Gender in the Making of the Nigerian University System

Cover artist
Tunde Odunlade is an internationally acclaimed Nigerian print and textile artist who has taught, studied and travelled extensively within Nigeria and throughout North America and Europe. Tunde’s art uses both contemporary and traditional techniques, some of which he has developed over the years such as batik appliqué and ‘floatograph’. His images draw on the rich history of Yoruba art and culture, and modern-day life in Nigeria.

Tunde does not create art for art’s sake but rather ‘art with a purpose’. He particularly reaches across cultural differences, raising awareness among his own people and the international community on potentials and challenges facing Nigeria. Tunde lives in Ibadan, Nigeria.

In his explanation of the linoprint for the cover, Tunde wrote: ‘Education to me is exactly what its origin means – “educaire”, i.e., to bring forth from within. The linoprint represents how the functions of education are integral to society. The interlocking circles show: (i) a tractor, a yam and corn plantation, a hoe and other tools for agriculture; (ii) village huts to depict rural life; (iii) a drummer to show the importance of cultural education; (iv) a house builder; (v) an indigo cloth dryer, a toxic-free industry; (vi) a telephone to show the importance of basic communications; (vii) a bird, who stands in the middle, and represents nature; (viii) a motorcar and its exhaust pipe to represent pollution and the need for environmental friendliness; and (ix) books and a woman on her graduation day because education propels development.’
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List of Acronyms

ABUWSG  Ahmadu Bello University Women’s Studies Group
ASUU  Academic Staff Union of Universities
BUK  Bayero University, Kano
JAMB  Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board
NANFS  National Association of Nigerian Female Students
NANS  National Association of Nigerian Students
NUC  National Universities Commission
NAUW  Nigerian Association of University Women
NAWACS  Nigerian Association of Women Academics
NWSN  Network for Women’s Studies in Nigeria
NEPU  Northern Element Progressive Union
SSANU  Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities
SSAN  Social Science Academy of Nigeria
UDU  Usman dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto
WIN  Women in Nigeria
WORDOC  Women’s Resource and Documentation Centre
A Glossary on Gender

The term ‘sex’ is used to refer to the biological differences between women and men. Differences between women and men on the basis of sex include hormones, chromosomes, men’s ability to provide sperm, and women’s ability to bear children and to breastfeed. One school of thought, social constructionists, posit that the biological differences between women and men are universal, obvious and generally permanent. Some poststructuralists point out that even what is thought to be ‘biological’ is socially acted upon and interpreted.

Gender refers to the socially and historically constructed relations between men and women, as opposed to their biological differences. The social relations of gender are dynamic and change over time, being shaped by cultural, social, political and economic relations of power that affect males and females in different ways in all societies.

Gender relations are the relations between different categories of women and men to one another, and to social phenomena such as the state, the economy, divisions of labour, education systems. These relations are shaped by ideologies and beliefs, practices, access to and control of resources, and so on. The social relations of gender are embedded in various other social divisions that are historically constructed and specific to that location. They include dimensions such as age, class, race, ethnicity and religion. Gender relations are played out in the spheres of production and reproduction, in households and communities, and in the social formations referred to above. Women are expected to work in several of these spheres at the same time, despite the oppressiveness of such expectations, whilst no such expectations exist for men.

Gender analysis is the process of analysing information in order to understand how structures, processes and resources, such as labour, for example, are differentiated, divided and valued according to sex and gender. It involves the systematic examination of ideologies and practices affecting women and men within their economic, political, social and cultural context and seeks to understand how societal institutions embody patriarchal assumptions that obscure women’s contributions and marginalize women from power and decision-making. Gender analysis often requires separating certain kinds of data and information by sex (known as disaggregating data) and analysing how the disparities between women and men arise.

There are varieties of gender analysis. Mainstream gender analysis seeks to explore differential impacts of policies, projects and institutions on men and women and to quantify the gendered outcomes within current systems. Feminist gender analysis addresses power relations and the causes of the major differences in women’s and
men’s lives, and seeks to transform social inequities. Whilst the general aim of carrying out gender analysis is to ensure that political, economic and social benefits and resources are effectively and equitably targeted to both women and men, and to successfully anticipate and avoid any negative impacts that may accrue to either sex, not all studies deploying gender analysis share this aim.

**Gender-blind**: Lack of awareness that gender is a key determinant of the choices we make. A person, policy or an institution that does not recognize that gender is an essential determinant of the life choices available to us in society is said to be gender-blind.

**Gender-neutral**: Free of explicit or implicit reference to gender or sex. This does not necessarily mean that the structures, processes or relations concerned affect women and men equally, although it is often assumed that this is the case when no distinction is made between genders. Gender disparities may be quite prominent in contexts that do not make any reference to gender or sex.

**Gendered (adj.)**: Having or making gender-based distinctions. It is used, *inter alia*, with regard to gendered institutions, gendered processes and structures and the gendered division of labour.

**Gender bias**: The tendency to make assumptions, distinctions, decisions or take actions based on consideration of one gender, predominantly masculine.

**Gender equity**: The condition in which women and men relate to one another and to social phenomena (such as the state, the economy, education systems) as equals, with equal access to resources, benefits and opportunities to exercise control. The promotion of gender equity stems from the established fact that women and men often benefit differently and unequally from opportunities and resources.

**Gender-sensitive**: Being aware of how the social relations of gender shape the differentiated expectations, needs, activities, domains and resources available to women and men. Also being aware that these shape differential patterns in women’s and men’s presence and power in social formations.

**References**


Preface to the Series

The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa began as an affirmation of the ability of African universities to transform themselves and promote national development. We, the presidents of four US foundations – Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation – came together out of a common belief in the future of African universities. Our interest in higher education proceeds from a simple faith that an independent scholarly community supported by strong universities goes hand-in-hand with a healthy, stable democracy. Universities are vitally important to Africa’s development. Their crucial activities in research, intellectual leadership, and developing successive generations of engaged citizens will nourish social, political, and economic transformation in Africa. By pooling our resources, the foundations will help advance the reform of African universities and accelerate the development of their countries.

Much of sub-Saharan Africa has suffered deep stagnation over the last two decades, and is staggering under the weight of domestic and international conflict, disease (especially the plague of HIV/AIDS), poverty, corruption and natural disasters. Its universities – once shining lights of intellectual excitement and promise – suffered from an enormous decline in government resources for education. In the late 1990s, however, things began to change in a number of countries. Our interest was captured by the renewal and resurgence that we saw in several African nations and at their universities, brought about by stability, democratization, decentralization and economic liberalization. Within these universities a new generation of leadership has stepped forward to articulate a vision for their institutions, inspiring confidence among those who care about African higher education. The case studies found that, while the universities represented in these volumes have widely varying contexts and traditions, they are all engaged in broad reform: examining and revising their planning processes, introducing new techniques of financial management, adopting new technologies, reshaping course structures and pedagogy, and reforming practices of governance.

The higher-education studies published in this series focus on the countries that the Partnership has selected for concentration: initially Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. Kenya was added in 2005. These countries were chosen because their universities were initiating positive change, developing a workable planning process, and demonstrating genuine commitment to national capacity building, in contexts of national reform.

The studies commissioned by the Partnership were carried out
under the leadership of local scholars, using a methodology that incorporates feedback from the institutions under study and involving a broad range of stakeholders.

The publication of the case studies in this series is closely in line with the major aims of the Partnership:

• generating and sharing information about African universities and higher education
• supporting universities seeking to transform themselves
• enhancing research capacity on higher education in Africa
• promoting collaboration among African researchers, academics and university administrators

The studies are the product of the foundations’ support for conceptual work that generates information about African higher education and university issues. Through the case studies, the foundations hope to promote a wider recognition of the importance of universities to African development. Additional studies on Kenya and Ghana will be published in 2007.

When the Partnership was established in 2000 we pledged $100 million in support of higher education in Africa. Working together, the foundations exceeded that goal and contributed $150 million through September 2005 to fund higher education reform efforts in the targeted countries and institutions involved. The Partnership was relaunched for a second five-year period on 16 September 2005. The relaunch represented several milestones – two additional foundations joined the Partnership, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Together, the six foundations have pledged a minimum of $200 million over the next five years. And, finally, Kenya was added to the list of Partnership countries. The conceptual work supported by the individual foundations, working together in partnership towards a common vision, seeks to ensure the strengthening of institutional capacity for research on higher education in Africa and wide dissemination of African research output.

We hope that the publication of these case studies will help advance the state of knowledge about higher education in Africa and support the movement for university reform on the continent. Equally significant, the process of our involvement in the case studies has enhanced our own understanding and helped the foundations focus future efforts of the Partnership. Interest in higher education in Africa has grown since the Partnership was launched in 2000. In this way, the Partnership not only uses its own resources but also acts as a catalyst to generate the support of others, on the continent
and elsewhere, for African universities as vital instruments for development. We see these case studies as a critical step in the process of regeneration and transformation.

Vartan Gregorian, President
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Charmaine Pereira
Abuja
1 Introduction

In recent years, there have been a number of changes in the political and social context surrounding university education, as well as in the field itself, in Nigeria. Contextual changes include the shift from military rule to civilian government on 29 May 1999. Prior to the handover in May 1999, Nigeria had experienced only ten years of civilian government since independence on 1 October 1960. There have also been several reform initiatives within university education launched by the federal government (Jega, 2001). These include the review of university statutes and the reconstitution of the governing councils of all federal universities and the visitation panels sent to universities, culminating in recommendations for improved financial accountability and administrative efficiency.

At the end of 1962, there were five universities in the country (FRN, 1992). The 1970s were witness to the tremendous wealth generated by the oil boom and the authoritarianism of military rule. Under military rule, the number of universities increased without regard for adequate funding, infrastructure and amenities or the working conditions of university staff. By the year 2000, there were 47 universities in total, 29 of these being federal universities, 15 state universities and 3 private universities (Jibril, 2000). The deterioration of the university system was compounded by structural adjustment, which began in 1986. Ade-Ajayi (2002) puts the destabilization of the university system in historical context. He traces the changing relations with government and the states, particularly in relation to funding and university autonomy, in the context of increasing politicization and corruption of the university system. The field of university education has thus been characterized by considerable shifts in structuring, policy and practice since its inception. More recently, an increasing number of private universities have been established.

Although university systems tend to be spoken of in gender-neutral terms, the effects of their workings are far from gender-neutral. The gender disparities are glaringly obvious when we examine the levels of recruitment of academic staff. In the academic year 1996/7, only 9.2 per cent of staff in the social sciences were women (150 out of 1,631), compared with 12.8 per cent of academic staff in the sciences, 14.7 per cent in the arts and a grand total of 22.2 per cent in education (data generated by the National Universities Commission, 2001).

Of a total of 11.6 per cent of students enrolled in education during...
1996/7, 47.8 per cent were women – almost half of all education students. Yet the proportion of women in positions of authority in universities in no way matches this figure. In the same period, 31.7 per cent of science students were women, compared with 37.6 per cent of female students in the social sciences and 44.6 per cent of female arts students (data generated by the NUC, 2001). These figures do not take drop-out rates into consideration. The gender disparities in student enrolment are exacerbated by differentials lower down the pipeline. At secondary school level in 1995, 22.2 per cent of girls and 22.5 per cent of boys were enrolled. This reflects a reduction in enrolment, compared with 38 per cent of girls enrolled at primary school and 45 per cent of boys enrolled in the same year (FME, 1999; FME, forthcoming).

This study maps the changing character of the university system in Nigeria, with a particular focus on gender. Whilst the term ‘system’ tends to be associated with stability and clearly defined relationships among constituent parts, the latter characteristics do not apply to university education in Nigeria. Instead, the term ‘system’ is used here to refer to the overall configuration that university education takes on at given historical junctures, recognizing that flux and contestation are inherent features of the changes in form and content. In view of the complexity and differentiation within the university system, the focus is solely on federal universities, as the prototype of public universities.

The aim of the research is to further our understanding of the gendered workings of university education. The following questions are of specific interest:

• How have gendered structures and processes at the systemic and contextual levels affected the institutional level, namely, universities?
• In what ways have the workings of the university system contributed to bringing about gender differentials?
• How have women contributed to policy issues in university education?
• What are the gender implications of existing reforms of the university system?

Gender, education & society

Below are two contrasting conceptions of education, embodying differing philosophies and understandings of the part played by education with regard to individuals and society. The first, the prevailing view in contemporary Nigerian society, is marked by a
functional approach towards education. It is juxtaposed to an alternative conception that engages issues of power vis-à-vis the individual and society. In official circles, the empowering possibilities of education are barely acknowledged.

Education is both an end in itself and a means to attaining other ends. Education has an obligation to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, knowledge of the society and to prepare the young people for their future membership in the society and their active participation in its development. Education therefore is in itself an aspect or object of development. It is an instrumental resource and a means of achieving the wider objectives of development. Education is believed to contribute to political development by creating an informed and participant citizenry and to socio-economic development by equipping people for new roles associated with an expanding range of occupations. (Musaazi, 1986: 6)

... education at all levels should be empowering – empowering the individual to be: to control his/her destiny, greed, avarice and violence; empowering the person to nurture, heal and care for others and to fight for justice, ethics and morality as well as developing inner growth leading to wisdom, tolerance and compassion. (UNDP, 1998: 21)

Philosophies such as these not only inform educational structures and their institutional practices, but also the question of what configuration would be ideal for the future in the context of rapidly changing social, political and economic conditions. Ultimately, this concerns questions about the kind of society the systems are in place to create.

As one writer once put it, to dream is perhaps the only reality. It goes without saying that any society or nation that is devoid of dreams and visions and has no shared positive values and ideals that inspire and challenge its citizenry faces the real danger of disintegration and annihilation. Such a society cannot move in unison and unity ... Indeed and in truth, where there are no visions, the people will perish.

Visions ... dare to set ideals to be pursued, to lay standards which a society or nation must strive to attain and the values it must cherish and espouse. Visions address such questions as what kind of a people, society or polity? What national values must its citizens commonly subscribe to and universally hold dear? (UNDP, 1998: 77)

There is a considerable lack of debate in the literature on these issues. This is perhaps an indication of restricted social expectations, given the greed and authoritarianism displayed by ruling elites in their mode of governance, including orientation to education, and the deepening poverty in the society at large. Yet, precisely because of this, the education field as a whole, and higher education within that, is in critical need of more thought and discussion about the
philosophies, values and visions underlying existing or future reforms.

Two main bodies of literature are worth exploring for the purposes of this study. The first addresses women in higher education. Much of this literature focuses on issues at institutional, societal and family levels. Contextual and systemic issues receive considerably less attention. The second area for review addresses gender, the state and stakeholders in higher education. This is a growing body of literature, some of which does not address universities or higher education directly. Nevertheless, this work provides useful analytical pointers to ways of engendering our understanding of the workings of higher education.

Women in higher education

The major themes in the literature on women in higher education have been the absence or presence of women as students or in positions of leadership. As Morley et al. (2001) put it, the predominant focus has been on the question of numbers and the proportion of women in particular positions and the implications for women’s career development. ‘Gender equity is frequently reduced to strategies for transforming quantitative representation and participation, rather than an engagement with processes, power and dominant values’ (p. 12).

In Ghana, girls’ enrolment is less than that of boys at each level of education, decreasing from one level to the next. As a proportion of total enrolment in the years 1996/7, girls’ enrolment declined from 46.3 per cent at primary school level to 26.5 per cent at university (Benneh, 2001). Ohiri-Aniche (2001) points to important regional and gender disparities in school enrolments in Nigeria. Northern states generally have lower enrolment rates than southern states and, within states, fewer girls are enrolled than boys. Ekhaguere (2003) also notes glaring disparities in enrolment according to region, gender and economic status as well as between rural and urban households in Nigeria.

In the light of massive disparities between men and women staff and students in African universities, Namuddu (1995, cited in Bennett, 2002) called for clear affirmative action policies. The strategies she proposed included using predetermined quotas to ensure that women were granted admission to courses; searching for specific women candidates, known in their fields, for advertised academic and management positions; capacity-building programmes for women, where necessary; introducing and implementing policies on sexual harassment; identifying strong women students and
nurturing their development; and ensuring the promotion of good women candidates.

At the end of a decade of various forms of affirmative action for women, Kwesiga’s (2002) exposition of women’s access to higher education in Uganda is, in her view, timely. Her review of theory on the meaning of educational access and her analysis of barriers to women’s access address a number of interlocking sites: the family; society, culture and unequal development; and the educational institution itself. Kwesiga points out that the education of women has implications that go beyond education-specific issues. In the contemporary era, women are more active in demanding a stronger role in the development of their country: higher education provides a channel for such engagement and an escape route from poverty.

Beoku-Betts (1998) analysed trends, and factors affecting trends, in women’s education at secondary and tertiary levels in Africa. Although efforts have been made within the region to improve female enrolment rates in the face of declining investment in education, enrolment rates alone can be misleading indicators of the status of women’s education. Gender disparities at secondary and tertiary levels are more appropriately understood, the author argues, through an analysis of educational policies, curricula, academic structures and socio-cultural gender role expectations. She concludes that, in order to transform the patriarchal structure of the educational system, action is required to address issues such as enrolment disparities, school subsidies, adolescent pregnancy, sexual harassment and gender-sensitive teacher training.

Stambach’s (1998) study carried out among the Chagga in Machame, Tanzania shows how changes in cultural and socio-economic factors had an impact on the participation of girls and women in secondary and tertiary education. Married women maintain close ties with their natal families and have a reputation for being strong-willed and having ‘excessive power’. Chagga women have long valued schooling. More than half of the graduates of local secondary schools in Machame were found to be girls, and a disproportionate number of Chagga women are found in national universities. Stambach proposes that this power is derived from schooling, which is used as cultural capital. Land scarcity and lineage patterns combine to ensure that education has become a form of female inheritance. The author concludes that, rather than being culturally monolithic, educational institutions are grounded in society, history and culture.

Powers (1994) elaborates some of the obstacles faced by African women pursuing higher education, in a qualitative study of 11 female students at the University of Malawi. In Malawi, only 3 per
cent of girls who attend primary school go on to secondary school, and an even smaller proportion of these attend university. Such a scenario is not specific to Malawi. Powers found that all the women interviewed had decided to go to university in order to get a professional job with a salary large enough to support parents, siblings, extended family members and the education of future children. Although all the female university students planned to marry and have children at some stage, they shared a rejection of traditional cultural norms favouring early marriage and a large family size. In all cases, parents supported the wishes of the young women to proceed with their education.

The generalized absence of females in subject domains such as science and technology has been the focus of much study. In Nigeria, women accounted for only 17 per cent of the total enrolment in university science programmes in 1984, and 21 per cent in 1988 (Erinosho, 1997). Two hundred and nine women working in scientific and technological professions responded to a questionnaire sent to 520 women. Data were also gathered from in-depth interviews with a subsample of women. The majority, 72.7 per cent, had attended an all-girls secondary school. Most had formally educated parents, of whom, 43.5 per cent of fathers and 33.5 per cent of mothers, were working in scientific professions. Personal interest was the most important factor in their choice of profession, followed by ability and altruism. The least important factors were imitation of role models, peer influence and potential financial reward. Sources of support were their fathers, spouses, mothers and teachers. A minor degree of discouragement came from male peers. The women expressed anxiety only over their ability to distinguish themselves and their compatibility with their chosen fields.

The Report of the Commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria, commonly referred to as the Longe Report (FRN, 1992), identifies a number of factors as contributing to the low levels of women in education in general and higher education in particular. While the Longe Report lists the different factors and discusses them item by item (twelve in all), without grouping them thematically, the discussion below aggregates items on a thematic basis.

Social and economic constraints are such that, when parental resources are limited, girls are rated as being of lower priority concerning entry to higher education. ‘Gender stereotyping further compounds basic societal prejudices’ (p.146) and ‘in a male-dominated society, presumes [the] innate inferiority of women’ (p.149). Women are assumed to be childbearers first and foremost, and this is reinforced by sanctions that have the effect of limiting women’s adventurousness. Practices such as early marriage effectively block
girls from access to higher education. Unplanned or unwanted pregnancies often lead to drop-outs, whether in secondary or tertiary education. Restricted mobility for women and girls also restricts access to education. In rural areas, the very high levels of illiteracy for women preclude their acting as motivators or role models in education. Girls in such circumstances are often expected to hawk and trade in order to supplement the family income.

Within the educational system, not enough girls come through to higher education from the secondary level. School curricula tend to steer girls away from technical courses, towards subjects such as teaching, nursing, home economics and secretarial work. Ill-equipped schools for girls and the general scarcity of teachers in the sciences and technical courses further exacerbate the situation. At administrative levels, policy formulation is carried out ‘predominantly by men, and such changes as are required and their implementation instinctively favour them’ (p.149).

For the women who do get through to higher education, the Longe Report identifies three major problem areas. The first is the increasing incidence of sexual harassment. Although recognized as a feature of tertiary institutions worldwide, the report points to rising concern over the level of sexual harassment in Nigerian institutions. Sexual harassment is defined as follows:

...all acts of verbal harassment, pressure for sexual activity, repeated remarks with sexual connotation and implications, unwelcome touching, suggesting or demanding sexual involvement with explicit or implicit threats. (p. 149)

The second problem area consists of the unsatisfactory living conditions on university campuses. These, the report states, ‘have made it particularly difficult for females to adjust’ (p.149). Many students cannot afford alternative accommodation and have to make do with overcrowded and poorly maintained hostel rooms, compounded by poor sanitation. Finally, even when women have obtained good degrees, particularly in the applied sciences such as architecture, engineering, surveying, construction, mining and metallurgy, they are faced with ‘such basic prejudices as to make it difficult for them to secure jobs’ (p.149). Although the report contains a number of suggestions on ‘what to do to redress the Imbalance’ (pp. 149–50), there are no recommendations in the section on women in tertiary education, unlike the other sections in the same chapter.

Gender, the state & inequity

Despite the considerable differences in the contexts of higher education institutions in different regions, the last ten years have witnessed a shift towards a more inclusive orientation in higher
education across the Commonwealth (Morley et al., 2001). This is evident for academics as well as students. The conditions fuelling this shift have been quite varied. In some cases, inclusivity arises out of concerns with democracy, accountability, citizenship and justice. In other cases, economic policies on growth and globalization have driven the move towards increasing the quantity and quality of high-level human resources. In yet other circumstances, social development and the expansion of programmes dealing with education, housing, health and economic programmes for the poorest have been the driving force. The authors examine the interconnections between changing global conceptions of higher education and the framing of equality agendas, particularly those concerning gendered change.

In their founding years, institutions of higher education were key sites for the legitimation of state authority. This they did by inducting (male) rulers into established ideas about citizenship and the ways in which rights were to be interpreted, in short, enabling ‘rulers to rule’ (Morley et al., 2001: 3). Democracy in this discourse was about government dispensing rights, and higher education was the means through which a select number of individuals (predominantly men) were to be equipped to carry out this distribution appropriately.

After independence, the purpose of higher education for many African and South Asian countries came to be framed in terms of national development goals or serving the community. The role of higher education remained that of instilling ideas about the origins of rights and what were thought to be appropriate skills for ensuring their delivery. Neither the social identities of students and academics nor the content of higher education and professional training were at issue (Morley et al., 2001). The masculinist character of this apparently gender-neutral process is exemplified below:

... creating modern nations means creating modern men. ... Trust in the ability of education to promote economic and social development is a common thing in Africa today. Imbued with this trust, and facing serious shortages of skilled manpower, African nations devoted the early years of independence to the rapid expansion of educational facilities and, of course, the provision of qualified persons to man [sic] their burgeoning economic and administrative institutions. (Musaazi, 1986: 1)

By the late 1970s, the virtual absence from academia of gender analysis as a key mode of social enquiry in research and teaching gave rise to the organizing of alternative fora and the formation of independent research and advocacy networks. At the continental level, the Association of African Women for Research and
Development (AAWORD) was formed in 1977 (see Mama, 1996a). One of its central aims was to set an agenda for feminism in Africa by facilitating research and activism by African women scholars. This it did in its early days through workshops on methodology, women and rural development, reproduction, the mass media and development assistance.

Debates on education in the 1980s took place under conditions of increasing inequity, characterized by structural adjustment, economic stabilization and cost-cutting. Gaidzanwa (1997) points out that several assumptions about education, class and gender, amongst other concepts, were made in these debates. The historical bases for educational systems, however, were less often examined. Not much has been written about the gender implications and assumptions of colonial educational systems, despite the wealth of data generated in this domain. Gaidzanwa points to the need for a reassessment of the history and theory of education in African countries as a starting point for laying bare the character and implications of such assumptions.

By the 1990s, not only had the relations between academics and previous understandings of citizenship changed but so too had the role of universities. These shifts took place in the wake of persistent state harassment of academics in the context of intensifying struggles for democratization. Some of the consequences were killings, imprisonment, displacement and the flight of many intellectuals from their countries. Academic freedom was under assault. The attacks came from different quarters – not only the state but from within academia itself, civil society and international funding agencies (see Sall, 1995; Zeleza, 1997). Writing about the Symposium on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Intellectuals, held in Kampala in 1990, Mamdani (1995, cited in Sall, 1995: 1) had this to say:

The first fact worth noting about the African symposium in Kampala was a rather startling shift in priorities: intellectuals who, in the past, laid claim to a leadership role, were now coming together on a platform of rights. This was connected to another shift: that in the nature of the university as an institution, which since independence had been shaped by a state-directed logic of development. It now found itself being defined by a market logic.

