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## Gender-biased Representation in English Language Textbooks in Nigeria Educational System

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# **Gender-biased Representation in English Language Textbooks in Nigeria Educational System**

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## **Abstract**

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Educational processes and practices have long been recognised as reproducing those gender relations that society endorses – its gender ideology. In this study, we examine educational materials that are used in Nigerian educational system for the gender ideology that they tend to reflect and reinforce. Content analysis and discourse mode were used to analyse seven widely used English Language textbooks for Junior Secondary School students in Nigeria. Findings reveal over-representation of males in the public sphere, especially in a range of professions, politics, requisite qualities, accomplishments, and contributions, on the one hand. Women, on the other hand, are overrepresented in the private sphere of home, as mothers and wives. Thus, males are rendered more visible in the public sphere than females; the latter are rendered more visible in the home sphere than males who are rarely represented in that domain. These findings indicate gender-biased learning materials that might be inimical to achieving gender equality in and through education consequently suggesting that these learning materials might be long overdue for reform to reflect gender fairness that is in consonance with Nigeria’s National Gender Policy goals.

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**Keywords:** gender ideology, equality, education, learning materials, Nigeria, policy

# **Representación Sesgada de Género en los Libros de Texto en Inglés en el Sistema Educativo de Nigeria**

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## **Resumen**

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Prácticas y procesos educativos durante mucho tiempo han sido reconocidas como reproducir las relaciones de género que la sociedad apoya – su ideología de género. En este estudio, examinamos los materiales educativos que se utilizan en sistema educativo nigeriano para la ideología de género que tienden a reflejar y reforzar. Análisis del contenido y el modo de discurso fueron utilizados para analizar siete libros de lengua inglesa ampliamente utilizados para los estudiantes de escuela secundaria en Nigeria. Los resultados revelan sobrerrepresentación de los varones en la esfera pública, especialmente en una variedad de profesiones, la política, cualidades necesarias, logros y contribuciones, por un lado. Las mujeres, por el contrario, son representadas en el ámbito privado del hogar, como madres y esposas. Por lo tanto, los machos se procesan más visibles en la esfera pública que las hembras; este último se procesa más visible en la esfera de la casa que los machos, que raramente están representados en ese dominio. Estos resultados indican materiales educacionales sesgo de género, que pueden ser perjudiciales para alcanzar la igualdad de género en y a través de la educación en consecuencia sugiriendo que estos materiales de aprendizaje pueden ser demorados reforma reflejar la equidad de género que está en consonancia con los objetivos de la política nacional de género de Nigeria.

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**Palabras clave:** género ideología, igualdad, educación, política, Nigeria, los materiales de aprendizaje

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Nigeria is signatory to the declarations and goals of Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In addition, its National Gender Policy was approved by its Federal Executive Council in 2006 and since mandated the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development as the major mechanism to implement the principles and objectives of the policy. However, it appears that the implementation plan and activities are yet to impact on the educational materials used in Nigerian education system. This paper examines selected educational materials (English Language textbooks) in use at the Junior Secondary level for the gender ideology they portray. Answers were sought for questions like whether the materials through their representations of male and female might engender gender in/equality and in/equity in learners that use them. This study is significant when one considers the core principles and objectives that underline the nation's gender policy.

For example, three of the core principles of the policy that was approved since 2006 by the Federal Executive Council of Nigerian government read are: (i) making gender issues an integral part of all policy articulation, implementation and evaluation undertaken by not only by Government at all tiers and within all arms, but also by all stakeholders; (ii) a cultural re-orientation that will be supported by policies and programmes of gender education, sensitization, dialogues, incentives, motivation and responsiveness, rather than only through legislations; and (iii) promoting the empowerment of women through the bridging of existing gender gaps will be considered integral to the achievement of gender equality, and using policies and legislation of affirmative action if necessary and would no way be deemed discriminatory. For the objectives, the policy aims to: (i) create an enabling policy environment for translating government commitment to gender equality in the reality; (ii) established policies, programmes, structures and mechanisms to empower women and to transform gender relations in all aspects of work at all levels of government as well as within the broader society; and (iii) ensure that gender considerations are effectively integrated into all aspects of government policies activities and programmes; (iv) establish an institutional framework for the advancement of the status of women as well as the achievement of gender equality; (v) strengthening the voice of women in society, in Parliament and in other

legislatures who have already made visible impact by challenging gender blind laws and policies; (vi) enhancing the work that is already being undertaken by ministries at the national, state and local government levels and those of other development agencies committed to issues of women empowerment, gender equality and equity for all; and (vii) guide the development of the National Action Plan (Source NGAP G6:10 cited in Kura & Yero, 2013, p. 12-13).

