progress through successive educational stages (**Etejere**, 2009). At the basic and secondary education levels, improvements in girls' access often mask deeper challenges related to sustained participation, school completion, and academic progression. Empirical studies show that socio-cultural norms privileging male education continue to undermine girls' educational continuity (**Etejere et al.**, 2015).

Research further identifies domestic responsibilities, early marriage, and cultural stereotyping as significant constraints on girls' sustained schooling (**Etejere et al.**, 2013). These factors contribute directly to higher dropout rates and reduced transition into tertiary education. At the tertiary education level, gender disparities intensify in postgraduate enrolment, academic career progression, and access to leadership. Empirical investigations demonstrate that access alone does not guarantee equity within university systems (**Etejere**, 2008). Further studies confirm that meaningful equality requires sustained participation and supportive institutional structures (**Etejere**, 2009). Organisational research also shows that leadership inclusivity is essential for institutional effectiveness (**Etejere & Oluwalola**, 2021).

The Leaky Pipeline in Nigerian Universities

Within Nigerian universities, women's increasing visibility as undergraduate students and junior academic staff contrasts sharply with their declining representation at advanced academic and administrative levels. This phenomenon, widely described as the 'leaky pipeline', reflects systemic institutional and socio-cultural barriers (**Etejere**, 2008). Empirical evidence demonstrates that women's academic persistence is strongly influenced by financial constraints, family obligations, and institutional inflexibility (**Etejere**, 2009). Further research identifies limited mentoring structures and gendered organisational cultures as key contributors to women's academic attrition (**Etejere et al.**, 2023). Structural inequalities in access to research funding, academic networks, and leadership development opportunities further intensify this attrition process (**Etejere**, 2013). Over time, these dynamics produce male dominated leadership structures and reinforce institutional gender hierarchies (**Etejere et al.**, 2023).

Gender and Leadership Representation in Nigerian Education

Leadership representation remains one of the most visible indicators of gender inequality within Nigerian education systems. Empirical research demonstrates that women remain significantly underrepresented in strategic leadership roles despite possessing leadership competencies comparable to their male counterparts (**Etejere & Oluwalola, 2021**). Evidence further shows that gender-inclusive leadership practices enhance teachers' job performance and organisational commitment (**Etejere & Oluwalola, 2021**). Additional studies confirm that inclusive leadership environments promote institutional effectiveness and organisational productivity (**Etejere et al., 2023**). Despite these benefits, women's access to leadership spaces remains constrained by patriarchal norms and institutional bias (**Etejere, 2013**). These exclusions systematically limit women's participation in policy formulation and strategic decision-making processes (**Etejere et al., 2023**).

Female Participation in Postgraduate Studies

One of the most pronounced manifestations of gender inequality in Nigerian higher education is the low participation of women in postgraduate studies. Empirical studies confirm that women are underrepresented in postgraduate enrolment (**Etejere, 2008**). Research also shows that women experience significantly higher attrition rates than men (**Etejere, 2009**). Key constraints include marital responsibilities, childbearing demands, financial limitations, workplace inflexibility, and weak institutional support systems (**Etejere, 2008**). Additional empirical findings identify supervisory challenges and institutional rigidity as major contributors to female postgraduate attrition (**Etejere, 2009**). These structural barriers significantly reduce women's doctoral completion rates and long-term academic advancement (**Etejere et al., 2023**).

Academic Career Development and Work–Life Integration

Gender inequality is also deeply embedded in both. Empirical evidence indicates that societal expectations surrounding care-giving and domestic labour slow women's academic progression (**Etejere, 2013**). Institutional rigidity further limits women's access to leadership pipelines (**Etejere et al., 2023**). Research confirms that female academics frequently

encounter stereotypes questioning their competence and professional commitment (Etejere, 2013). These biases translate into reduced research opportunities, delayed promotions, and limited leadership nominations (Etejere *et al.*, 2023). As a result, systemic inequality is reproduced even within merit-based academic environments (Etejere, 2013).

Global Perspectives and Comparative Insights

Nigeria's experience reflects broader continental and global patterns in which gender disparities persist most strongly in higher education leadership and postgraduate participation. Comparative research demonstrates that systems adopting deliberate gender mainstreaming strategies achieve higher levels of female participation and leadership representation (Etejere *et al.*, 2023). In contrast, systems that rely solely on formal equality, without addressing structural barriers, continue to reproduce gender gaps (Etejere, 2013). These dynamics undermine institutional effectiveness and long-term sustainability (Etejere *et al.*, 2023).

In summary, the state of gender equality in Nigerian education reflects a paradox of measurable progress and persistent inequality. Empirical evidence confirms sustained disparities in retention, academic achievement, postgraduate participation, and leadership representation (Etejere, 2008). Longitudinal studies demonstrate that these inequalities intensify across educational stages (Etejere, 2009). Organisational research further establishes that gender inequality constrains institutional effectiveness and sustainability (Etejere, 2013).

Leadership studies confirm that inclusive leadership enhances organisational performance (Etejere & Oluwalola, 2021). Comparative global analyses show that structural reforms are essential for closing gender gaps (Etejere *et al.*, 2023). Until these systemic gaps are intentionally addressed through policy reform, institutional restructuring, and cultural transformation, education in Nigeria will continue to operate with one wing weakened, unable to realise its full transformative potential.

Research-based Insights from the Lecturer's Scholarship

A distinctive feature of this inaugural lecture is its firm grounding in long-term empirical scholarship. Beyond descriptive accounts of gender inequality in Nigerian education,

as established in the preceding section, my research provides analytical, contextual, and evidence-based explanations of why gender gaps persist and how they can be systematically addressed (**Etejere**, 2008; 2013; 2015). Spanning over two decades, my studies interrogate gender dynamics across educational leadership and management, student participation and learning outcomes, ICT and globalisation, as well as the socio-cultural contexts that shape educational access, retention, and success (**Etejere**, 2009; **Etejere**, Sofoluwe & Onasanya, 2013; **Etejere et al.**, 2023).

Collectively, this body of work advances a central argument: gender equality is not a peripheral social concern but a critical determinant of institutional effectiveness, educational quality, and sustainable national development (**Etejere**, 2013; **Etejere & Oluwalola**, 2021). By systematically linking empirical evidence to policy and institutional practice, my scholarship moves the discourse on gender in education beyond moral advocacy toward actionable, context-responsive, and policy-relevant solutions (**Etejere**, 2008; 2015).

A significant strand of my scholarship focuses on the relationship between gender and leadership effectiveness in educational institutions. In an empirical study by **Etejere** and Oluwalola (2021), which examined principals' gender leadership practices and teachers' job performance, the findings revealed that leadership behaviours such as inclusiveness, participatory decision-making, effective communication, and fairness are far more predictive of teachers' job performance and organisational commitment than the biological sex of the administrator. This evidence directly challenges deeply entrenched stereotypes that associate administrative competence and authority with masculinity and reinforces earlier conclusions on the primacy of leadership behaviour over gender identity (**Etejere**, 2013).

Similarly, a study by **Etejere**, Shittu, and Ibrahim (2022) on principals' gender and management effectiveness in Kwara State secondary schools demonstrated that male and female principals exhibit comparable levels of managerial effectiveness under similar institutional conditions. These results reinforce the conclusion that gender differences do not determine leadership outcomes; rather, contextual support, professional preparation,

and organisational climate are the critical mediating variables (**Etejere**, 2013; **Etejere et al.**, 2023).