The 1990s were also marked by feminist reconstructions of the notion of citizenship. These have theorized about citizenship as plural and multi-layered, embodying the recognition of multiple identities and associated new claims for distributing and redistributing the rights and practices linked with citizenship (e.g. Yuval-Davis, 1997; Young, 1990). This notion of citizenship has been pitted against the
older conception, not simply at the level of theory but also at the level of practice within higher education. The paradigms of knowledge production (Imam and Mama, 1990), the pedagogies used, the formation of the institution and the ways in which it is reproduced have all come under scrutiny. Bennett (2002) concludes that the ‘core business’ of universities includes the notion that some citizens (women) can have multiple burdens of work demanded of them in order to be seen as worthy of value. Universities’ ‘core business’ also includes support for gender dynamics that maintain the non-remuneration of reproductive labour at the same time as women’s bodies are constructed as a legitimate site for surveillance by institutional authority.

The struggle for academic freedom is in many ways a struggle for citizenship, involving members of universities, individually and collectively, engaged in struggles for rights and democracy within the institution as well as in the polity (Sall, 2000). Academic freedom itself is now recognized as gendered in the sense that the sources of threat to women academics are often quite different from those experienced by men. Violence and abuses of women’s sexuality, hitherto ignored in conceptualizations of academic freedom, are no longer silenced (see Phiri, 2000).

Differing ideas about higher education and citizenship embody contrasting orientations to equity agendas, especially concerning gender equity (Morley et al., 2001). The first position posits that higher education should ‘remain a more or less elite institution transmitting higher level knowledge and knowledge of professional practice to a select few’ (p.5). Expansion, where it occurred, would encompass small numbers of students and of particular kinds of students, such as women or groups defined by ethnicity. Gender equity thus comes to mean increasing the numbers of women, but on the prevailing institutional terms.

Power is not redistributed, even though the potential space for access to power might have been widened. By contrast in a context where radical notions of democracy have had an impact on higher education, the equity agenda is about transforming institutional power relationships, often taking account of feminist scholarship on the gendered formations and governance of institutions. It is about examining the legitimacy given to certain knowledges, taking on board the feminist critique concerning selections from knowledge, and of scrutinizing pedagogy for the power relations it carries. (Morley et al., 2001: 5)

Bennett (2002) discusses varying conceptions of equity in general, and gender equity in particular, as well as the corresponding strategies. Equity in the South African context has included consideration of race as well as gender divisions in terms of restricted
access to university education (see for example, Badsha and Kotecha, 1994). The most common form taken by formal gender-equity policies has been the development of affirmative action opportunities for women students. Bennett (2002) points out, however, that challenges within institutions on issues of gender have rarely been initially expressed as concerns about the relative numbers of women and men in the university.

Instead, an increasing number of initiatives address the ubiquity of sexual harassment and sexual violence in academia. As a key feature of oppressive institutional cultures, sexual harassment is not only commonplace but presents persistent obstacles to women’s advancement in universities (Sall, 2003). Reliable data on the phenomenon are difficult to collect since the practices involved are often submerged and ignored, even in those rare cases where they are reported. Institutional cultures are shaped by the dynamics of change in the political as well as economic arenas. In the Nigerian context, Pereira (2003a) argues that sexual harassment has become embedded in the malgovernance of the university system and the general spread of corruption.

Alongside the efforts to address sexual harassment and sexual violence, a great deal of energy has gone into the development of new fields of knowledge. Since the late 1970s, the demand for research and teaching that takes gender seriously has led to the formation of gender and women’s studies programmes, departments and centres in universities across Africa (see Bennett, 2002). At its heart, the challenge that has given rise to these institutional developments has been one of counteracting and transforming knowledge production across disciplinary divides. Key texts in this regard are Mama’s (1996a) Africa-wide review of a range of themes under the broad umbrellas of women, politics and the state; cultural studies; and work and the economy. The late 1990s and beyond have witnessed a dramatic increase in the richness and volume of scholarship in gender and women’s studies in Africa. Lewis’s (2002) sequel to Mama’s review follows themes and debates in the literature, highlighting diverse theoretical models and methodological approaches in addition to regional and conceptual dialogues and comparisons. At the country level, Pereira (2003b) relates intellectual content in gender and women’s studies in Nigeria to its political agenda, with a view to outlining potential trajectories for the future.

At the international level, the era of globalization and fragile economic growth accompanied by increasing inequity has given rise to concern at the slow pace of social change. The first World Conference on Higher Education, hosted by UNESCO in Paris in 1998, endorsed the World Declaration on Higher Education for the
Twenty First Century: Vision and Action, which embodies a commitment to in-depth reform of higher education throughout the world. Gender reform occupies a prominent position in the declaration (UNESCO, 1998).

The contested nature of the purpose of the university is highlighted by the analysis of Morley et al., as are the possibilities of change:

The notion of the purpose of the university [is] contested in different periods and in different regions of the Commonwealth. On the one hand the university has been viewed as ungendered, a site for knowledge to serve national interests and ungendered notions of citizenship. In this guise it is open to primarily quantitative change with regard to including certain formerly excluded groups. On the other hand, the university may be viewed as an institution complicit with the social divisions of the society, but nonetheless open to qualitative change and transformations concerning gendered and other forms of inequity. (Morley et al., 2001: 11)

Gaidzanwa (1997) reports the results of a study of factors affecting women’s academic careers and continued under-representation at the University of Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, as in many other African countries, there was massive expansion in the numbers of students in educational institutions between 1960 and 1983. This happened at a time when governments were implementing welfare policies in health and education whilst attempting to boost economic growth. Despite the huge expansion in education as a whole, Gaidzanwa points to some alarming trends. The proportions of young women in senior secondary school declined significantly after independence in 1980. There was also a significant decline in the proportion of women in administrative and managerial positions across the economic spectrum after independence. All this took place in the context of relatively high budgetary expenditures on education in Zimbabwe, resulting in the expansion of free primary schooling and a growth in the numbers of secondary schools since 1980.

Given the strength and salience of expectations about marriage on women’s educational opportunities (see Bennett, 2002), Gaidzanwa’s treatment of the issues is explored here in some detail. A higher percentage of female than male students were married; nearly one-third had children, and they said that their family responsibilities had affected their studies. Most of the female students did not aspire to acquire postgraduate qualifications, no doubt because of the perceived difficulties concerning financial and family support, and a lack of role models, encouragement and opportunities. A higher proportion of male students saw women’s primary roles as wives; over 50 per cent of female students shared this view. More than 50 per cent of male students thought that a man’s career should have precedence over his wife’s, whilst, significantly, 42 per cent of the
female students held the view that careers were the most important roles for women. Students’ views tended to reinforce the status quo, although the views of some sections of the female population were quite different from the expected views.

Male and female academics had the same aspirations and career goals. However, women entered academia at a disadvantage, being appointed at lower ranks than men at the start of their careers as well as being more likely to start their careers in temporary posts. Subsequently, women’s mobility within the system was slower than men’s because of the gender division of labour that freed men from domestic work, whilst simultaneously casting it as ‘women’s work’. Women’s general acceptance of this exploitative state of affairs has implications for their academic productivity and careers, since ‘women are not able to discharge their household and academic obligations simultaneously without prioritizing one over the other’ (p.290), namely, their families over their careers:

Male academics at the University of Zimbabwe were able to achieve at a level higher than that of their married female counterparts because they had wives and women in their lives who were expected to take care of domestic responsibilities thus freeing male academics to excel in their chosen line of work. Thus, men have support systems that are socially organized and legitimated whereas those women who opt to pursue academic careers while nurturing marriages have many doubts and experience socially-induced guilt related to the pursuance of their career choices. This frame of mind is not conducive to productivity and satisfaction with work generally. (Gaidzanwa, 1997: 293–4)

Gaidzanwa’s study makes the important theoretical point that gender analysis helps to expose the assumptions that there are clear links between expansion, availability, affordability and accessibility of education. ‘Expanding educational facilities and making them more available does not necessarily make them affordable or accessible equally by gender, race, class and age …’ (p. 295). Prah’s (2002) analysis of the gendered character of the University of Cape Coast in Ghana highlights the complex interplay of social and cultural orientations, belief systems, ignorance and poverty. The ensuing web of social relations affects the gendered dynamic of the university, producing gender-specific problems for women and upholding women’s low visibility.

Tsikata (1997) highlights the significance of the state and gendered processes within it. She points out that a clear understanding of the gender dimensions of state policy and the relations between civil society and the state is necessary for a full understanding of gender inequalities. In a wide-ranging review of state policies and practices in colonial and post-colonial Ghana, Tsikata
shows clearly that there are contradictions in state policy and practice within any single regime as well as between regimes:

The state does not operate as an organic or monolithic whole; various state structures and institutions have their own logic and ideologies with which they operate. Thus state action has had direct, indirect and sometimes-unintended results in increasing gender inequalities or in enhancing gender equity. (Tsikata, 1997: 405)

She concludes that important gaps remain in our knowledge of the state, and that there is a need for a different kind of analysis of the state, alongside policy analysis. ‘The nature of the state itself, the inner workings of state structures and how policy is made and implemented are yet to be analysed’ (p.406). This type of study is critical to a fuller understanding of state policy. It is also more difficult to carry out.

Pittin’s (1990) article on women’s education in northern Nigeria highlights ideological, structural and material features and interests. Although her focus is on girls and women in secondary and primary, rather than higher, education, Pittin’s approach is nevertheless useful for an analysis of gender elsewhere in the education system. She points out that current debates and actions concerning women’s education must be placed in historical context. In Katsina State (in northern Nigeria), this history is one of ideological and material constraints manifested in centuries-old differentiated access to education for girls and women, whether refracted through Hausa tradition, Muslim ideology or later overlaid by the British system of indirect rule, and more recently by political Islamist intervention. Contemporary discussion and action over women’s formal education reflects a non-consensual and multi-stranded arena in which access to education is directly related to questions about women’s labour and other scarce resources.

Pittin argues that, for the state, women’s education and training have been, and remain, matters of low priority. In the recent past, whilst policies have ostensibly provided educational access to women, the failure of these policies to take into account resistant pressures in society has resulted in the progressive loss of female students at levels beyond primary school. Consequently, the class basis of educational access is accentuated in the prevailing context of economic crisis.

For women in positions of authority and decision-making, one of the barriers to their effective involvement in education, as in other spheres of life, is the prevalence of masculine work environments. This is the case even when the atmosphere regarding women’s advancement is supportive. Ghana’s Women in Public Life Project (Oware Gyekye et al., 1998) examined women’s representation in
education and in a wide range of governmental and non-governmental institutions. Women’s lack of qualifications left them unable to compete for jobs, and therefore very few were in decision-making positions.

The research revealed other obstacles to women’s advancement, such as perceptions that domestic responsibilities affect women’s ability to concentrate on jobs, fears of being accused of sexual impropriety and perceptions of gender roles. In order to improve women’s participation in public life, the project calls for a broad range of actions to be implemented. These include concrete action programmes to increase the education and training of girls and women; reduction in the number of school drop-outs; mentoring of junior female colleagues by senior officials; improvements in women’s status; the identification and correction of discriminatory practices; the enactment of appropriate laws; and the establishment of gender and development documentation centres.

In Nigeria, the atmosphere regarding women’s advancement is only superficially supportive. State discourses on gender have championed ‘better life for rural women’ and ‘economic advancement for families’, through the medium of female power structures deploying the wives of the head of state and state governors (see Mama, 1998). First ladies at different levels have experienced greater visibility and better material conditions than most other categories of women.

The lives of the vast majority of Nigerian women, however, are more likely to be characterized by the continued existence of gender inequity and women’s subordination, a phenomenon widespread across the continent, and indeed internationally. In Nigeria, this takes the form of pervasive beliefs that women are (men’s) ‘property’ and, by extension, minors, whose adult status is mediated via men, primarily the father or husband, but also uncle, brother and so on. A range of oppressive and inhumane practices that do violence to women’s bodily integrity and their humanity – such as widowhood rites, female genital mutilation and child marriage – are justified through recourse to a complex that variously combines culture, tradition and religion. In addition, there is the widespread denial of education, land and property rights and access to credit (Effah et al., 1995; Civil Liberties Organisation, 1993).

Research on masculinities

In the past two decades, a new body of research has developed internationally. This is research on masculinities, meaning patterns of conduct related to men’s place in a given gender order. One of the
critical conclusions is that masculinities are diverse; different cultures vary and patterns of masculinity change over time. Masculinities also exist impersonally in institutions, in a similar sense to that referred to earlier as the masculine work environment. Institutions embed particular gender patterns in their institutional cultures, which may be reproduced in their training programmes. These gender patterns shape self-understandings, repertoires of conduct, beliefs about the appropriate behaviour for men and women in society and sexual behaviour (Connell, 2001).

Research carried out on gender relations by Gaidzanwa and her colleagues at the University of Zimbabwe engaged male and female students in studies of gender, masculinities and femininities (see Gaidzanwa, 2001). The increasing economic distress faced by many students, the rise of sexual harassment and of violence on the part of male students, and institutional silence about such abuses were all matters of concern. Describing the class structure of different masculinities on campus, Chagonda (2001) highlights the problems posed by the hegemonic masculinities of undergraduate students. He argues that the violence and the degradation of women that are inherent in the masculinities of the Undergraduate Bachelors Association undermine the principles of gender equity and democracy espoused by the university.

Also at the University of Zimbabwe, Gore (2001) examines the masculinities of ‘wilder’ students engaged in politics, the contradictions in forms of masculinities amongst these students and the difficulties encountered by women and disabled male students in efforts to engage in student politics. The transgressive aspects of ‘wilder’ male working-class and rural masculinities are marked by alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, the harassment of women and the pursuit of political fame. Not all masculinities are violent or disruptive, Gore states, pointing to the masculinities of religious (Christian) males and male students with disabilities as being more muted.

Male-dominated institutional cultures embody assumptions that men should lead and women should follow. Where affirmative action is practised, as for example in universities in South Africa, men exhibit passive and active resistance. ‘Men ignore women, they use “old boys” networks to block women, they belittle women in meetings, they ridicule women and engage in sexual harassment and intimidation to control women’ (Bone et al., 1996, cited in GETNET, 2001). Institutional culture is deeply affected by the pervasiveness of corruption – one of the important features of states with weak infrastructural power, i.e. the capacity to enforce laws and regulations (see Rai, 1996). Corruption affects the lives of different
people differently; for women, the ‘favours’ asked for are not only financial but also sexual. Men are not affected in quite the same way.

It is instructive to examine the experience of one initiative aimed at changing the culture of masculinity in academia. This is the example of Vista University in South Africa, located on eight campuses in formerly African townships across the country. In 1998, Dr Ngoato Takalo, a black woman, became principal of one of the campuses of Vista University. She began her work in a highly charged atmosphere. A number of women had been appointed to strategic positions on the campus prior to her arrival at Vista. This made it easier for Dr Takalo to address gender issues, but the task was undoubtedly still a difficult one. Unlike a number of other South African universities, Vista University did not have a gender policy. Male inertia and conservatism were strong features of the campus, and men in the transformation structures perceived Dr Takalo as a threat. Progress was impeded partly because none of the other Vista campuses was making an effort to work on gender transformation. Moreover, Dr Takalo’s co-ordination of work around gender took place in addition to all her other responsibilities as principal. Funds were inadequate, and there were no gender officers working in the area on any of the campuses (GETNET, 2001).

The critique that Dr Takalo made of the reform initiative is recounted below (GETNET, 2001: 44):

Dr. Takalo has identified a weakness in the gender equity strategy. Gender equity assumes that having more women on the staff means that women’s interests will be promoted. But this is not necessarily the case. Female bodies on a committee do not necessarily lead to gender transformation. Dr. Takalo and some of her colleagues argued that a distinction should be made between gender representation (bodies) and representation of women’s issues. In their experience, women were not automatically gender sensitive. They believed that it was important to appoint women capable of implementing gender transformation. They also acknowledged that gender-sensitive men had an important part to play in gender transformation. Dr. Takalo praised the contribution of a handful of male colleagues who supported the cause of gender equality. However, far more support was needed from women and men for gender transformation to make progress at Vista University.

The critical point here is that transformation of academia or the university system is not an ‘essence’ that women possess by virtue of being women, nor are men necessarily debarred from engaging in such work, simply because they are men. Gender transformation is both an intellectual and a political project, and for it to be effective it has to be engaged with at both these mutually reinforcing levels. What is not referred to above, however, is the need for men to take...
responsibility for changing masculinist features of institutional cultures. Otherwise, gender-insensitive men will see the task of gender transformation as simply one of ensuring that ‘the right kind of women’ and ‘a few men’ do the work, whilst they carry on with ‘business as usual’.

The rest of this chapter outlines the conceptual framework that has guided the choice of themes for this study, the questions asked and the reasoning behind the analysis. This is followed by a description of the modalities used to carry out the research, in what seemed to be uncharted territory. This is part of research methodology, though it is not often the part that gets written about. Finally, the research instrument and analysis are summarized.

**Researching the university system**

In order to understand the university system, it is necessary to understand the context in which that system is located, as well as the system itself. The development of the university system can only be made sense of if the context in which it is located is simultaneously the focus of study. Dimensions operating at local, sub-national, national, regional and international/global levels all shape the contours of the system as well as its context. The ways in which they do so form the focus of the research.

University education is viewed here as integrally linked to other parts of the education system, namely, primary and secondary education. The question of student opportunities to attend university and the structure of access to university education cannot be addressed solely within the terms of the university system itself. Instead, the character of student flows from one level of the system to another – from primary to secondary and secondary to university – is recognized as a critical dimension of the overall question of women’s low presence and visibility in university education.

Analysis of the university system, and particularly the changes it has undergone, is grounded in the concrete analysis of actual configurations. As a result, ‘the university system’ is recognized as meaning different things at different conjunctures of Nigerian history and politics. As noted earlier, the use of the term ‘system’ does not assume stability or clearly defined relationships among the diverse components of university education. Instead, the phrase ‘university system’, as used here, leaves open the question of what institutions and agencies constitute the system, how they come to be constituted, where the boundaries of the system lie and the interrelations among its constituent parts.
The conceptual framework locates the university system in relation to broader social relations, the agencies of the state and various groupings in society. As a key arena for ideological production, the university system is conceptualized as straddling all these domains, constituencies and sets of interests. Education, because it is capable of developing scarce skills and raising consciousness, holds out particular promise for the state in relation to its need to control society and the economy. At the same time, education poses a threat to prevailing relations of authority, since education is also capable of stimulating independent thought.

The federal state is viewed as a domain of particular significance for university education, bearing in mind its positioning in relation to structures of authority and coercion that have played a key role historically in the development of the Nigerian university system. Moreover, the workings of the state in shaping gender relations, within and beyond academia, are of particular significance. The state is understood here not as a unity of structure and power but as an often contradictory nexus of institutions and practices embedded in power relations, whose trajectory has been shaped primarily by political regime and historical conjuncture (see Alvarez, 1990).

'Gender' is used here to refer to the processes that define 'acceptable' ways of being masculine or feminine in a particular social formation. Gender relations are not primarily biological or sexual relations, although they may include elements of either. They are social as well as ideological and cultural relations, marked by power differentials, that map the range of processes, activities, ways of being, and use of time and space that are considered appropriate for women and for men, in a given collectivity over a particular period of time. The exercise of power and authority, access to and control of resources, the range of activities covered by the term 'reproduction', as well as participation in cultural and religious activities are all gendered. The social meanings of these activities, for women and for men, may vary within the same group over time and certainly vary between groups at any given time. Gender relations are very often relations of inequality, structured by the rules and practices of different institutions, such as those of the state, both separately and through their interactions. As the contributors to Imam et al. (1997) show, gender relations in African societies tend to be interwoven with class and neo-colonial relations, pointing to multiple discourses within which gender is implicated.

In view of the range of power structures that the university system is constituted in relation to – from the state and the economy to households and communities – it follows that analysis
of the university system requires addressing questions of power. One of the important implications of the poststructuralist conception of power as dispersed across social relations and everyday life (Foucault, 1979, 1980) is the recognition that power takes diverse forms and can be used in varied ways. The economic, political, legal and cultural forms constituting the power relations pervading the state (Rai, 1996) may also be conceptualized as permeating the university system. Education systems are embedded in and reflect existing patterns of state power, class divisions, gender relations, ethnic or racial domination and religious authority.

Although it has not been possible to address the totality of these differing forms of power in this study, it is recognized that existing social divisions engage in mutual interaction with and against each other. The effects are not always predictable and may often be contradictory. The effects of the discontinuity introduced into the development of the university system by political and economic shifts in policy and practice are examined. These processes point to the character of agencies driving changes in the configuration of university education. From this perspective, it is also possible to take account of social forces and their impact, through struggles, on the university system as well as the impact of the university system on social relations.

The study’s focus on an understanding of changes unfolding within the university system is not derived from the view that it is important to change university education simply for its own sake, independent of the rest of society. Rather, the emphasis is on the kinds of changes that are necessary to propel the university system along a trajectory of greater gender equality and social justice. This entails understanding in the Nigerian context of what forces subvert the building of institutions for knowledge production in this direction. It also entails an understanding of what strategies might promote the capacity of universities to engage in research, teaching and learning that are more likely to bring about democratization and gender justice.

The methodology has been shaped by the overall theoretical goal of understanding institutional power relationships, through an examination of the gendered formation and governance of the university system. Accordingly, analysis of the numerous and multi-faceted dimensions of the overall context within which the university system is located, and of the gender politics operating within the system and at institutional level, has preceded the synthesis of specific lines of thought in order to address the research questions outlined at the start of this chapter.
Modalities, as used here, refer to modes of procedure, namely, the processes involved in trying to make sense of the vast amount of research material collected, the form and significance of which varied considerably. For example, of the written texts, some were official reports of governmental commissions and others constituted published research. The sources of information were uneven; far fewer interviews were obtained than was originally planned. Newspaper reports were useful for understanding contexts.

The study attempted to map the university system as it has developed, highlighting processes where possible, whilst identifying arguments and assumptions, and raising questions for further research and analysis. Whilst considerable analysis of the university system has been carried out at various points in time, most of this work has been blind to gender. Textual analysis of existing documentation, from a gender perspective, has therefore been invaluable. It appears that a lot of ‘institutional forgetting’ (Douglas, 1987) has taken place. Douglas’s reference to the way in which memory is sustained by institutional structures, suggests its converse – the possibility of institutional structures failing to sustain the fruits of memory, particularly in intellectual work.

The aim here has been to analyse and synthesize some of this ‘forgotten’ material with current observations from interviewees, analyses of these and interpretation of other material. Gender analysis has proceeded by examining those issues that are in the foreground at any one time, those that are hidden or submerged, who are the subjects and whether women’s agency is recognized. The study also draws on sex-disaggregated numerical data wherever possible.

The research experience has meant reaching out to structures and sources of information that are dispersed and not always willing to engage in the research process. The task of tracking civil servants for the purpose of interviews has been frustrating. Civil servants in the network of governmental bodies and parastatals, the regulatory agencies comprising the higher education system, are very reluctant to participate in research. According to civil service regulations, the political head of a ministry is the only one allowed to make policy statements. Civil servants are unwilling to make ‘policy statements’ without clearance from their ministers. Consequently, the status of information, whether or not it relates to policy, tends to be blurred. Often, it is not clear whether the information required even exists. Even where it does exist, it is rarely organized in such a way as to be accessible.

The following sources were used for the research:
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- reports of government commissions, national development plans, official records
- published and unpublished texts, including conference papers, mimeos, memoranda
- interviews, discussions with key actors and stakeholders
- newspapers
- lived experience.

Research instrument and analysis
The main research instrument used was a protocol that allowed for data collection on two axes of the research: contextual and systemic issues. Indications of how the analysis proceeded are provided for selected themes in each of the axes.

Contextual issues were:
1. the impact of politics and political leadership
2. the relationship between national factors and transformation
3. the extent and implications of autonomy
4. the relationship between the higher education system and national development as well as the private sector
5. the question of the existence of a national human resources development policy
6. national and international factors responsible for the ‘brain drain’
7. global trends in higher education.

At the level of the context within which university education has developed, a critical dimension concerns the impact of politics and political leadership. How do politics, political leadership and policy environment (particularly government appointments, control and funding) affect the university system? In what ways has higher education been politicized? How does the current situation compare with the past? Gendered dimensions of these questions include the impact of (masculinist) military rule on the university system; how often and in what ways women have been involved in political leadership and policy development; and what impact, if any, women’s involvement has had on higher education policy.

The question of the relationship between national factors and change is also significant: How have national factors, such as legal frameworks and social, economic, political, developmental philosophy and policy, influenced change and transformation in the higher education system? To what extent are women or women’s interests reflected in these policies? How does the legal framework, vis-à-vis women’s right to work, for example, affect women’s position in higher education? How are policies regarding women in development
(WID) and gender and development (GAD) reflected in higher education/university policy?