It must be noted that the primary machinery of the government (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development) that has been mandated to implement the goals of the said policy has also formulated an Implementation Plan to this effect. In 2008, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (hereafter MWASD) under its National Gender Policy Strategic Framework (Strategic Development Results Framework) designed Implementation Plan for implementing the Nigeria National Gender Policy', an exercise that took 8 months to complete in order to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the policy. The Ministry formulated a five year Implementation Plan (2008 – 2013) timeline...giving the education sector a significant place as a key player in the achievement of gender equality.

As the national gender machinery, The MWASD built on the National Gender Policy's principles and established its focus under its Strategic Development Results Framework thus:

- Establishment of an institutional framework for the advancement of the status of women, as well as the achievement of gender equality;
- Advocacy for the promotion of new attitudes, values and behaviour and a culture of respect for all human beings;
- Strengthening the voice and leadership of women for continuous organizing, advocacy and ensuring that gender equality issues remain high on the national agenda.

Strategic Development Results Framework for the education sector requires changes in public perception of the roles of women and increasing respect for women and child rights and in the schools curricula. The curricula for primary and secondary school levels are to be reviewed and changed to reflect changing and empowering gender roles for women and men.

One of the areas within the education process and practice where the effectiveness of these principles, objectives and strategic plan can be tested is the educational materials used therein. Thus our study focused on the learning materials for the gender representations they reflect and how their gender representations are in agreement with these objectives and the implementation plan on the curricula. The paper is divided into seven sections: (i) gender ideology and equality; (ii) the role of educational materials; (iii) previous studies, (iv) methods and data, (v) analysis, (vi) findings and discussion of findings, and (vii) conclusion.

### **Gender Ideology and Equality in and through Education**

Every society has its gender ideology which sets space boundaries for its females and males – masculinity and femininity). By gender ideology, we mean the belief system that prescribes acceptable behaviour and roles for males and females. Kroska & Elman (2006) defined gender ideology as attitudes regarding the appropriate roles, rights, and responsibilities of women and men in society. However, modern society has come to realise that some of these human-erected (societal) boundaries have been instrumental to under-development and inequality. Therefore, to actualize equality and equity for all-round development, these boundaries must be dismantled to allow for full and complementary participation of men and women. Thus, international organizations (UN, ECOWAS and others) and local bodies (e.g., Nigerian Gender Equality Programme) have rolled out ways to dismantle barriers, such as gender boundaries that are obstacles to achieving equality and national development. For example, some set goals of gender equality programmes as contained in the Dakar Framework for Education for All (the EFA goals) which include eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a particular focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of high quality (Bakari, 2009) have been adopted by many countries (Nigeria included). There are other goals as contained in the third Millennium Development goals (MDGs), UNICEF gender equality programmes, Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against

Women (CEDAW), ECOWAS Gender Policy, and Nigeria's Gender Equality Policy, among others.

Although these policy statements and goals are meant to be pursued in order to bring about gender equality, there are some gaps that researchers must take into consideration. For example, policy statements do not provide for the differing understandings of gender. These policy statements and goals are to be pursued to bring about gender equality although the policies do recognise the need for greater gender equality. The understanding that gender could be viewed from non-essentialist perspective, that is, how gender is constructed, constructed, negotiated and reproduced is not taken into account in the policies. So the policies are problematic in two ways – first, they don't provide any indication of how teacher educators/teachers are supposed to achieve gender equality in their work with children; second, the importance of understanding how children take up their gender is completely omitted. As researchers have discovered in the UK, we can make a classroom look 'gender equitable' by having displays of male nurses and women fire-fighters, making sure girls get involved in technology, avoiding gender stereotypes in teachers talk to children – but providing an environment isn't enough if the children themselves are not actively engaged by the teacher in thinking about alternative 'ways of being'. However, research could start from the essentialist perspective (which is the basis of this study) and progress into studies that consider how gender is constructed and/or negotiated in different ways by learners.

