

Stepping up Agenda 2030 for the Attainment of Gender Parity and Sustainable Development in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study

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The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The most important determinant of a country's competitiveness is its human talent — the skills and productivity of its workforce. The strongest, safest and most prosperous societies are those in which women are empowered and the genders are more equal. Gender equality is not a women or men issue—it is a human rights issue. Sequel to the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights by UN in 1948, education became a veritable implementation tool for promoting and achieving gender equity, social justice, poverty reduction and the overall advancement of women. This has opened the door of university education to a lot of women in Nigeria. As a widely recognized basic human right which bestows on women and men a disposition for lifelong acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes, competence and skills, university education has also paved way for an increasing number of women into academic positions. In spite of these attainments, the World Economic Forum predicts in its Global Gender Gap Report 2014 that it will take until 2133 to achieve gender parity in all spheres of life, implying one hundred and seventeen (117) years until gender parity! The implementation of great decisions for sustainable development in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions cannot wait till 2133. Stepping up actions geared towards eliminating gender disparities in leadership and decision-making as well as building bridges to leadership for women will help to build healthier higher educational institutions, society and culture, and most likely lead to the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGS) by 2020 or 2030. Thus, showcasing the achievements of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, Ekiti State University, Nigeria, this paper posits that the time for accelerating gender equality in universities for sustainable development is now.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, gender disparity remains a problematic phenomenon and a major barrier to human development in virtually all sectors, including education, politics, health, economy and governance. Despite the fact that a large number of Western women gained entry into the workforce over 200 years ago during the Industrial Revolution and access into higher education was more than 150 years ago; there remain a huge gender disparity in pay check. Politically, women only gained the rights to votes in parts of Asia a little over 90 years ago and 80 years in parts of South America¹. According to the UNFPA *State of World Population Report* [1], "Gender inequality holds back the growth of individuals, the development of countries and the evolution of societies, to the disadvantage of both men and women".

The unanimous adoption of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (a visionary blue print for gender equality and the empowerment of women² by 189 countries began a new global development agenda and provided new opportunities to galvanize the political will to end poverty, transform lives and protect the planet. Since then, women have been contributing enormously to social, educational, economic, cultural and political development globally.

In spite of these breath-taking attainments, today, no country has achieved gender equality across all areas of public and private life and significant inequalities persist between women and men. There are still many places around the world where women do not have the right to vote or hold a job, attend college, create a business or rise to leadership positions in companies or countries. The 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action has brought into sharp focus that progress has been slow and uneven³ in all sectors including

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), (2015). *Women in Parliament: 20 years in review*. - ISSN 1993-5196 Available online @ <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/WIP20Y-en.pdf>

² *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* which was adopted at the 16th plenary meeting, on 15 September 1995; for the discussion, see chapter V. available online @ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>

³ *Evaluation of the Beijing Platform for Action +20 and the opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development*

education. For instance at the tertiary institutions, women represents a large pool of officers engaged in low paying jobs, especially administrative cadres and lower rungs of the academic cadres. Very few women occupy leadership positions among staff and students unionisms, principal officers and members of special committees. Hence, the need for this paper which attempts to showcase the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, Ekiti State University, Nigeria, as case study for accelerating gender equality in tertiary institutions with focus on the implementation of gender equality compact of Agenda 2030.

2. GLOBAL TIME-FRAME FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF GENDER PARITY

The World Economic Forum predicts in its Global Gender Gap Report 2014 that it will take until 2133 to achieve gender parity in all spheres of life. It also estimated 2095 as the due date for the attainment of global gender parity in the workplace. As such, there remains one hundred and seventeen (117) years to gender parity in all spheres of life; eighty (80) more years until institutions, companies and governments are equally led by men and women; more than 75 years to reach equal remuneration between men and women for work of equal value, and more than 30 years to reach gender balance in decision-making. That is, eighty (80) more years (four generations⁴ before women achieve gender parity in the workforce, closing the 60% gender gap for economic participation and opportunity worldwide⁵.

The global timeframe for the achievement of gender parity is too long [2]. While acknowledging the suffragettes and all those who have fought, and continue to fight for women's

agenda. DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES POLICY DEPARTMENT C: CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS WOMEN'S RIGHTS & GENDER EQUALITY. Available online @ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/519191/IPOL_STU\(2015\)519191_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/519191/IPOL_STU(2015)519191_EN.pdf)

⁴ *Women. Fast forward The time for gender parity is now> available online @ [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-women-fast-forward-thought-leadership/\\$FILE/ey-women-fast-forward-thought-leadership.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-women-fast-forward-thought-leadership/$FILE/ey-women-fast-forward-thought-leadership.pdf)*

⁵ *The Global Gender Gap Report 2014 (GGGR_Complete Report-2014) by the World Economic Forum. . Available online @ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CompleteReport_2014.pdf*

rights and empowerment at the national, regional and global levels, by ensuring that these are fully realized, it is time to accelerate global action for gender equality and close the gender gaps in all sectors. The present generation cannot wait for 117 years to attain gender parity and sustainable development.

2.1 Time for Change

Time passes slowly when change is overdue.⁶ The time for change is now. There is an urgent need to change the current course of history. Commitments to achieve gender balance in leadership positions have not been met. That must change immediately. The global community cannot wait another century to achieve gender parity in governance, politics, leadership and the decision-making bodies that shape our policies and societies, and decide on war and peace. Currently, global voices around the world are demanding an end to poverty, hunger and inequality.

To turn these demands into actions, world leaders from 193 countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on 25 September 2015 at the United Nations in New York. Sustainability is a call to act now to protect the future and avoid environmental, economic or social crises by encouraging development that is good for both people and the planet.