Systemic issues included:

1. evolution of the system of higher education in relation to national needs
2. problems facing the university system
3. the role of the education bureaucracy
4. the roles played by organized interest groups within the system
5. university autonomy
6. the relationship between university curricula and national development plans
7. implementation of policies
8. factors determining the size and growth rate of the university system
9. duplication of functions
10. accountability and transparency in governance
11. capacity and capability of the system
12. the influence of parallel higher education structures
13. mechanisms for sharing resources among universities
14. educational quality
15. mechanisms for learning and diffusion of innovation
16. the relationship of the higher education system to lower levels of education
17. the expansion of distance education
18. discrepancies between the funds budgeted for universities, those approved by the NUC and the funds released by government
19. access to higher education for the physically challenged.

In the context of extensive debates and contestations over university autonomy, the various interpretations of university autonomy by government and actors within and beyond the university system are clearly important. How have these groups initiated and/or responded to issues of autonomy? What is the prevailing definition of autonomy in practice in the system? The gender implications of the various interpretations and the nature and scope of women’s involvement in the debates about autonomy are of particular interest. The question of what resources are available for the system to adapt to greater autonomy and how much of this is likely to be addressed to women’s needs as well as to men’s is also raised.

The critical question of quality is addressed by examining how quality is defined at the systemic level. Are there properly functioning mechanisms for quality control at this level? Are there stated,
publicly available standards for quality control? How were these derived? The question of whether the official standards are adequate and what mechanisms are in place to improve quality is also examined, as is the extent to which quality assessments take account of gender bias or discrimination.

Following the Introduction, in Chapter 2 the study discusses the historical basis for the educational system in Nigeria, as the overall system within which the university system is located. The intention is to draw attention to the regional, subregional and class dimensions of the system, which configure gendered processes and relations that continue to have an impact today. The discussion then turns in Chapter 3 to the post-colonial context within which the university system has grown in Nigeria. The contemporary configuration of university education and its gender politics form the subject of Chapter 4, exploring the legal framework underlying the system and the nature of the educational bureaucracy. Chapter 5 examines the policy environment and the relations between the university system and the job market. Chapter 6 addresses the politics of funding the university system and its implications for the quality of university education. Universities are examined as gendered institutions in Chapters 7 and 8, focusing on access, student enrolment and academic staff strength as well as institutional culture and equity agendas. Finally, sites of reform in the university system and the implications for greater gender equity are discussed in Chapter 9, before presenting the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 10.
This chapter provides a gendered overview of the colonial background to the existing system of education in Nigeria. Gender ideologies marked by colonial and missionary worldviews informed the policy and practice of religious institutions providing Western education for the colonized, which formed the basis for the contemporary education system. Diverse Christian denominations were involved in this scenario.

**Exogenous sources of education in Nigeria**

Christian missions were not the only exogenous source of education in Nigeria. As Soda (1999: 29) put it:

Education came to Nigeria from two different directions. Western or Christian education brought by European missionaries was introduced from the coastal regions and expanded gradually inland into South-Eastern and South-Western Nigeria. From across the desert came Islamic and Arabic education into what became known as Northern Nigeria. The purpose of the two great religions was the same: to teach and spread the Word of God. These two events have had and will continue to have a fundamental and far-reaching influence on the country’s political, social and cultural development and existence.

Islam was brought to Hausaland in the early fourteenth century by traders and scholars, whereas the first Christian missionaries landed in Nigeria around the 1840s. Up to that time, Muslim education had produced (male) scholars who were highly learned in the study of the Qu’ran and the Hadith, Islamic theology and etymology. It was the alliance between Church and state – Christianity and colonial rule – that combined to define ‘formal education’ in terms of the educational activities of Christian missions (Fafunwa, 1974). And it was this system of education that laid the foundation for the precursors to university education in Nigeria.

Nigeria was colonized not as a single territory but as three separate units, each administered separately. These were the colony of Lagos and the two Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria. In 1914, the colony of Nigeria was formed by the amalgamation of the three units, although the North and South continued to be administered separately. In 1938 the South was further divided into two regions, West and East. The principle underlying this arrangement was that each region would consist of
a ‘majority ethnic group’ that would play the role of the leading actor (Ibrahim, 1997). In the South, the British built a colonial bureaucracy and legal system to protect the interests of British traders and promote the development of commerce. Yoruba rulers were quickly replaced by the colonial government, which assumed supreme political and legal authority in the colony (Mann, 1985). Immediately after the occupation, Christian missionaries began to introduce Christianity and Western education to the colony.

In the North, the British policy of indirect rule instituted by Lord Lugard took the form of supporting and transforming the hereditary ruling classes where they already existed, as in the Sokoto Caliphate. Without the agreement and support of members of these classes, such as the emirs, the vast area of Northern Nigeria could not have been controlled. Authoritarian structures were thus reinforced and popular attempts at representative forms of governance undermined (Imam, 1997). Whilst missions were accorded a free hand in the South, this was not the case in the North. Christian missions made a number of expeditions to the North, but they faced several obstacles. One of these was the aversion with which the Muslim elite held Christianity, regarding it as a subversive religion. Another was the ambivalence of the representatives of the main trading agency, the Royal Niger Company (Williams and Falola, 1995).

Coleman (1958) points out that the system of indirect rule may have been as much about controlling and limiting access to information and alternatives, as it was about acknowledging Muslim sensibilities. The experience of education in the South had resulted in rising expectations amongst the colonized, thus militating against instituting a similar policy in the North. In the small number of schools opened in the North, Western education did not include the teaching of Christianity, except for schools in particular designated areas. The curriculum was designed and largely imported by the British. Muslim teachers were hired to teach Islamic religious knowledge, including some Sudanese teachers brought to Nigeria to teach a broader Muslim curriculum (Pittin, 1990).

The early colonial policy supported restricted Western schooling, intended to train Muslim scholars as clerks and primary teachers, to educate the sons of chiefs and to provide Christian education to the children of Southern clerical staff. Qur’anic schools, it was assumed, would continue to provide education as expected by the traditional rulers. Since the system of Muslim education already provided the necessary structure for the training of judges, scribes and functionaries for the traditional aristocracy and for lower levels of the British administration, this provided a rationale for circumscribing Western education even more strictly (Pittin,
One of the consequences of the limited introduction of Western education in Northern Nigeria was a marked North-South educational imbalance (Adamu, 1973). This had important political and infrastructural implications, especially in the run-up to, and after, independence.

The growth of international trade, the imposition of colonial rule and the introduction of Christianity along with Western education combined to alter the structure of economic and political power. These changes created new opportunities in commerce, the churches, the colonial service and the professions for a small group of Christian, educated African men. High European mortality and the reluctance of Great Britain to commit ‘men and money’ to colonial development meant that good jobs were available for well-educated African men in public service.

New, gendered processes of social and economic differentiation were set in train, widening the gap between rich and poor within the African population. Elite men worked as import-export merchants, colonial servants and professionals. These were occupations that brought them influence with Europeans, authority over other Africans and wealth in the form of privately owned capital, real estate and luxury goods. Elite women, on the other hand, toiled in the home and community to spread Christianity and ‘civilization’, for fewer tangible rewards (Mann, 1985).

Colonial rule brought about complex and contradictory effects on the material conditions and status of African women (see, for example, Hay and Stichter, 1995). The growth of international trade under colonialism worked to the detriment of most West African women. Even in areas where women had previously played an important part in agriculture, men subsequently dominated the production and trade of lucrative new export crops (for example, Boserup, 1970; Strobel, 1982). The expansion of trade created new opportunities for women in commerce, however, though in most places men dominated the import-export business, whereas women were to be found in petty retailing or local commerce (for example, Boserup, 1970; Mba, 1982). The emergence of a money economy and private land ownership, the dependence of large-scale traders on extensive European credit and the use of privately owned land as security for loans would all have worked to put women traders at a disadvantage (Mann, 1985).

Colonial governments undermined women’s political power and influence where they existed (see van Allen, 1976; Amadiueme, 1987), ignoring or simply failing to see the signs of women’s political authority. Some indigenous political systems had provided for substantial involvement by women in the political and religious lives
of their communities. Precolonial systems, although differentiated by
gender, included political offices and titles of varying importance and
influence for women as well as men (Okonjo, 1976; Lebeuf, 1963).
Colonial administrations introduced new laws and established new
courts that sometimes gave women new legal rights or created new
opportunities for them to contest male authority. When colonial
governments began to codify customary law, male elders sometimes
used this as an opportunity to redefine local laws to their advantage
(for example, Chanock, 1982).

Missionaries, educated repatriates and colonial administrators
brought to the colony Victorian ideas about the separate spheres of
men and women, which included a particular gender ideology of
domesticity for women. A woman’s place was supposed to be in the
home, caring for her husband and children. The perfect Victorian
lady did not toil within the home but supervised the work of
servants. Women were regarded as the purer, more pious sex –
protected from the trials of the world in order to uphold the family
and society’s moral values. If women’s time and energy could not be
consumed by the home alone, then they could turn their attention
to religion, philanthropy or social reform. In this way, their moral
authority could be exercised in the community. Women’s restricted
power and influence within society stemmed from their special role
as the guardians of virtue. These beliefs were profoundly influential
among the elite in southwest Nigeria but not among the lower
orders (Mann, 1985).

Mann (1985) points out that elite women’s response to Christian
marriage only makes sense in the context of the contradictory
impact of colonial rule on their status. Most modern occupations did
not admit women during this period. Even those educated women
who worked had low economic status relative to that of educated
men. As late as 1921, regulations over posts in the colonial service
reserved them for men from England. Posts especially designated for
women were the exception. With such restrictive policies at the
centre, Lagos administrators were unlikely to consider women for
local appointments. Trade was regarded as unsuitable for elite young
ladies, further restricting their economic options. Nor could women
compete effectively with men in commerce, due to economic changes
that had come about during the colonial period (Mullings, 1976).
Teaching and sewing, the most common employment of elite
women, paid very poorly, at least in the early phases of colonialism.
Elite women did not have access to the colonial state and the
opportunities that brought elite men wealth and influence (Mann,
1985).
Christianity and Western education spread gender ideologies embodying specific values regarding women’s personal autonomy and economic independence. Through the agency of churches and schools, Christian missions encouraged the adoption of Victorian concepts of domesticity in southwest Nigeria. Neither churches nor schools succeeded in imposing the ideology as a whole on African peoples, who had their own notions of the appropriate positions for women in society and the home (Denzer, 1992). Victorian and indigenous ideologies of domesticity differed in several important ways. Whereas the ideal British wife did not work outside the home or play a part in public life, Yoruba women were expected to be active in household production, marketing surplus foodstuffs and other commodities, and to be involved in family and community decision-making (Awe, 1977; Mba, 1982). In southwest Nigeria, the Yoruba adapted and transformed the European ideology of domesticity to fit their own cultural assumptions and changing needs.

The primary goal of girls’ education, according to the prevailing beliefs of the time, was to instil the correct morals and teach girls modest behaviour. Education was not supposed to offer training for jobs or in academic subjects. Colonial administrators, missionaries and Christian parents agreed that mission schools were the best suited to provide such training. It was not until the early 1930s that the colonial state began to play an active role in planning policy for girls’ education (Denzer, 1992). Colonial administrators adopted an indifferent approach towards the provision of secular education, being content to leave education to the missions until fairly late in colonial rule.

As Christian mission activity spread throughout Yorubaland, missions of all denominations adopted the same approach to educating girls. They used popular crafts such as needlework, which provided a way of introducing Victorian middle-class virtues, which happened to overlap with Yoruba virtues and included neatness, orderliness, concentration, caution and obedience. Once the missions were firmly established, some set up single-sex boarding schools for the sons and daughters of the growing Christian elite. Based on the British prototypes, these boarding schools were designed not only to teach specific subject matter but also to shape character. One of their central aims was to inculcate evangelical Christian attitudes towards work and social values. In 1869, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) founded the Girls’ Seminary in Lagos, the first girls’ school. The Methodists followed ten years later, founding the Wesleyan Girls’ Seminary, also in Lagos. The number of girls’ schools slowly rose
between 1923 and 1950, from fourteen to forty-four. Twenty-nine of these were in Yoruba areas (Denzer, 1992).

In Igboland, Protestant and Catholic churches and their schools were firmly established by the first two decades of the twentieth century. Christian and Western ideas and cultures were being introduced through church and school, with the support of the political allies of the colonial state, namely the warrant chiefs. In Nnobi, classes were held in church buildings, and those who had not been converted to Christianity were not admitted into schools. This practice resulted in acrimonious exchanges between colonial government officials and the missionaries, with state officials insisting on the separation of education from religious instruction (Amadiume, 1987).

In the North, British colonizers in the century after the jihad\(^1\) of Shehu Usman dan Fodiyo viewed Hausa women through their own particular gendered preconceptions. They saw nothing amiss in the seclusion of women in the home and did not seem to question the role that religion may or may not have played in such an arrangement. The lack of government policy on mass secular education and the prevention of the establishment of Christian mission schools in the North had significant implications, delaying the provision of Western-style education in the region for several years, relative to the South (Imam, 1991).

The Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) Women’s Wing consistently appealed to the regional government to open schools for girls. In their submission to the Willink Commission (1958), set up to address the problems of minorities, the Women’s Wing called for improved educational methods in view of the existing situation where children lost touch with their ‘native culture’ and were left with nothing to replace it. Moreover, such education as they currently received did not match that of their Southern counterparts, in whose presence ‘they feel bashful because they know that they are inferior educationally to those girls’ (Shawulu, 1990:104).

Royal women, whose access to Nigerian and British decision-makers meant that their views could at least be heard, had expressed their interest in women’s education. In response to such expressions of need, girls’ schools were established. There were, however, far fewer schools for girls than for boys; only girls from privileged backgrounds could attend, and the curriculum was primarily oriented towards domestic training as opposed to leadership skills (Mack, 1988).

To the extent that Western education was provided in the North, Pittin (1990) points out that it was characterized by differential

\(^1\) Religiously inspired war.
access with regard to sex as well as class and limited access for women at all levels. This situation reflected the convergence of British colonial interests and ideology with those of the Northern aristocracy during the pre-independence period. The convergence was most evident in relation to the way in which women’s work, particularly among the elite, was perceived and ideologically constructed as revolving around the family.

British-designed education was, in the North as well as the South, intended to focus only on domestic subjects and literacy. Girls were allowed to leave school at the ‘customary age’ of marriage. Since this varied from ten (in Sokoto) to between twelve and fourteen elsewhere in the North, this meant that girls’ education was curtailed early on in their lives. The tendency of the state to support continued familial control over girls through marriage was manifested in two main ways: first, the failure to set a minimum age of marriage and, second, the failure to implement subsequent sanctions prohibiting the unauthorized removal of girls from school (Pittin, 1990).

In Katsina, formal education for girls was introduced several years later than for boys – 1929, compared with 1912. The colonial authorities acted with considerable caution in this regard, eventually locating the school within the compound of the emir’s palace. The original idea was that the school should be sited in the Katsina Middle School, the training ground for the first group of Northern educated elite, but there were objections to the plan from the emir and his council. They argued that the girls’ presence on the streets would not be compatible with the practice of seclusion (Pittin, 1990).

At that time, however, seclusion was not as widespread as it is at present (Imam, 1991). It was primarily practised by the ruling aristocracy and among the families of senior religious functionaries. Accordingly, it had a significant class-based dimension. The linkage between the aristocracy and the establishment of girls’ education reinforced the practice of seclusion, thereby facilitating the formal control over girls that had previously been expressed through Hausa Muslim culture (Pittin, 1990).

The colonial position on education

Prior to 1925, the British government had no clearly defined policy on education for its African colonies. Competition among Christian missions was keen and led to disputes over the land on which schools and churches were to be built. It was in the midst of this scenario, in 1920, that the Phelps-Stokes Fund, an American philanthropic organization set up in 1911 to further the education of Africans and African-Americans, in co-operation with the
International Education Board set up a commission to study education in West, South and Equatorial Africa. The commission’s terms of reference included finding out what educational work was being done in each area to be studied and investigating the educational needs of the people, ‘with especial reference to the religious, social, hygienic and economic conditions’ (Fafunwa, 1974: 120).

The commission held consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. These were governors, commissioners, administrators, ministry officials (in education, medicine, agriculture and prisons), educated and uneducated Africans, lawyers and clerks, preachers and teachers, women and girls, parents and guardians, farmers and blacksmiths. It visited many schools and sometimes held oral examinations of pupils.

The colonial government’s educational policy in Africa came under strong criticism by the commission, whose report made concrete recommendations about how to improve African education. The Phelps-Stokes Report highlighted the indifference of the colonial government with regard to education as well as the inefficiency and myopia of the Christian missions engaged in educational activities. In the process, the commission emphasized the importance of the education of women in Africa and pointed out that ‘the future welfare of Africa and the education of men and women, of boys and girls, should be parallel and simultaneous’ (Fafunwa, 1974: 123).

The report of the commission, entitled *Education in Africa* (1922), constitutes a significant turning point in education for the continent.

Although the Phelps-Stokes commission emphasized the significance of African girls’ and women’s education, the content of the education it had in mind was imbued with the ideology of domesticity. It encouraged the formation of boarding schools whose priorities should be, first, food preparation, second, household comforts, and third, ‘the care and feeding of children and the occupations that are suited to the interests and ability of women’ (Musisi, 1992: 180). The commission noted that ‘the first responsibility of the women is the supply and preparation of food’ (ibid.). It advocated different curricula for boys and girls, in view of ‘women’s special role’. Whilst the commission referred to the need for some elementary professional training for women in teaching and nursing, this was justifiable, in its view, in terms of the true role of African women, epitomized by domesticity. The traces of this particular orientation are still manifest in contemporary times, restricting the options available for girls’ and women’s education.

The Phelps-Stokes Report succeeded in putting tremendous pressure on the British government to be seen to show an interest in
The education of Africans. The report of the commission led to the creation, in 1925, of the London-based Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical Africa Dependencies by the Secretary of State. The Advisory Committee took the position that education for domesticity was not simply desirable but necessary for girls (Musisi, 1992: 180):

The Advisory Committee acknowledged that more should be done with regard to the education of girls and women, especially in domestic hygiene. It advocated improvements in women’s education for two main reasons: to ensure that clever boys, for whom higher education was expedient, be able to look forward to educated mates; and to combat the high rates of infant mortality and unhygienic living conditions.

The government issued its first policy paper on education in 1925, three years after the Phelps-Stokes Commission’s report came out and eighty-three years after Western-style education was introduced to Nigeria. The 1925 Memorandum on Education in British Colonial Territories was the key guide to educational policy and development in Nigeria from 1925 to 1945.

Some of the key points of the memorandum are outlined below (Fafunwa, 1974: 124-5):

The development of African dependences on the material and economic side demands a corresponding advance in the expenditure on education and to be successful in realizing the ideals of education the status and conditions of service of the Education department should be such as would attract the best available men [sic].

The education of women and girls is an integral element in the whole educational system and presents many difficult problems. Systems should be established which, although varying with local conditions, will provide elementary education for boys and girls, secondary education of several types, technical and vocational education, institutions of higher education which might eventually develop into universities and some form of adult education which will ensure identity of outlook between the newly educated generation and their parents.

The memorandum recognizes the relationship between development, education and status. Interestingly, however, it refers only to attracting ‘the best available men’, and not women. Given the recognition of gender elsewhere in the document, the omission reflects the assumption that, even when access to the colonial state was to be expanded to include Africans, these would be African men, not women. With regard to the second point, it would be illuminating to know what the ‘many difficult problems’ of educating girls and women were thought to be, at that time. The final point refers to the various forms of education in the system, which it appears could be considered as open to ‘boys and girls’, including ultimately, universities.
Demands for higher education

Prior to 1932, apart from universities in the UK and the USA, the main locus of higher education to which Nigerians had access was in the subregion. This was Fourah Bay College in Freetown, founded by the Church Missionary Society in 1927 to ‘train ministers, teachers and lay-workers for the Church’ (Fafunwa, 1974: 138). Fourah Bay was the only institution of higher education to provide opportunities to Nigerians as well as other West Africans who might have qualified for admission into British universities but could not afford to pay. Since the ecclesiastical order has rarely been distinguished by female participation, it is unlikely that many of the entrants to the college were women.

In Nigeria, public clamour for an institution of higher education where young people could receive training without having to go abroad had begun towards the end of the 1800s. The first institution of higher education to be established was Yaba Higher College in Ibadan in 1932. By 1934, it had students enrolled in medicine, agriculture, engineering and teacher training. In 1948, Yaba Higher College was absorbed into the newly formed University College, Ibadan, affiliated to London University (Fafunwa, 1974). The stringent admissions policies of both colleges laid the foundation for what was to be called in later years Nigeria’s premier university – the University of Ibadan.

The years between 1950 and 1960 were tumultuous. This was the prelude to independence, when the British colonial administration was handing over power to the Nigerians who would succeed it. The significance of regional differences in educational achievement during this period is poignantly captured below:

The influence of the two different systems of education has continued to determine the political and philosophical attitudes of the different regions of the country, often characterised by political and social crises, and sometimes, violent upheavals. The total absence of a central forum and therefore, lack of contact between the North and South for so long continued to nurture the differences in traditional and cultural attitude of the people especially in the period leading up to independence. The situation in Nigeria just before independence was one of mutual suspicion, sometimes hostilities, brought about by great disparity in the levels of educational development. Well before independence, the Southern part of the country had made great advances in education with a fair number of university education [sic] people, among them doctors, engineers, accountants and a good number of renowned academics. In the north, there were hardly any university graduates. The first set of three lawyers were just being called to the Bar in London, the two Northern doctors to join the only Northern doctor of some experience were just completing their housemanship. There were two engineers just graduating. There were hardly any others. It was, therefore, not surprising
that there were arguments about fixing the time of independence. (Soda, 1999: 30)

Although Soda speaks of the different educational systems ‘determining’ political and philosophical attitudes in the different regions, it is more likely that the disparities were the consequence of the lack of any consistent and co-ordinated colonial policy on secular education for the population at large. Instead of the state carrying out this integrative function, it supported religious entrepreneurs in the province of education – Christian missionaries who put religious conversion before education. The educational disparities that resulted largely reflected this history and geography of colonial rule.

The various constituting power relations of the post-colonial state are not easily understood without some reflection on the historical legacies of colonialism. The legacies of the colonial state, as we have seen, have been material, cultural and political. How the post-colonial state took up the issues of university education and the implications for equity form the subject of the next chapter.
The Post-Colonial Context

Nigeria as a reconstituted democracy has to address issues of a dual transformation. The country needs to re-examine its past and focus on development plans that will meet the challenges of its future. The need to work out a new developmental plan puts pressure on the political, social and economic sectors of the country. The new government has declared education as one of its priorities. The goal is to have a reformed system of education that will provide access at all levels of education and to improve the quality and efficiency of the entire education system. While these are lofty goals, the real challenge will lie in the successful implementation of them. (Mojia, 2000: 1)

From an overview of the colonial background to the mainstream system of education in Nigeria, we turn to the development of the university system in the post-colonial period. What features of this period affected the growth and complexity of the Nigerian university system? Can we say that the university system in Nigeria has been planned? How has the process been gendered? On the one hand, there are the official documents - the National Development Plans, subsequently replaced by the National Rolling Plans and Perspective Plans. Yet the university system has grown in ways that defy planning, as outlined in the reports of several government commissions.

There is a radical disjuncture between the planning systems and the concrete unfolding of the university system, the formal face of official plan documents belying the actual practices of authoritarian civilian as well as military regimes. This is not to say that there has been an absence of planning, but rather that planning has been carried out in a manner that has become disconnected from implementation. The aim in this chapter is to examine the contradictory ways in which the university system has developed, by juxtaposing relevant aspects of the official plan documents with actual events. In the process, the salient features of the post-colonial context of national development are highlighted, as are the ways in which the changing form of this development has contributed to observed disparities between women and men in university education and relevance to gender, as background to understanding.

The university system & national development

University education was a fruit of the nationalist struggle, and the independent state was the key to its establishment. This context defined both the
role and the function of the university, as it was understood at that time. The state was the custodian of the development process and the university the institution to train human resources – then called 'manpower training for development'. The university was a national asset, a training ground for personnel to manage development. (Mamdani, 1995, cited in Sall, 1995: 2)

In this excerpt, Mamdani draws our attention to some of the historical factors shaping the mission and status of universities in Africa. In Nigeria, the notion that the university exists to produce ‘manpower for development’ not only shaped government policies on university education in its early days, but continues to do so today. The report of the Longe Commission put it this way:

The evolution of the developmental role of higher education in national development can be traced to the policies of various Governments in the country, which perceived the role of higher education as essentially a process for the production of the specialized manpower needed by society for nation building, promotion of the economic and social well being of the nation, self-reliance and self-sufficiency. (FRN, 1992: 38)

Since 1946, long-range educational planning has been integral to Nigeria’s national economic planning. This has not been without controversy, however, particularly with regard to the objectives of educational planning. As the twenty-year perspective plan (Academic Planning Consultants, 1997: 27) said:

Some have advocated that education is a birthright that should be provided for the citizens for its own sake, as a means of enriching the individual’s knowledge and developing his or her full personality. This concept of education has largely and lately influenced educational planning in some developed countries of the world. Others, on the other hand, advocate that education should seek to prepare [the] individual to undertake specific tasks and employment functions [that] are essential for the transformation of the country. At the present level of education, Nigeria should regard education as both. That is, education should be provided as both an important social service and an investment for the future. It should satisfy the needs of the economy for skilled manpower of all kinds and the needs of the society for civilized, educated citizens who are enabled to develop to the utmost their individual abilities and live a richer and more constructive life.