The education sector has been identified as a major role player in the achievement of gender equality. Thus, its curriculum, organisation, contents and structures, personnel and learning materials have come under scrutiny for their roles in hindering gender equality in and through education. For example, the school system through its hidden curriculum has been criticized for the negative roles it plays in engendering inequality, discrimination and gender bias. While assessing the progress made by nations in that vein, in her recommendations, Blumerg (2007) stated that as countries succeed in achieving gender parity in enrolment, i.e., succeed at access, they should be encouraged to tackle –and monitor and evaluate – “second level” problems, such as gender bias in textbooks and curricula.

Stressing the place of textbooks further, Mukundan & Nimehchisalem (2008) noted that the textbooks...young people focus on repeatedly during the classroom practice, follow-up assignments or projects, and preparation for examination exert influence on the learner in terms of the quality of education they receive, their understanding of social equality and national unity. Putting it very strongly, both Poulou (1997) and Treichler & Frank (1989) reported that linguistic sexism creates deleterious real-world and damaging pedagogical consequences especially for women and girls. Thus female and male representations in learning materials have been the subject of investigation of many studies since the 1960s. One motivation for these undertakings has been the inequalities that permeate human society to the undoing of womenfolk and learning materials as social agent tends to engender gender inequality through its linguistic and non-linguistic representations. For example, Stromquist, Lee & Brock-Utne (1998) noted that

educational institutions are powerful ideological institutions that transmit dominant values, and function as mechanisms of social control...schools transmit values that not only reproduce social class but also main gender structures...the formal school system contributes to the reproduction of gender inequalities through such mechanisms as selective access to schooling, the content of what is being taught and what is not and how it is taught and the kinds of knowledge men and women (and boys and girls) get (p. 83).

It has been observed that if these discriminatory gender representations in learning materials are highlighted and replaced by gender neutral representations, it might serve as one of the means of giving quality education and achieving gender equality in and through education. Thus learning materials used in and out of school have been examined because gender-biased textbooks foster gender boundaries that are inimical to gender equality and national development. To Mustedanagic (2010) whenever a text is read, an interpretation is made by the reader and meaning is constructed. Comparing language teaching with building a house, she says that "the text represents our material ... therefore, bad material, bad building".

### **Studies on gender and learning materials**

Studies before year 2000 (Cerezal, 1991; Cincotta, 1978; Hartman & Judd, 1978; Hellinger, 1980; Polou, 1997; Porecca, 1984; Renner, 1997; Talansky, 1986) reported that many textbooks used for learners are not only gender-biased but that their use fosters gender discrimination, degradation, invisibility, subjugation, oppression, of women which indirectly play disempowering roles. More recent studies (Blumerg, 2008; Cubukcu & Sivasligil, 2007; Hamdan, 2010; Khurshid, Gillani, & Hashmi, 2010; Healy, 2009; Kizilaslan, 2010; Lee, 2008) have also confirmed similar findings in areas that were formerly described as under-researched sites (Sunderland, 2000). Studies have also emerged from some of the areas that Sunderland (2000) designated as under-researched sites among Islamic countries, Africa, and Asia (see Ansary & Babaii, 2003; Birjandi & Anabi, 2006; Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012; Ross & Shi, 2003; Zhang, 2003; Zhao, 2002).

Thus from the 1960s to date most of the findings of these studies indicate that textbooks, especially language textbooks are biased against femininity painting men in the brighter light of importance in occupations, public/social life, decision makers in corporations and government bodies whereas women are rendered invisible, or represented far less than men.

Mills (1995) operating from a feminist perspective noted that phallocentrism prevails in gender and literature since generic sexism usage in language at the morphological, phrasal and sentential levels abounds. For example, affixes in occupational terms and generic pronouns in literature betray the lack of fairness to womenfolk. Sunderland (1994) summarised the areas of concern of these studies thus:

Gender imbalance in texts includes invisibility (fewer males than females or vice versa), occupational stereotyping (females/males in fewer and more menial occupational roles; relationship stereotyping (women are more in relation with men than men with women); personal characteristic stereotyping (women as emotional and timid); disempowering discourse roles (more males talking first and degradation (blatant sexism to the point of misogamy) (p. 55-56).

In response to these findings, some countries (UK, US, Sweden, China and the other countries) have undertaken reforms of their learning materials to make them gender sensitive. Guidelines for authors and text publishers have been formulated and are being enforced. One understanding that these reformative programmes emphasises is the role that education plays in national development. For example, SADEV Report (2010) noted that

education is a prerequisite for promoting women's economic empowerment, health and well-being. Education is crucial in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS and in promoting women's sexual and reproductive health.