These findings are consistent with my earlier work on gender and managerial effectiveness, which established that leadership capacity is primarily shaped by training, experience, institutional culture, and organisational opportunity structures, rather than gender identity (**Etejere**, 2013). Extending this line of inquiry to the higher education sector, my more recent research examined gender disparities in the teaching profession and leadership representation within the context of globalisation. The findings revealed that although women remain underrepresented in senior academic and leadership positions, deliberate institutional strategies such as structured mentorship, transparent promotion processes, workload equity, and gender-responsive policies can significantly narrow these gaps (**Etejere et al.**, 2023).

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that educational institutions function more effectively and equitably when leadership and decision-making structures deliberately enable the full participation of both men and women (**Etejere & Oluwalola**, 2021). Gender-balanced leadership is therefore not merely a question of representation but a strategic imperative for institutional performance, innovation, and long-term sustainability. Beyond leadership, my scholarship makes a compelling case for the intrinsic link between gender equality and student learning outcomes. In a study examining the role of education in changing pre-conceived gender stereotypes among secondary school students, **Etejere et al.** (2015) demonstrated that schooling can function as a transformative social force when curricula, pedagogy, and school culture actively promote gender equity. Students exposed to inclusive learning environments exhibited more egalitarian attitudes, higher levels of engagement, improved interpersonal relations, and enhanced academic participation, thereby confirming the broader educational value of gender-responsive pedagogy (**Etejere**, 2013).

Importantly, these findings resonate strongly with broader African and global research that links gender inequality in education to constrained human capital development and limited national competitiveness (Tamboura, Danadji, Ngaba &

Diallo, 2022; Akinwande, Turuc, Seraj & Ozdeser, 2025). Collectively, the evidence shows that gender inequality affects not only access to education, but also the quality of learning experiences, academic progression, labour market outcomes, and long-term career trajectories (**Etejere**, 2008; 2009; 2015).

Responding to the realities of an increasingly globalised and digitally driven education system, my research has also interrogated the intersection of gender, ICT, and globalisation. A study on ICT, gender, and globalisation in Nigeria revealed that unequal access to digital tools, training, and technological infrastructure disproportionately marginalises women within educational and professional spaces (**Etejere**, Sofoluwe & Onasanya, 2013). This digital divide restricts women's participation in research networks, limits scholarly visibility, and constrains engagement in global knowledge production, thereby reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies in new technological forms (**Etejere et al.**, 2013).

Building on this foundation, my more recent work on ICT-driven innovations for enhancing teachers' competencies highlighted the transformative potential of technology when access and capacity-building are equitably distributed (Adesina & **Etejere**, 2024). These findings reinforce the argument that technological advancement, when pursued without a gender lens, merely reproduces existing inequalities in digital form, whereas inclusive technological policies can function as powerful instruments of empowerment and professional advancement (**Etejere et al.**, 2013; Adesina & **Etejere**, 2024). Therefore, without deliberate and sustained efforts to close the technological gender gap, education systems cannot achieve global relevance, competitiveness, or long-term sustainability (**Etejere**, Sofoluwe & Onasanya, 2013; **Etejere et al.**, 2023).

My scholarship further recognises that gender inequality in education is deeply embedded within broader community, family, and cultural structures, which collectively shape access, participation, and educational outcomes for boys and girls. Empirical evidence demonstrates that deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms, patriarchal belief systems, and household labour expectations systematically disadvantage girls' educational trajectories, thereby reinforcing cycles of inequality across generations (**Etejere**, 2015). Research on youth empowerment

and entrepreneurial education further underscores the central role of education as a critical pathway for economic participation, self-reliance, and social mobility, particularly for girls and young women.

Empirical findings revealed that when education is aligned with entrepreneurial skill development, it enhances young people's capacity for innovation, employment generation, and sustainable livelihoods, thereby reducing gendered economic vulnerability (Sofoluwe & **Etejere**, 2011). These findings collectively highlighted that gender equality in education cannot be achieved solely through institutional reforms but requires broader socio-cultural transformation, community engagement, and policy interventions that address the structural roots of inequality.

In addition, analyses of socio-economic and cultural influences on girls' education revealed how poverty, parental education, community norms, and entrenched cultural expectations continue to shape access, retention, aspiration, and academic persistence (**Etejere**, 2008; 2015). These findings demonstrate that institutional reforms alone are insufficient without complementary shifts in family attitudes, community support systems, and societal value orientations. Thus, sustainable gender equality in education requires coordinated institutional reform alongside community-level and cultural transformation (**Etejere**, 2013; 2015).

By empirically demonstrating how gender equality influences leadership effectiveness, student outcomes, technological inclusion, and socio-economic development, my scholarship provides a critical analytical bridge between the diagnosis of gender disparities and the strategic interventions proposed in subsequent sections (**Etejere & Oluwalola**, 2021). In this way, the research moves the discourse beyond normative advocacy to evidence-driven, context-sensitive pathways for building a gender-responsive educational system capable of driving sustainable national development.

Two Wings, One Bird: Why Education Cannot Fly Without Gender Equality

Education is universally recognised as the engine of national development, social mobility, social cohesion, and human capital formation. It is through education that societies

transmit cultural values, cultivate intellectual and technical skills, nurture innovation, and prepare citizens for meaningful participation in economic, political, and civic life. Education shapes leadership quality, strengthens democratic institutions, reduces poverty, and determines a nation's competitiveness in a knowledge-driven global economy.

However, despite its transformative power, education cannot fulfil these roles in isolation from gender equality. The central argument of *“Two Wings, One Bird: Why Education Cannot Fly Without Gender Equality”* is clear and compelling: no system can soar when half of its strength is constrained. Just as a bird requires two balanced wings to rise, glide, and soar, an educational system requires the full, equitable, and sustained participation of both men and women to achieve optimal performance. If one wing is weakened through systemic exclusion, discrimination, structural barriers, or deeply rooted cultural stereotypes, the bird cannot fly. It may struggle, it may flap, it may attempt movement, but it cannot soar.

Likewise, when one gender is marginalised within educational systems, whether in access, leadership, professional development, research participation, or technological inclusion, the entire system becomes constrained. Education amid gender inequality is like a bird attempting to fly with one wing: imbalance replaces progress; limitation replaces excellence. My body of research consistently demonstrates that gender equality is not merely a moral aspiration or ethical obligation. It is a strategic necessity. It is a performance imperative. It is the second wing without which the bird of education remains grounded.

Gender-Responsive Leadership as a Pillar of Institutional Effectiveness

Leadership is the steering mechanism of any educational institution. Where leadership is inclusive, institutions thrive; where leadership is exclusionary, institutions stagnate. Studies on gender leadership practices and organisational outcomes demonstrate that inclusive, gender-responsive leadership significantly enhances institutional performance. For instance, **Etejere** and Oluwalola (2021) found out that administrators' gender leadership practices positively influenced teachers' job

performance, morale, and organisational commitment. Institutions that adopted inclusive leadership approaches experienced stronger collegial relationships, improved communication patterns, greater participatory governance, and heightened staff motivation.

These findings reinforce the thesis of “*Two Wings, One Bird: Why Education Cannot Fly Without Gender Equality*”. When leadership structures are gender-balanced and inclusive, educational institutions benefit from shared responsibility, professional trust, and collaborative problem-solving. Inclusive leadership reduces workplace conflict, promotes fairness, enhances transparency, and strengthens institutional stability. When both wings of leadership, male and female perspectives, operate in harmony, institutional flight becomes smoother, steadier, and more sustainable.