Educational planning tends to synthesize several types of information. These include the configuration of the economy, labour and employment trends in the country as well as the gaps that need to be filled for development, however that is conceived, to take place. Educational planning should also be concerned with the proportion of the population, female and male, that is able to gain access to universities and that will provide the pool from which high-level labour force requirements are to be met. Little gender disaggregation...
of data on student enrolment and output, or of labour and employment trends, takes place, however, and it is such data that would form the basis for planning. From a technical point of view, effective educational planning would address the most appropriate configuration of the university system to provide the required spread of specialized graduates, in sufficient numbers of women and men, to fulfill the projected needs of the economy and the society.

What is often neglected, however, is the principle that effective planning needs to take on board the ideas, contributions and concerns of the various female and male constituencies comprising the university system. This presupposes the political will to democratize university education, in order not only to plan for more participatory relations but also to actually engage with the various groupings and with the substance of their gendered views, regardless of whether or not these are in agreement with the official position.

In 1943, the first commission to address the question of university education in Nigeria – the Elliot Commission – was set up by the colonial government. This led to the establishment, in 1948, of University College, Ibadan as a college of the University of London. The increasing demand for a high-level labour force in Nigeria, following the creation of the three regions, led to the formation of the Ashby Commission in 1959.

The Ashby Commission was to investigate the labour-force requirements of the growing economy and to make recommendations accordingly. The commission had two major aims regarding the relationship between higher education and the estimated requirements for a high-level workforce by 1980. The first aim concerned the question of how to upgrade already employed persons who needed further education. The second aim was to design a system of higher education that would begin to produce the high-level workforce that Nigeria would need before 1970. The idea was to design the system in such a way that it could be enlarged, without replanning, to meet Nigeria’s needs up to 1980 (Ashby Report, 1960).

The commission revealed stark weaknesses in the educational system. An ideal educational system would be predicated on a balance among primary, secondary and post-secondary education. The educational system prevailing in Nigeria at the time lacked balance, both in structure and in geographical location. There were very clear imbalances in educational opportunities between the Southern and Northern parts of the country. At primary and secondary levels, the quality of teachers was poor. Most teachers suffered from either a lack of general education that would qualify them to teach or inadequate professional training. This situation
rendered both primary and secondary education quite fragile. In general, the resources for education were limited. At higher education levels, the opportunities for enrolment were inadequate. Emphasis was on the literary tradition and the university degree, to the detriment of subjects such as agriculture, technology, engineering and other practical courses, especially at sub-professional levels (Ashby Report, 1960).

The Ashby Commission reported that in 1958 there were over 1,800 students enrolled at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology and at University College, Ibadan. Over 1,000 additional students were attending universities and colleges abroad. Within Nigeria, there were over 25,000 students enrolled at teacher training colleges. The recommendations of the commission were that university education should be developed in such a way that enrolment would be at least 7,500 by 1970 and considerably higher in the following decade, up to 1980. Four autonomous universities should be established, at Ibadan, Lagos, Zaria and Enugu (or some other location). These universities should be national in outlook and, as a matter of policy, should avoid unnecessary duplication of expensive courses. The commission proposed various other policies for the governance of Nigerian universities, including the formation of a National Universities Commission (NUC) that would secure funds and distribute these to universities, as well as co-ordinating their activities (Ashby Report, 1960).

Centrally planned education

The first attempt at a co-ordinated, centrally planned education system was put forward in the First National Development Plan (1962–8). In the plan, the government summed up its objectives as follows:

To develop, as rapidly as possible, opportunities in education, health and employment, and to improve access for all citizens to these opportunities. This includes the creating of a greatly increased number of places for University students, the provision of primary education for a rapidly increasing proportion of children of school age, the expansion of hospital services commensurate with the ability of the economy to sustain them (cited in NUC, 1992: 23).

In the plan the government acknowledged the lack of intermediate-level labour, such as supervisors and managers. The limiting factors were the lack of funds as well as the lack of trained personnel. The skills of such personnel were not only hard to find but expensive to hire. Accordingly, the government’s strategy for finding such personnel was informed by the Ashby Commission Report. This was
the aspect concerned with the supply of a trained workforce through the expansion of universities.

The First National Development Plan was prepared by the different regional governments. It was during the first plan period that the federal government established the University of Lagos. During the same period, the Western and Northern Regional Governments, respectively, established the University of Ile (now Obafemi Awolowo University) and Ahmadu Bello University. Even before the plan was produced, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was founded in 1960. The plan period was supposed to have lasted from 1962 to 1968 but, because of the Civil War, it was delayed until 1970. By the end of 1962, there were five universities – three regional and two federal – one more than recommended by the Ashby Report and all emerging within two years of the report’s publication. The University of Benin, set up in 1970 as the Mid-West Institute of Technology, was established in 1972, bringing the number of universities to six (FRN, 1992).

Although the Ashby Commission’s report was officially accepted, its recommendations were not fully implemented. The 1970s were witness to the tremendous wealth generated by the oil boom in Nigeria and the authoritarianism of military rule. From 1960, the year of independence, to 1999, there were only ten years of civilian rule. The authoritarianism of military rule was not only responsible for the excessive centralization of resources and decision-making but also entrenched an understanding of leadership as invariably masculine.

The increasing centralization of prolonged military rule in Nigeria has been characterized by repressive modes of control as well as deepening corruption. A number of institutional mechanisms were used as vehicles for the exertion of control over the university system, not only by the military regimes but also by the political class under civilian rule. They included visitation panels, patterns of funding, specific policy recommendations and commissions of enquiry. More specifically, militarization of the system occurred:

... mainly through introducing a garrison conception of organization, in which things are seen as giving orders and obeying orders, and therefore trying to change the collegial nature of the university system, sending Sole Administrators [to run universities]. But of course also, all the peremptory orders and policy changes that result from the institutional mechanisms [above]. (interview with Dr Jibrin Ibrahim, 12 November 1960)

In the military era, I had often sat at meetings where the Head of State himself was Chairman, all the security chiefs were there, all the education chiefs were there, you know, to talk about how to crush an ASUU [Academic Staff Union of Universities] strike. These meetings were merely to give
The Second National Development Plan (FRN, 1970) was put together immediately after the Civil War and reflected the spirit of optimism and national reconstruction of the time. The plan emphasized the need to ‘upgrade the level of available manpower for self-fulfilment and full employment’. The levels targeted were high- and intermediate-level labour power. The plan pointed to an acute shortage in executive personnel in the education sector itself, particularly among the teaching and administrative categories of staff. At the federal level, the shortage was most acute in the Federal Ministry of Education, where co-ordination in the implementation of programmes was essential. In 1972, the federal government enacted the Indigenization Decree. This introduced an import-substitution policy at the same time as it paved the way for the movement of Nigerians into the upper echelons of university decision-making previously occupied by Europeans.

The second plan period witnessed considerable reconstruction, rehabilitation and much expansion of educational facilities. Enrolment increased at all levels. In engineering, emphasis shifted from the number of engineers produced to the production of supportive, technical personnel in appropriate numbers. This shift in policy was accompanied by recognition of the need to increase the pool from which engineering and other science-based candidates would be drawn. Such a move was necessary in view of the preference for enrolment in arts and humanities courses amongst university entrants. The National Manpower Board recommended that a ratio of 50:50 should be adopted in science/arts and humanities admissions. During this plan period, the government identified tensions regarding education as a consumer good and a capital good.

Nigeria’s Third National Development Plan (FRN, 1975) was more comprehensive than previous ones, in terms of specifying additional universities and the actual number of personnel required by the economy. The federal government introduced free universal primary education (UPE) throughout the country in 1976. The Third Plan categorized the problems in education as follows:

- structural imbalances in the country’s educational system. Enrolment in primary schools was considerably higher than that in secondary schools, instead of approaching parity. Possible causes for the imbalances were thought to be inadequate co-ordination and regulation in the past.
- low absolute levels of enrolment, at each level of education,
alongside a high illiteracy rate for the country as a whole
• shortage of teaching staff
• uneven distribution of educational facilities.

In 1977 the new National Policy on Education was first formulated, and subsequently modified in 1980. The policy bases its philosophy of education on the main national objectives, as articulated in the Second National Development Plan, 1970–74, namely, the building of a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens. The pre-eminence of these national objectives is rooted in the timing and significance of the Second National Development Plan, coming as it did after a protracted and traumatic civil war that almost tore the nation apart. The theme of ‘national unity’ has had added poignancy in the Nigerian context.

Given the state-led conception of development that formed the backdrop to the policy and its formulation, it was assumed that the state would play a central role in the management of universities. The National Policy on Education (para. 41 (1)) states this clearly:

By virtue of the magnitude of its financial support, and its responsibility for overall national development and unity, the federal government will have a great say in the affairs of Nigerian universities. (FRN, 1980: 26)

In other words, the lack of administrative autonomy for universities was predicated on the provision of government funding, in the context of the state driving development. The more recent change towards a free market economy has implications for the ways in which the state conceives of the financial and administrative autonomy of universities, as we shall see later in this study.

**Increasing centralization of university education**

The government’s emphasis on the development of labour power continued. The increasing centralization of university education was also maintained during the 1970s. In 1975, the federal government took over control of the already existing regional universities – Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; University of Nigeria, Nsukka; University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) and University of Benin. In the same year, the federal government established the Universities of Jos, Maituguri, Sokoto and Calabar and set up three university colleges in Port Harcourt, Ilorin and Kano. In 1975 alone, seven new institutions of higher education were formed.

The main reasons for the federal government’s takeover were increased income from the oil sector, pressure from a large number
of people seeking university education, demand for high-level labour in the public and private sectors, and the need for a broader geographical spread of universities. In 1977, the three university colleges became universities, bringing the total number of universities to 13 (FRN, 1992). The enrolment target for the period – 53,000 university students – was exceeded by the end of 1979/80. The Federal Ministry of Science and Technology was also created during this period (FRN, 1975).

The 1979 Constitution placed higher education on the Concurrent Legislative List, thus allowing states to set up their own universities. Between 1980 and 1983, in addition to the Federal Universities of Technology, state universities were established in eight states: Anambra, Bendel, Cross River, Imo, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo and Rivers. There were also an Open University, a proposed military academy, 26 federal and state universities and 24 proposed private universities (FRN, 1992). As Abdulkadir, then Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission put it (NUC, 1992: i):

The centralization and expansion reached its peak in the second Republic, 1979-83, with the creation of a Federal University in each of the 19 States of the Federation. This development brought with it enormous problems, and the NUC had to contend with developmental issues, which bordered on the astronomical expansion in size and numbers of the Universities over a short span of time and the effect of this on the quality of products of the system. In essence therefore, while the NUC was trying in its near infancy to settle the issues of full access to University education in the early 1970s, source adequate and stable funding for the few existing universities, and maintain the quantity and quality of both academic staff and products of the system, it was besieged with a deluge of an unprecedented number of new Universities in a very short span of time.

Politicization of the university system

The rapid expansion of the university system was just one manifestation of its politicization. As the Longe Report (FRN, 1992: 30) makes clear:

These universities were established primarily on political grounds without due regard to adequate funding and adequate data on manpower requirements. The Federal Government had in place a policy of at least one Federal University located in each State. The States which established universities did so on the grounds that several of their indigenes who were qualified could not gain admission into Federal Universities. They also sought to meet their manpower needs.

Other aspects of the politicization of the university system are referred to below:
Because the universities are ... dependent on government for funding and for policy directions – student intake, etc. – then politics has a very large role to play in the universities. And I think that occurs at a number of levels. One is pressure from political sources to reduce standards in the admission of students, as members of the political class insist [that] their children or wards [must] be admitted. But secondly, I think it’s the way in which the political class has grown to see itself as all-powerful, in a context in which the university saw itself as an arena of autonomy. That clash has been resolved against the universities, as the political class increases its control of the university system. (Interview with Dr Jibrin Ibrahim, Abuja, 12 November 2001)

Some of the ways in which the functioning of the educational bureaucracy has been politicized are outlined in the following chapter.

In the Fourth National Development Plan (FRN, 1981), the government put further emphasis on human resource development, viewing education as a priority area. At the same time, it recognized the absence of sufficient postgraduate facilities to produce the large numbers of academic staff required. The need to develop and strengthen postgraduate facilities, particularly in the older universities, was highlighted. There were many problems in the implementation of the plan, due to the instability and uncertainty created by military coups and the serious financial crisis for federal as well as state governments, induced by the fall of the price of crude oil on the world market.

The major educational problems identified in the Fourth Plan were:

- The huge expansion of education at all levels of the system in the third plan had produced mixed results. In some cases, it had helped to solve or relieve existing problems, while in others it had exacerbated them and actually created new problems.
- The shortage of teaching staff persisted into the fourth plan period.
- Poor equipping of schools. More money was spent on buildings to the detriment of equipping the schools.
- Quality was sacrificed on the altar of quantity.

The absolute amount allocated to the education sector, around 3.2 billion naira, constituted 12 per cent of the total public-sector effective programme. The total amount set aside for education was more than the estimated total public-sector programme during the Third National Development Plan. One of the consequences was a phenomenal rise in enrolment at all levels of the educational system.
The federal government established the universities of technology during this time, and some of the states in the federation set up their own universities. It was projected that, by 1985, around 108,720 students would be enrolled in the university system.

By 1984, the Open University and all the private universities were closed. Four of the federal universities of technology – at Abeokuta, Makurdi, Bauchi and Yola – were merged with other universities. The phenomenon of graduate unemployment began to emerge during this period, and was generally believed to be the result of the uneven production of high-level labour from the universities. This was at a time when there was an acute shortage of such labour in areas such as chemical engineering, mathematics and physics. At the same time, some graduates in these disciplines were known to be teaching in secondary schools. By 1986, the effects of the structural adjustment programme on the funding of higher educational institutions had become apparent. Devaluation of the naira and the withdrawal of subsidies to education were some of the hallmarks of the SAP, with dire consequences for the state of facilities and the staffing of the institutions (FRN, 1992).

The period of the Fifth National Development Plan (1986-91, cited in NUC, 1992) was marked by the loss of academic staff in universities as a result of the brain drain to other countries, and within Nigeria, to other sectors of the economy. This trend adversely affected universities in a number of ways and points to serious problems in the sustainability of the system, particularly in terms of the provision of quality staff. Meanwhile, in 1988, two specialized universities of agriculture were established at Abeokuta and Makurdi, and the federal universities of technology at Bauchi and Yola, which had been merged with other institutions, were re-established as Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi and the Federal University of Technology, Yola respectively. At the end of 1990, there were 31 universities in Nigeria and indications that more states wanted to establish their own universities (FRN, 1992).

In an attempt to redress the deterioration of the university system, the federal government set up the Longe Commission on the Review of Higher Education in November 1990. The commission carried out a comprehensive review of higher education in Nigeria, re-examining its development since the Ashby Commission. It was not until this review that the question of gender balance and the access of women to university education were raised as matters for concern. For women, the problems of access had dimensions that went beyond academia alone.

Not too long ago, you are aware, culturally, that it was not felt that training girls was anything compelling. The preference was to send the boys to
school and you can take your time with the girls because ultimately they get married, and even the family name is lost. So what’s the point in investing so heavily in people who eventually walk out of the home? That was once upon a time. Today, I think there is a kind of recognition that that position is not quite correct. (Interview with the Hon. Tunde Lakoju, member, House of Representatives and House Committee on Education, Abuja, 12 November 2001)

Whilst more girls may be accessing education lower down the pipeline, gender disparities are marked at the level of university education. Generalized gender blindness is one of the problems facing the university system as a whole, as well as being a problem for individual universities as institutions.

I think there is, but not peculiar to Nigerian universities, a major problem about gender bias, [which is] mostly unacknowledged, resisted and made fun of. It finds its expression in two major ways. One is the [low] presence of women, whether it is as students, academic faculty or senior staff ... Secondly, in masculinist ways of doing and thinking about things, that again are never put under question, never considered. And if anything, I think it’s the second issue that’s the bigger problem, because it assumes that more females might come in, without actually changing the system. And it may well be that if we get more women in, the system will perforce have to change, but on the other hand, women are also socialized into masculinist ways of doing things so it might take longer than it should do, if specific attention is not paid to those things. (Interview with Dr Ayesha Imam, former Executive Director of BAOBAB for Women’s Human Rights, Abuja, 19 October 2001)

Introduction of national rolling plans

At the level of national planning, the federal government adopted the use of National Rolling Plans in 1988 in place of National Development Plans. The first of these rolling plans, for 1990–92, was also the first of the plans (including the development plans) to have a specific section on ‘Women Education’. According to the Academic Planning Consultants (1997: 128), the section made only a ‘fleeting reference’ to women’s education and what would be done to promote it during the plan period.

During the 1980s, there was a vast proliferation of policies, programmes and projects carried out worldwide to assist low-income women. This mushrooming of activity was largely shaped by the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–85), when the marginalization of the majority of women in the global South became a matter of serious concern. It was during this era that the women in development (WID) approach was formulated, incorporating a number of different emphases (Moser, 1991). In Nigeria, the orientation that appears to have been most accepted and articulated
in official discourse is the one that focuses on poverty (as opposed to equity or efficiency). The basic approach has been to emphasize the need to ‘integrate’ women into development through access to the market, for example, through small-scale income-generation projects and education.

The WID paradigm’s assumption that women have not been contributing to development has been severely criticized by feminist scholars. The problem has not been a lack of women’s participation in development. The reality is that for most categories of women, and especially women in poverty, the problem was that they were participating too much in development. In practice, ‘development’ for women has increasingly meant that their labour was expected to compensate for an absence of infrastructure and development options, at the same time as demands on women’s labour were rendered ‘natural’ through oppressive gender ideologies. Women’s participation in development has been structured on highly exploitative and unequal terms. Overall, the form that development has so far taken has exacerbated women’s marginalization and oppression (see, for example, Sen and Grown, 1988).

The National Rolling Plan of 1991–3 emphasized the government’s efforts to develop highly skilled manpower, with a focus on engineering and technical education. The need for a deliberate policy to improve student enrolment and graduate turnout was expressed. Universities were also encouraged to try to retain their graduates with first- and upper second-class degrees for postgraduate education as a way of meeting their academic staff requirements (FRN, 1991). Two new federal universities were established during this period, the University of Uyo in 1991 and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka in 1992.

The macro objectives of the rolling plan remained much the same as in the 1990-92 Development Plan. These are described as ‘consolidation of the gains of the Structural Adjustment Programme’, whilst continuing the ‘effort of mitigating the adverse impact of the economic down-turn and the adjustment process on the most affected groups’ (FRN, 1991: 10). These aims are clearly contradictory, since the so-called ‘gains’ of the SAP were drastically to reduce expenditure on the social sector, including education. The National Commission for Women and the Better Life Programme were to receive increased support, ‘especially in recognition of the strategic role of women in development’. The content of this ‘strategic role’ was not delineated, nor was there any reference to the kind of support that was to be received for what kind of programmes. No mention was made in the plan of women’s education, unlike in the previous rolling plan.
The Longe Commission completed its report in 1991. The recommendations of the commission were largely ignored, however. The failure to implement major aspects of the commission’s report was followed by industrial action on the part of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in 1992. The strike lasted over five months.

In the political arena, the possibility of transition from military to civilian rule was witness to the mobilization of mostly male members of the ‘political class’. Their claims to democracy were undermined by their tendency to exclude most categories of women and, in some cases, men whose ethnicities and regional backgrounds differed from their own. Masculinities competing in the political arena seemed united only by the common ground they found in hostility towards gender equity and any suggestion by women that the playing field should be levelled. This scenario was similarly played out in the university system, as an arena that was viewed as closely tied to the project of nation-building.

The National Rolling Plan of 1994–6 highlighted the crisis in the educational system, which it described as being rooted in the deteriorating conditions of teaching and infrastructural facilities and the welfare of those engaged in teaching, and the increasing cost of education. The results were to be seen in the adverse effects on the quality of training. The government’s intentions for education during the plan period were to continue to provide basic and functional education for all Nigerians. This was to be achieved through the strengthening of the existing educational institutions and infrastructure and the harmonization of their activities. Government policies were also directed towards involving the private sector and non-governmental organizations in order to improve the quality of education. Enhanced quality was to be achieved through more effective management and the provision of instructional materials and equipment. Private universities were to be allowed to operate in the country, following the federal government’s approval of the establishment and ownership of private universities through Decree 9 of 1993 (FRN, 1994).

In the federal and state ministries of education, ‘Women Education’ branches were set up ‘to spearhead and collate activities to help women achieve parity of access to education’ (FRN, 1994: 187). In 1990, the National Commission for Women was established to ‘develop policies and programmes that would enhance the state [sic] of women and address the various issues militating [against] their full participation in the development process’ (ibid.: 187, emphasis supplied). The plan was to strengthen the programmes of the commission.
Volume II of the 1994–6 Rolling Plan (p.890), summarizing capital projects, refers to the establishment and equipping of women’s centres for ‘Home Economics, Typing etc.’, both stereotypically ‘female’ subjects, presumably in preparation for stereotypically ‘female’ occupations. How this would ensure women’s ‘full participation’ in development is not clear, particularly if the mainstream of development was left intact. This is the women in development (WID) approach, which underlies the rolling plans and according to which ‘full participation in the development process’ is required as a solution. The state’s response to the problem, in typical WID mode, could end up compounding the problem without providing real solutions.

The latest rolling plan available, the National Rolling Plan of 1996–8, pointed out that policies in the education sector would continue to be targeted at achieving basic education for all Nigerians. With regard to tertiary education, the plan states that no new university would be established during the plan period. The emphasis instead would be on the ‘development and maintenance of existing facilities in the various institutions’ (FRN, 1996, I: 176). The opening statement runs as follows:

Government will continue to provide adequate financial support to tertiary institutions in recognition of their role in training high-level manpower for the economy. Areas of teaching and research, particularly applied research, will be given adequate priority. Government will give special attention to rehabilitation of facilities with the agreement reached with the Academic Staff Union of Universities in September 1992. (ibid.)

Nowhere is the meaning of ‘adequate financial support’ or ‘adequate priority’ specified. We may also note the government’s statement that it will ‘continue’ to provide such support. As most stakeholders in the system agree, however, the university system has been seriously underfunded for some time now, so it is clearly a misnomer to talk about ‘continu[ing] to provide adequate support’ (see Chapter 6).

A separate section of the 1996–8 Rolling Plan addresses the question of ‘Women Education’:

Government has continued in its efforts aimed at reducing inequality in terms of school enrolment of boys and girls through the implementation of various Women Education projects directed at correcting previous imbalances suffered by women both at the formal and non-formal levels of education. Several activities that have been carried out in this area include:

a) establishment of a twenty-five-member inter-agency steering committee at the national level for policy advocacy and promotion as well as state
technical sub-committees and Local Government Area Implementation Committees;
b) a baseline survey on women’s education in some selected states;
c) advocacy and mobilization workshops for women’s education conducted
   at the national level to publicize female education in the electronic and
   print media;
d) establishment of 270 women education centres throughout the country
   where women and young girls who dropped out of formal school receive
   basic literacy and vocational education;
e) revision of the Women Education curriculum. (FRN, 1996, I: 173–4)

The aims of this particular programme appear to be somewhat unclear. If the objective is to ‘reduce inequality in ... school enrol-
ment’, then it is not clear why the education system itself, at primary
and secondary school levels, for example, is not specifically
addressed. Whilst it is commendable, in principle, that women’s
education should be the focus of attention, we are not informed about
the content of that education, the ‘Women Education’ curriculum or
even the learning processes involved. All of these have a significant
bearing on whether the education on offer effectively challenges
women’s subordination or adds to its reinforcement. There is no
mention of the position of women in higher education. Finally, it is
not clear how or whether the inter-agency steering committee
referred to in (a) is structurally linked to the educational system, in
order for its prescriptions to be capable of making a difference to the
enrolment of girls in school or of women in higher education.

Despite the existence of high unemployment and underemploy-
ment of skilled labour, the 1996–8 Rolling Plan points out that
paradoxically there were also skill shortages. These were particularly
evident in the scientific, technical and vocational fields. The plan
outlines a number of ‘manpower’ policy objectives and strategies, which include:

• Reduction in the level of unemployment through employment
  promotion programmes focusing on self-employment, employment-
  oriented career guidance and counselling, and entrepreneurship
  development programmes.
• Rationalization of the number of higher educational institutions,
  particularly universities, across the country. Substantial reduction
  in the rate of increase in university student enrolment in the non-
  science and technology-based programmes.
• Rational approach to the establishment of new universities and
  polytechnics. Harmonization of other programmes in order to
  minimize duplication, ensure cost-effectiveness and maintain high
  standards. Optimal utilization of the activities of existing educa-
  tional institutions through adequate provision and maintenance

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of necessary implements, infrastructural facilities, and academic staff and encouragement of development-oriented research and consultancy services.