Moreover, education is important for women's political and civic participation, and in preventing gender-based violence and insecurity.

In spite of the volume of studies that has been done in other countries and the fact that many African countries are signatories to bodies such as CEDAW and UNESCO Gender Equality programmes, it does not appear that much research and reforms have taken place in the sub-Sahara Africa. Amongst the scanty studies that have been done in Africa are those funded by the World Bank, The Commonwealth of Countries and the British Council in Nigeria.

The World Bank between 1990–2005 funded educational sector initiatives in Africa with specific gender components an exclusively female clientele (Tembon, 2007). The programme targeted (i) provision of infrastructure to increase educational access (constructing rehabilitating schools and classrooms, building separate latrines for girls and boys) and (ii) learning interventions (increasing the numbers of female teachers, curriculum and textbooks reform, provision of textbooks and other educational materials and gender sensitization of personnel. The programme covered Nepal, Bangladesh, Chad, Guinea and Ghana. These large educational initiatives were claimed to have had explicit components or activities aimed at eliminating gender bias from curricula and/or textbooks. However, it does not appear that the impact of these studies is being felt in these countries since it appears that there is no record of any follow-up actions.

The Commonwealth of Nations also sponsored gender analysis research in seven countries, namely, India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Samoa, Seychelles, and Trinidad and Tobago in 2007. The rationale for the research was based on the question of access to schools in developing countries which has been widely reported in previous studies. The report of the research on this subject indicated high levels of gender disparity and inequality in selected Commonwealth countries. According to this research report edited by Page & Jha (2009)

the three least developed countries, India, Pakistan and Nigeria were found to have much lower participation rates of girls at secondary level, due to a variety of factors including affordability and parental expectations. Boys were found to be under-performing in the other four countries, in the Seychelles and in Samoa by 15 per cent, according to exam pass rates studied cited in Rowe (p. 35).

The research tends to emphasize gender parity (quantitative education) rather than gender equality (qualitative education). In the same vein, other hidden areas where the school system or education process engenders gender inequality were either partially addressed or excluded from the researchers' undertakings. Thus, the studies examined school practices with little consideration for learning materials that schools (teachers and learners) use. Although the researchers did not underestimate the roles that learning materials play in socializing learners to disparate gendered identities and how eliminating gender bias in text would contribute toward achieving gender equality in society (thus the studies partially addressed gender and learning materials) yet it concentrated more on a wide spectrum of school processes and practices.

The British Council (2012) examined gender issues in Nigeria with the sole aim of improving the lives of girls and women. It is reported that the Nigerian population of 165 million comprises 49% women while observing that any discussion about Nigeria's future must necessarily entail consideration of girls and women, the role they play and the barriers they face in making the future. According to the report of the research, women are Nigeria's hidden resource... (therefore) investing in women and girls now

will increase productivity in this generation and will promote sustainable growth, peace and better health for the next generation. What happens here to women and girls matters, not least for realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Amongst its key findings are that: (i) women and girls have significantly worse life chances than men; (ii) excellent policies and intentions have not translated into budgets or action to make the changes required if women are to contribute effectively to Nigeria's development (The National Gender Policy has yet to bear fruit, while implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has stalled); (iv) only 9% of those who stood for election in Nigeria's April 2011 National Assembly elections were women...which is below the global average and well behind South Africa and Rwanda; (v) women are under-represented in all political decision-making bodies and their representation has not increased since the inception of democratic rule; (vi) more women than men register to vote, but women are excluded from decision-making at all levels - by male dominated patronage networks. These findings indicate the rating of Nigeria in terms of gender equality among other nations of the world.

Although this research revealed useful statistical facts and other findings that should provide the platform for plan of actions that are geared toward achieving gender equality, learning materials used for those who attend school, which drop and/or do not pick up formal job or become members of decision-makers, were not (thought necessary as) part of their investigation. Again, the oversight is understandable because gender bias in learning materials is hidden to many people and how they impact on learners appears to have been ignored in many studies. Thus barring a small group of studies (e.g., Buthelezi, 2003; Madu & Kasanga 2005; McKinney, 2005; Lamidi, 2009; Touorouzou, 2006; Birkhill, 1996), it appears that studies on gender equality in and through education are hard to come by in Africa. In Nigeria, it appears that the subject is yet to be researched into aside from Bakari (2009).