Challenging Stereotypes and Redefining Managerial Competence

Persistent stereotypes have historically equated leadership effectiveness with masculinity. However, empirical research dismantles this myth. Studies by **Etejere** and Ibrahim (2013) and **Etejere**, Shittu, and Ibrahim (2022) confirm that leadership competence is not biologically determined. Instead, it is shaped by administrative skills, emotional intelligence, communication ability, professional preparation, and organisational support systems.

Female educational leaders perform as effectively as their male counterparts when given equitable access to leadership opportunities, professional development, mentoring, and institutional backing. Indeed, many female leaders demonstrate transformational leadership qualities: empathy, collaboration, conflict mediation, team-building, and participatory decision-making, which enhance school climate and organisational cohesion.

Thus, “*Two Wings, One Bird: Why Education Cannot Fly Without Gender Equality*” becomes more than a metaphor; it becomes a corrective lens. Restricting women’s access to leadership does not strengthen institutions; it weakens them. It narrows the intellectual reservoir from which decisions are drawn. It limits innovation. It undermines governance. A bird with one wing clipped cannot reach its destination. An

educational system that excludes women from leadership cannot reach excellence.

Gender Equality, Teacher Motivation, and Organisational Performance

Educational quality is inseparable from teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment. No curriculum reform, technological intervention, or policy innovation can compensate for a demotivated workforce. Evidence from studies on welfare packages and job commitment (**Etejere**, Bello, & Abdulkareem, 2020) shows that inclusive and supportive work environments significantly enhance engagement, loyalty, and instructional effectiveness. Further research (Olaifa, Kayode, & **Etejere**, 2025) indicates that marginalisation, whether through inequitable promotion systems, limited access to professional development, or exclusion from decision-making, erodes morale and weakens institutional cohesion. When women are systematically sidelined, the institution loses productivity, creativity, and collective synergy. Organisational imbalance emerges. Trust deteriorates. Performance declines.

Gender, ICT, and Global Competitiveness

In the 21st century, education operates in a digital, globalised environment. Technological innovation in secondary schools, as highlighted by Oluwalola, Ogbudinkpa, Famaye, **Etejere**, and Ajiboye (2024), is indispensable for sustainable development in Nigeria. Technology is no longer optional; it is foundational. However, digital transformation without gender inclusion produces digital inequality. Research on gender, ICT, and globalisation (**Etejere**, Sofoluwe & Onasanya, 2013) underscores the consequences of limited access to ICT among female educators. Restricted digital access diminishes research productivity, curtails academic networking, limits global collaboration, and weakens institutional competitiveness. In a knowledge economy, digital exclusion becomes academic invisibility.

Nnaka (2014) further argues that sidelining women in technological advancement restricts a nation's capacity for innovation and adaptation. When women are excluded from digital ecosystems, the educational bird loses aerodynamic

balance in the global knowledge space. Conversely, when institutions deliberately ensure equitable access to ICT training, infrastructure, research funding, and innovation platforms, the results are transformative. Creativity expands. Research output increases. International partnerships strengthen. Global engagement deepens. Thus, “*Two Wings, One Bird: Why Education Cannot Fly Without Gender Equality*” applies equally to digital inclusion. Without technological equity, education remains grounded in a rapidly advancing world.

Gender Equality as the Foundation of Sustainable Development

Education is central to achieving sustainable development goals, fostering social justice, and promoting national progress. However, sustainable development cannot be built upon structural imbalance. Gender inequality systematically undermines leadership effectiveness, organisational performance, policy implementation, and national productivity. Education cannot operate at full capacity when half of its intellectual and professional workforce is underutilised, constrained, or silenced (Etejere *et al.*, 2023).

Gender equality is not an optional reform. It is not symbolic compliance. It is not institutional charity. It is a structural necessity. Deliberate gender mainstreaming policies, equitable recruitment and promotion systems, inclusive leadership development programmes, digital empowerment initiatives, and institutional accountability mechanisms are not peripheral strategies; they are flight mechanisms. When both wings, men and women, are equally empowered, education gains balance. It gains strength. It gains lift. It gains direction.

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, The message of “*Two Wings, One Bird: Why Education Cannot Fly Without Gender Equality*” is unmistakable. Education cannot fly with one wing. It cannot glide toward excellence while carrying a structural imbalance. It cannot drive national development while excluding half of its human capital. When gender equality is institutionalised rather than merely proclaimed, education fulfils its transformative mandate. It becomes more innovative, more inclusive, more resilient, and more globally competitive. The message must continue to resonate: “*Two Wings, One Bird: Why Education Cannot Fly Without Gender Equality*”.

Whenever leadership is monopolised by one gender, the bird tilts.

Whenever women are denied promotion, the bird descends.

Whenever digital access is unequal, the bird falters.

Whenever stereotypes override competence, the bird struggles.

However, when opportunity is balanced, when participation is inclusive, when leadership is equitable, the bird rises and education soars. Moreover, with it, society advances toward sustainable development, social justice, and enduring national transformation.

Barriers that Clip the Wings: Realities Hindering Gender Equality

Despite growing awareness of the importance of gender equality in education, numerous structural and cultural barriers continue to hinder the educational bird's ability to achieve stable and sustained flight. These barriers are often interconnected, deeply embedded, and sometimes subtle, yet their combined effect significantly undermines educational effectiveness and leadership development.

One of the most enduring barriers to gender equality in education is the persistence of cultural stereotypes and patriarchal norms (Edinoh, Asemota, Oche & Adesola, 2025). In many societies, including Nigeria, leadership, authority, and decision-making are traditionally associated with men, while women are expected to prioritise domestic responsibilities. These social expectations shape educational aspirations, career choices, and leadership trajectories from an early age. Such stereotypes influence subject selection, participation in academic discourse, and perceptions of leadership competence. Girls and women who aspire to leadership roles in education often face societal resistance that their male counterparts do not. These norms weaken one wing of the educational bird long before it attempts to fly.

Although women constitute a significant proportion of the teaching workforce, they remain underrepresented in school leadership and educational management positions (Ogunode & Salman, 2023). This disparity is not a reflection of limited

competence but of restricted access to leadership pipelines, mentorship opportunities, and decision-making platforms. The absence of women in leadership roles has far-reaching implications. It limits diversity in leadership perspectives, reduces role models for female students and early-career academics, and perpetuates the misconception that leadership is inherently masculine. An educational system that excludes women from leadership effectively denies itself the full strength of one wing.

The academic profession places high demands on time, productivity, and mobility. For many women, particularly in higher education, these demands intersect with societal expectations of care-giving, motherhood, and family management. The lack of flexible work arrangements, childcare support, and family-friendly policies disproportionately affects women's career progression. As a result, women are more likely to experience career interruptions, slower promotion rates, and burnout (Olaifa, Kayode & **Etejere**, 2025). These challenges do not reflect a lack of commitment or capability but rather systemic conditions that fail to accommodate the realities of women's lives. When institutions ignore work-life balance, they effectively constrain one wing while expecting the bird to soar.

Access to funding, research grants, digital tools, and information and communication technology remains unevenly distributed along gender lines. Limited access to ICT infrastructure and training restricts women's research productivity, global visibility, and participation in knowledge networks, particularly in an increasingly digital academic environment (**Etejere et al.**, 2013). Additionally, gender policies within educational institutions often suffer from weak implementation, inadequate funding, or poor monitoring. Policies that exist only on paper cannot strengthen the wings of education. Without intentional investment and accountability, gender equality initiatives remain symbolic rather than transformative.