• Improvement of the quality and skill of formal education graduates through regular review of curricula.

• Deliberate effort to challenge Nigerian engineers, scientists and professionals to create the necessary infra- and super-structures for sustainable development.

Nigeria’s Perspective Development Plan 1997–2010, as cited in the FME’s forthcoming Education in Nigeria: A Handbook, barely mentions university education. The stated target for the perspective plan is to achieve the aims and objectives of the 6-3-3-4 education policy,² including the attainment of education for all by the year 2010. More specific to university education is the aim of increasing university admissions by 10 per cent a year. Distance learning is to be encouraged in order to ‘increase the participation of more eligible learners’ (FME, forthcoming: 116).

A more comprehensive 20-year perspective plan (1996–2015) was produced for the National Planning Commission, synthesizing the reports of three earlier studies on education, manpower and population and migration and employment (Academic Planning Consultants, 1997). The report points out that the existing situation of university graduates requiring retraining before they can enter the job market provides a clear pointer to the need to ‘re-orient university education towards the provision of marketable skills’ (p.272). Emphasis should be placed on improving the standards and facilities in the institutions, as well as on areas of ‘critical manpower needs’ in science and engineering (p.273).

The section on women’s education addresses female enrolment across educational institutions – primary, secondary and tertiary. However, there is no mention of gender in the section on tertiary education, and none of the points made in the section on women’s education are reflected in the concluding chapter, which includes recommendations. The general tone of the discussion in the chapter on women’s education is set by the following conclusion:

The National Policy on Education is in [sic] the right direction. It seeks to ensure a nine-year free and compulsory education to all, irrespective of sex, and seeks to make special provisions for the encouragement of women education beyond the first nine years of schooling. It is not necessary for us to

² This system provides for six years of primary school, three years of junior secondary school, three years of senior secondary school, and four years of university education (for a first degree).
make special or specific projections for women education here, other than to say that with [the] dynamic execution of [the] National Policy on Education, women will hold their own fairly equitable [sic] with men in the future so that by year 2005, there may be no need to make special provision for women education, other than that women themselves should endeavour to enter the professions like medicine, engineering and technology in which they are comparatively much fewer than men today. (Academic Planning Consultants, 1997: 132)

It is worth noting that the view that there is 'no need to make special provision for women' is widespread, being evident in the political as well as the educational arena. Such an orientation contrasts sharply with the affirmative action of ensuring more equitable sub-regional representation through the practice of 'federal character'. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria describes federal character as necessary in order to promote national unity and also to command national loyalty, thus ensuring that there should be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in the government or in any of its agencies (s.14.3). Federal character has also been described as necessary in order to recognize the diversity of people within the area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all peoples of the federation (s.14.4). The constitutional reference to interpretation (s.318), however, does not specify any form of diversity, whether state, ethnic, gender or sectional differences.

Yet, in its interpretation, federal character has been used to address sub-regional and ethnic differences without considering how these might be interwoven with gender. Some form of affirmative action is considered appropriate when it comes to addressing inequity on the basis of geopolitical zone and ethnicity, but because there is no effort to address these inequalities alongside gender, federal character is more likely to benefit men than women. Whilst the practice of federal character in this form is officially accepted, attempts to institute even minimal forms of affirmative action for women have been dismissed as 'reverse discrimination' (see for example, FRN, 1987).

In general, we can see that the development and rolling plans are gender-blind in their treatment of university education. There is a deafening silence surrounding the low numbers of women inside the university system – whether academic staff, support staff, or students. Women are specifically referred to only outside the university system. The apparently gender-neutral orientation of the plans ultimately masks their gender insensitivity. The general bias that is evident here goes beyond the rolling plans, however.
In a Memorandum to the Presidential Committee on Provisions and Practice of Citizenship and Rights in Nigeria (Salihu et al., 2002: 3), the authors had this to say about women’s citizenship rights in Nigeria:

For women, whatever happens at the level of the domestic arena is in turn carried over to what is generally called the public space. The reason that this is significant is that women may experience the denial of their citizenship and fundamental human rights at any one, if not more, of these levels – family, community, private sector, state and so on. Hence it is necessary to go beyond the public space when we talk about women’s citizenship and rights, to address the interconnected and interlocking character of women’s lives as well as women’s rights. Realizing women’s fundamental rights requires addressing women’s unequal access to economic, political, social and cultural resources, which are located not only in formal, public arenas but also in private and semi-private places, households and communities. This is the paradox that lies at the heart of women’s citizenship as well as public policy formulation and the political process today.

Women in academia are not sheltered from diminished citizenship status by their location. In practice, university women – like women elsewhere in society – experience the erosion of full citizenship status through a wide range of discriminatory administrative, legal and customary practices.

Discriminatory administrative practices include those relating to taxation and revenue laws and policies. These make it mandatory for women to pay higher taxes than men because they have no automatic allowances for children, even when they are the only or major income earner in the household. Women who get pregnant and have babies lose their annual leave if they go on maternity leave. The motivation underlying this ridiculous practice appears to be that annual leave, if taken with maternity leave in the same financial year, would prove to be too expensive. In order to forestall this, some means has to be found of equating the two forms of leave, even if this means defying rationality and logic. It is only on the irrational basis that maternity leave is somehow ‘equivalent’ to annual leave that it is possible to justify denying annual leave to women who have taken maternity leave. For any woman who has had reason to take maternity leave, however, rationality in this instance is not so easily turned upside down. Giving birth and caring for a newborn is simply not a holiday. For (male) academics, ostensibly engaged in intellectual work in universities – where rationality is valued in normative terms, even if not in practice – contradictions such as these ought to be of greater concern than they currently are.
Women and the law

Full citizenship for women is also eroded by existing laws, which discriminate against women. Let us take violence within the household, for example, which is a widespread phenomenon across the country. Women in academia – whether students, lecturers or non-academic staff – are not exempt from such abuse. The existing law on domestic violence is clearly inadequate, particularly concerning wife battery. Domestic violence is currently classified under common assault, which diminishes the seriousness of this crime. Section 353 of the Criminal Code makes an indecent assault on males punishable by three years imprisonment. Indecent assault on females, however, is considered a mere misdemeanour, punishable by a maximum of two years imprisonment (s. 360). This is clearly a discriminatory provision (Imam, 2000).

According to section 55 of the Penal Code, wife beating is allowed as long as it does not amount to ‘grievous hurt’. As defined in section 241 of the Penal Code, ‘grievous hurt’ includes emasculation, permanent loss of sight, ability to hear or speak, facial disfigurement, deprivation of any member or joint, bone fracture or tooth dislocation (Imam, 2000). This means that a man who beats his wife – within academia and beyond – is acting within the law as long as he does not inflict the above injuries! One can only ask how women’s constitutional right to dignity is thereby being protected.

A major area in criminal law where women are discriminated against is rape. For married women, forced sexual intercourse by their husbands – marital rape – is not recognized as an offence. A further lacuna in the law concerns sexual harassment, which is not recognized as an offence, despite being extremely widespread.

In yet another arena, practices justified under the umbrella of ‘culture’ or ‘tradition’ often violate women’s right to dignity. Under many customary laws, women are subjected to harsh and degrading rites at widowhood and are often condemned to ritual periods of isolation. Other discriminatory socio-cultural practices include male preference, child marriage, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and wife beating. That such practices are often justified in the name of ‘tradition’ does not preclude their existence in the ostensibly ‘modern’ environment of the university.

When women talk of discriminatory practices such as the above, their concerns are often dismissed (by men) as ‘private’ or ‘domestic’ (meaning ‘not serious’). This dismissal quite simply shows a lack of understanding of the broader question of the relationship between universities as institutions and social processes in the larger society. This lack of understanding is further compounded by a failure to recognize the significance of the relations between society and state.
and the implications of social norms reinforcing the infrastructural capacity of state institutions. This also applies to institutional configurations that straddle state and society, such as the university system. Where those social norms are oppressive to women, as we have seen above, the fact that they reinforce the state’s inertia in addressing lacunae in the law, or the state’s capacity to enforce its discriminatory laws and regulations, means that at best women are barely protected by the state and, at worst, are the object of state-sanctioned abuse. The state’s ‘embeddedness’ in uncivil ‘civil’ societies is not an automatic guarantee of effectiveness, let alone justice. It is in such circumstances that we need to argue for the autonomy of states from civil society and not simply the converse (see Pereira, 2001).

Problems facing the university system

The above discussion of national development plans and rolling plans highlighted their explicit concern with linking university education to development. At a conceptual level, this approach raises at least three main problem arenas concerning the university system. The first is to do with the overall aims of universities and the character of the development they are supposed to advance. This question was raised in the Introduction, highlighting the themes of equity, citizenship and democratization; its concerns run throughout the study. The second issue concerns state capacity under neoliberalism, specifically the bureaucratic capacity of the state to carry out its plans, particularly in relation to gender. The third point is about the linkages between the university system and other systems, in this case, the job market. This question is addressed in Chapter 5.

At a practical level, the former Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC) had this to say about the problems facing the university system:

I believe that there are four major problems. The problem of access, [which] is how people get into the universities. This means there are too many people wanting to get in and too few places. So it leads to all sorts of things – admission malpractices, competition for the few places available and so on. The crisis of funding is also a major problem. Most of the universities are government-owned, federal or state government, and they are not adequately funded. And of course, this leads to the third problem, which is poor quality of output, because poor funding leads to lower remuneration for lecturers, malpractices like extortion, sale of handouts and so on. This is all attributable to poor funding. And then the fourth problem is cultism, especially in the Southern universities – cultism and cult-related violence. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001)
The problems receiving the greatest public attention tend to be strikes on the part of university staff and student unrest on campuses, with a concomitant rise in anti-social behaviour. These phenomena are probably more accurately understood as responses to the systemic underfunding and declining quality of university education (Dabalen et al., 2000). Problems facing the university system have been amply documented in the mainstream literature. Emphases differ but the commonalities are most evident in the lack of attention to issues of gender. The problems appear to fall into two broad categories – governance and quality.

Governance

The following problems at university level fall under this rubric:

- authoritarianism and excessive centralization
- crisis of overall funding
- masculinist norms and processes
- low numbers of women at all levels
- uncertain policy environment
- sexual harassment
- gender discrimination
- corruption
- lack of intellectual freedom
- mismanagement and bureaucracy.

Quality

Quality problems in the university system include the following:

- unclear thinking about objectives
- masculinist norms and processes
- decline in knowledge production
- low numbers of women at all levels
- poor quality output
- lack of research funding
- lack of educational materials
- lowering of standards for student admission
- decaying infrastructure
- selectivity in determining sources for staff recruitment.

The two items ‘masculinist norms and processes’ and ‘low numbers of women at all levels’ are placed in each broad category, since they have differing effects in the domain of governance from that of quality. For example, masculinist norms have implications for what counts as knowledge (quality) as well as for institutional processes.
affecting policy decisions (governance). These two domains are not entirely separate, since the policy decisions may be about reviewing existing curricula and/or institutionalizing new fields of study. The next chapter examines key aspects of the university system in greater detail.
An overview of the system

Tsikata (1997) makes the point that very few studies have problematized the state in relation to gender, despite the fact that ongoing work in areas such as education, health, work and the like contains implicit critiques of state policy and practice. The question of problematizing the state includes problematizing the structures of power themselves, the agencies that constitute them and their relationship to one another. Making this explicit may not in itself demonstrate the implications for gender, but the exposition is necessary in order to grasp the form of the system itself. Without this, our understanding of the place of gender in the making of the university system would be inherently restricted. This chapter outlines the contemporary configuration of the university system in Nigeria. It begins with a view of the geographical spread of federal universities and the ways in which the universities have been categorized. This is followed by a discussion of the legal framework regulating the university system and the form that the educational bureaucracy takes in Nigeria.

Universities in Nigeria have been categorized in a number of ways: by their ownership (federal, state or private); by generation or age (first, second, third); by disciplines (conventional or specialized, such as science and technology); and by size of enrolment (Jibril, 2001).

### Table 1 Federal universities categorized by generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Ibadan, Lagos, Nsukka, Zaria, Ife, Benin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Jos, Calabar, Kano, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Ilorin, Port Harcourt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Owerri, Akure, Minna, Bauchi, Yola, Abuja, Uyo, Awka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2 Federal universities categorized by type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional (N=16)</td>
<td>Ibadan, Lagos, Nsukka, Zaria, Ife, Benin, Calabar, Kano, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Ilorin, Port Harcourt, Uyo, Awka, Abuja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science &amp; Technology (N=5)</td>
<td>Bauchi, Owerri, Akure, Minna, Yola</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were 47 universities in Nigeria in 2004, 21 of which were federal universities. For illustration, Tables 1–3 show the categorization by generation, type and size.

![Figure 1 The spread of universities in Nigeria](image)

**Table 3 Federal universities categorized by size of enrolment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers of students enrolled</th>
<th>Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10,000</td>
<td>Sokoto, Bauchi, Owerri, Akure, Minna,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yola, Awka, Abuja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-15,999</td>
<td>Lagos, Jos, Calabar, Kano, Maiduguri,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ilorin, Port Harcourt, Uyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16,000-30,000</td>
<td>Ibadan, Nsukka, Zaria, Ife, Benin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2000). There were 47 universities in Nigeria in 2004, 21 of which were federal universities. For illustration, Tables 1–3 show the categorization by generation, type and size.
The legal framework

The Constitution

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria sets out the basic legal framework for educational policy in the country. The national educational objectives, outlined in Section 18 of Chapter II of the Constitution, on Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, state that:

1. Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.
2. Government shall promote science and technology.
3. Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall, as and when practicable, provide –
   (a) free, compulsory and universal primary education;
   (b) free secondary education;
   (c) free university education; and
   (d) a free adult literacy programme.

The Second Schedule of the Constitution defines the legislative powers of the three tiers of government—federal, state and local. Education is placed on the Concurrent Legislative List, empowering both federal and state governments to make laws for the planning and organization of education. Item L on the list is about ‘University, technological and postprimary education’, including professional education. This item allows both federal and state governments to legislate on and establish institutions for the purposes of university, postprimary, technological or professional education.

In view of the widespread denial of the rights of women and girls, including the right to education at all levels, it is pertinent to ask the general question of how the Constitution protects the rights of women and girls. What we find is that there are some areas of similarity with human rights instruments that recognize the equality of women and men as well as the rights of women and girls to freedom from discrimination. These include provisions contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter Protocol. At the same time, however, there are also many areas of divergence between the Constitution and the principles enshrined in these human rights instruments. Here, the Constitution falls short of recognizing women’s rights and protecting against discrimination (Imam, 2000).

For example, the Constitution recognizes the fundamental rights of all citizens of Nigeria. These rights are identified and the measures
by which they are to be safeguarded are delineated in Chapter IV (sections 33 to 46). Section 42 (a) states that a citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, ‘by reason only that he [sic] is such a person’, be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law, to any disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religion or political opinion are not made subject.

Protections such as these are, however, contradicted by discrimination within the Constitution itself. The use of masculinist language, where the masculine gender is used throughout and assumed to be generic, is discriminatory and inappropriate. Masculinist language signifies the conception of masculine as ‘the norm’, and feminine as somehow ‘different’, if not ‘deviant’. If questions of unequal power relations were not involved, then the term ‘she’ would carry the equivalent status to that of the term ‘he’. In this scenario, it should make no difference if the Constitution were to refer only to women and to use ‘she’ and ‘her’ throughout, instead of the ubiquitous ‘he’ and ‘him’. The outcry (from men) that usually accompanies such a suggestion is indication enough that more is at stake than simply a matter of words.

Masculinist language is not restricted to the Constitution. Its significance lies in its manifestation of the ideological as well as material domination of most categories of men over most categories of women. Ultimately, the predominance of masculinist language is an example of who has the power to define the character of agency and which categories of persons are unproblematically defined as ‘agents’. Agency is understood here as the capacity to act, which is implicated in the nature of being and doing, of thinking and knowing. If, by definition, those who possess agency are always men, this has the effect of rendering women’s agency questionable, at best, when it is not otherwise denied. For those of us interested in the production of knowledge and moving the frontiers of knowledge, then the question of who has the power to define agency, and the terms on which this takes place, ought to be recognized as fundamental.

Imam (2000) points out that even the chapter on Interpretation of the Constitution (Chapter VIII, part IV) does not address the need to state clearly that references to the rights of male citizens should also cover female citizens. Perhaps this is not surprising, given the discrimination inherent in the provisions on citizenship itself. Nigerian women are deemed incapable of conferring citizenship on non-Nigerian husbands (s.26.2a), whilst Nigerian men are free to do so for non-Nigerian wives. The definition of ‘federal character’ (s.318) does not include gender, alongside state, ethnic and sectional
differences. This should have been the case if the intentions of section 15 – the promotion of national integration and prohibition of discrimination – are to be realized.

Elsewhere in Africa, countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Eritrea, Uganda and Namibia have recognized the need to use gender-inclusive language in a document as significant as the Constitution. Not only do their constitutions use more appropriate language but they have also begun to address the need for the content of constitutional provisions to protect and promote the human rights of all, not just men.

Decrees regulating the university system

The functioning of the university system is regulated by a number of decrees, a reflection of the decades of military rule and the shifts in military regime under which the system has unfolded. The entire legal framework has in fact been formulated in the course of rule by diverse military regimes. Keeping women out of institutions of rule, whether in the state or elsewhere, was implicit in the character of most military regimes, even where their token presence was tolerated in specific regimes such as that of General Ibrahim Babangida (1985–92). At the beginning of this study, we noted that there has been considerable flux in the shape that the university system has taken at different historical periods. Changes in decrees introduced from one military regime to the next point to shifting emphases in policy (for example, from the development of private universities to their prohibition and back again to privatisation) as well as contestations over which male-dominated arenas should be allowed to exercise power within the university system. These arenas vary from the parastatals surrounding state structures; the differing levels of government in the federal state; the private sector; and the academic staff union, a major source of resistance to military rule. The decrees are presented below in relation to the relevant institutional domain. Masculinist language is used throughout and the arguments made in the previous section in relation to the use of such language also apply here.

The NUC

• Decree No. 1 of 1974 reconstituted the NUC from the advisory body that it was when it was first established, to a statutory one.
• Decree No. 49 of 1988 – National Universities Commission (Amendment) Decree. This amended Decree No. 1 of 1974, which set up the NUC as a statutory body. The NUC (Amendment) Decree expanded the membership of the Commission to include new
academic disciplines and new ministries, and allowed for the re-
appointment of any member of the Commission. It also incorpo-
rated the provision allowing the NUC to lay down minimum
standards for all universities.
• Decree No. 10 of 1993 – National Universities Commission
(Amendment) Decree. This amended Decree No. 1 of 1974 (the
Principal Act) as well as the Amendment Decree No. 49 of 1988
(the Subsidiary Act). The new Decree reconstituted the mem-
bership of the Commission and reduced it from 33 in the 1988
Decree to 21.

Institutions of Higher Education
• Decree No. 19 of 1984 – Private Universities (Abolition and
Prohibition) Decree. This Decree abolished all private universities
and prohibited any further establishment of such universities.
• Decree No. 16 of 1985 – Education (Minimum National Standards
and Establishment of Institutions Decree). Decree No. 16 specified
the various authorities empowered to prescribe minimum
standards of education in the country. It gave the NUC the
responsibility of laying down minimum academic standards for all
universities and academic programmes, and the power to enforce
these standards.
• Decree No. 7 of 1993 – Educational Tax Decree. This imposed a
2 per cent tax chargeable on all assessable profits of any company
registered in Nigeria. The fund is disbursed to federal, state and
local government educational institutions and is to be used
especially for the purposes of physical as well as staff development,
library systems, research equipment, book development, enrol-
ment balance and execution of the 9-year compulsory education
programme.
• Decree No. 9 of 1993 – Education (National Minimum Standards
and Establishment of Institutions) (Amendment) Decree. This
amended the Education (Minimum National Standards and
Establishment of Institutions) Decree of 1985, and repealed Decree
No. 19 of 1984, the Private Universities (Abolition and Prohi-
bition) Decree. Decree No. 9 allows federal, state and local govern-
ments as well as companies incorporated in Nigeria and
individuals who are citizens of Nigeria to establish higher institu-
tions, including universities, as long as they satisfy the criteria for
the establishment of such institutions.
• Decree No. 11 of 1993 – Universities Miscellaneous Provision
Decree. This Decree applies to all universities owned or controlled
by the federal government and takes precedence over all
individual university laws. Decree No. 11 synchronizes major provisions in the different university laws, such as those regulating the composition of Council and the procedure for the appointment of Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, registrars, bursars and librarians of universities. The Decree also raised the retiring age of academic staff to 65.

**The JAMB**
- Decree No. 2 of 1978 established the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) to administer admissions to universities.
- Decree No. 33 of 1989 – Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board Act. This repealed Decree No. 2 of 1978 and re-established the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board in order to administer a centralized admissions system for universities, polytechnics and colleges of education.

**The ASUU**
- Decree No. 26 of 1988 – Academic Staff Union of Universities (Proscription and Prohibition from Participation in Trade Union Activities) Act. This Act proscribed and prohibited ASUU from participating in trade-union activities.
- Decree No. 36 of 1990 revoked this proscription and prohibition.
- Decree No. 24 of 1992 further proscribed and prohibited ASUU from engaging in trade-union activities.

The above constitutes the framework governing the operation of institutions and associations in the university system. The decrees chart the manoeuvres of military administrations in constituting, reconstituting and generally reordering the institutional shape of the structures comprising the university system. Moreover, new institutions have been proposed and subsequently prohibited, such as private universities. Existing associations, such as the ASUU, have been proscribed, readmitted to the university system and proscribed yet again.

The commonality amidst all this flux is the marginal presence of women in the diverse institutions and agencies implicated. Moreover, as a result of the above manoeuvres, the military government established a direct relationship through law with the men in these agencies, a relationship that would have applied to only a minority of women. The regulation of women in the university system not only took place under the umbrella of the formal legal framework but was also shaped by administrative and bureaucratic practices, as
well as those practices justified as ‘traditional’ that have a bearing on women’s ability to operate as autonomous agents, inside and outside the university system. These practices were addressed in Chapter 3.

The educational bureaucracy

The Presidency

As overall policy-maker for the nation, the Presidency has responsibility for creating the structures affiliated to the state (parastatals) with an education mandate, via the Federal Ministry of Education. Of the more than twenty parastatals in the education sector, those most closely related to higher education are the NUC, which oversees university education; the JAMB; the National Board of Technical Education (NBTE); and the National Commission of Colleges of Education (NCCE). All the budgets for universities and for the parastatals have to be approved by the President. The President is also the Visitor to all federal universities by virtue of the Federal Universities of Technology Decree of 1986. As Visitor, the President conducts, or directs others to conduct, a visitation of every university at least once every five years. The report of the Visitor is binding upon the authorities, staff and students of the university and cannot be appealed.

Under military rule in Nigeria, the exercise of power by the (invariably male) head of state has become increasingly personalized and arbitrary, resulting in the politicization of various dimensions of policy and practice surrounding university education. With this in mind, it is worth noting the points made by the Longe Report on the actual uses and misuses of power by the Visitor, given the concentration of powers in the state, the relations between the state and the universities and the absence of a democratic culture, even under civilian rule. The misuse of power by those at the top of the institutional hierarchy not only sends powerful messages to those in leadership positions at several other levels of the institution but is also difficult to counter. These dynamics shape the potential scope for agenda-setting in the policy environment of the day, particularly in relation to gender equity.

... the Visitor is not a Principal Officer in Schedule 1 and not part of Convocation. Neither does the Act endow him [sic] with powers of discipline of students or staff, or the powers in Section 6 (2) (f) to close or open the institution. It also noted that these powers which rightly belong to the Council (Section 5 (1)), and the Senate of the University (Section 6 (1)), have been freely exercised, from time to time during the last two decades by
both military and civilian Heads of State as Visitors to the University, contrary to the provisions of the law. The Visitor has also played a prominent role in the Convocation Ceremonies at which addresses are delivered which confuse the role of the Visitor as *Head of State* with the role of the *Head of Government*. (FRN, 1992: 80)

The functions of the Head of State (President) and the Head of Government (Prime Minister) were previously separate in Nigeria’s Republic Constitution. Since the adoption of the presidential system of government, these functions have become merged in the Executive Presidency.

It has been difficult, if not impossible, for the President to be seen to perform the functions of Visitor as prescribed by the University law, only in his capacity as Head of State. Directives to University Councils as a result of visitation panels have been couched in such a way as to make them directives from the Head of Government, not instructions from the Head of State. (FRN, 1992: 81)

It was through the Visitor’s issuing of instructions to the University Councils as a result of visitation panel reports that the governments had ‘consistently interfered with the autonomy of the Universities’ (ibid.). This was the case for both the regular type of visitation for which provision was made under university statutes as well as the ad hoc type set up to investigate special matters and problems. The implications of the above are that university autonomy is a necessary, if not sufficient, precondition for determining what gender equity would mean in practice, at the level of the institution and its intellectual workings.