3. GENDER PARITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

According to the United Nations Brundtland Report [3], sustainable development is "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*" Sustainable development is "people-centred and planet-sensitive" [3], guided by values of equal rights and social justice, enabled by proactive states and well-functioning institutions, and shaped through the participation of empowered populations. It is the process of establishing a trajectory of equitable human development which allows all people to exercise their choices and meet their aspirations. It is an inclusive process which enables the benefits of development to

spread to those left behind in the progress made to date.

Consequently, the Agenda 2030⁷ (SDGs) is a positive and ambitious transformative plan of action for all countries and stakeholders which sets poverty eradication as an overarching aim (Fig. 1) and has, at its core, the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development [4].

The SDGs is therefore a "universal, transformative and integrated development agenda". Its seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 global targets will guide policy and funding to advance sustainable development for the next 15 years, beginning with a historic pledge to permanently end poverty globally. Emanating from the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20, the SDGs is a set of universally applicable goals that balances environmental, social, and economic issues as the three dimensions of sustainable development [5].

The SDGs replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which in September 2000 rallied the world around a common 15-year agenda to tackle the indignity of poverty. In spite of the global progress attained through MDGs in the reduction of income poverty, access to improved sources of portable water, primary school enrolment and child mortality; millions of people are still living in abject poverty. The SDGs is set to end hunger, achieve full gender equality, improve health services and get every child into school. The SDGs also aim to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, create better jobs and tackle contemporary environmental challenges – particularly climate change.

3.1 Key Targets of the 2030 Agenda

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes.
- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary

⁶ Women in the manufacturing industry. (March 2015). Available online @ http://www.mskills.org.au/DownloadManager/downloads/Women%20in%20the%20manufacturing%20industry_March%202015%20v1.pdf

⁷ 1 United Nations. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transforming_ourworld

- education so that they are ready for primary education.
- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
 - Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
 - Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

4. GENDER GAPS IN GOVERNANCE, POLITICS AND OCCUPATIONAL SECTORS

Absence of gender responsive governance and policies has led to gender gaps in politics, leadership, decision-making and occupational sectors, including health and education; especially in staff recruitment and employment, promotion, selection and appointment for

executive position. The prevailing gender gaps in the Nigerian education system for instance, could be traced to the patriarchal arrangements within the Nigerian traditional societies, exacerbated by colonial ideologies which remained primarily male-centric, 'gender-neutral', and at worst 'gender-blind' [6]. Patriarchy also facilitated inequalities in prestige, power and access to resources [7].

This was closely entrenched by the colonial government's formal educational system which heralded the distinct gender norms. Even when Girls Secondary Schools came into existence, the colonial administration emphasized clerical skills for boys and domestic science for girls in the school curricula. In other words, the educational curricula for girls enabled them to become good housewives rather than to become income earners. Thus, lack of proper education continues to be a strong barrier to female participation in leadership and decision making especially in the formal sector.

<p>Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere</p> <p>Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture</p> <p>Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</p> <p>Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all</p> <p>Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</p> <p>Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</p> <p>Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all</p> <p>Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</p> <p>Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</p> <p>Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries</p> <p>Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p> <p>Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</p> <p>Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p> <p>Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</p> <p>Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</p> <p>Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p> <p>Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</p>
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Fig. 1. Agenda 2030 and its Gender Equality Compact

Source: UN, 2014

Even though university education and jobs are currently opened to females and males, there still exist huge gender gaps in knowledge transmission, students' enrolment and staff recruitments, promotions and appointments in Nigeria. This gender disparity in access to university education and jobs are a replica of the international scenario. As a global phenomenon, the results of a follow-up survey conducted in 2000 by Association of Commonwealth Universities has indicated that women remain disproportionately represented within instructors, lecturers and unranked positions [8].

4.1 Closing the Gender Gaps

Gender balance and gender equality are core to many of the economic challenges the global economy faces, and not just for the next 10 years but for the next 50 years. Gender balance and gender equality are not ends in themselves. These are a means for creating effective policies aimed at ensuring sustainable development for societies [9].

The role of women is, without doubt, very important, when population growth in certain countries is witnessing negative trends. Since 50 percent of the human potential pool in the world is women, not to give them an equal opportunity in governance, politics, leadership positions and the workforce is absolutely discriminatory. Women have been the drivers of structural reforms to ensure more women participate in public life; that public institutions are gender-sensitive; and that they provide conditions of decent work and deliver the public goods and services that help promote balance between work and family responsibilities.

Thus, it is imperative for institutions globally, including the education sectors and HEIs, to accelerate actions geared towards achieving SDGs and closing the gender gap in order to maximise the invaluable asset of female talents for sustainable development. Amplifying women's voices, expanding their agency, and boosting their leadership and influence in all spheres of leadership and economy is vital to the achievement of democracy, good governance, economic development, environmental sustainability, and peace. Women have a rightful place in decision-making and leadership positions. Their participation in politics and governance has been contributing to sustainable development globally. Therefore, if all the global targets of the SDGs and its gender equality

compacts are implemented, the global economic picture in 2030, 2040 and 2050 in both developed and developing nations will look very different from today in the following spheres:

- i. **Demographic Issues:** Current demographic issues in the developed nations include strategies for reducing population challenges and a limited workforce, while there exists an increasing population but enormous competition for the bright talents in the developing world.
- ii. **Education:** Gender gap in access to education is one of the areas that differentiate economically advanced countries from developing economies. Women in industrialized countries have immensely benefitted from the expansion of educational opportunities. In contrast, there are historical, cultural, and economic factors that continue to hinder women's access to and benefits from formal education, especially at the tertiary level in developing countries [10]. These factors have culminated into the huge gender gaps in access to power, resources and participation in decision-making in African nations, especially in Nigeria. For instance, Oyelaja [11], Adegun [12] and Balogun [13] noted that leadership and management positions in Nigerian tertiary institutions have been male dominated. Besides, Odejide [14] observed that women academics are confronted by sexual prejudice that abound among their male counterparts and the lack of a suitable framework within which they can articulate their concerns. According to Balogun [13], only 12.4% of the academic staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions are women. These identified gaps have constituted gender inequality in the university management, thus making the university environment appear to be dictated by patriarchal values and beliefs. These under-value the abilities of female administrative and academic staff [15]; as well as limiting women's bargaining power and opportunity to influence decisions or other initiatives to promote gender equality [16].
- iii. **Economic Change:** Gender parity is linked to economic prosperity, as an economic imperative. The established G7 economies are already seeing a shift of their traditional economic power to the emerging countries (the so-called E7 of