Perhaps the most challenging barrier to confront is subtle or covert institutional discrimination, which operates through informal yet powerful organisational mechanisms. Empirical research demonstrates that such discrimination includes biased recruitment and promotion practices, exclusion from informal academic and leadership networks, differential performance

expectations, and the systematic undervaluing of women’s scholarly contributions (Etejere, 2013). Unlike overt forms of discrimination, these practices are often normalised within institutional cultures, making them less visible and therefore more difficult to challenge or reform (Etejere, 2013). Organisational studies further reveal that these covert biases gradually erode women’s professional confidence, restrict access to career-enhancing opportunities, and reinforce entrenched gender hierarchies within educational institutions (Etejere *et al.*, 2023). Though less visible, their cumulative impact is profound, quietly weakening one wing of the educational system over time.

Etejere *et al.* (2023) studied how to bridge gender disparities in the teaching profession in tertiary institutions to address globalisation. The study revealed that the percentage of female lecturers in tertiary institutions in Kwara State is much lower than that of male lecturers over the 8 years considered. Although the gender distribution was very pronounced, it was about 55% for male lecturers with a range of 1,987 to 3,623 male lecturers, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Gender Distribution of Tertiary Institution Lecturers in Kwara State (2014-2022)*

Session	Male(Y)	%	Female(X)	%	Total	Y-X	%
2014/15	1 623	78	463	22	2 086	1 160	56
2015/16	1 559	79	428	22	1 987	1 131	57
2016/17	1 877	77	563	23	2 440	1 314	54
2017/18	1 868	76	576	24	2 444	1 292	53
2018/19	2 012	75	683	25	2 695	1 329	49
2019/20	2 025	72	794	28	2 819	1 231	43
2020/21	2 367	75	801	25	3 168	1 566	49
2021/22	2 801	77	822	23	3 623	1 979	55
Total	6 927	77	2 030	23	8 957	4 897	55

Etejere *et al.* (2023)

The analysis in Table 1 is presented in a group bar chart in Figure 1 to have a pictorial presentation and description of the gender distribution of tertiary institution teachers.

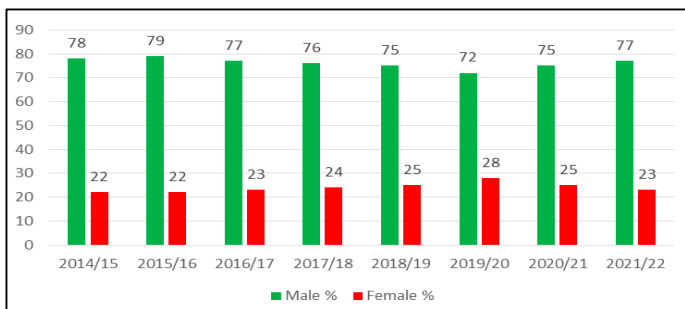


Fig. 1: A Group Bar Chart showing the Gender Distribution of all Selected Tertiary Institution Lecturers in Kwara State

To ascertain the factors responsible for the gender gap in tertiary institutions in Kwara State, a qualitative study was conducted involving 22 participants (15 females and 7 males). Males were included to provide a holistic perspective on the factors underlying the lower number of female teachers in higher institutions compared to secondary schools. Also, of the 22 participants, 21 were married and one was single. The qualitative data yielded the following themes as factors responsible for gender imbalances in tertiary education in Kwara State: marital factors, personal factors, qualifications, financial factors, societal factors, and religious factors, among others. Please, note that pseudonyms (fictitious names) were used in this study.

Marital Factors: Responses indicated that most females who prefer to teach at the secondary school level over tertiary institutions do so for marital reasons, despite their educational qualifications. These reasons include care for their homes, time for their family, husband’s decisions, and individual family differences. Prominent among these reasons is the care of their homes.

Care of their Homes: Most respondents noted the role of females in caring for the home hindered them from furthering their education. Hence, they are limited to secondary schools. Mrs. Fehintola stated, “Females usually find themselves tied down by family problems like childbearing, caring for the home, the husband, and other family members.”

There are husbands who, according to Mrs. Gidado, *will say ah you should go for teaching with this your NCE because you will be able to take care of the house, take care of my children, look after their house and look after everybody in their house.*

Supporting these views, Dr. Sam, a lecturer in one of the tertiary institutions, explained that:

at the lower level, that is, primary and secondary level of education, females have free time to attend to their nuclear families, and after work, the female teachers will, want to go home, attend to their families and do domestic stuff.

In the words of Mrs. Amoke, females have the mentality that teaching at the lower level of education will “help them to manage their home and take care of their children”. It is clear from the responses that females are saddled with the care of their homes, perhaps due to societal expectations, personal passion, or family agreement. This factor tends to hinder their passion for teaching in higher institutions, as they may need more time at home for tertiary institution jobs.

Time Factor: A corollary to the home care factor is the natural desire of some females to take up employment that will give them ample time for the home. Respondents expressed their view that most females prefer secondary school teaching to a tertiary institution because according to Mrs. Sade,

The teacher closes at 2 or 3 O'clock, in that definite time, she can attend to her family, but at the tertiary level, you do not have space. The time is choked.” Mrs. Sade explained that teaching at a secondary school “allows women to have time for themselves; it is not a kind of rigorous profession, you have time.

According to her, after the school closes for the day, such a woman will have time to go and do other things. Mrs. Adeyinka, backing this view, said that teaching in secondary school will give females enough

time for the children and the family, but in the higher institution, they may be closing at late hour, but teaching

in secondary school, primary school, they close by two and so you will have time for the children.

From the preceding, it can be deduced that time for self and family can be a mitigating factor against female lecturing in tertiary institutions.

Husband's Decision: In Africa, it is culturally believed that the husband is the head of the home, and his decisions are based on the family members (Akinola, 2018; Arekapudi & Manzoni, 2022). Hence, some women who aspire to further their education and secure employment at tertiary institutions may be prevented from doing so by their husbands. This may be because such husbands felt teaching at a lower level of education would give their wives ample time at home.

Sharing her experience with one of the interviewees, Dr Owolabi said:

Even like my own husband when we got married. I did not even know that what he had in mind for me was teaching. For me to go into teaching, he does not want his wife doing 'yes, sir' to anybody in the office. I never knew that. So also the mind of many men; they want their wives to themselves so that they can take good care of their children at home. As a teacher and a woman, you will have enough time for your husband and children.

In the words of Dr. Deborah, a lecturer at one of the tertiary institutions, “*At times they [female] have aspirations to do all these things, but the husband may not be supportive*”. Unsupportive husbands may be because the husband is “*jealous that she is competing with his tertiary education, which is meant for the husband*”. Seven respondents noted the lack of husbands’ support as one of the factors responsible for women’s concentration in secondary schools. However, most of the respondents mentioned it passively.

Extended Family View: Aside from the husband and children, extended family members may oppose women pursuing higher qualifications or higher education, or engaging in teaching. In African family settings, the nuclear family is rarely separated from the extended family. Hence, some husbands make decisions based on the extended family’s view. Dr. Agbenike mentioned

that “at one time, they [female] have aspirations to do all these things, but the husband might not be supportive ...” She further explained that this might be because “the in-laws are jealous that, why is she competing with the husband? Tertiary education is meant for the husband”.