**The Federal Ministry of Education (FME)**

The Ministry of Education oversees all the parastatals working at different levels of the education system, including the NUC, and is the supervisory ministry with responsibility for giving the NUC general policy directives. The Federal Universities Branch of the Ministry has the functions of policy implementation; arranging visitation panels to the universities and communicating the decisions of officials on the panels; preparing memoranda and briefs on policy issues affecting the universities; and preparing the President’s convocation speeches to universities (FME, forthcoming: 248).

For the needs and interests of diverse categories of women to be appropriately addressed in policy-making, the process would necessarily require women’s engagement. How has the Ministry’s policy-making function worked in practice?

The Ministry of Education, for example, doesn’t evolve policy by consult-
tion. There used to be a forum whereby the chief executives of all federal parastatals used to meet with the Minister every fortnight to talk about the problems of education and so on. And there, because you had all the best people, with the Directors of the Ministry, the Minister, the Permanent Secretary, the Chief Executives, you know, policy could evolve in a sensible way there because you could argue a case, you were talking to people who knew, and so on. I think since Ayu, when he was Minister of Education, these meetings stopped with him. He did have them but after him, no more. The Ministers who came after him all seemed not to have the time. Merely being a university lecturer doesn’t make you an expert in the management of education, even primary education. ... So people come thinking that they know it all, but they don’t. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

The Ministry of Education is the agency through which the NUC relates to the Presidency, there being no direct relationship between the NUC as a body and the Presidency as an institution. The Minister informs the President of the universities’ needs: ‘depending on how he (sic) packages it, whether it gets approval or not will depend on the stature of the Minister occupying the space.’ (Interview with Hon. Tunde Lakoju, Abuja, 12 November 2001). In practice, the level of interest shown in the universities by Ministers is contingent upon other factors:

To be honest with you, I do not think that they [the Ministers] care much about the universities. Because, you see, the funding for the universities goes direct to them [the universities], through the NUC. So the Ministers do not control the funds, and in the Cabinet they only fight for the funds that they control directly. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

The significance of the potential availability of funds for the involvement and practice of state officials is alluded to below. When asked if the situation would be any better if the Ministers did have control over the funds, the former Executive Secretary of the NUC had this to say:

It would be worse, because they would misuse them. They are not happy to see so much money going into a sector that is supposed to be under them, and yet for them not to have a say in the way it is spent. (ibid.)

There is no guarantee that the situation would be considerably different if more women were appointed to such public offices, despite the conviction of many that women are essentially more ‘trustworthy’ than men.

Within the Federal Ministry of Education, the Planning, Research and Statistics Department has the following functions:

- preparation of the educational sector development plans (rolling,
medium and perspective) at federal level

- monitoring and evaluation of educational plans and budget implementation
- co-ordination of research into the education sector and dissemination of the findings
- collection, collation, analysis, publication and dissemination of statistical data on education
- liaison with the National Planning Commission, Federal Ministry of Finance and other relevant bodies outside the ministry (such as multilateral agencies) in order to fit the education sector plans into the overall national development plan (FME, forthcoming: 275–6).

The stated gender policy of the Federal Ministry of Education sets out to achieve the following policy objectives:

- provision of adequate education [sic] opportunities for girls from primary to tertiary levels of education
- provision of functional education for girls and women by creating opportunity [sic] for them to acquire skill in sewing, cooking, baking, typing, knitting, crocheting ... dyeing and batiking
- advancement of women [sic] development in science, technology and mathematics (FME, forthcoming: 258).

The gender ideology of domesticity that pervaded colonial education still prevails in the notion that ‘functional education’ for girls and women should comprise home-based occupations such as sewing, cooking, baking and the like. It is worth noting that the second and third policy objectives above are contradictory: the second reinforces gender stereotypes, whilst the third objective attempts to redress them.

In 1980, the Women’s Education Branch of the Ministry was established to serve as the agency carrying out the programme of women’s education. The branch operates the scholarship programme for female students. Awards are given to girls in secondary schools who excel in science, technology and mathematics. The awards cover tuition fees, boarding and the cost of books on an annual basis, renewable on good performance. For the first policy objective – providing adequate educational opportunities for girls from primary to tertiary level – to be adequately realized vis-à-vis university education, the Women’s Education Branch would need to co-ordinate its work with all the relevant agencies, inside and outside the Ministry, and vice versa. It is not clear to what extent any of the units has either the capacity or the resources to do this effectively.
The National Universities Commission was established in 1962 as an administrative unit in the Cabinet Office, on the recommendation of the Ashby Commission. Initially, the commission’s remit was to advise the government about the financial needs of universities and to plan the co-ordinated development of university education in Nigeria. When the NUC became a statutory body by virtue of Decree No. 1 of 1974, its functions were expanded to include the collation, analysis and storage of data from universities with the aim of advising the government on the planning and creation of new universities; establishing new faculties or postgraduate schools in existing universities; preparing plans for the development of universities across the board; and advising on the setting up of visitation panels to universities (Abdulkadir, 1992). Overall, the NUC co-ordinates the affairs of the universities’ budgetary proposals and is charged with the implementation of policy affecting universities. The Executive Secretary of the NUC is appointed by the President.

There have been serious criticisms on the part of various stakeholders in the university system, regarding the extensive powers of the NUC. Given the commission’s important mediating role between the state and the universities, it is worth considering the criticisms further. The Longe Report (FRN, 1992: 93) outlined the most critical views expressed:

- The powers of the NUC over the universities have grown, are growing and should be curtailed if a healthier working relationship between the commission and the universities is to prevail.
- Areas where the NUC law and functions conflict with those of the universities should be identified and removed.
- The NUC should co-ordinate the activities of the universities and not control them; it should advise the universities, not impose its will on them.
- The function of monitoring and controlling academic standards should be undertaken through formal consultation between the NUC, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and professional and academic bodies, for example the Academies of Education, Sciences and the Arts and Humanities.

Further criticisms concerned the delays and uncertainties over the release of funds, even when the amounts allocated to the universities were confirmed by the NUC. The NUC’s exercise of its powers generally took the form of prescribing curricula, rationalizing university courses and staff, and issuing orders to universities. For their part, the universities viewed the NUC’s actions as interference and an obstacle to their effective functioning.
In 1999 – the latest date for which an annual report of the commission could be obtained – the NUC’s Management Committee consisted of eight members chaired by the then Executive Secretary, Professor Munzali Jibril. Only one of these eight members was a woman, Mrs A.E. Omole, the Acting Director of the Department of Finance and Supplies (NUC, 2000). From 1991 to 1998, the only woman on the Management Committee was Mrs Modupe Adebowale, the then Director of Finance and Supplies. Prior to that, there was one woman on the committee from 1982 to 1984, Mrs E.C. Achukwu, who was the Acting Director of Administration. She was preceded by Mrs M. Adeyeye, Acting Director of Finance (NUC, 1998: 5–6). The few women who have been members of the Management Committee have, more often than not, been there in an acting capacity. It is also worth noting that women have most often been Directors or Acting Directors when responsible for Finance, a sphere that is often gender-stereotyped in this part of the world as more appropriate for women, given their ‘more trustworthy nature’.

With regard to the NUC’s generation of data on the universities, such as student enrolment and staff numbers, a number of weaknesses can be identified, including gaps in the data, statistics presented for a given year that refer to the previous year’s figures, and data that are not usable and are therefore omitted. Some of these weaknesses may emanate from the universities themselves as opposed to the NUC. In the commission’s 1997, 1998 and 1999 Annual Reports, none of the figures for student enrolment or academic and non-academic staff were disaggregated by gender, which makes it impossible to use them to carry out separate analyses for women and men. One is therefore unable to use such data to demonstrate graphically any differences or similarities in the profiles and composition of specific categories of women and men in universities, whether these are academic or administrative staff, or students. Since 2001, data generated on the universities by the NUC have been disaggregated by gender. It is worth noting, by way of contrast, that the NUC’s internal generation of data disaggregates the composition of NUC staff by region and gender, concurrently, as well as by age (NUC, 1998: 15–19).

With regard to research funding, the NUC holds and releases the research funds for all the federal universities. The commission insists that if research funds released to a university are not fully accounted for, the university will receive no further research funds. Whilst the purpose may be to promote transparency, the effect is to entrench decision-making outside the university. Moreover, the whole university is penalized when a few staff default. Researchers working in
gender and women's studies are less likely to obtain funds via the NUC in the first place, since research in these areas is rarely funded through mainstream channels. In the event that they do receive such funds, however, and do not fully account for them, they will not only be sanctioned for this and bring about the sanctioning of all the other university members, but they may also have their research focus belittled as a front for siphoning funds for themselves. Gender and women's studies researchers who have succeeded in accounting for research tranches received via the NUC are likely to be a minority and will therefore spend substantially more time waiting for the rest of their funds, as a consequence of being penalized unfairly for the accounting inadequacies of their colleagues. If the universities controlled such funds themselves, they would be able to sanction those who had erred whilst allowing those who had not, to carry on with their research (interview with Hon. Tunde Lakoju, Abuja, 12 November 2001).

In the area of data management, the NUC's Data Management Department collects and distributes data that can be used for planning as well as research. It is critical that such data should be disaggregated by gender wherever possible. The formation of a functional, accessible and sex-disaggregated data bank would certainly aid in planning, administration and management, including financial management. The linking of universities and the NUC through computer networks, if effective and efficient, would undoubtedly further the aims of information flow and the accessing of institutional data.

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board conducts University Matriculation Examinations (UME) and administers a centralized admissions system for universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. The requirements for university admission are five 'O' level credits (or the equivalent) in subjects relevant to the proposed course and a score of 180 and above in the UME. Candidates with the required scores have their names sent for registration to the universities of their choice. The rationale for having a central admissions board, as opposed to individual universities conducting their own entrance examinations and admissions, is to prevent the wastage that had occurred in the past when applicants received offers from more than one university. Other qualified candidates would be unable to take up the places in universities whose offers were declined. As the number of universities increased, so did the wastage.

The JAMB

The System of University Education
How well have these relationships worked in practice? The picture that emerges is one marked by unevenness, where relations among some agencies work relatively well whilst those among other agencies constitute potential sources of conflict. In general, the relations among the NUC, the Ministry and the Presidency have worked fairly smoothly, given the well-defined character of communications among these bodies (interview with Hon. Tunde Lakoju, Abuja, 12 November 2001). The more problematic relations have been those between the NUC and the universities, as referred to earlier. However, there are other points of tension in the relations between agencies, such as when one agency attempts to usurp the functions of another. The 1995 Visitation exercise is one example of such an instance, when the Ministry of Education attempted to take over the functions of the NUC and bypass it completely. Once the visitation reports were submitted, instead of working through the NUC, the Ministry decided to set up panels to examine the reports, produce White Papers and submit them to the government for approval. Their recommendations led to the removal of six Vice-Chancellors. The fact that decisions affecting three of the six Vice-Chancellors were subsequently reversed highlights the irregular character of the whole exercise (interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001).

Several difficulties have been highlighted concerning the operation of the JAMB and a centralized admissions system for the universities. The reliance on a single score for registration – the University Matriculation Examination (UME) – raises a number of issues:

... you discover that somebody who scored 300 doesn’t know anything. So we have been insisting that in addition to JAMB [UME] scores, we should be allowed to examine either their WASC [West African School Certificate] or their GCE ‘O’ levels, because we believe those would be better determinants for admitting them than just JAMB [UME] scores. ... If the universities are allowed to select their own candidates, I believe you’d have better candidates because, in addition to examining their credentials, we can also interview them. We would be able to find out if indeed they are the owners of the papers they are using. In most cases today, quite a number of papers held by candidates don’t belong to them. It is either they buy them or somebody sits the exam for them. ... And what we’ve found is that a candidate who might have scored 250 may not have the required 5 credits at GCE for direct registration. In fact, you find that somebody who scored very high may have just 3 credits excluding English, and nobody can be registered in any Nigerian university without a credit in English Language. (Interview with Dr Joe de-Goshie, Dean of Social Science at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 19 July 2001)
The erosion of the rule of law at the systemic level, highlighted in both the above examples, results in conditions that reinforce unethical practices within the universities. Problems surrounding the admission of students are compounded when universities face pressure from the federal government to increase their intake, without concomitant increases in teaching and research facilities or infrastructure. Such circumstances contribute to the entrenchment of corruption at the institutional level. Corruption takes the form not only of illicit monetary exchanges but also of the unethical trading of sexual favours from female students for gains in class performance. This practice appears to have become increasingly common in universities across the country, pointing to the need for further research in this area.

Decision-making positions in the educational bureaucracy are almost overwhelmingly held by men. No woman has ever held the position of Visitor, vested in the President. The Federal Executive Council and Ministers of Education have been virtually all men. The post of Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission has also never been occupied by a woman and of all the Vice-Chancellors of the 21 federal universities currently in existence, only three have ever been women. In the absence of efforts to ensure that the concerns of diverse groups of women as well as men from subordinate groups are taken into account in policy-making, the implications of the dominance of elite males in the educational bureaucracy include a neglect of women’s perspectives as well as the perspectives of subaltern male groups and a large gap between policies on university education and their effectiveness.

The extent to which the educational bureaucracy recognizes the needs and interests of girls and women is unevenly manifested across agencies:

I was a member of the Governing Board of JAMB for about four years. And I remember that at the Board meetings, there was a feeling, in fact there was a policy at the time, that a certain percentage of admissions should be reserved for women deliberately, to the extent that, in some cases, even where girls do not score exactly as high as boys on the tests, you still find a way of getting them because of the quota. I think it was 5 per cent – so, very insignificant but at least the gesture was there, the understanding, the realization was there – there was a need to deliberately expand the space [for women].

It was realized, for instance, that if you take the eastern part of Nigeria, the reverse was the case, as far as enrolment was concerned. For every 5 students that were placed, 3 or even 4 were girls. The boys were not there, they [had] all gone to the market, selling [vehicle] spare parts and all that.
So in that area, there was a deliberate bias, encouraging boys to enrol, while elsewhere the very opposite was the case.

If you take the Ministry of Education and the policy there, I don’t think there has been a deliberate attempt, at that level, to address the issue. All that has happened is, O.K., let's mount a campaign – mobilization and sensitization – that people should send both their boys and girls to school. At the primary school level, that has largely succeeded but beyond that, the graph begins to drop. It has dropped so drastically. ... But in terms of the bureaucracies that you have in education today, I don’t think that really, quite frankly, there has been anything there that addresses the issue of women in a very frontal way. (Interview with Hon. Tunde Lakoju, Abuja, 12 November 2001)

The former NUC Executive Secretary expressed the view that there was greater accountability in the university system than elsewhere, pointing out that, since the university community was both critical and closed, the kinds of behaviour that administrators could get away with were limited (interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001). Transparency and accountability were generally thought to be greater in the university system than in government or the larger society, due to the tendency for university staff to be vocal about inappropriate practice. At the same time, however, the absolute level of transparency in the university system was thought to be very low. This was the result of the university committee system, which was formerly very powerful, being subsumed by the notion of a Chief Executive Officer who had direct control over many university processes. This was how the Vice-Chancellor had come to be viewed, rather than as the head of a collegial team (interview with Dr Jibrin Ibrahim, Abuja, 12 November 2001).

Despite the view that there was relative transparency in the university system, there were particular loopholes rendering the system opaque whilst principal officers were left free of accountability for their actions. Given their level of responsibility, the remuneration packages of Vice-Chancellors were very poor. The lack of strict monitoring of university expenditure by the Council resulted in Vice-Chancellors having almost open-ended budgets. One loophole that tended to be exploited in some parts of the country more than in others was the cost of household feeding. Such costs were often incurred by the Vice-Chancellor’s wife who would make direct requests for food items. Given her status as wife of the Chief Executive Officer – a status designated as ‘the First Lady’ in political circles and replicated at other institutional levels – no one would be willing to challenge her or deny her requests.

Gender in the Making of the Nigerian Universities

Transparency & accountability

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... their [the Vice-Chancellors’] feeding is fully borne by the university, in most cases. But this is not a statutory thing. There is nothing in their conditions of service that says, ‘You will be fed’. And in some universities, there is no such tradition, especially in the North ... although it is creeping fast and I wouldn’t be surprised if all of them have also followed suit. But in the South certainly, it is the norm for the Vice-Chancellor to be fed out of university funds. It is not written anywhere. You see, they have a small code called Maintenance of the Vice-Chancellor’s Residence and that’s the code that gets charged. ‘Madam asks for liver, for kidney, for eggs, or rice, for this, that and the other.’ So in the end, the Vice-Chancellor spends nothing [of his own money] on his own feeding, just like the Executive Governors or the President. And this is a hidden item of expenditure which really distorts the structure of expenditure in the university system. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

The lack of accountability within the university system is embedded in that prevalent in the broader society:

We shouldn’t isolate the universities from the rest of the system. How really transparent is the entire system of Nigerian governance? ... We just passed an anti-corruption law. A few scapegoats will suffer but essentially, it’s quite a cosmetic thing. I don’t think it will be effective anywhere . . .

... If you have an opportunity and you do not steal, everybody in this country thinks you are a fool. If you steal, and you can just bring a bit of it, you know, maybe donate to churches and mosques and everything, and to one or two traditional rulers, they give you a chieftaincy title and you’re a hero! That’s the truth. So we cannot isolate the university from this kind of rot. You see, it’s a societal rot, and the university is part of it. (Interview with Hon. Tunde Lakoju, Abuja, 12 November 2001)

Having provided an overview of the contemporary configuration of the university system in Nigeria, the next chapter addresses the policy environment in which the university system functions.
We turn now to explore the environment in which policy-making concerning university education takes place in Nigeria. The first section examines the policies impinging on gender balance in the university system. Can we say what drives policy in this arena? How has policy been formulated and what factors influence its implementation? The 2002 Budget is examined for its policy implications. For graduates, a key concern is their employment prospects. Does a university education pave the way for employment, for women as well as for men? The final section examines the relationship between the university system and the job market.

The overall environment is one characterized by the erosion of the entire policy process through externalization. The prescription of structural adjustment policies by the international financial institutions – the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – is a prime example of policy-making being led by exogenous bodies (see Olukoshi, 1993). The implications for women have been dire, resulting in disproportionately high labour demands, deepening inequalities in access to resources and an entrenchment of the inequitable distribution of resources within households, such that men and boys are more likely to be privileged than women and girls (see Pereira, 2002). Women in academia have not, by virtue of their location, been necessarily sheltered from these effects, given the poverty that until recently characterized living conditions for academic staff.

Focusing more specifically on education, the 1980 National Policy on Education states that Nigeria’s philosophy of education is based on ‘the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system’ (FRN, 1980: 7). The national educational aims and objectives to which the philosophy is linked are:

• the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
• the inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
• the training of the mind in the understanding of the surrounding world;
• the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his [sic] society (ibid.: 8).

Some of the stated aims and objectives can only be described as vague. What, for example, are the ‘right type of values and attitudes’? What are the ‘appropriate skills, abilities and competences’? By contrast, universities are explicitly expected to ‘cement national unity’ through means such as improved quality of instruction, a more even geographical distribution of universities, the admission of students and recruitment of staff from a broad national base, inter-university teacher and student exchange programmes, and a compulsory first-year course on the peoples of Nigeria (ibid.: 24). In addition, other mechanisms such as the unity schools at secondary education levels and the National Youth Services Corps Scheme after graduation are also to be utilized.

Whilst imbalances in ‘inter-state and intra-state development’ (ibid.: 8) are recognized (but not spelt out), no imbalances on the basis of gender are referred to, although such disparities could also be manifested in inter- and intra-state terms. The policy mentions the need for ‘equal educational opportunities for all citizens’ but there is no recognition of the differing life circumstances and opportunities for girls relative to boys, and the corresponding implications for access to education and retention within the system. In the main, the language used is gender-neutral, to the extent that citizenship training (p. 21) is discussed without any indication of its gender-differentiated character in practice. Agency, when it is referred to, is conceived of in masculine terms, such as the need for ‘faith in man’s ability to make rational decisions’ (p. 7). There is no statement about the timeframe or indication of the budget to be allocated, if the ambitious programmes necessary for the policy to be implemented are to be carried out.

In the sphere of science, the 1986 National Policy on Science and Technology stipulated a strict minimum ratio of 60:40 science-based to other disciplines in the yearly enrolment of students in the universities. The educational system was to emphasize science at all levels with a view to re-orienting the entire society towards scientific thinking. The overall aim was to facilitate the development of new technologies and to adapt existing ones to improve social well-being and security. The imposition of such a disciplinary ratio presupposes that students choose their subjects in line with national needs. The fact that the science: arts ratio is still some way away from being implemented highlights the fact that other factors might be more salient, such as personal interest and ability, the likelihood of getting a job and so on.
The policy prescription of the proportions of graduates to be produced by the university system belies the notion that governments can do this in a vacuum, without taking account of the nature of the economy, much less conditions within the universities themselves. Elsewhere in the world, science as an occupational domain thrives where it is the engine of either industrialization or militarization, or even both. Neither of these scenarios applies in the case of Nigeria. Without changing the broader economic and social conditions, which are in turn shaped by global as well as national conditions, governments are hardly in a position to prescribe an increased uptake in science at university.

The tendency for policy-making to focus on conventional sectors results in an emphasis on sectoral divisions, such as education, health, population, law, employment and so on. The difficulty with this form of analytical and administrative division is that the focus tends to be on areas of social life as opposed to the development process (Longwe, 1991). This also leads to an emphasis on locational differentiation – the functions of particular structures in specific sectors – at the expense of temporal differentiation – what processes need to be carried out when, how and by whom. Consequently, there is a partitioning and fragmentation of policies and policy-making, with resulting difficulties for co-ordination. This is particularly serious when it comes to cross-cutting issues such as gender, that are implicated in differing ways in all sectoral policies as well as in setting overarching policy goals and objectives.

In view of the above, the question of how policy gets formulated in the first place, at governmental level, is a critical one.

It is a very tricky question. But the truth is, if you’ve been at policy-making levels, sometimes you get surprised at how policy evolves. You know, maybe in the middle of a meeting, if somebody important enough has a brainwave, he just says something. Then it becomes policy. And it may be completely irrational. It could be based on inadequate information, ignorance. And yet it sticks as policy because it can’t be challenged, because it’s been pronounced by somebody big. ... And you see, up to now – we may discredit the military ... but we’re still very much paramilitary, if you like, in the way we evolve policy, in the way we run government and so on. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jabril, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

The authoritarianism of military rule is evident in other institutional arenas as well. In November 1998, a draft national policy on women was being revised, in haste, without including the participation of most categories of Nigerian women (FRN, 1998). In addition, relevant people outside the government and the donor community – such as gender and development experts and women’s organizations – were not included. The philosophy underlying the
policy was said to be:

...based on national constitutional stipulations, the need to restructure the economy and our political and social institutions to ensure social equity and economic growth. It also derives from our traditional commitment to the stability of the family and the complementarity of gender roles (para 2.5, p.3).

Several criticisms of the process were outlined by the Network for Women’s Studies in Nigeria (NWSN, 1998). The power relations, within which women’s lives were embedded, were barely acknowledged. Whilst the draft policy refers (once) to ‘patriarchy and its related practices constitut[ing] major impediments to the full integration of women into the Nigerian economy’ (p.6), there is no mention of women’s subordination and the multiple forms of domination and repression that Nigerian women experience. Moreover, the draft policy showed inadequate recognition of the fact that ‘development’ is not gender-neutral and that a range of social institutions as well as development programmes themselves were integral to discrimination against women. The 1998 draft remained virtually the same as the 1993 version. There were obvious omissions regarding the significant changes in women’s circumstances during the intervening five years and the various commitments and responsibilities of the government under international treaties and instruments, including the Beijing Platform for Action.

Following the handover from military to civilian rule in May 1999, the national policy was further revised, this time drawing on the input of various women’s organizations. The policy was finally accepted by the Obasanjo government in December 2000 (FRN, 2000). The rationale, aims, objectives and policy thrust remain virtually identical to the 1998 draft. The general policy guidelines have been modified, to include somewhat confusing references to the need to formulate a gender and development policy, without stating its relationship to the existing national policy on women. Also within the policy guidelines is a new section on restructuring the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which points out the social costs to women and suggests ways of broadening the approach to the SAP to mitigate such effects. The subsequent section on resource allocation omits the proportion of government funds necessary to allocate to women’s programmes (at least 3-5 per cent of GDP) that was present in the 1998 draft.

The most significant changes to the policy are evident in the sectoral components, particularly those on legal reforms and legislative protection, social services, politics and employment. Interestingly enough, one of the strategies for increasing women’s participation
and representation in politics is the 'setting up and endowment of chairs in faculties in universities and research institutions on women issues' (15.3.6, p.27). This item was also present in the 1998 draft. It remains to be seen whether the provision will actually be implemented.

The education component of the National Policy on Women is disappointing. None of the seven objectives explicitly mentions higher education. There is only the barest hint that women may engage in education beyond the secondary level, in the following objective addressing a somewhat disparate collection of women:

6.2.5. To reinforce current non-formal education programmes to provide selected types of learning with specific objectives for adult women, secondary school dropouts and women who desire to further their education (p.8).