- China, India, Brazil, Russia, Indonesia, Mexico and Turkey). Women must be involved in economic leadership to ensure that they shape markets and drive economic growth.
- iv. **Labour Market:** Labour sustainability and labour supply are also critical issues.
 - v. **Socio-cultural Transformation:** The global community is currently going through a period of huge social transformation. There would be a movement into a future of labour shortages, skills gaps and a world in which the educational and economic empowerment of women will become even more significant.
 - vi. **Technological Advancement:** This is critical for sustainable development in all sectors, i.e. education, health and economy.
 - vii. **Emerging Markets:** Markets are changing. Companies will expand into new markets and new environments globally. There will be a great understanding of what the needs of the new markets are as well as the development of global strategies and mechanisms for meeting their needs.
 - viii. **Climate Change:** women involved in decision-making processes relating to climate change, and for women to design and implement gender-responsive climate solutions.

5. PLANET 50-50 BY 2030: STEP IT UP! A CALL TO ACT FOR GENDER PARITY

Through the SDGs, the United Nations envisage a world where all women and girls have equal

opportunities and rights by 2030 [17]. ‘Step It Up’ asks governments to make national commitments that will close the gender equality gap – from laws and policies to national action plans and adequate investment [18,19]. This call to “Step It Up” comes at a critical moment in time as a new development agenda is taking shape to replace the Millennium Development Goals. It is a global demand that requires governments to make national commitments to address the challenges that are holding women and girls back from reaching their full potential. Passing new laws or strengthening existing ones is one way to Step It Up. Other actions might include creating programmes to eradicate violence against women and girls, encouraging women’s participation in decision-making, investing in national action plans or policies for gender equality, creating public education campaigns to promote gender equality, and many more.

This call for gender parity in all sectors demands that women and men must share responsibility for determining their futures, and in building peaceful, climate resilient communities. Specifically, this call requires stepping up and accelerating the following in all institutions and governance for sustainable development:

1. **Commitment to Act Now:** To close the gender gap, women and men must take a stand to end gender inequality and be committed to act beyond one day. It is time to advocate for substantive gender equality in politics, judiciary, peace-making forums, governance, educational institutions, multinational corporations, small businesses, trade unions and party leadership. Women must be at the heart of decision-making in all sectors.

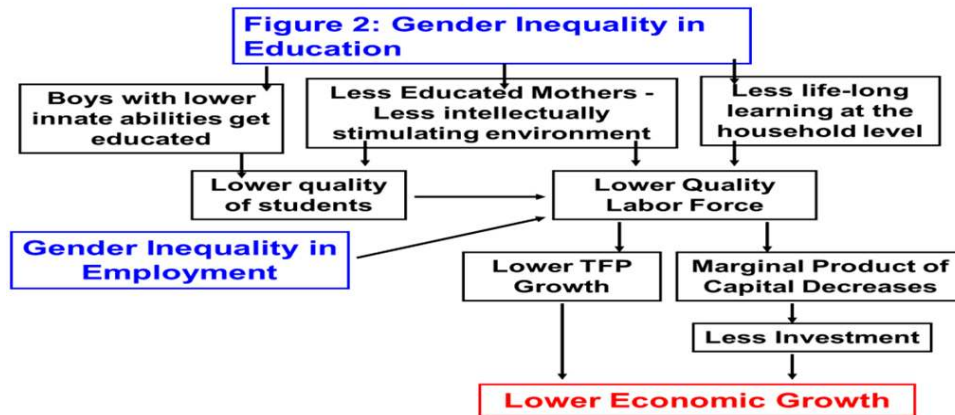


Fig. 2. Gender inequality in education

2. **Political Commitment:** Renewed political commitment to close remaining gaps and fully implement the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action by 2020 and the SDGs by 2030. This will require political will to ensure women's participation and leadership across all spheres, including marginalized women; urgent action to promote positive norms of gender equality, human rights and social justice. Others are the elimination of discriminatory social norms and attitudes; the replacement of laws that perpetuate discrimination against women with those that promote gender equality, including through affirmative action, the enforcement of policies that support the full participation of women in the economy and workplace; and balanced representation of women and men in all national and international decision-making processes, including the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Financing for Development, and climate change processes.
3. **Empowerment of Women:** This requires explicit commitments and acceleration of gender equality by governments, civil societies, international and regional organizations, the private sector, media, academia, political parties, youth, as well as male champions of women's rights to achieve and regularly monitor measurable results and boost support for the realization of human rights of women and girls; and the elimination of gender inequality by 2030.
4. **End Funding Gap on Gender Equality:** An end to funding gap on gender equality and matching of commitments with means of implementation require significant, increased investments in gender equality; economic transformation and sensitization of national budgets to issues of gender equality; increased receptivity to lobbying and fundraising calls from organizations working on gender equality and the promotion of women in leadership; and accountability of leaders for their promises.
5. **Shared Leadership:** Shared leadership is critical for generations of the future. Institutional leaders must set example to young women and men; show that it is possible for women to lead countries, corporations, courts, communities, and colleges; show that it is possible for women to live free from violence, fear and discrimination; to have their choices

respected and capabilities acknowledged; and to demand the same opportunities, resources and responsibilities as men.