Qualification Factor: Higher education is a significant requirement for teaching in a tertiary institution. According to Mrs. Yetunde, a secondary school teacher, there is an educational level required “to teach in a tertiary institution ... most women have acquired their Grade two, NCE, Degree, most people stop at that. Only very few go for their masters”.

Supporting this view, a female lecturer, Owolabi, stated that “teaching at the tertiary level requires attending higher institutions for training and further reading”. Hence, most females cannot be employed in tertiary institutions because they do not have the required qualifications. Some of the respondents referred to this as an inadequate qualification for females.

A teacher, M. Moshood, stated that, “it is very few women that go beyond maybe their first degree now, and that has limited them to ... the level or the position where they can teach”. Therefore, some females were forced to concentrate on teaching in secondary schools because of their inadequate qualifications.

Financial Factor: Another germane factor raised by the respondents, which can also be linked to inadequate qualification, is inadequate funds. Some women who want to further their education need more funding.

In the words of Mrs. Alabi (a teacher), one of the respondents,

Some women want and have an interest in becoming a professor, in becoming a doctor, but once they don't have the financial capacity to further their education, they will just be in one school teaching.

Dr. Deborah, a lecturer, also pointed out that further education “entails much money, so most women are incapacitated due to lack of finances to further their education”. This may partly be “because the government pays teachers like labourers, so their salary is not even enough for them to save, let alone

saying they want to further their education”. Some husbands would have sponsored them, but needed more funds to do so.

Mrs. Adeyinka, a secondary school teacher, referred to the situation in the country and explained that it might be challenging for a family man to sponsor his wife's education, as they need to cater for their children first. Mrs. Gidado, a secondary school teacher, expressed her view that:

Some parents do not have the money. They are not all that buoyant to send their children to the university, so they will prefer their daughter go to the colleges of education because of financial problems, because the money is not all that there.

Peculiarity of Working in Tertiary Institutions: Some females dread lecturing in higher institutions because of the professional hazards and academic rigour. A lecturer, Dr. Bukola, mentioned that “*lecturing at a tertiary institution is more hazardous than teaching at the secondary school level*”. She explained further that cultism, gangsterism, and hooliganism are rampant on campuses more than in secondary schools. Fear of being in such an environment may limit some females from seeking employment at tertiary institutions. Another aspect is the issue of academic rigour in tertiary institutions.

Mrs. Owolabi, sharing her experience, said that because of the academic rigour, “*there are times you don't even have time for yourself, except you try to create one. You have to be loaded with much work, many jobs, a lot of things.*”

Her experience aligns with Dr. Sam's assertion that the rigour in a tertiary institution is enormous, including writing papers for promotion, attending departmental meetings, giving lectures at any time, and other duties. All these factors may discourage females from working in tertiary institutions, whose primary aim is the care of their homes.

Negative Notions about the Teaching Profession: Responses generated revealed negative perceptions of teaching in secondary or primary schools, which may make men detest such appointments. Dr James, a lecturer, said, “*Teaching in secondary schools is regarded as low-grade and low-income. Also, the cultural perception of females as weaker vessels meant to do*

work with less rigour has caused some females to concentrate in secondary school rather than progress to tertiary institutions”.

This notion also affected some parents who would not want their male children to be engaged in such a profession.

Religious Factor: Respondents mentioned that religious beliefs uphold the view that females are meant to stay at home or do work that will not be so demanding so that they can have time for their families. All the factors mentioned above are interconnected; severing them from one another may be difficult. This is because a married woman cumbered with the care of her home may need the opportunity to further her education. Hence, inadequate qualifications quench the ambition or passion of such a woman to lecture in a tertiary institution.

Personal Factor: The individual’s positive and negative decisions also affect their profession. The responses generated showed some positive personal factors, which include female passion for teaching; ability to sit for a long time with children; child-friendliness; and the nature of the teaching job. Negative personal factors were also generated, such as inferiority complex; phobia of lecturing; inadequate personal capability; male lack of interest in teaching; and lack of ambition.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, in sum, these barriers (cultural, structural, institutional, and systemic) do not merely inconvenience women; they compromise the effectiveness and sustainability of education itself. An educational system burdened by clipped wings cannot fly far, no matter how ambitious its goals. Addressing these barriers is therefore not only a matter of justice but also a strategic imperative for educational development.

Reconstructing the Wings: Strategies for Strengthening Gender Equality in Education

If education is to fly effectively, deliberate efforts must be made to strengthen both wings through intentional, evidence-based, and sustainable strategies. My research across educational management, leadership, quality assurance, and gender studies provides a strong empirical foundation for proposing practical pathways towards gender equality in Nigerian education. Gender equality must be institutionalised within educational policy

frameworks rather than treated as an optional add-on. Findings from studies on quality assurance, management effectiveness, and university goal achievement emphasise the need for enforceable, adequately funded, and regularly evaluated policies (**Etejere et al.**, 2020; **Etejere & Shittu**, 2019). Gender-responsive policies should include affirmative action measures that promote balanced representation in leadership positions, transparent recruitment and promotion processes, and gender-sensitive budgeting at all levels of education. Additionally, educational planning frameworks should integrate gender indicators into monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure accountability. Without such structural mechanisms, gender equality initiatives risk remaining symbolic rather than transformative.

Leadership remains a critical lever for advancing gender equality in education. My studies on gender and managerial effectiveness, as well as administrators' gender leadership practices, demonstrate that leadership effectiveness is shaped by inclusive practices rather than gender identity (**Etejere & Ibrahim**, 2013; **Etejere & Oluwalola**, 2021). Educational institutions should, therefore, prioritise leadership development programmes that promote participatory decision-making, fairness, empathy, and accountability. Mentorship structures should be strengthened to support aspiring female leaders, particularly within universities and colleges of education. Such initiatives can help dismantle the 'glass ceiling' that continues to limit women's progression into senior academic and administrative roles.

Gender equality must also be embedded within classroom practices and school cultures. Evidence from **Etejere et al.** (2015) on the role of education in changing preconceived gender stereotypes among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis shows that schools play a significant role in either reinforcing or challenging preconceived gender stereotypes among students. Gender-sensitive pedagogy, inclusive curricula, and unbiased assessment practices are essential for fostering equitable learning environments. Teachers should be trained to recognise and address subtle forms of gender bias in classroom interaction, subject allocation, and student evaluation. Creating

safe, inclusive, and supportive school climates enhances girls' retention, confidence, and academic performance, while also benefiting male students.

In a globalised and technology-driven educational landscape, access to ICT is no longer optional. My research on ICT, gender, and globalisation highlights how unequal access to technology disproportionately limits women's professional growth and leadership capacity (**Etejere**, Sofoluwe, & Onasanya, 2013). Targeted ICT training programmes for female teachers, administrators, and students are, therefore, essential. Institutions should invest in digital infrastructure and capacity-building initiatives specifically aimed at closing the digital gender gap. Such efforts will enhance women's participation in research, innovation, and global academic networks.

Another critical strategy involves addressing structural constraints that disproportionately affect women in the educational system. Research on welfare packages, job commitment, and productivity underscores the importance of supportive work environments in enhancing staff effectiveness (**Etejere**, Bello, & Abdulkareem, 2020). Flexible work arrangements, childcare support services, and equitable workload distribution can significantly improve women's retention and advancement in academia. By recognising and accommodating the dual professional and domestic roles often borne by women, educational institutions can harness the full potential of their workforce.