The preamble to the education component states that 'The Government shall ... increase girls’ and women’s participation in education irrespective of their location and circumstance'. One of the implementation strategies is to 'provide encouragement and incentives for the education of girls/women in science, technology and mathematics'. The immediate question that arises is: How will this encouragement take place? This is even more salient in view of the fact that the 1998 draft explicitly referred to the provision of 'scholarships/educational subsidies to encourage girls', a provision that is no longer part of the final policy. Similarly, under science and technology, the implementation strategy present in the 1998 draft, referring to the award of scholarships and grants to female students and women who distinguish themselves in science and technology, is no longer present. The final provision states, instead, that government shall 'encourage' such students. Overall, the omission of task allocation to key actors throughout the policy and the silence on provision for resource allocation to enable periodic, independent analyses of gender impact, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up remain significant weaknesses.

In principle, the development of distance education ought to expand the opportunities available for women and men to pursue university education. It is not at all clear that this will actually happen, however, given the way in which policy on the open university has so far evolved.

There is an open university policy now, and it has never been openly or widely discussed. There has never been, to my knowledge, a workshop, say, where experts would present papers and policy would evolve. There was an international conference on distance education organized by the adviser to the president, on education, ... But that’s not what we needed. We needed to go have a retreat somewhere for a week or so, brainstorm. Yes, we need
distance education but what should be the [modalities]? The way policy evolved in this particular regard was, there is a Nigerian international expert who was invited to consult for the government on this. So between him, the minister and the president, there evolved the policy. And in my view, the policy is faulty because it is going to have a big, centralized open university for a country that is this big, that has very, very, very poor electronic infrastructure. … Of course, you see, the Nigerian consultant is also looking at his own personal interest, because eventually an empire would be built into which he will now move in as the emperor. So you see, it is not a disinterested piece of advice, as it were. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

The agencies that are most involved in policy-making with regard to the university system are the NUC, the Federal Ministry of Education and the National Council of Education.

The university system is tied to government bureaucracies, so policies, invariably coming from that level, are external to the universities. … the driving force is from outside the universities, it's not from within the universities. And that is a pity. (Interview with Hon. Tunde Lakoju, Abuja, 12 November 2001)

To what extent has policy addressed the needs and interests of women vis-à-vis university education in Nigeria? The former Executive Secretary of the NUC had this to say:

In the ‘eighties, when Jibril Aminu was Minister for Education, there was a policy which recognized the need for special education for women, special quota, special targets for the admission of women in higher education. And at that time, because the actual proportion was very low, there was a target of 25 per cent enrolment for women in universities. … We’d be talking about ‘85 to ‘89. He put in place a Women’s Education Unit in the Ministry of Education and there was a women’s education programme and so on. It was brought to the front burner of the education agenda. But of course, with his exit, these things were quietly relegated to the background or eliminated. … So we had a target of 25 per cent, which we have since exceeded because the total proportion of women in universities is about 36 per cent, in enrolment. And of course, as far as I know, there have never been any targets on staffing. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, 30 October 2001)

For female staff, the issue of differential conditions of service has been on the agenda for some time. Professor Bolanle Awe reflects on her early days at the University of Ibadan, where she became the first Nigerian woman to be appointed as a member of academic staff. She began work as an assistant lecturer on Independence Day, 1 October 1960, a date of symbolic significance.
As the above excerpt shows, women’s ability to raise policy issues is shaped by a range of issues, including where they are placed in the social hierarchy and from whom they can get support. The dynamics at a micro-level, not least of which are the differences among women, are particularly salient here. Even among female academic staff, women may be differentiated by status, experience, age, sometimes by nationality, if not by ethnicity, race and/or religion. It cannot be assumed that women will necessarily always work together across all differences that may be socially significant at any given time, any more than it can be assumed that men will do so, simply by virtue of being men. In the male-dominated context of university departments and faculties, women’s ability to raise policy issues may be as likely to be a function of the support they get from gender-sensitive men in strategic positions, as it is of a reliance on women alone.

A diverse range of global policy initiatives has supported women’s capacity to organize around policy issues, at micro- and macro-levels. These initiatives have been put forward with the aim of addressing the increasing disparities evident in the living conditions of women and men, and have come from international bureaucracies and international women’s movements alike. The United Nations Decade for Women (1975–85), the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies (1985) to accelerate women’s advancement, the International Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993), the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1995) and the International Conference on Women held in Beijing (1995) are some of the major landmarks in this process. Women have organized prior to these events, at national and international levels, but the international legitimacy accorded by placing women on the agenda has undoubtedly acted as a spur to increased networking and co-ordination of women’s efforts. In view of the
marginalization of most groups of women at national policy-making levels, Nigerian women have used the leverage gained at international policy levels to amplify their voices at national and more local levels. This has been the case regarding the National Policy on Women, for example.

In more mainstream domains, global trends have been acted upon in ways that have been less than beneficial to the university system:

One way they’ve related is through the Americanization of the world, where, increasingly, the American conception of university administration has been accepted and forced on the universities, especially in the development of the course unit system. Even if the universities didn’t have the capacity to operate the course unit system, it was imposed anyway, because of this notion that that’s the global trend, the universal trend. (Interview with Dr Jibrin Ibrahim, Abuja, 12 November 2001)

We turn now to the important arena of policy implementation. The content of state policies is rarely matched by their active and effective implementation. For example, the minimum qualification stipulated by the National Policy on Education, for primary school teachers, is the National Certificate of Education (NCE). With the recent policy shift towards Universal Basic Education, the minimum qualification is now Pivotal Teacher Training, the equivalent of a secondary school qualification and therefore a lower-level qualification. The Hon. Tunde Lakoju expressed his views on the policy thus: ‘That is a policy somersault. . . . There is a dislocation between policy and its implementation (interview, 12 November 2001).

The national president of ASUU outlined the following factors affecting the implementation of policies regarding the university system:

One big factor is the lack of constancy of funding. Universities are never guaranteed the amount of funds they are going to get in any year, so that implementing of policies depends on the stability of back-up . . . of whatever policy. Second, the Nigerian universities, administratively, they are not well run. They have very large but inefficient machinery. Three, they have problems of accountability. For example, those who are in charge often shift money that is meant for aspects of university life like academics, to other aspects. . . . Who formulates the policies and who implements them is very important. People who don’t really have a deep vision about what the Nigerian system should do, formulate policies. So even at the level of formulating policies there are problems. (Interview with Dr Oladipo Fashina, National President of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Zaria, 17 July 2001)
Speaking for students, the president of the Student Government of Abuja and chairperson of the Committee for the Unification of Three Factions of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) had this to say:

One fundamental factor why things do not work is because the system itself ... is being tied completely to the apron strings of people who are not really within the system. You find bureaucrats determining academic matters. ... Another thing is, you find that people who are incompetent, but because of political and other primordial considerations, are being imposed on the university system. So all these constitute very serious impediments to the implementation of policies. Things are not being done the way they should and it is all tied down to the lack of administrative autonomy. So the lack of autonomy itself is a major handicap for the implementation of policies. (Interview with Umar Kari, President of the Student Government of Abuja and Chairperson of the Committee for the Unification of Three Factions of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Abuja, 14 August 2001)

The Deputy President of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) reinforced this view:

The problem of implementation is that of interference. The policies are imposed on us by the larger society. I’m talking of government. And the interpretation, again, they want to monitor the interpretation. ... There is no room for flexibility. (Interview with Olatunji Olaniyan, National Deputy President of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), Jos, 20 September 2001)

The policy environment is shaped considerably by the funding context and so the next sub-section outlines some of the key features of the 2002 Budget. In principle, policies concerning the university education system are formulated and implemented in the context of development plans. In the last chapter we saw how the official development plans and rolling plans referred to the expansion of the university system in terms of its meeting the need for high-level ‘manpower’. How effectively these needs have been met is the subject of the final section.

The 2002 budget

The annual budget provides an official statement of the way in which the economy is likely to be configured over the year, while outlining policy priorities and objectives. To what extent does the 2002 Budget suggest any shift in policy direction that would indicate greater political will to fund the university system more appropriately? President Olusegun Obasanjo outlined the policy objectives for 2002 in his address on the budget to a joint session of the National Assembly:
• to eradicate poverty by fostering the opportunities for job creation
• to achieve a high economic growth rate through better mobilization and prudent use of economic resources
• to build a strong economy by encouraging private sector participation, while providing continuity to economic reform programmes
• to ensure good governance by transforming development administration into a service- and result-oriented system. (Obasanjo, 2001)

The policy objectives outlined by the President that relate to education include the enhancement of funding for education at all levels, and ‘the creation of conducive [sic] and congenial environment for teaching, learning and research’. Particular emphasis was to be placed on Universal Basic Education (UBE) and mass literacy programmes. One of the specific objectives was the elaboration of a new information technology policy through investment in information and communication technology. The President declared that the government would ‘continue the rehabilitation and improvement of secondary and tertiary educational institutions’ (ibid.: 5).

Tables 4 and 5 summarize allocations to specific sectors for recurrent and capital expenditure estimates, respectively. The items are ranked in descending order of magnitude. Defence is the single largest line item of recurrent expenditure, followed somewhat anomalously by education and health. Although the proportion of the recurrent budget allocated to education (9.1 per cent) is half as much again as the proportion of the capital budget (6.0 per cent), 9.1 per cent is still very low compared to the UNESCO-recommended level of 26 per cent. Women and youth affairs, while ranked fourth on the list for recurrent expenditure, is allocated a miniscule 1.7 per cent of the total recurrent budget and a grand total of 0.2 per cent of capital development funds. One can only wonder how, if at all, the business of engendering the functions of other ministries is to take place, if there are few or no funds allocated for such work.

According to the Nigeria Labour Congress, the government’s intention of providing an enabling environment for privatization is signalled by the infrastructural sectors – power and steel, works and housing, water resources and transport – being uppermost in the capital expenditure list (NLC, 2001). Together, these sectors are allocated an aggregate of 40.3 per cent of the overall budget. A shift in economic policy towards privatization would have repercussions on the university system, apart from changing priorities for funding. One of the most likely implications would be a restriction of space for addressing gender equity concerns. Inconsistencies in government policy, however, are indicated by the same infrastructural sectors being ranked very low on the recurrent expenditure list, accounting
Table 4 Recommended recurrent allocations for specific sectors in year 2002, as % of budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>% of budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and youth</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works and housing</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and steel</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and technology</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water resources</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment, labour and productivity</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Draft 2002 Budget.

Table 5 Recommended capital allocations for specific sectors in year 2002, as % of budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>% of budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works and housing</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and steel</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water resources</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and technology</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment, labour and productivity</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and youth</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Draft 2002 Budget.
for a total of 2.9 per cent of the total budget. At the least, this suggests that capital expenditure lists are disconnected from recurrent expenditure lists. The much larger question, however, is the extent to which the figures set down on paper bear any relation to the sums allocated and released by the executive. The relationship can only be described as tenuous, in view of the continual discrepancies between such figures for university funding, as the following chapter makes clear.

Such a situation highlights the need for advocacy on budgets and the need to demand accountability from the government in meeting officially stated financial targets. This process is only just beginning to happen in Nigeria. One area in which advocacy has clearly promoted a rethinking of the scope and function of budgets is in gender budgeting. Diane Elson (1999a: 3) puts it this way:

The budget, on the face of it, appears to be a gender-neutral policy instrument. It is set out in terms of financial aggregates – totals and sub-totals of expenditure and revenue, and the resulting budget surplus or deficit. As usually presented, there is no particular mention of women, but no particular mention of men either.

However, this appearance of gender neutrality is more accurately described as gender blindness. The way in which the national budget is usually formulated ignores the different, socially determined roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of men and women. . . .

The presence of gender differences and inequalities means that a gender-blind budget in practice tends to have different impacts on men and women, boys and girls; and in turn they have different responses to the budget. . . . although the education budget of a country may have no intention of favouring boys over girls, the actual outcome may in fact favour boys over girls.

The ways in which gender is implicated in economic policy, processes and decisions are only recently becoming unravelled. A range of tools is available for integrating gender into an appraisal of the composition of public expenditure, for example. Public expenditure incidence analysis first analyses the net unit costs of providing a service and then the pattern of utilization of services, in this case by gender. The data are often difficult to assemble, requiring collaboration between the Ministry of Finance, the Audit Commission (or similar body) and the Office of Statistics.

Where services are collectively, as opposed to individually, consumed, gender-aware policy appraisal may be more appropriate to use. The central question concerns the extent to which the policies are likely to reduce gender inequalities and imbalances. The Women’s Budget Project in South Africa, a joint initiative of the Parliamentary Finance Committee and civil society organizations, is a key example.
In addition, a women's budget statement, as pioneered in Australia, is an important tool for bringing together information on the implications of government expenditures for women. A women's budget statement does not produce a separate budget for women. It does, however, attempt to disaggregate expenditure according to its impact on women. The production of such a statement requires a high degree of co-operation among government agencies and some level of commitment. It is critical to note that creating the conditions for such co-operation ‘requires a substantial and well organized coalition of supporters both inside and outside of government’ (Elson, 1999b). This applies as much to Nigeria as it does anywhere else. Coalition-building in and around the existing administration will be necessary to create the conditions for assessing the implications of government expenditure in Nigeria on university education, for women as well as for men.

The university system & graduate un/employment

This section examines the relationship between the university system and the job market. Whether or not a university education does indeed pave the way for employment for both men and women is part of this larger question.

Enrolment trends

First addressed is the question of enrolment of students in universities. Table 6 gives the total number of students enrolled in arts and humanities in the 37 Nigerian universities in existence at the time. The figures for 1990/91 are actual figures, whilst the rest are projected figures for subsequent five- and four-year intervals. The projections were carried out on the basis of the NUC 60:40 ratio of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>12,746</td>
<td>21,945</td>
<td>30,767</td>
<td>43,083</td>
<td>67,283</td>
<td>105,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>25,339</td>
<td>37,138</td>
<td>52,068</td>
<td>72,910</td>
<td>113,864</td>
<td>179,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>34,836</td>
<td>40,514</td>
<td>56,801</td>
<td>79,538</td>
<td>124,215</td>
<td>195,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>9,524</td>
<td>15,193</td>
<td>21,301</td>
<td>29,827</td>
<td>46,580</td>
<td>73,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social science</td>
<td>25,363</td>
<td>42,203</td>
<td>59,168</td>
<td>82,852</td>
<td>129,390</td>
<td>203,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5,015</td>
<td>11,817</td>
<td>16,567</td>
<td>23,198</td>
<td>36,229</td>
<td>57,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112,823</td>
<td>168,810</td>
<td>236,672</td>
<td>331,408</td>
<td>517,561</td>
<td>814,393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Academic Planning Consultants, 1997: 90.
From the Policy Environment to the Job Market

Figure 2 Projected student enrolment in arts/humanities

Table 7 Total student enrolment in science-based disciplines, 1990/91 – 2014/15 (figures presented in Fig. 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>12,002</td>
<td>21,393</td>
<td>36,030</td>
<td>61,784</td>
<td>104,806</td>
<td>164,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering/technology</td>
<td>17,984</td>
<td>34,071</td>
<td>57,381</td>
<td>98,397</td>
<td>166,914</td>
<td>262,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental design</td>
<td>6,394</td>
<td>10,776</td>
<td>18,148</td>
<td>31,121</td>
<td>52,792</td>
<td>83,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical &amp; health science</td>
<td>12,565</td>
<td>22,344</td>
<td>37,631</td>
<td>64,530</td>
<td>109,464</td>
<td>31,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>2,661</td>
<td>4,120</td>
<td>6,939</td>
<td>11,899</td>
<td>20,185</td>
<td>172,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>34,819</td>
<td>63,388</td>
<td>106,754</td>
<td>183,064</td>
<td>310,537</td>
<td>488,636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary medicine</td>
<td>1,528</td>
<td>2,377</td>
<td>4,003</td>
<td>6,864</td>
<td>11,645</td>
<td>18,324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>87,953</strong></td>
<td><strong>158,469</strong></td>
<td><strong>266,886</strong></td>
<td><strong>457,659</strong></td>
<td><strong>776,343</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,221,590</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Academic Planning Consultants, 1997:90.
science to arts disciplines, as presented in the 20-Year Perspective Plan (Academic Planning Consultants, 1997).

In 1990/91, the ratio of enrolments in science-based disciplines to arts and humanities was 44:56. According to the projections carried out in the 20-year plan, the ratio of 60:40 could be reached by 2007/08. Over the 20-year plan period, the total student enrolment would reach roughly 2.03 million. Of these, science-based students would number 1.22 million compared with a total of 814,393 for arts and humanities. None of these figures are disaggregated by gender.

Table 7 presents the total number of students enrolled in science-based disciplines in the same universities as those covered in Table 6. Figures for 1990/91 are actual figures, whilst the rest are projected figures for subsequent five- and four-year intervals. None of these figures are sex disaggregated.

Table 8 presents the actual number of female students enrolled in Nigerian universities between 1956 and 1991. The proportion of female students in the total population changes somewhat unevenly over the years. The period 1956–60 shows an increase in female enrolment from 10.1 to 17.1 per cent, only to be halved in 1962. Subsequently, the proportion of female students continues to rise more or less steadily, reaching a peak of 33.6 per cent by 1991.
From the Policy Environment to the Job Market

Table 8 Total female enrolment in universities, 1956–91
(figures presented graphically in Figure 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1,024</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>2,548</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>3,606</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>12,064</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>14,474</td>
<td>3,117</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>26,450</td>
<td>6,098</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>32,286</td>
<td>9,313</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>41,499</td>
<td>11,089</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>59,390</td>
<td>17,867</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>75,839</td>
<td>22,179</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>126,285</td>
<td>30,009</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>135,670</td>
<td>36,195</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>151,967</td>
<td>46,173</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>162,059</td>
<td>48,717</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>172,588</td>
<td>51,676</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>184,468</td>
<td>56,119</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>189,494</td>
<td>57,512</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>205,000</td>
<td>68,977</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Academic Planning Consultants, 1997: 133.

Figure 4 Female enrolment in universities, 1956–91
Whilst total enrolment has increased at a phenomenal rate, this does not necessarily translate into a large labour force, since rates of repetition and drop-outs appear to be high. Data on student retention in federal universities are uneven and hard to come by. Working out what proportion of an incoming cohort will graduate within the expected time is not a straightforward task. It is further complicated by the delay in the duration of an academic year, due to strikes and university closures, in some cases. However, data on the actual number of students graduating are available.

Table 9 Projected graduate turnout, 1985/86–2014/15
(figures presented graphically in Fig. 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985/86</td>
<td>27,541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986/87</td>
<td>30,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987/88</td>
<td>37,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988/89</td>
<td>38,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989/90</td>
<td>40,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990/91</td>
<td>42,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/96</td>
<td>55,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/01</td>
<td>80,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>128,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>198,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>280,096</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Academic Planning Consultants, 1997: 92.
Table 9 shows the projected number of graduates from all Nigerian universities between the years 1985/86 and 2014/15. Enrolments up to 1990/91 were actual, while subsequent enrolments are projected. The figures are not disaggregated by gender.

Table 10 shows the actual graduate output in arts and humanities between the years 1986/87 and 1996/97. In 1996/97, the two fields producing the largest numbers of graduates were education and social science, with 12,390 and 9,201 respectively, followed by arts with 5,596. The smallest number of graduates was produced in law. These figures are not disaggregated by gender.

The actual number of graduates produced in science-based disciplines between 1986/87 and 1996/97 is shown in Table 11. Nearly 7,000 science graduates and 3,210 engineers entered the labour market in 1997. In more specialized professional disciplines, the numbers were even smaller. In all, there were only 2,402 graduates of medicine, 405 pharmacists and 275 veterinary medical graduates produced. As Dabalen et al. (2000: 8) point out, ‘The small numbers of graduates in some critical areas should be a source of concern if Nigeria has a shortage of these skills’. None of these figures are sex disaggregated.

The total number of graduates actually produced in each year is less than the numbers projected, if we compare Table 9 with the totals for each year in Tables 10 and 11. Table 9 shows a projected number of 30,935 graduates produced in total in 1986/87, compared to the actual figure of 27,312 (totals from tables 10 and 11). In 1988/89, the total number of graduates was 32,296 as opposed to the projected figure of 38,000. And in 1995/96, 48,243 students graduated, compared with the 55,010 projected. The projections are clearly more optimistic than current conditions can support in terms of graduation.

### Table 10 Graduate output in arts and humanities, 1986/87 –1996/97
(figures presented graphically in Fig. 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>1,897</td>
<td>2,088</td>
<td>2,459</td>
<td>2,233</td>
<td>2,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>3,907</td>
<td>4,072</td>
<td>4,292</td>
<td>5,569</td>
<td>5,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>7,836</td>
<td>10,686</td>
<td>13,950</td>
<td>14,449</td>
<td>12,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>1,714</td>
<td>1,892</td>
<td>1,624</td>
<td>1,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social science</td>
<td>4,190</td>
<td>4,139</td>
<td>6,383</td>
<td>9,199</td>
<td>9,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19,270</td>
<td>22,699</td>
<td>28,976</td>
<td>32,714</td>
<td>30,936</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Dabalen et al., 2000: 10.
Gender in the Making of the Nigerian Universities

![Graph showing graduate output in arts/humanities](image)

**Figure 6** Graduate output in arts/humanities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>1,366</td>
<td>1,681</td>
<td>2,371</td>
<td>2,453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>1,569</td>
<td>1,871</td>
<td>2,246</td>
<td>2,867</td>
<td>3,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td>1,593</td>
<td>1,646</td>
<td>2,205</td>
<td>2,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2,582</td>
<td>3,503</td>
<td>5,109</td>
<td>6,593</td>
<td>6,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary medicine</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>8,042</td>
<td>9,597</td>
<td>12,382</td>
<td>15,529</td>
<td>16,403</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ibid.

Table 11  Graduates in science-based disciplines, 1986/87–1996/97
(figures presented graphically in Figure 7)
This section draws on a labour market study carried out by the National Manpower Board (1998) of selected metropolitan areas of the federation, which collected information on educational attainment. Table 12 presents unemployment rates by education level. The average graduate unemployment rate across all metropolitan areas was 12 per cent for men and 5.2 per cent for women. The data are incomplete for female undergraduates in Ibadan, Jos and Kano. Where data are available, they indicate wide differences across the country: unemployment for female graduates in Abuja is twice as high as the overall average for women and three times higher than the rate in Port Harcourt. In addition, Abuja is the only site where graduate unemployment is higher for women than for men. Considerable variation across regions is also evident from the data for male undergraduates. For example, graduate unemployment was between 14 and 15 per cent in Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt, but virtually non-existent in Jos. In all cases for which data are available, graduate unemployment was lower than that for secondary school leavers, including major urban centres such as Aba and Lagos.

Graduate unemployment

Figure 7 Graduates in science-based disciplines

The average graduate unemployment rate across all metropolitan areas was 12 per cent for men and 5.2 per cent for women. The data are incomplete for female undergraduates in Ibadan, Jos and Kano. Where data are available, they indicate wide differences across the country: unemployment for female graduates in Abuja is twice as high as the overall average for women and three times higher than the rate in Port Harcourt. In addition, Abuja is the only site where graduate unemployment is higher for women than for men. Considerable variation across regions is also evident from the data for male undergraduates. For example, graduate unemployment was between 14 and 15 per cent in Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt, but virtually non-existent in Jos. In all cases for which data are available, graduate unemployment was lower than that for secondary school leavers, including major urban centres such as Aba and Lagos.
Gender in the Making of the Nigerian Universities

Table 12 Unemployment rate by education level
(university data for selected areas presented graphically in Fig. 8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan area</th>
<th>University first degree</th>
<th>Polytechnic/monotechnic</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aba</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jos</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiduguri</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Harcourt</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All metropolitan areas</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 8 Graduate unemployment in selected metropolitan areas

96
picture is less uniform for university graduates compared with polytechnic and monotechnic leavers. Despite this, the picture for graduates is not rosy, and their employment prospects are likely to be restricted.

We now turn to look at estimated labour requirements and the actual distribution of selected high-level occupations.

**Estimated labour requirements**

Table 13 shows the projected occupational requirements in selected occupations, as presented in the 20-Year Perspective Plan (Academic Planning Consultants, 1997).

Based on a survey of 823 industries carried out by the Manpower and Industrial Relations Consultants (ibid.), the sex-disaggregated distribution of occupations is presented in Table 14.

**Gender segregation of the labour market**

The gender segregation of the labour market is acute in technical areas such as architecture, town planning, cartography and quantity surveying, where no women were employed in 1990. That this is not simply the result of a lack of technical capacity is evident from the fact that some women have been employed as computer programmers and computer system analysts. Women have made greater inroads into sections of the science and engineering domain. The largest number of female scientists was employed as geologists. In engineering, the highest proportion of female engineers was employed in building, whilst the greatest absolute number was employed as civil engineers. More astonishing, however, is the absence of women in professional agricultural jobs such as poultry, fishery, livestock and forestry officers, given the predominance of women engaged in agriculture at informal levels. The professions in which women were most likely to be found are accountancy and pharmacy, the latter being the only area (apart from geophysics) in which more women were employed than men. In the health sphere, in addition to pharmacy, women were most often employed as medical practitioners.

