WOMEN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF TWO NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

by

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MASTER'S THESIS

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To God Almighty: My strength, my life, my all

The future belongs to the countries whose people make the most productive use of information, knowledge and technology - these are now the key factors for economic success, not natural resources.-

Goh Chok Tong, 1993 (Speech by Prime minister of Singapore)
Date unknown

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, there has been a consistent record of low female representation and participation in science and technology, specifically, in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This trend not only exists in African and other developing countries, but in many developed nations as well. Thus it has been a cause for concern for many and consequently the topic of numerous discussions and research.

Given the instrumental role that ICT plays in development, it is argued that if women, who constitute about half of the human population do not actively participate in this sector; nation's will be limiting the impact that ICT could have on their economy.

Being a West African female student interested in information technology and fascinated by the global trend of persistently low and in some cases decreasing female participation in the field of information technology, I have decided to probe this issue further in this research. In particular, my interests lie in the development of information technology. I hope to extend my analysis beyond the disclosure of the already conceived and established fact that women (though instrumental in development) are highly under represented in ICT. I intend to look at this phenomenon as it is revealed in the education sector in Nigeria and explore ways in which this could be addressed.

The case studies used in this research are from two universities in Nigeria - The University of Jos (UNIJOS), in Central Nigeria and The Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in southwest Nigeria. These two institutions were chosen for two reasons. First, because of the significant progress they have recorded in their development and use of ICT (relative to other institutions in the country) and secondly, because of the different approaches that have been

adopted by these institutions in their bid to develop their ICT systems. While UNIJOS adopted the use of an internship program as a key tool in the development of their ICT system and the spread of the ICT culture to its community, OAU has made use of systems managers from its Information Technology Unit (INTECU) and adopted network assistants from its engineering departments.

This research will attempt to identify the reasons for low female participation in the identified programs at these institutions, compare it with findings from research done in developed countries, investigate strategies that have been adopted (in developed countries as well as in other developing countries) and try to see how this could be incorporated by developing countries (Nigeria, in this case) given their own particular issues and environment. I will also suggest possible strategies that could be considered by African institutions of higher learning as they develop and improve their ICT policy and systems.

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