Gender equality in education cannot be achieved solely through institutional reforms; it requires broader societal engagement. My study on gender stereotyping and educational development emphasises the influence of family and community attitudes on educational outcomes (**Etejere et al.**, 2015). Educational institutions must therefore collaborate with parents, religious bodies, traditional leaders, and civil society organisations to challenge cultural norms that devalue female education. Community-based sensitisation programmes can help reposition education as a shared social investment rather than a gendered privilege.

Sustainable gender equality efforts must be guided by continuous research and data-driven decision-making. My

extensive empirical work demonstrates the power of research in shaping educational policy and practice across Nigeria’s educational system. Institutions should support gender-focused research, data collection, and dissemination to inform policy reforms and institutional strategies (Etejere, 2008; Etejere, 2009). By grounding interventions in evidence, educational planners and managers can design solutions that are contextually relevant, effective, and sustainable.

In Etejere *et al.* (2023), a study that examined gender disparities in the teaching profession in tertiary institutions for globalisation, the responses to the qualitative data identified how gender balance in tertiary institutions can be actualised for globalisation in Kwara State, Nigeria. The respondents identified various factors essential to achieving gender balance in tertiary institutions. The identified factors are personal solutions, family support, public awareness and government support. These are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

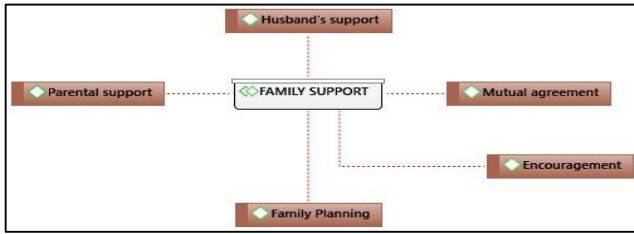


Fig. 2: Family Support to Close the Gap between Male and Female Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions (Etejere *et al.*, 2023)

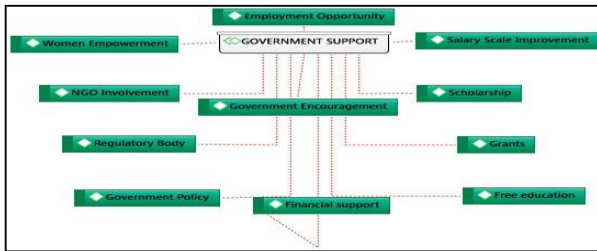


Fig. 3: Government Support as a Way of Balancing Gender Inequality in Tertiary Institutions (Etejere *et al.*, 2023)

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, when both wings are strengthened, when men and women experience fairness, opportunity, and recognition, institutions gain psychological safety, mutual respect, and shared accountability. Productivity rises. Innovation increases, and commitment deepens. This is the operational truth at the heart of *Two Wings, One Bird: Why Education Cannot Fly Without Gender Equality*: educational excellence requires balanced utilisation of human capital.

Contribution to Knowledge

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, over the course of my academic career spanning two decades in this “*Better by Far*” University, my scholarly engagements have consistently focused on advancing knowledge in educational management, with particular emphasis on gender studies, higher education governance, quality assurance, and information and communication technology (ICT) in educational system. My research trajectory reflects a sustained commitment to generating empirical evidence that informs policy, improves institutional practice, and enhances educational outcomes across diverse contexts.

Studies on Gender and Education

My early research interrogated the structural and socio-cultural barriers limiting female participation in postgraduate education in Nigerian universities. In one of my foundational studies, **Etejere** (2008) identified spousal support, time constraints, financial challenges, and fear of delayed completion as the principal factors contributing to attrition among female postgraduate students. This study underscored the need for targeted financial support mechanisms, including bursaries and scholarships, to promote women’s access to advanced education. Extending this line of inquiry, **Etejere** (2009) examined the demographic profiles of female postgraduate students, revealing that most were self-sponsored, employed, and married, with education emerging as the dominant field of study. The findings highlighted the urgency of early academic mentoring and policy-driven encouragement to nurture postgraduate aspirations among female undergraduates, while also recommending improved data

management practices by regulatory bodies such as the National Universities Commission.

According to **Etejere**, Sofoluwe and Onasanya (2013), gender inequalities persist because they are supported by social norms and legal institutions, by households' choices and behaviours, and by regulations and incentives that shape how economies function. In a study on ICT, gender, and globalisation in Nigeria, it was observed that women face major challenges as a result of changes in the world economy arising from rapid globalisation, fast-paced technological processes, and the growing information economy of work. The full maximisation of the twin benefits of globalisation and ICT opportunities would have far-reaching positive effects on the income-earning potential of Nigerian women. Consequently, **Etejere et al.** (2013) felt that creating an enabling environment for the literate woman to find her niche in the ICT domain will not only empower her but also ensure that she contributes positively to the comfort of her family and community. The study recommended that efforts should be geared towards increasing access to ICT education, removing socio-cultural norms that discourage women from studying science and technology, and removing stereotypical attitudes that women have towards ICT jobs.

History has shown that men consider themselves stronger than women. This opinion has been creating a lot of problems, such as gender inequality, where men and women are subjected to different roles and functions, based on the belief that men are stronger than women. It should be noted that gender roles are defined by behaviours, whereas gender stereotypes are beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity. These are social differences between women and men that have been learned over time and may vary across cultures, rather than biological characteristics that differentiate people as males or females (Commonwealth Secretariat, in **Etejere**, Oniyangi, Olanrewaju, Azeez & Amana, 2015). Thus, in a study aimed at investigating the role of education in effecting changes in pre-conceived gender stereotyping, **Etejere et al.** (2015) found that parental home training, schools, and the curriculum could affect changes in pre-conceived gender stereotyping among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. It was recommended that

teachers and teacher educators should be exposed to a comprehensive training on strategies that have to do with effecting changes in gender stereotyping in secondary schools. Policy-makers on gender should not treat men and women, boys and girls as homogenous groups in policy terms when preparing the curriculum for schools.

In a more recent study, **Etejere** and Oluwalola (2021) opined that the leadership pattern of the school administrator shapes the tone of administration in the school system, adding that gender has been known to be a variable that may or may not influence the way schools are governed. They, therefore, investigated administrators' gender, leadership practices, and teachers' job performance in Ilorin South Senatorial District secondary schools in Kwara State. The study affirmed that an administrator must not only be a motivator but an inspirer, and he must have the ability to listen to colleagues and subordinates in order to accomplish objectives. This implies that both male and female administrators are bound to function equally in such capacities and they should be viewed as people who have the potentials to assume leadership possibilities. The study found out that instructional supervision was the predominant administrators' gender leadership practice in Ilorin South Senatorial District of Kwara State. Other administrators' gender leadership practices were teamwork and strategic planning.

In the secondary school system, the principalship position is important and it ensures the attainment of the goals and objectives of the school. Some people have the notion that it is only a certain type of gender that can lead an organisation successfully. They believe that women are weaker leaders; while the men are in the best position to lead. **Etejere**, Shittu and Ibrahim (2022), therefore, set out to investigate principals' gender and managerial effectiveness in Kwara State secondary schools. In other words, they examined the difference between male and female principals with respect to managerial effectiveness in Kwara State secondary schools. The findings of the study showed a significant difference between male and female principals on the basis of managerial effectiveness. One of the recommendations of the study was that school principals should endeavour to adopt effective leadership style based on the

situation in the school system. Members of staff should give equal support and co-operation to their principals, irrespective of the gender of the principal.