5.1 New Regional Commitments to Step It Up for Gender Parity

1. **African Union Steps it Up:** The African Union has just adopted Agenda 2063, which is a vision of the Africa we want in line with its priorities. It specifically plans to modernize Agriculture where women will dominate the workforce, and involve more women in business. These include the education of girls and the modernization of agriculture, where 70 per cent of workers are women. Another priority is involving more women in business, which makes sense as a right and in terms of economic benefits since half the population can contribute more to national development.
2. **Council of Europe:** The Council of Europe confirms its commitment to Step it Up to close the gender equality gap and to continue contributing to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goal 5. The Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2014–2017 specifically sets the following strategic objectives – all aiming at transformative action to achieve de facto gender equality:
 - i. Combating gender stereotypes and sexism;
 - ii. Preventing and combating violence against women: A direct consequence of inequality is violence against women. The “gold standard” – the Istanbul Convention – provides a comprehensive response to prevent violence, protect victims and prosecute the perpetrators.
 - iii. Guaranteeing equal access of women to justice;
 - iv. Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making;
 - v. Achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.
3. **European Union Steps it Up:** This intends to back equal care responsibilities, ramp up anti-violence measures and put more women on corporate boards. Working with partner countries, the European Union pledges to stop all kinds of gender violence, empower women

economically and socially, and support their louder voice in public life. As the world's largest aid donor, it is committed to systematically screening development funding to ensure that assistance helps transform the lives of girls and women worldwide. Through a new initiative for working parents, with an emphasis on the role of fathers, it will promote women's economic independence and the equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men. Its efforts to stop violence against women will involve prevention, protection and prosecution. The European Union will put its full weight behind the Council of Europe [Istanbul] Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, and if legally possible will accede to it. To put more women in top positions influencing decisions, the European Union is in the final stages of setting a legally binding objective for 40 per cent of listed company board members to be women by 2020.

4. **League of Arab States:** The Arab League Ministerial Council in its 144th session adopted a regional plan of Action on "Protection of Arab Women: Peace and Security," calling for meaningful participation of women as leaders at all levels of decision-making to promote peace and contribute to negotiations and conflict resolution. Also at the 144th session, held on 13 September, Arab League Member States adopted the Cairo Declaration and its Strategic Plan of Action as a "Post-2015 Development Agenda for Women in the Arab Region" to be submitted and adopted at the upcoming Arab Summit in the Kingdom of Morocco, in 2016. The League of Arab States declares its commitment towards the implementation of the Cairo Declaration and its Strategic Plan of Action to push for stronger investment in gender equality, policies, gender-responsive budgeting and establish new standards for gender-responsive indicators and statistics.
5. **Organization of American States Steps it Up:** Commits to broadening the scope and reach of protections of women's rights. The region has made important strides in strengthening laws for women's rights and gender equality, showcasing some of the strongest legal protection frameworks in the world. The Organization of American

States is committed to broadening rights for more people in the region. In terms of women's rights, there are still limitations on their scope and reach, with the region retaining restrictive laws on sexual and reproductive rights and freedoms, a reality that has to change. Other matters that need to be addressed relate to why women comprise a larger share of the unemployed and have lower salaries.

6. **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Steps it Up:** Aims to increase resources and act in line with the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation maintains it is of paramount importance to aim higher and alter the status quo in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment. It has established a gender policy advocacy group as a regional mechanism to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including through engagement of civil society representatives as key partners. The Association has a crucial role to play in increasing resources to increase gender equality, and is committed to acting in line with the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5.2 Policy Guidelines for Accelerating Stepping It Up for Gender Parity in Universities

The global advancement of gender equality and elimination of all forms of disparities in education dates back to 1948 with the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. This was followed by the UN declaration of 1974 as the International Year of Women which culminated in the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women held in 1995 that championed the course of gender equality and social justice principles around the world.

In response to these global call for gender equality in higher educational institutions globally, the British Council presented specific gender mainstreaming mandates which affect higher education institutions globally. Specifically, the 2013 British Council's Going Global Conference in Dubai released the Manifesto for Change for Women in Academic Leadership and Research. This Manifesto sets

the following conditions for engaging tertiary institutions on the gender equity project -

- i. **Research Projects:** “gender implications and impact” of research projects must be included by grant-making bodies as a criteria against which funding applications are assessed.
- ii. **Gender Mainstreaming:** should be fundamentally incorporated in all of a university's practices and procedures.
- iii. **Global Database:** All higher institutions should have a global database on women and leadership in tertiary institutions so that it's easier to see how slowly – or indeed how fast – the situation improves country by country.

Consequently, this is acceleration moment for tertiary institutions in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, for the implementation of the Beijing+20, Post-2015 Development Agenda, Financing for Development, climate change processes and the Gender Equality Compact of Agenda 2030 era; UNGA/ECOSOC resolutions – particularly in relation to SDG 5 and gender-related targets in other goals; the Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the landmark UNSC resolution 2242 aimed at achieving gender equality and women's rights and empowerment. The political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing+20), adopted at CSW 59, urged Member States to accelerate the full and effective implementation of the global agenda, with monitoring and accountability, and set the deadline of 2030 for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

The affirmation of gender equality in Agenda 2030 that “sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities”⁸ also lends credence to the need for tertiary institutions to bridge gender gaps in access, retention and academic attainments; employment; participation in leadership roles and decision-making.

The crucial role of higher institutions in eliminating gender disparity and unsustainable development, in shaping values that are

supportive of SD and in consolidating sustainable societies has been a burning global issue since the Rio de Janeiro 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and in its Agenda 21. The 2005 United Nations declaration of the *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)*⁹ also re-echoed the role and importance of tertiary institutions as one of the major drivers of SD across the globe. This was also re-emphasized in paragraph 233 of *the Future We Want*, an outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. This was further reiterated by the UNESCO's launching of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD [20,21]. The overall goal of the GAP-ESD is to generate and scale up actions in all levels and areas of education and learning to accelerate progress towards SD. The five priority areas of GAP-ESD are policy support, whole-institution approaches, educators, youth, and local communities.