In his (Bakari, 2009) study that examined gendered inequalities in Nigerian secondary schools covering areas such as education system, process and practices - school and class environments, school management, teachers,

students, textbooks and learning materials and classroom processes, Bakari (2009) found that:

both institutional (school-related) and societal factors have a strong influence on the preservation, refining and transmitting of gendered beliefs and practices in the schools surveyed. The schools appear to be erecting powerful barriers to females' entry into the world of work. This is being done through the inculcation of the belief that boys should be prepared to dominate their physical environment, while girls should be prepared for marriage, child rearing and playing second fiddle in society. ...apart from deliberate discrimination against girls in the types, forms and processes of education provided for them, their personal integrity is also at times attached in schools (p. 257).

This dearth of study among others motivated our investigation. Also, it appears that gender awareness within the education sector is either very insignificant or absent. In fact, Bakari (2009) reported that the education managers that were interviewed in his study are gender-unaware ...because they feel strongly that gender issues should not be considered or infused in the preparation of curricula themes, schemes of work or lesson delivery, because there is no glaring gender disparity in the current uniform practices (p, 247). It is noted that Bakari's (2009) study examined two textbooks at the periphery. Aside from this, it does not appear that gender issues in learning materials have received researchers' attention in Nigeria. This observation might support the claim that the country might be one of the under-researched sites where studies in the area are expected to fill the gap in the literature. This dearth motivated our present undertaking. It is anticipated that our investigation into learning materials which often mirror gender ideology of society might help to create the needed awareness and motivate stakeholders to address the issue of gender bias in learning materials.

Thus, in this study, we concentrate on textbook representations with regards to visibility and invisibility of females and males in societal spheres,

such as public and private sphere, population representation in pictures and passages in textbooks, representation among contributors to societal development (achievers), and moral models. The assumption is that learning materials used in the education sector reflect gender ideology of society that it (society) seeks to inculcate in the younger ones who are expected to take their place in society as adults in later life.

### **Method and data**

Seven English Language textbooks for Junior Secondary School were selected. This level of education is the terminal point for Nigeria's Universal Basic Education Scheme (UBE). Nigeria operates a 6-3-3-4 system of education where the first six years are spent in the elementary school - Primary (Basic) 1 - 6; followed by the first three years in the secondary school - Junior Secondary (Basic 7- 9); the second three years in the Senior Secondary (Senior Secondary 1-3) before the last four years in university education. Of the seven textbooks, the authors of the Junior English Project textbooks claimed to have developed the series in consonance with the UBE scheme policy thus they are tagged (UBE Edition). Each book contains 20 units and each unit has six sub-units - A. Spoken English B. Reading C. Vocabulary D. Grammar E. Listening and F. Writing.

The other four English Language textbooks are Intensive English for Junior Secondary Schools Book I and II, New Practical English for Junior Secondary School Book I and III, Their authors did not claim that the texts were prepared in consonance with the UBE Scheme policy although the textbooks are highly recommended by government representatives in the ministry of education for use in government-owned schools and also in private schools. While Intensive English series were published in 1983, New Practical English series were published in 2006. Intensive English series has 20 units and each unit is divided into four sections, namely Speech, comprehension, language structures and Composition. New Practical English has 24 units and each unit has all the areas of language study found in the other texts including literature section. These series are highly recommended for teachers and learners' use.

Content analysis was used for the study. Pictures of males and females are counted to compare and contrast the numbers of male and female

occurrence. In addition, the number of males and females represented in passages are counted to depict the representation of females and males population in the textbooks. Similarly, the domains (home and outside home) where females and males are represented in the textbooks are analyzed. These domains have to do with roles – public and private roles. In terms of character in the textbook (passages), we sought to determine which sex group is over/under-represented. For the conversations or dialogues analysed, we counted the number of dialogues allocated to male and female dyads and the number of turns/words allocated to male and female speakers in the dialogues. In addition, we also analysed the dialogues for the sex group that initiates conversation more than the other group using Sinclair & Coulthard's (1992) mode of discourse analysis.