In Nigeria, there are more women in the teaching profession at the lower levels (primary and secondary) of education than in tertiary institutions. To support this assertion, **Etejere**, Oluwalola, Awodiji, and Sagaya (2023) examined the gender distribution rate of teachers in secondary and tertiary institutions and the factors that caused differences in gender balance at tertiary institutions using mixed-method research. The results showed that the rate of female teachers outweighed their male counterparts in secondary schools, while male lecturers outnumbered female lecturers by 54.67% at the tertiary level. Lack of ambition to aspire higher, as well as societal perspectives and marriage, among others, were found to be factors responsible for the low rate of female lecturers in tertiary institutions. The study recommended that educational policy makers should ensure that tertiary institutions increase the percentage of women in their academic recruitment.

Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness

Quality assurance has been another critical area of my research, focusing on strengthening institutional and national frameworks. **Etejere** (2012) examined the challenges and prospects of quality assurance in Nigerian universities, identifying insufficient funding, limited capacity development, and misalignment of accreditation standards with labor market needs. Recommendations included adopting global benchmarks, establishing internal quality assurance units, and implementing communication strategies to enhance public understanding of institutional quality processes. Expanding on this, Abdulkareem, Ogundele, and **Etejere** (2012) investigated the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and quality assurance in private secondary schools, revealing a significant positive relationship. The study highlighted the need for improved working conditions, recognition, and compliance with quality standards to enhance teacher retention and educational outcomes.

Furthermore, **Etejere**, Shittu, and Eniola-Arigbe (2020) examined the relationship between internal quality assurance and

teacher productivity in public secondary schools. Their findings underscored that systematic internal quality assurance fosters higher productivity among teachers. Recommendations included continuous professional development, workshops, and exposure to modern teaching practices, ensuring teachers can deliver high-quality instruction and achieve institutional goals. Through these studies, it becomes evident that quality assurance is not merely a compliance exercise, but a strategic lever for improving teaching quality, institutional accountability, and student outcomes.

Higher Education, Governance and Development

In higher education, my research has concentrated on governance, management, and university-industry collaboration, recognizing their impact on institutional effectiveness and national development. **Etejere**, Aburime, Aliyu, and Jekayinfa (2017) examined the roles of governance and management in the university system as they relate to West African universities. They recommended that West African universities establish special committees tasked with working with the universities' governing councils to review the university's mission and strategic directions and to determine major policies related to the allocation and deployment of resources.

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, an interesting concept that caught my attention in my academic journey was the concept of university-industry collaboration. This is a concept used to describe the alliances, linkages, partnerships, or interactions between universities and relevant industries. It is a vital instrument for achieving university goals, which can be achieved through collaborative research, students' industrial training, and support for developmental projects. Thus, **Etejere**, Eniola-Arigbe, and Ogunniyi (2019) looked into the challenges and prospects of university-industry collaboration in Ondo State. The paper affirmed that universities and industries are two different types of organisation.

Therefore, differences in their organisational cultures, nature, values, and goals have become hindrances to effective collaboration between them. Other challenges identified include a lack of trust and confidence on the part of industry in higher education institutions as potential partners, and poor governance.

The study recommended that the government should encourage universities to create an enabling environment for effective university-industry collaboration by looking at the profitability to both parties and organising appropriate means of interaction, such as seminars, workshops and conferences.

Having recognised that entrepreneurship could also be defined as the ability to engage in risky ventures for profitable outcomes, Sofoluwe and **Etejere** (2011) set out to determine the relationship between tertiary education and entrepreneurship. The study revealed a significant relationship between tertiary education and entrepreneurship, suggesting that acquiring knowledge and skills in tertiary institutions can help graduates pursue entrepreneurship after completing their studies. The study recommended that the linkage between employers of labour and tertiary institutions should be strengthened to allow the former to establish job requirements and employability skills for the latter.

Motivation is crucial to determining educational outcomes. This is because motivated lecturers are more likely to be committed to student educational development and the attainment of educational goals. It is against this backdrop that Fasasi, **Etejere**, and Oyeniran (2016) examined the factors influencing lecturers' motivation towards maximum job performance in Nigerian higher education institutions. The study revealed that variables such as job satisfaction, supervision, work conditions, recognition, promotion, goal setting, and decision-making could impact academic staff motivation if they are given attention by institutional heads. The study recommended that administrators should not always wait for workers' unions to embark on industrial action before putting in place motivational packages.

It is worth noting that higher education must inculcate in learners the skills required to survive in the knowledge economy, since skill acquisition is the order of the day (Fasasi, **Etejere** & Oyeniran, 2013). Thus, in response to the need to position higher education in Nigeria to meet the challenges of the knowledge-driven economy, Fasasi, **Etejere** and Oyeniran (2013) advocated the introduction of new programmes that would equip learners to be relevant in the knowledge – driven economy and that teaching in higher institutions should focus on the need to nurture the

culture of problem identification and think through its solution in the students. With a view to examining the contribution of university privatisation to social segregation in Nigeria, Amali, Bello, and **Etejere** (2013) conducted a study involving lecturers from private universities in Abuja, FCT, Kwara, and Adamawa States. It was discovered that private universities have contributed in no small measure to inequality among social classes. The study recommended intensifying efforts to ensure that private universities are regulated in areas such as fees and other costs, so that the general public can also have the opportunity to attend such schools.

Students' support services are the determinants of administrative effectiveness in tertiary institutions. To test this assertion, **Etejere**, Shittu, and Ajagbe (2021) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between these two variables in colleges of education in Oyo State. The study revealed a significant relationship between students' support services and administrative effectiveness in colleges of education, with moderate support services and high administrative effectiveness. It was recommended that the level of success for students for students in colleges of education in Oyo State could be improved through public-private partnerships to enhance administrative effectiveness.

Information and Communication Technology in Education

Recognising the transformative role of ICT, my work explored how technology can enhance teaching, learning, and administrative efficiency. **Etejere** (2007) examined ICT in technological education, highlighting its potential to equip students with critical skills for modern industries. The study noted that students could benefit from knowledge of ICT tools and practices embedded in their technology-based courses, as well as from the acquisition of relevant skills for using these technologies, to facilitate the attainment of educational goals. The study recommended that more emphasis should be placed on technological education at all levels of education in Nigeria and that every Nigerian school or institution should have a computer laboratory where all students and pupils are exposed to the study and use of ICT tools and practices.

Etejere and Ogundele (2008) investigated the relationship between ICT and the administrative effectiveness of Nigerian distance education. They recommended that distance education centre coordinators and facilitators should be trained and retrained in the use of modern ICT equipment and facilities. Alabi, **Etejere** and Onasanya (2011) conducted a study on multimedia and the management of open and distance learning for teacher education. They explored the benefits of the integrated multimedia model's principles in the management of open and distance learning. They recommended that relevant course-writing workshops and retreats should be organised to acquaint writers with the details of course content standards, duration, and related matters. Also, as a form of motivation for staff who are essentially the instructors, the materials developed by course writers could be recognised as academic publications for staff appraisal purposes.

Etejere, Sofuluwe and Onasanya (2013) also discussed the issue of gender inequalities in education, which has often given rise to the marginalisation of the girl-child in some situations. In a paper titled 'ICT, Gender and Globalisation in Nigeria', they focused on the relevance of ICT for bridging the gender gap in the era of globalisation. Among others, they recommended that the Nigerian government and the management of each institution should encourage the spread of ICT and increase its availability, accessibility and usage by women academics, thereby reducing the gender gap in ICT engagement.