Consequently, in the run-up to the Rio+20, Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) was created as a partnership of several sponsor UN entities (UNESCO, UN-DESA, UNEP, Global Compact, and UNU) to galvanize commitments from higher education institutions across the globe to teach and encourage research on SD, greening campuses and support local sustainability efforts. With a membership of almost 300 universities worldwide, HESI partnership officially became a member in priority area 2 of the GAP Partner Network: “*Transforming learning and training environments*” in 2015.

Thus, the stage is set for tertiary institutions across the globe to galvanize actions towards “Promoting Education, Public Awareness, and Training” for gender inclusive environmental, societal and economically viable sustainable development [22].

5.3 Step it Up: Showcasing the Centre for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS)

CGDS is a Centre of Excellence in the Study of Gender and Development known for equity, fairness and justice in EKSU. Its major goal is to institutionalise gender education; and gender

⁸ - See more at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/11/lakshmi-puri-at-the-global-civil-society-dialogue#sthash.ztC59Aew.dpuf>

⁹ “The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005 – 2014”, UNESCO. Retrieved 7/7/10.

equity/justice principles within the university system and the larger society through the establishment of academic programmes; engendering of academic disciplines across the university using gender as an analytical tool, and treating gender as a cross-cutting issue in both academic and administrative engagements of the university.

The main objectives of the Centre are to:

- i. Consolidate and expand the University's focus on gender, social work, social policy and social development;
- ii. Develop academic programmes both at post graduate (PG-D, MSc & PhD) levels of international standing in the areas of gender and development as well as Social Work;
- iii. Develop short courses and conduct workshops to build technical capacity of practitioners on gender mainstreaming, social policy and analysis frameworks for achieving sustainable development, poverty reduction and quality of life;
- iv. Build capacity of students and staff of Ekiti State University in the use of gender mainstreaming and sustainable development frameworks;
- v. Build national capacity in gender mainstreaming and social development frameworks, planning, and policy analysis, through teaching, training, consultancy, documentation and networking; and
- vi. Challenge, strengthen and promote interdisciplinary policy relevant basic and action- oriented research into issues of equity and equality associated with gender, class, ethnicity and political differentiation for sustainable human development and social change among others.

Within its two years of existence and as part of its commitment to building, sustaining and advancing a generation of students grounded in gender and development theories and methods, and researchers (in the various academic fields) whose efforts will contribute to resolving the developmental challenges at EKSU, in Nigeria and international arena, CGDS has achieved the following:

- **EKSU Gender Policy and Sexual Harassment Guidelines:** The development of the EKSU Gender Policy has been inspired by the paradigm shift towards SD which requires a renewed

focus on people-centred development that prioritizes the expansion of capabilities, the eradication of poverty and the reduction of all types of inequalities. Globally, gender equality is intrinsically linked to SD and is vital to the realization of human rights for all. The overall objective of gender equality is a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Thus, the development of this Gender Policy has been inspired by the overwhelming demand to correct the systemic institutional imbalances caused by gender prejudices and stereotypes with attendant implications for organizational functioning and performance.

- Set the pace for gender sensitive learning and culture in EKSU;
- Encouraging interdisciplinary teaching and research;
- Providing opportunity for faculty from different departments to co-teach a course;
- Ensuring academic rigor of courses;
- Providing training to faculty to help them learn how to design gender-sensitive pedagogy;
- Fostering local and international collaboration;
- Emphasizing research over teaching because research adds monetary value to the University;
- Creating room for more collaboration within the university;
- **CGDS Fellows:** Constituting Fellows of the Centre across the various Departments and Faculties in the university, with a standing Steering Committee reflective of the various academic interests in the university.
- **Developing and running Academic and Non-Academic Programmes:**

a) The Gender and Development Track

i. *Non-Degree Certificate Courses in Gender and Development Studies*

- Gender and Development (3 Months);
- Gender and Health Studies (3 Months);
- Gender, Human Rights and Access to Justice (3 Months)
- Gender, Adolescent Sexuality and Youth Development (3 Months)

- Women and Gender Studies(3 Months)

ii. Postgraduate Programmes in Gender and Development Studies

- Postgraduate Diploma in Gender and Development Studies
- M.Sc. in Gender and Development Studies
- PhD in Gender and Development Studies.

b) Academic Programmes in Social Work

- Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work
- MSc in Social Work
- PhD Social Work

- Organized series of gender-sensitive Workshops on Institutionalization of Gender Mainstreaming in EKSU and the education sector in Ekiti State.

5.4 Framework of Action for Accelerating Gender Parity in Universities

In keeping with the current global concern for gender equality in tertiary institutions, the recent ratification of Ekiti State Gender Equality Bill by the State House of Assembly; and the Ekiti State University 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, CGDS is poised towards embracing a systemic approach to gender education and ESD in all sectors of the educational institution.

5.5 Mechanisms for Accelerating Gender Parity in Universities

Tertiary institutions across the globe are expected to key into the global agenda through mainstreaming and institutionalization. Thus, institutionalization of Agenda 2030 and its gender equality compact through gender education and ESD [23,24] in the ivory towers of learning in Nigeria will involve a wide range of factors across economic, social, environmental and political dimensions. It will entail development of mechanisms for equipping students and staff with the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to work and live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic wellbeing, both in the present and for future

generations.¹⁰ It implies making learners acquire knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes for the following concepts within the context of their own discipline and in their future professional and personal lives:

- Global citizenship;
- Environmental stewardship;
- Issues of social justice, ethics and wellbeing, and how these relate to ecological and economic factors;
- Development of a future-facing outlook: learning to think about the consequences of actions, and how systems and societies can be adapted to ensure sustainable futures.