### **Analysis**

Table 1  
*Male and female population in seven textbooks*

Textbooks	Population	
	Male	Female
New Practical I	110	50
Practical English III	134	88
Intensive English I	190	178
Intensive II	460	150
English Project I	210	123
English Project II	221	123
English Project III	110	50
Total	1435	760
%	34.6	65.3

Table 1 shows that male population almost double female population in the seven textbooks and this is the case in every textbook. Thus females consistently record lower population when compared to that of males.

In the next section, we present experiences covered in the passages in order to show which sex group in terms of experiences is underrepresented and/or overrepresented. It is anticipated that the results will indicate which sex group's experiences that the authors/publishers wittingly or unwittingly adjudged worth mentioning more than the other in the textbooks.

Table 2

*Female/male experiences in passage focus in the seven textbooks*

Females' Experiences	Males' Experiences
30	67
30.9%	69%

Table 2 shows that males' experiences are over-represented. This is the pattern in each textbook except English Project Book II females' experiences are more than male experiences. Generally, male experiences dominate while female experiences are downplayed or relegated to the background.

Table 3

*Representation of males and females roles*

Home Domain		Outside Home Domain	
Females	Males	Females	Males
41	14	48	159
Ratio: 3 : 1		Ratio 1 : 3.3	

In terms of roles, females are consistently assigned more home-based roles in all the textbooks than males are. However, males have far more outside-the-home roles than women in all the textbooks. Noticeably the gap between them is very wide in both roles. This is the pattern in every textbook examined. While males dominate the public domain, females dominate the home domain in every textbook, except in Project II where

females and males are equally represented in home domain – 3 males vs. 3 females.

Table 4  
*Character portrayal of females and males*

Desirable Qualities		Undesirable Qualities	
Females	Males	Females	Males
36	50	29	19
41.8%	58.1%	60.4%	39.6%

In all the series, males' desirable character traits are represented more than females' while females' undesirable character traits are given more prominence than males' undesirable character traits. However, only in English Project Book II are females' desirable characters given more prominence than males' although in the same textbook more females' undesirable qualities are represented than males'. It is noted that female characters feature more than male characters in the textbook. In order to determine exclusiveness/inclusiveness (how males and females are represented in the dialogue), we examined how dialogues are assigned to the sexes – same sex (F-F and MM), and mixed sex (F-M/M-F).

Table 5  
*Frequency of dyad by sex*

Textbook	Same-sex		Mixed sex	Neutral
	F-F	M-M	FM/ MF	
Intensive English I	0	14%	72%	14%
Intensive English II	24%	60%	16%	0
Practical English I	8%	8%	33%	50%
Practical English III	0	0	0	0
Project English I	10%	32%	19%	39%
Project English II	5%	31%	23%	41%
Project English III	18%	55%	27%	
Total	8.1%	29.7%	31.5%	30.6%

Table 5 shows that female dyads are allocated far less number of dialogues than males in all the textbooks aside from what we found in Practical English Book I. In other words, male dyads are allocated far more dialogues than female dyads in the other six textbooks. Thus the frequency of male dyads competes favourable with those of mixed sex dyads and triples that of female dyads.

We also counted the number of words allocated to speakers by sex.

Table 6

*Amount of talk by sex of speakers*

	Females		Males		Total
	Amount	%	Amount	%	
Intensive Bk I	117	45	142	55	259
Intensive Bk II	133	48	144	52	277
Practical Bk I	34	34	65	66	99
Project BK I	96	48	103	52	199
Project Book II	186	54	157	46	343
Project Book III	275	49	289	51	564
Total	841	48	900	52	17

In Table 6, the overall amount of talks (count of words) allocated to males (52%) and females (48%) indicates little or no difference. However, this is not the case in every textbook (males are allocated more words in all the textbook dialogues than females aside from Project English Book II where females use more words than males).

In the conversation (dialogues) we also investigated visibility in terms of primacy in dialogues - who initiates conversations more using Sinclair & Coulthard (1992) discourse model. The results are represented in Table 7.