For schools to be effective, computer literacy should be demonstrated through computer availability, computer utilisation, and content competencies for effective record-keeping, computer-assisted instruction and communication in schools. Thus, Ogundele and **Etejere** (2013) investigated the relationship between computer literacy and secondary school teachers' job effectiveness in Kwara State. The study found a strong, positive, and significant relationship between computer literacy and teachers' effectiveness in secondary schools in Kwara State, suggesting that knowledge and use of computers will facilitate the teaching-learning process, thereby enhancing teachers' job effectiveness. The study thus recommended that

compulsory computer education be introduced for secondary school teachers in Kwara State and that educational resource centres be established in every local government area of the State.

The study by Adesina and **Etejere** (2024) focused on enhancing public school teachers' competencies and entrepreneurial skills through ICT in Kwara State. It was discovered that there was a significant relationship between ICT usage and the development of entrepreneurial skills among teachers. This implies that teachers who utilise ICT are more likely to enhance their entrepreneurial skills. It also shows the critical role of technology in professional development and skill acquisition. The study recommended that in addition to training Kwara State secondary school teachers in ICT programmes, there should be comprehensive support systems, such as government grants, partnerships with NGOs, or teacher-focused financial literacy programmes, access to funding, mentorship and market opportunities, to help teachers translate their entrepreneurial skills into increased financial capability.

Supervision, Mentorship, and Academic Service

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, in addition to research, I have dedicated myself to mentorship and capacity building. I have supervised over 200 undergraduate projects, 27 Master's dissertations, one M.Phil, and four Ph.D. theses, and served as Internal and External examiner across multiple institutions, including Al-Hikmah University and Kwara State University, Malete. This work reflects my commitment to developing the next generation of educational leaders and researchers, ensuring a sustainable impact on the Nigerian education sector.

Responsibilities and Community Service

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, over the past two decades, I have served in the following capacities:

Main University System

1. Acting Director, Centre for Supportive Services for the Deaf (2018–2020) – now the Centre for Students with Special Needs
2. Member, Unilorin SERVICOM Committee (2017–2018)

3. Chairman, Zone 4 Committee (KEEP UNILORIN GREEN PROJECT) (2008–2011)

Faculty of Education

4. Faculty Representative, Business Committee of Senate (2018–2020)
5. Member, Faculty of Education Ethical Committee (2022–2024)
6. Member, Faculty of Education Postgraduate Committee (2014–till date)
7. Member, Faculty of Education Dress Code Committee (2013–2015)
8. Faculty of Education Representative, Ceremonials Committee (2014–2015)
9. Secretary, Faculty of Education Retreat (Technical Committee) (2009)
10. Member, Faculty of Education Screening Committee (2009–2013)
11. Member, Faculty of Education Transportation Committee (2008–2015)
12. Faculty of Education Representative on Faculty of Science Board of Examiners (2008–2015)
13. Member, Faculty of Education Environmental Sanitation Task Force (2007–2015)

Department of Educational Management

14. Head, Department of Educational Management (2024 - 2025)
15. Co-ordinator, Postgraduate Programmes, Department of Educational Management (2017–2018)
16. Chairman, Undergraduate Programmes Review Committee (2017–2018)
17. Sandwich Programme Coordinator (M. Ed Educational Management) (2014–2015)
18. Co-ordinator, Postgraduate Seminar (2012–2015)
19. Member, Examination Committee (2008–2013)
20. Member, Departmental Welfare Committee (2008–2015)
21. Seminar Reporter (2006–2015)
22. Academic Staff Secretary (2006–2013)
23. Level Adviser (2005–2012)

Community Responsibilities

1. Patroness, The Girls' Brigade, Nigeria, UMCA Chapel Tanke District, Ilorin (2016-date)
2. Member, Ladies Fellowship of UMCA Chapel Tanke, Ilorin (2006-date)
3. Member, Eastern Reservoir Community, Tanke, Ilorin (2018-date)
4. Member, Zone K House Fellowship Group (UMCA Chapel), Tanke, Ilorin (2021-date)

Conclusion

The Vice-Chancellor Sir, a gender-responsive educational system is a collective responsibility that extends beyond the classroom and campus. When policymakers provide enabling frameworks, educational managers foster inclusive institutions, and families and communities nurture equitable values, education gains the balance and strength required for sustainable national development. Only then can both wings move in harmony, and only then can education truly fly.

Recommendations

Mr. Vice Chancellor, I stand to declare that if education has to fly effectively, we all must make intentional efforts, in our own little way, to make things work for the female folk. In the light of this lecture, the following recommendations are hereby proposed for future action:

1. *Establishment of a gender-responsive educational system*: Universities, colleges, and secondary schools should be seen as inclusive spaces where access, participation, achievement, and leadership opportunities are equitably distributed. Such institutions are characterised by gender-sensitive curricula, inclusive leadership structures, and learning environments that actively challenge stereotypes rather than reinforce them.
2. *Formulation of gender-responsive policies*: Gender-responsive policies must be clearly articulated, adequately funded, and rigorously monitored. Gender-disaggregated data should inform educational planning,

budgeting, recruitment, promotion, and leadership development. For instance, the provision of facilities such as creches or daycare centres, nursing rooms, play areas or kids' zones in academic institutions will go a long way to enhance the work of women in general. Even female students will benefit from this structure. In this regard, the recent pronouncement in the ASUU-FGN agreement that female academic staff will be allowed to go on six months' maternity leave is a right idea in the right direction.

3. *Integration of gender mainstreaming across all levels of education:* Gender considerations should be integrated into curriculum design, pedagogy, teacher education, assessment, leadership training, and quality assurance processes to eliminate stereotypes and promote inclusivity. Accountability mechanisms must be established to assess compliance and impact.
4. *Prioritisation of interventions:* Policymakers should prioritise targeted interventions such as scholarships for female postgraduate students, leadership development programmes for women, and ICT access initiatives that address digital gender gaps. These investments are essential for building a robust pipeline of female academics and educational leaders.
5. *Robust translation of policy into practice:* Educational managers, including principals, department heads, deans, and vice-chancellors, play a central role in translating policy into practice. They must cultivate inclusive institutional cultures that value diversity, fairness, and merit. They should also implement flexible work arrangements, equitable workload distribution, and supportive welfare policies to address work-life balance challenges, particularly for women in academia. Institutional leaders should invest in ICT infrastructure and digital capacity building, ensuring that all staff have equal access to tools that enhance teaching, research, and global engagement.

6. *Influence of Families and communities:* Families and communities should continue to be powerful influence on educational participation and career choices. Sustainable gender equality in education requires a cultural shift that values education and leadership for both girls and boys. Parents, religious leaders, traditional authorities, and community organisations should actively challenge norms that restrict female education or leadership. Encouraging girls' academic ambition, supporting women's career progression, and sharing domestic responsibilities are crucial steps towards creating an enabling environment for educational success. Community engagement initiatives, advocacy programmes, and partnerships between schools and local stakeholders can further reinforce positive attitudes towards gender equality and educational empowerment.
7. *Introduction of capacity-building programmes:* Capacity-building programmes should be strengthened to equip educators and administrators with gender-sensitive teaching and leadership skills.
8. *Institution of gender balance:* Gender balance in educational leadership and governance should be encouraged and promoted to enhance inclusive decision-making.
9. *Demonstration and sustenance of political will:* All stakeholders should demonstrate and sustain political will and funding commitment to advance gender equality in education.

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All glory must be to the Lord
For He is worthy of our praise
No man on earth
Should give glory to himself
All the glory must be to the Lord (Alleluia!)

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