The major points of accelerating the Agenda 2030, Gender Equality Compact and ESD in tertiary institutions therefore include:

- **Leadership:** Strong political will and Institutional commitment to a vision of equitable and sustainable development.
- **Policy:** Enabling policy and legal environments, including institutional mechanisms
- **Capacity:** Competent and high-level gender-promoting academics and administrative support service contributing to the design and execution of gender sensitive policies.
- **Action Plans:** Universities are to incorporate sustainability into campus operations, governance, policy and administration. Development and implementation of an Institutional Action Plan for SD can drive sustained development results.
- **Financing and Investment:** Over the coming 14 years, education industries across the globe will be investing around \$90 trillion in sustainable innovative education and gender sensitive leaning infrastructure and assets. Unlike the past century the bulk of these investments will be in the developing world. Investing in institutionalization of gender education and ESD in tertiary institutions is essential to attaining the SD objectives of Agenda 2030.
- Data and statistics (including monitoring and evaluation).

¹⁰ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Education-sustainable-development-Guidance-June-14.pdf>

- ❑ Accountability mechanisms (for states, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders).
- ❑ Global Action Programme.
- ❑ Institutional Culture and Attitudinal Change.
- ❑ Town-Gown Relationship.

5.6 CGDS Commitments for Accelerating Agenda 2030 and its Gender Equality Compact in EKSU

Globally, tertiary education is in the midst of a historic structural transformation with strong focus on and a great commitment to Agenda 2030, its gender equality compact, gender education and ESD as the driving force for accelerating SD, eradicating gender inequality and poverty through formal, non-formal and informal education.

Consequently, the Centre for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS), EKSU, with strong Institutional support is set to accomplish the following commitments by 2030:

- ❑ **Put Sustainable Development at the Core:** Ensure institutionalization of Agenda 2030 and mainstreaming of its gender equality compact in EKSU and Ekiti State in order to slow the alarming pace of poverty and inequality.
- ❑ **Leave No One Behind:** Move from reducing to ending gender gaps in EKSU, in all its forms by ensuring that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied access to enrolment in any academic discipline or participation in leadership positions through the implementation of the EKSU Gender Policy and Sexual Harassment Guidelines.

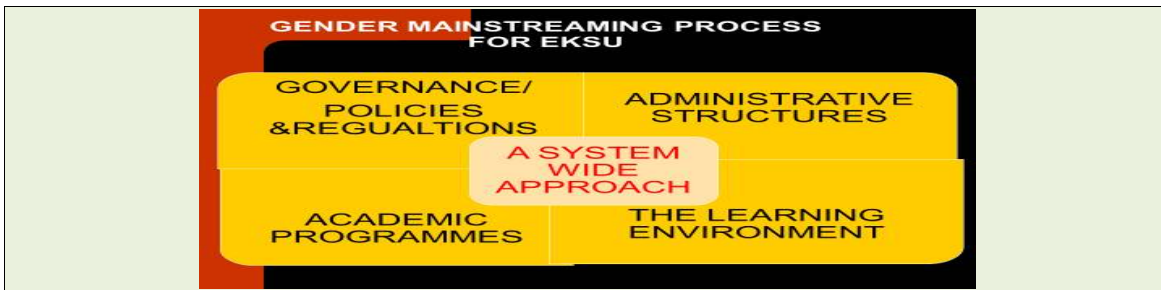


Fig. 3. System wide conceptual framework to gender education and sustainable development

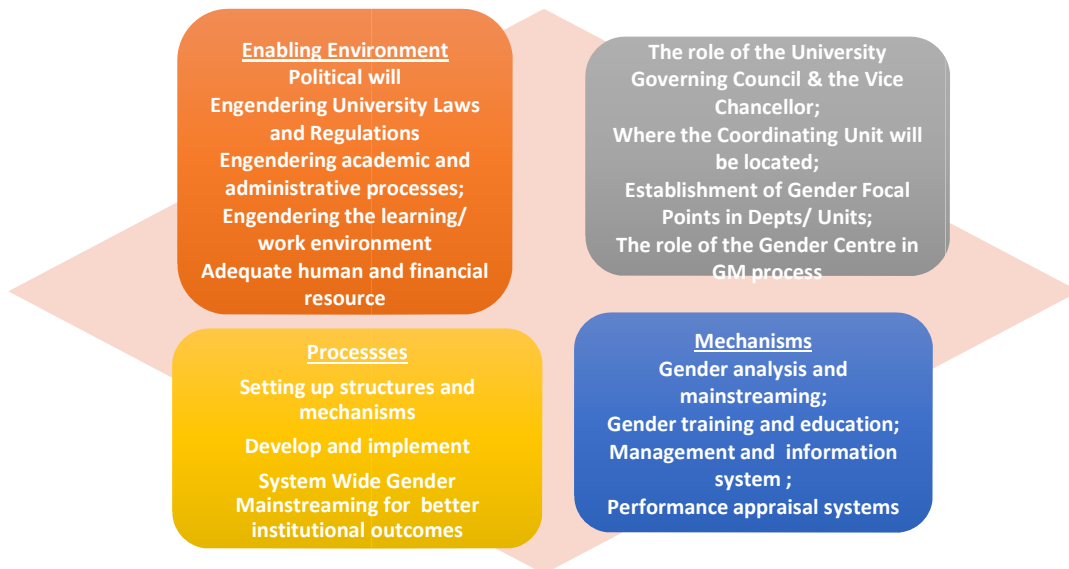


Fig. 4. Conceptual Framework for the Gender Management System (GMS)

Source: Adapted from the Commonwealth Gender Management System Handbook, 1999

- ❖ **Skills Development:** Build institutional, State and National capacities on gender mainstreaming, social development planning and policy analysis through teaching, training, consultancy, documentation and networking.
- ❖ **Research for Sustainable Development:**
 - Promote an inter-disciplinary research and policy analysis for SD;
 - Promote research into issues of equity and equality associated with gender, class, ethnic and political differentiations.
- ❖ **Gender Disaggregated Data:** Maintain a database on gender and development issues for Ekiti State Government in particular and the Nigerian Government in general.
- ❖ **Collaborations and Linkages:** Forge research collaborations with local and international sister institutions for staff fellowships and students exchanges in specific areas of expertise with national and international partners.
- ❖ **Partnerships:** Build partnerships and networks with government institutions, the private sector and other civil society organizations on issues relating to gender or development issues.