Table 7  
*Discourse analysis of dialogues*

	Initial		Response		Feedback	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Intensive I	9	2	5	6	2	5
%	81.8	18.1	45.4	54.5	28.5	71.4
Intensive II	6	3	6	6	4	3
%	66.6	33.3	50	50	57.1	42.9
Practical I	8	0	0	8	1	0
%	100	0	0	100	100	0
Project I	5	10	10	3	2	3
%	33.3	66.6	76.9	23.0	40	60
Project II	3	11	13	1	1	4
%	21.4	78.5	92.8	7.1	20	80
Project III	12	18	19	15	7	18
%	40	60	55.8	44.1	28	72
Total	43	44	53	39	17	33
	49%	51%	58%	42%	34%	66%

In our analysis of givers of initiation, we found that females have (51%) and males' (49%) which are quite close to each other. In the first three textbooks (Intensive English I & II and Practical English I) males initiate more dialogues than females (compare 81.8% with 18.1%; 66.6% and 33.3%; 100% and 0%). However, females initiate more dialogues in English Project Series than males do. It is noted that in English Project Series female teachers are largely used to engage learners as their interactional partners thus the female teachers initiate most of the dialogues.

### **Findings and discussion**

Our findings indicate that population-wise males' figures are far higher than females'. There is an over-representation of males outside the home in economically well-paid work whereas women's roles are largely associated with housework which suggests perpetration of women as mothers and homemakers, care-givers - stereotypes of gender roles in a typical patriarchal society and men as the dominant and important figures in public life. We also found that males' experiences are foregrounded while females' are pushed to the background. Males' desirable character traits largely occupy the focus of the passages while females' undesirable character traits are given more attention than their desirable traits. At the level of discourse, males are over-represented in the allocation of dialogues, amount of words and primacy in conversation aside from what we have in the English Project Series that use more female characters in the dialogues.

These findings suggest that gender representations in the textbooks which reflect the gender ideologies or beliefs of the Nigerian society tend to render female invisible in the public life. This might pass the impression that women have little or nothing to contribute towards national development to the learners who use the textbooks. In terms of population, they are underrepresented in the materials while males are overrepresented – a way of rendering one visible and the other invisible. This pattern is also repeated in the narratives of the texts as there are more male characters than female characters whose experiences are brought to the forefront. Thus females are rendered as minor characters and their counterparts, males as the major characters. Males' desirable character traits are foregrounded whereas female undesirable characters are portrayed more in the narratives (passages). Similarly, males dominate the dialogues in terms of amount of talks and primacy in dialogues.

These findings indicate gender-bias in the contents of the learning materials. These are similar to what have been reported in many communities in the literature although many countries have embarked on reforms of their learning materials (see section 3 of this paper). Going by recent Nigeria official population figures of 2008, the representations in the textbooks do not reflect the 52% male and 48% female population in the last census. In addition, in recent times, Nigeria has witnessed a rise in the

participation of women not only in public life - politics, higher education, higher professional achievements and contributions towards national development. Female professors in academics, vice-chancellors, justices, senators, ministers, deputy governors, and commissioners among others abound and their contributions towards national development have been acknowledged by international bodies (e.g. Ikonje-Iweala, Prof Dora Akinyuli). Thus the representations of women in the textbooks do not appear to reflect happenings in the contemporary Nigerian society.

From our findings, it might be difficult to argue against the claim that the textbooks will not hinder the achievement of gender equality in and through education of the National Gender Policy aims. The textbook representations of males and females appear to be geared towards socialising young learners into two opposing groups - the superior and the inferior, the dominating and the dominated, the visible and the invisible groups. This is a picture of a traditional patriarchal society that tends towards inequality and inequity by rendering members of the other sex group as insignificant group that has little or no contributions towards national development.

### **Conclusion**

Educational materials that tend to reflect and enforce gender inequality and inequity on learners is not only gender-wise asymmetrical but also inimical to the building a progressive society that is supposed to be characterised by equity and equality. Gender-biased textbooks will breed inequality and contribute towards the disempowerment of females thereby hindering their contributions towards national development. Thus, the gender representations of the textbooks that we examined (and all other educational materials that contain gender-biased representations) are not only out of tune with the contemporary society, the goals of the National Gender Policy and the Implementation Plan, they also pose as obstacles to achieving gender equality in and through education. Therefore, the study suggests that learning materials at all the levels of education in Nigeria are long overdue for revision to reflect not just the happenings in the contemporary Nigerian society but gender fairness in all its ramifications. They are to be revised in order to provide learners with quality education (equal education) that will

prepare both male and female learners for useful participation in national development. Guidelines for the elimination of all gender discrimination should be formulated for authors and publishers of learning materials. Government agencies and ministry of education at the national and state levels might need to formulate policies that will ensure gender-fairness at all the levels of education processes and practices. It is also suggested that teacher-training programmes and their trainers might need to incorporate gender issues into their curriculum.

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