These commitments and priority areas in Figure 5 below are in line with the 30th May 2013 High Level Panel Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda to eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development.

The Centre also hopes to utilize the technical tools in Table 1 to drive the process on institutionalization of Agenda 2030 and its gender equality compacts in EKSU.

5.7 Accelerators of Gender Parity

There are three accelerators, working independently and together, that can change the trajectory of women's advancement and gender parity in the workplace:

- i. Illuminate the path to leadership by making career opportunities more visible to women
- ii. Speed up culture change with progressive corporate policy, such as paternity leave and flexible working
- iii. Build supportive environments and work to eliminate conscious and unconscious bias. A supportive culture throughout the organization is the top enabler of women's acceleration in most companies and institutions.

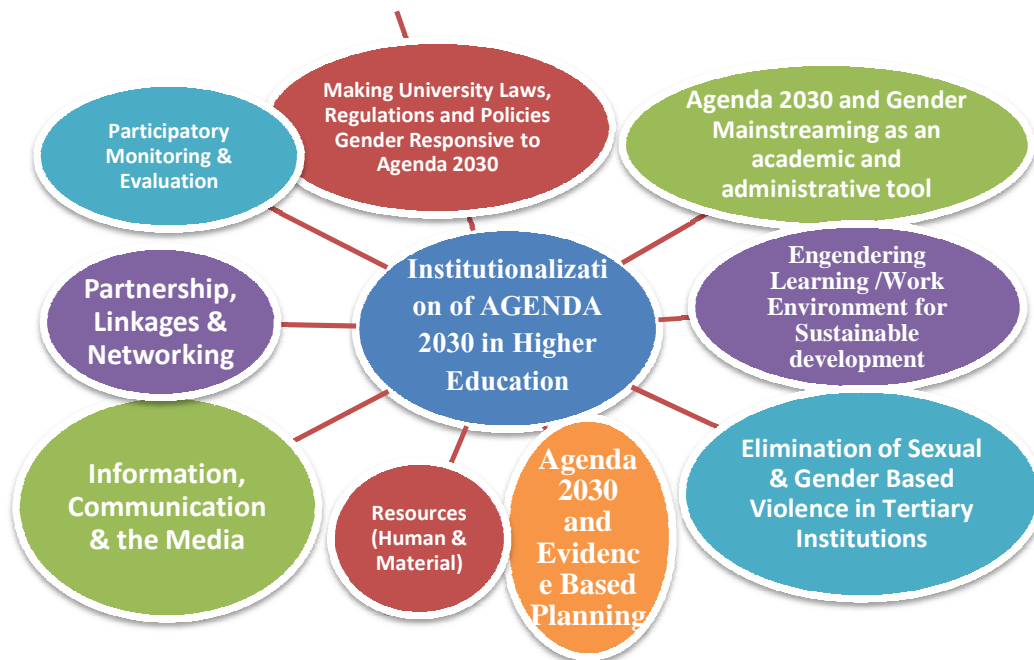


Fig. 5. CGDS Priorities Areas of Action for Agenda 2030 in EKSU

5.8 A Push for Gender Equality in Tertiary Institutions - Recommendations

There is the need to put gender on your agenda beyond International Women's Day celebration in tertiary institutions in the following areas:

■ **Academic Programmes:** In order to step up and accelerate the 2030 agenda for sustainable national and international development, tertiary institutions need to intensify and diversify academic programmes designed to meet the demands for high level manpower across the globe [24,25]. It is therefore necessary for governments, policy makers and education stakeholders to significantly increase investment to close the gender

gap and strengthen support to institutions in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment as well as making higher institutions the market place for generating highly skilled and competent manpower required in industries and other sectors of the economy across the globe.

■ **Male-dominated academic disciplines:** Institutional management should develop and drive the process of gender sensitive enrolment of students and employment of staff in male-dominated academic disciplines. These will significantly enhance an increase in women's levels of educational attainment as well as their participation and achievements in traditionally male-defined subjects.

Table 1. Institutionalization of Agenda 2030 and its Gender Equality Compacts in University Setting

	Academic programmes	Female administrative and academic staff
Planning and Programming	Develop a gender perspective in University Curricula and academic programmes; Conduct advocacy meetings with faculties, Units and Centres; Organize gender awareness and gender sensitive training to generate understanding among academic planners and programmers.	Conduct Capacity Building and technical Trainings for institutionalizing female participation in leadership and university management
Develop Technical Tools and Resources for capacity building	Develop Gender Equity Policy, Affirmative Actions and Guidelines for mainstreaming gender in EKSU, Develop Training Manuals, Conduct TOT on gender analysis, gender statistics, gender budgeting and gender auditing	Conduct advocacy meetings with key stakeholders in the University, Implement measures such as affirmative actions, Increase female's participation in decision-making, students' politics, university politics, leadership and governance
Gender sensitive Regulations	Institutionalization of gender sensitive regulations, affirmative actions and policy; Ensure the use of gender lens in programme planning and implementation, Appoint gender focal points in various faculties, Departments, and Units to support gender mainstreaming.	Conduct advocacy programmes for social and attitudinal change Conduct social change capacity building programmes
Institutionalization of EKSU Gender Equity Policy	Conduct advocacy and consultative meetings with key principal officers on policy implementation and gender mainstreaming in the university	Conduct capacity building workshops for male administrators and male academics on gender attitudes and how to eliminate gender based violence, gender discrimination and gender disparities in the university system. Monitor implementation of EKSU's Gender Equity Policy

☒ **Town-Gown Relationships:** Because gender education and ESD is a lifelong process, universities need to work with non-formal and informal educational sectors to accomplish local sustainability goals in the following areas:

- Knowledge systems: Development of indigenous knowledge systems e.g. local religions, traditional foods, knowledge for biodiversity conservation; and integration of the local knowledge with other knowledge systems.
- Skills development, sustainable entrepreneurship, livelihoods and markets.
- Strong relationship between natural resource base and livelihoods.

☒ **Research platforms:**

- Create a research agenda to address important questions, such as the effectiveness of faculty efforts to reorient education to address sustainability.
- Develop strong arguments backed by research to submit to academic boards to show that education that does not include gender education and ESD is not an appropriate education for the future.

☒ **Academic Pedagogy, Teaching/Training**

- Develop specialized programmes on gender education and ESD and interdisciplinary coursework on sustainability.
- Demonstrate learning techniques that foster higher-order thinking skills, support decision making and involve participatory learning
- Identify research topics and projects linked to local sustainability issues
- Promote understanding of local, indigenous and global sustainability in order to encourage critical thinking and decision making that influence personal lifestyle and economic choices.
- Place graduates who have completed courses in GE and ESD in key institutions and ministerial positions to help influence and bring about change
- Work with ministries of education to redirect existing funding to address ESD; seek new funding through grants, and research; and collaborate with NGOs and environmental, business and social foundations.

☒ **University Curricula**

☒ **Administration**

☒ **Make a Pledge: Pledge to**

- i. Help women and girls achieve their ambitions: Organizations must illuminate the path to leadership, showing women the career and advancement opportunities that match their skills and professional objectives and provide the experiences necessary to fulfil their potential. Individuals can commit to advocating for themselves, and when appropriate, becoming effective role models and sponsors of women to help them achieve their goals.
- ii. Challenge conscious and unconscious bias: Studies show that gender-balanced organizations and teams deliver stronger results, and that inclusive societies are more progressive, but ingrained bias slows the progress of equality. Organizations must build cultures where all people feel valued and included and can contribute fully according to their capabilities. Individuals can commit to learning about their own biases, adjusting their behaviour as needed and welcoming different experiences and points of view.
- iii. Call for gender-balanced leadership: Companies with women board members outperform in return on equity, net income growth and price-to-book value as well as a host of non-financial measures. Organizations must ensure women are exposed to strategic operations and functions to gain the experience needed for senior positions and set measurable targets for appointing women to leadership. Individuals can show potential or current employers that they value and expect gender-balanced leadership. They should seek out leadership, sponsorship and mentoring programs, exposure to strategic and financial roles and integrated networks designed to help women advance.
- iv. Value women and men's contributions equally: Raising the female labour force participation rate to match that of men will have a positive impact on GDP in both developed and developing economies. Organizations must ensure all their talent processes are equitable, fair and that they further their gender

parity and diversity objectives. Individuals can seek out perspectives different from their own, prioritize building diverse teams and engage in mixed networks that build trusted relationships.

- v. Create inclusive, flexible cultures: After competitive pay and benefits, workers in eight countries rank working flexibly and still being on track for promotion as what they value most in a potential job. Organizations should recognize that lines between career and personal lives are becoming more fluid. They should create progressive policies like flexible working that allow everyone - regardless of age, gender, rank or geography - to manage their personal and professional lives and realize their ambitions. Individuals can create trusting, team-oriented work environments by encouraging flexible working supporting choice about the times, places and ways work gets done.

focus on and a great commitment to Agenda 2030, its gender equality compact, gender education and ESD as the driving force for accelerating sustainable development, eradicating gender inequality and poverty through formal, non-formal and informal education. This is because the SDGs is a “universal, transformative and integrated development agenda”. It is set to end hunger, achieve full gender equality, improve health services and get every child into school. It also aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, create better jobs and tackle contemporary environmental challenges – particularly climate change. Thus, institutionalization of Agenda 2030 in the ivory towers of learning in developing nations like Nigeria will entail a wide range of factors across economic, social, environmental and political dimensions. It will necessitate development of institutional mechanisms for equipping students and staff with the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to work and live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic well-being, both in the present and for future generations.

5.9 Pledge for Gender Parity in Universities

- ❖ I pledge to help a woman in my Unit/Department/Faculty identify and secure her next promotion.
- ❖ I pledge to identify opportunities for women in my Unit/Department/Faculty to lead.
- ❖ I pledge to become a better teammate by learning more about why gender parity matters.
- ❖ I pledge to help create a culture of flexibility for everyone in my Unit/Department/Faculty.
- ❖ I pledge to encourage men in my Unit/Department/Faculty to take paternity leave.
- ❖ I pledge to seek out perspectives different from my own and encourage everyone to contribute.
- ❖ I pledge to become a sponsor for a woman to help her achieve her professional ambitions.
- ❖ I pledge to challenge our leaders to ensure men and women are treated equally.
- ❖ I pledge to become more aware of my own biases and work to eliminate them.

6. CONCLUSION

Globally, tertiary education is in the midst of a historic structural transformation with strong

Therefore, Achieving gender parity is a task larger than any single organization. By participating in the Pledge for Parity, every member of staff in EKSU is committed to taking one specific action to advance women in the entire university system. CGDS alone fast forward the pledge for parity to accelerate change in EKSU, hence the need for this parity pledge campaign with the university management and the entire members of staff for collective organized action aimed at speeding up clock for attainment of gender parity by 2020, 2030 or 2050.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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