Comparing the actual distribution of occupations (Table 14) with the estimated need for labour in these areas (Table 13), there are two striking points to be made. The first is that the number of graduates employed in any field, during 1990, was considerably lower than the annual estimate of required labour, over the 13-year period 1992–2015. In other words, the country is simply not producing enough high-level graduates, and this applies across the board for the categories of labour listed. The second point is that one of the
### Table 13 Estimated need for selected high- and middle-level labour, 1992–2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>Projected shortages</th>
<th>Required labour by 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stock 1992 (1)</td>
<td>Wastage (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stock 2015 (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>7667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town planners</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartographers</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity surveyors</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers:</td>
<td>Civil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>3100</td>
<td>13,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical</td>
<td>3800</td>
<td>4643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>3120</td>
<td>15,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemists</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicists</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geologists</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>1789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geophysicists</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agronomists</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>25,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horticulturalists</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>12,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural research officers</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>11,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry officers</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>24,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural engineers</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>14,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary pathologists</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>13,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant pathologists</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishery officers</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>20,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock officers</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>22,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry officers</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>11,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil surveyors</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>5246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical practitioners</td>
<td>11,450</td>
<td>26,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgeons</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>9750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentists</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical pathologists</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>2625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacists</td>
<td>3220</td>
<td>7875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opticians</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountants</td>
<td>9260</td>
<td>50,805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditors</td>
<td>3100</td>
<td>7321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statisticians</td>
<td>1010</td>
<td>2321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economists</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>44,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers/justices</td>
<td>9690</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer system analysts</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>5190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer programmers</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>5880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81,720</td>
<td>418,893</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 14 Distribution of occupations, 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment category</th>
<th>Numbers employed</th>
<th>% employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town planners</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartographers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity surveyors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers Civil</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemists</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicists</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geologists</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geophysicists</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agronomists</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horticulturalists</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural research officers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry officers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural engineers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary pathologists</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant pathologists</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishery officers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock officers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry officers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil surveyors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical practitioners</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgeons</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentists</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical pathologists</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacists</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opticians</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountants</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditors</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statisticians</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economists</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers/justices</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer system analysts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer programmers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>282</td>
<td>3416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

areas in which there is the greatest need for additional labour – the agricultural sector – is one in which virtually no women are employed at professional levels, despite the fact that most farmers in Nigeria are women. Taken together, these two points highlight the level of disjuncture between the labour market and the university system.

The dislocation between university output and labour market demand brings with it considerable social and economic costs. Dabalen et al. (2000) point out that the main reason for the poor employment conditions in Nigeria is the weak performance of the economy. They offer two reasons why an economy would perform badly. The first is the policy environment, outlined in the previous section. The second reason is ‘an inadequate level and quality of inputs that businesses in the economy employ’ (ibid.: 21). Whilst the first point, the shortfall in absolute numbers of graduates recruited is clear from the above, the second point about quality is critical. This is addressed in the context of funding in the next chapter.
6 The Politics of Funding

There is no generally accepted rule for determining the level of aggregate funding to the university system by Government. It is a matter of both economics and politics. However, it is known that, in the 1970s, resources devoted to university education in countries such as the USA, USSR, West Germany, Brazil and Singapore annually constituted between 1–4 per cent of their gross national products. In sharp contrast, the approved annual allocations to the Nigerian universities during the 1970s and the projected annual allocations during the 1981–85 Plan Period constitute less than 1 per cent of the country’s gross national income. Judged by the experience of other countries, therefore, it could be seen that there is still much greater scope for additional funding to the Nigerian university system than has actually been achieved to date. (FRN, 1981: para. 154, p.98)

Written in 1981, the tenor of the above quotation still applies today. The UNESCO standard for the proportion of a national budget that should be spent on education is 26 per cent. Nigeria spends between 7 and 8 per cent. This raises the question of why the government does not spend a larger proportion of the national budget on education:

The military did not believe in education at all, frankly. And what we have is still some extension of military rule. The man who is President today is a retired military officer, a general. So the mentality has not faded. They don’t believe in education, because the whole idea of the military is control. And the more illiterate the people are, the better for control … That’s why the government is a bit reluctant. Also, because we’ve not been able to define our priorities right, as a nation. (interview with Hon. Tunde Lakoju, Abuja, 12 November 2001)

Up to 1975, it is generally agreed that the universities were adequately funded (FRN, 1992), with funds derived from a variety of sources, including individuals and groups, local communities, clubs, societies of different kinds and voluntary agencies. In 1975, the Federal Government took over the regional universities and in 1976 abolished student fees. The funding situation deteriorated even more in the 1980s with the onset of the economic recession and subsequently with the imposition of the SAP in 1986. The devaluation of the naira has not been accompanied by any corresponding adjustment of the recurrent or capital grants dispensed to universities. Indeed, it would be surprising if such an adjustment did take place, since one of the principal aims of the SAP was to reduce public expenditure in social sectors such as education and health. Yet the universities’ requirements for appropriate staff salaries, books,
journals, laboratory equipment and re-agents, conference attendance
and so on continue nevertheless. At the same time as underfunding
and SAP-related inflation became the order of the day, the university
system was being expanded, as we saw in Chapter 3, with fore-
seeable consequences for the quality of output.

From the late 1970s, the Federal Government became aware of
the erosion of funding of the education system in general, including
higher education. A number of commissions were set up to examine
the problems and make recommendations. Among the reports
produced were the Ogundeko Report (1978) on university finances,
the Cookey Report (1981) on salaries and conditions of service of
university staff, and the Falunwa Report (1984) on the funding of
education. The Longe Report (1992) also examined funding in its
review of higher education. We turn now to address key features of
the way in which the university system is funded in Nigeria.

Federal funding of the university system

Federal universities receive two types of grant through the NUC:
recurrent and capital grants. Recurrent grants cover salaries and
allowances, goods and services, teaching and research equipment as
well as administrative costs, student services, maintenance and
general university expenditure. The NUC has evolved an elaborate
procedure for calculating the required recurrent grant for each
university.

The basic cost is the direct teaching cost, which is worked out on
the basis of the NUC’s approved student/teacher ratios for specific
programmes and staff salaries, with allowances for teaching
materials, equipment and related services. The emphasis on student/
teacher ratios prioritizes the absolute number of students, not their
gendered composition. Using student/teacher ratios as the basis for
calculating teaching costs creates pressure for programmes that are
likely to attract large numbers of students. As the total number of
students increases, so does the student/teacher ratio and, with it, the
funds necessary to meet recurrent costs. Programmes that are
unlikely to attract large numbers of students, such as feminist theory
and/or research, are unlikely to be prioritized by the university.

Capital grants are of two types: for on-going capital projects that
begin in one plan period and spill over into the next, and for new
projects. The location of most universities away from urban centres
means that, in addition to buildings and facilities needed for teaching
and research programmes, universities must also provide substantial
non-academic facilities including housing for most staff and students,
clinics or health centres, schools for the children of staff, roads, and
plants for campus-owned electricity and water supplies.

The needs for recurrent and capital grants for universities are negotiated at three levels: the university, the NUC and the government. The annual budget cycle within the university begins with a call circular from the university administration to all departments and faculties. Submissions are collected, analysed and costed through committees at Faculty, Senate and Council levels, before being submitted to the NUC. All these committees are located in senior levels of the administrative hierarchy, characterized not only by small numbers of women members but also by a generalized lack of gender sensitivity and commitment to gender justice. The same is true of the second level of negotiating recurrent and capital grants, the NUC.

The third level of negotiating university grants is that of the government. The Cookey Report (1981: 101) had this to say about it:

The annual budget hearing at the Federal Ministry of Finance is attended by the Executive Secretary of the NUC and his lieutenants, without any direct university representation. The criteria used in determining the size of resources to be allocated to the universities by the Government is [sic] usually unclear and varies [sic] from year to year. The ultimate figure is always arbitrary and unrelated either to the immediate assessed needs of the universities or the recommendations of the NUC.

**Funding problems**

The funding problems facing universities include budgetary as well as management aspects (FME, forthcoming), the gender dimensions of which are rarely recognized. In general, approaches to budgetary considerations at all levels are arbitrary. Funds are released late; there is inconsistency in the timing of releases; universities have enormous requirements for capital funding that cannot be met through regular allocations; and the recurrent costs of the maintenance of structures are not adequately taken into account, resulting in serious deterioration. Moreover, the need for universities to address national labour force requirements is not properly addressed. The NUC points out that existing funding formulae need to be modified so that over-enrolment and the resulting system overloads are not encouraged by policy.

The actual level of underfunding of the university system has been most marked from 1999 to date, especially in the area of capital development. In 1999, for example, Nigerian universities overall received 97 per cent of the required recurrent funds allocated but only 50 per cent of the capital grants (NUC, 2000: 20).
Insufficient capital grants have implications for the number and condition of lecture facilities, laboratories and other structures required for teaching and research. Degraded structures lead to overcrowding and increased stress in the conditions under which teaching and research are supposed to be carried out, with potentially differing implications for women and men, whether staff or students.

The shortfall in capital grants affects women directly, in relation to housing and accommodation. Insufficient housing for staff, for example, means that senior staff (predominantly men) are more likely to be housed than those lower in the institutional hierarchy (women and men in junior positions). Inadequate and insufficient hostel accommodation results in female students experiencing chronic congestion in the existing halls of residence, just like male students.

In addition, however, the fact that female students are forced in such circumstances to look for accommodation off-campus has further gendered implications. Many female students residing off-campus are subjected to sexual harassment by unscrupulous landlords, when they are not expected to do housework simply because they are female. The journey to and from campus also leaves them vulnerable to sexual harassment and the threat of sexual violence, including rape. The additional transport costs inherent in having to travel to and from campus, and the insecurity of doing so late at night, restrict the participation in university life of female students living off-campus. For young women, the fear of sexual harassment and violence, whilst not restricted to journeys to and from the university at night, is compounded by the restricted availability of adequate accommodation on campus. This fear is real and restricts women’s capacity to learn and develop intellectually, regardless of the actual occurrence of sexual harassment and violence in and around the university concerned. As may be expected, levels of sexual harassment and violence vary, given the specificities of local contexts and conditions (see Bennett, 2002).

Returning to recurrent grants, initial approved allocations in the budget for 1999 were, without exception, not met. The actual allocations received were all lower than the budgetary allocations. At the same time, gross releases were higher than the total funds available for the year, leading to a picture of generalized under-funding and arbitrariness in the allocation and release of funds (NUC, 2000). In the case of research grants, some universities received no funds at all in 1999 (ibid.: 28). Universities that do not account for all research grants received in a given year are deprived of further research funds until such time as the funds already...
received are accounted for. In other words, if any research project funded by the NUC in a given university has not been fully accounted for, all other NUC-funded researchers in that university will end up bearing the brunt of the institutional penalty. This is the case even if NUC funds were to be received for research in gender and women’s studies at that university and the research were to be competently carried out and accounted for. The following universities came under this category in 1999: the University of Lagos; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; the University of Ilorin; the University of Uyo; and the Federal University of Technology, Minna.

With regard to teaching and research equipment grants, the NUC allocated only the first and second quarters by the end of 1999, in other words, only half of what was due to the universities for the year. It is not clear why some universities received no funds under this grant (University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; University of Calabar; University of Ilorin; University of Jos; University of Maiduguri; Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi; Federal University of Technology, Akure) whilst others received the full complement of the existing balance before 1999 (University of Lagos; Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto; University of Uyo; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Federal University of Technology, Owerri; and the University of Abuja) (NUC, 2000: 30).

More recently, the discrepancies between the actual financial requirements of universities and the funds released to them have continued. Tables 15 and 16 indicate the situation for 2000 and 2001, respectively. In 2000, the following universities received less than half of their actual financial requirements: University of Calabar; University of Uyo; Federal University of Technology, Owerri; Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi; Federal University of Technology, Akure; Federal University of Technology, Yola; Federal University of Technology, Minna; and the University of Abuja. The distribution of these universities across the country suggests no particular geopolitical pattern to the underfunding.

By 2001 (Table 16), the situation had deteriorated even further. A number of universities received less than one-third of their actual financial requirements: University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; University of Lagos; University of Calabar; University of Jos; University of Maiduguri; University of Port Harcourt; Usman Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto; and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. One university – the University of Ibadan – received less than a quarter of its actual financial requirements. Here too, the universities affected are distributed across the country.

In the years 2001 and 2002, the draft 2002 budget presented the
recommended allocations for recurrent expenditure and capital development. Whilst the 2001 Appropriation Act and the 2002 draft budget indicate how much money was initially recommended in budgetary allocations for recurrent expenditure and capital development, this does not mean that the funds were actually released as recommended. The general pattern of discrepancies between funds originally recommended for a given purpose, subsequently allocated and finally released, applies here too, in the relations between the legislative and executive arms of government:

We have so far done three Appropriation Bills [for the Annual Budget]. Appropriation is the most important law that the legislature can pass, which will impact positively on the lives of the people, including the university system ... When we came in in 1999, we came in in the middle of the year and we passed what we call a Supplementary Appropriation, you know, voted money and approved money for capital development and recurrent

### Table 15 Actual financial requirements and funds released, 2000 (naira)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Actual financial requirements</th>
<th>Funds released</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>3,067,545,024</td>
<td>2,509,890,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsukka</td>
<td>2,966,973,646</td>
<td>2,512,793,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ife</td>
<td>2,600,370,769</td>
<td>2,304,114,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>2,494,340,475</td>
<td>1,955,127,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>3,065,419,669</td>
<td>2,567,587,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>2,781,915,742</td>
<td>1,949,126,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calabar</td>
<td>2,609,214,183</td>
<td>1,227,113,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilorin</td>
<td>2,229,563,128</td>
<td>1,472,655,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jos</td>
<td>1,674,055,232</td>
<td>1,332,790,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>1,652,154,510</td>
<td>981,801,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiduguri</td>
<td>2,107,001,571</td>
<td>1,089,099,496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/Harcourt</td>
<td>2,107,042,719</td>
<td>1,268,403,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>1,149,261,294</td>
<td>651,927,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uyo</td>
<td>2,221,916,615</td>
<td>1,013,481,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awka</td>
<td>1,037,930,277</td>
<td>801,835,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owerri</td>
<td>1,581,849,449</td>
<td>611,326,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauchi</td>
<td>1,407,961,633</td>
<td>556,208,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akure</td>
<td>1,590,497,263</td>
<td>545,315,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yola</td>
<td>1,449,743,917</td>
<td>499,590,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minna</td>
<td>1,314,216,462</td>
<td>417,130,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>661,530,671</td>
<td>313,559,030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

expenditure in the country, including the development of the university system. We specifically allocated some money to the university system, which, if it had been released, would have gone a long way to alleviating the crisis we now have in the university system. We did the same thing in 2000, we did the same thing in 2001. I can say, without any fear of contradiction, that none of the Appropriation Bills we passed so far has been implemented up to 40 per cent. (Interview with Hon. Tunde Lakoju, Abuja, 12 November 2001. Emphasis in the original)

The striking discrepancies between the financial requirements of universities and the actual funds released are the monetary expressions of an overall scenario in which there is very little political will to sustain public university education. The nuances of this point are highlighted by the quotation above from the Hon. Tunde Lakoju, referring to the discontinuity between approved funding of the university system by the legislature and the failure to follow through.

Table 16 Actual financial requirements and funds released, 2001 (naira)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Actual financial requirements</th>
<th>Funds released</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>5,472,955,737</td>
<td>1,291,408,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsukka</td>
<td>4,887,944,737</td>
<td>1,547,513,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ife</td>
<td>3,890,190,887</td>
<td>1,217,489,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>3,784,666,173</td>
<td>1,103,705,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>4,050,510,625</td>
<td>1,493,580,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>3,072,964,428</td>
<td>1,260,720,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calabar</td>
<td>2,401,505,290</td>
<td>747,400,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilorin</td>
<td>2,260,101,450</td>
<td>937,760,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jos</td>
<td>2,299,604,893</td>
<td>715,268,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>1,584,574,863</td>
<td>577,497,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiduguri</td>
<td>2,610,961,283</td>
<td>758,675,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/Harcourt</td>
<td>2,828,301,817</td>
<td>792,965,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>1,383,888,294</td>
<td>460,993,819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uyo</td>
<td>1,854,139,905</td>
<td>984,536,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awka</td>
<td>1,505,377,548</td>
<td>442,499,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owerri</td>
<td>1,049,332,005</td>
<td>445,593,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauchi</td>
<td>971,934,182</td>
<td>362,601,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akure</td>
<td>1,142,026,110</td>
<td>387,831,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yola</td>
<td>774,568,212</td>
<td>331,742,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minna</td>
<td>682,247,543</td>
<td>340,312,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>801,457,280</td>
<td>962,168,378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ibid.
on the part of the executive. The apparent gender-neutrality of figures such as those in Tables 15 and 16 belies the possibility of a gender analysis of the significance of such figures, bearing in mind the political configuration in which they are embedded and their layered implications.

First, in a context in which even the basic needs of the university system are not met, the question of gender justice can only be posed in a hostile and restrictive environment. Issues of gender equity and justice are predominantly constructed as optional ‘add-ons’, of marginal importance to the ‘real business’ as defined by ‘malestream’ stakeholders in the university system. The stark absence of a transformative agenda for university education on the part of the government constitutes the single most significant obstacle to pushing forward an agenda for gender equity.

Secondly, the arbitrariness of funding allocations has been one of the key markers of the form that military rule has taken in Nigeria’s recent past. As such, arbitrariness in financial matters highlights the generalized absence of the rule of law in the process of making decisions about funding allocations and implementing those decisions in terms of releasing funds. The erosion of the rule of law has continued even under civilian rule; the financial basis for decision-making remains not only opaque but also unpredictable. The case for gender budgeting, in contrast, would require not only political will but also a high degree of shared information and co-ordination among different government ministries. This process cannot take place in an environment that subverts clarity in the presentation of official information and which is marked by the absence of predictability. The existing scenario is one in which the chances of getting gender issues, such as gender budgeting for example, recognized as valid, and having such arguments followed through in practice, are slim indeed.

Thirdly, those who make decisions about allocations and the release of funds are almost inevitably men in senior positions in the bureaucracy of the university system. Given the prevailing unpredictability and lack of transparency in funding decisions, it is very likely that the considerations shaping decision-making are informal as well as formal, as may be reflected in terms of the criteria for the making of decisions as well as the individuals constituting the decision-makers. In the latter case, those involved may be not only the (predominantly male) members of the committees formally constituted for that purpose but also members of male networks linked to such committees. As already pointed out, such groupings, located as they are in senior levels of the administrative hierarchy, are distinguished not only by minimal female membership but also
by a generalized lack of gender sensitivity and commitment to gender justice. This point is just as applicable here.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that even in national contexts distinguished by a commitment to democracy and gender equity, as in South Africa, the progressive rhetoric is rarely matched by commensurate budget allocations for work on gender (see, for example, Meintjes, 2003). The lip-service paid to gender equity is not restricted to any single national context but is common across the continent, as is clear from the use of national machineries on gender (Tsikata, 2000). In the contemporary Nigerian context, the official priority given to gender seems to have diminished rather than increased with the transition to civilian rule, if the practice regarding women’s participation in party politics is anything to go by (Ibrahim and Salihu, 2004). Against this backdrop, the failure to match pronouncements with practice – in fact, the yawning gap between the two – is likely to be pronounced indeed.

Writing in the early 1980s, the observations of the Cookey Report (1981: 102–3) on the systemic drawbacks of the budgeting system are still pertinent today:

- The uncertainty and lack of confidence about the future of planned programmes affects staff morale and unnecessarily lowers the threshold for friction between government and universities.
- The system does not allow for long-term planning because no-one is sure about the level of support for any one year.
- Too much emphasis is placed on the quantitative dimensions of the budget ‘at the expense of deeper issues like questioning the existence of certain programmes, or examining of possible alternatives for inter-budgetary unit trade-offs’ (p.103).
- The use by the NUC of student enrolment as the basic criterion for sub-allocating government recurrent financial allocations among universities leaves much to be desired, in view of the approximations of the relative weights given to sub-degree, first degree and postgraduate students.
- Neither research nor public service is founded on a one-to-one relationship with the student population. Funds for research and public service should be based directly on agreed programmes of research and type of public services offered, and the estimated cost of these during a given year.

Whilst the above arguments are clearly valid, they do not address the specific gender dimensions of the politics of funding the university system. For example, the continual low-level conflict between government and universities undermines the likelihood of changing
the university system in the direction of gender equity. A transformative agenda such as the struggle for gender justice can only be furthered in a climate of co-operation between government and universities, given the necessity for sharing information and coordinating diverse activities in line with an agenda aimed at promoting gender justice.

Similarly, lowered staff morale reduces the scope for organizing around gender-equity considerations in the university system. Given that gender justice is cast as ‘marginal’ to the mainstream workings of the university system in practice, and even to the praxis of oppositional forces such as the academic staff union (ASUU), the energy and vision required to push through the case for change in this direction are less likely to be forthcoming under the present circumstances.

The inability to plan on a long-term basis has serious implications. Advancing an agenda of gender equity in practice entails a process of prioritizing funding allocations, with gender justice in mind. This needs to be followed by decisions made on the basis of the identified priorities, for which the decision-makers can be held accountable. When unpredictability is structured into the workings of the university system, decision-making is more likely to be shaped by expediency than by principles.

Persistent and serious underfunding has contributed to the development of a problematic ethos amongst university administrations. This is one in which the actual funds available for universities are of apparently greater significance than the question of what the university system is in place to achieve, and how universities, as institutions, should be positioned in order to further the aims articulated in their mission statements. The result is an undue emphasis on the quantitative dimensions of the budget as the principal criteria for decision-making and the effective erasure of more radical possibilities. Prime amongst the latter is the need for programmes based on critical enquiry and a change agenda oriented towards social justice, as is the case in feminist studies. The question of what kind of students, and what kind of society, university funds should be used to advance, tends to get lost in the immediacy and short-term focus of crisis management.

The assumptions and weaknesses inherent in the use of student enrolment as a basic criterion for making recurrent financial allocations have already been referred to. Since female students are in the minority, arguments for research and public service based on a one-to-one relationship with the student population would automatically wipe out the possibility of carrying out research on gendered themes with particular implications for women. Even if research allocations
are not directly based on student populations, the mentality fostered by according importance to numbers *per se* encourages the view that matters directly affecting women are of relatively little significance to the rest of the population. This is in direct contrast to an analysis recognizing that issues affecting minorities, in this case women, also have implications for the majority, despite the difference in substance of those implications. Issues such as sexual harassment and sexual violence are key dimensions affecting the intellectual, social, psychological and emotional climate of universities; their existence has implications for *all* categories of women as well as men in the institution.

**Cost-sharing**

Whilst the actual proportion of national expenditure allocated by the government to education, from which university education is funded, is very low, the costs of financing federal universities are currently borne almost entirely by the federal government. This combination of elements is virtually guaranteed to bring about funding crises. Changing the proportion of national expenditure on education is a political decision that can only come about as a result of concerted pressure and/or a change in administration. In the meantime, a range of stakeholders has sought other more immediate solutions.

At least two methods of what has come to be known as ‘cost-sharing’ have been proposed in debates on university funding. The first is through fund raising by universities themselves, whether through the internal generation of funds or raising funds externally. The second cost-sharing mechanism proposed is the re-introduction of tuition fees for students, an approach that has generated considerable controversy, not least amongst students themselves.

**Generating funds**

At present, most federal universities in Nigeria depend on the central government for over 90 per cent of their funds. The official position is that universities are expected to generate at least 10 per cent of their funding requirements internally (FME, forthcoming). The extent to which universities have actually been successful in doing this varies greatly across institutions.

**Internally generated funds**

The most common sources of internally generated funds in the federal universities include the establishment of commercial enterprises such as transport services; supermarkets, kiosks, canteens;
cottage industries, such as soap making and bakeries; petrol stations and car washes; farm and animal produce. The commercialization of university guesthouses and of patents is also common. Other sources are extra-mural and remedial programmes; non-tuition charges to students; bookshops, binderies, printing presses; consultancy services; commissioned research for industries, governments, NGOs; and model primary and secondary schools (FME, forthcoming).

The increased university engagement in commercial ventures and consultancies rests on a number of key assumptions. The first is that universities have adequate staff of the right calibre and orientation to undertake outside consultancy and commercial activities without impairing their ability to cope with their main responsibilities of teaching and research. It is also assumed that universities have the initial capital outlay required to set up commercial ventures and they can compete successfully with private professional practices and business enterprises (FRN, 1981: 106).

The significant point here is that the goal of revenue generation is being pursued at the expense of the primary goal of universities, which is knowledge-building in the form of teaching and research. In some instances, universities are in considerable danger of having the mission of knowledge-building superseded, both in principle and in practice, by that of revenue generation. A feminist agenda in university education entails questioning the basis for mainstream knowledge-building, its epistemology, content, methodology and the actors involved. When knowledge-building, in itself, is no longer the overall goal of the university system, it becomes very difficult to raise questions about what kind of knowledge-building universities should be engaging in, and how.

With regard to consultancies, here the terms of reference – the questions to be pursued and the modalities – are generally set by the commissioning agency. The role of the academic engaged in the consultancy is to carry out a pre-determined task, usually in the shortest time possible, in which the intellectual input is restricted to that determined by the paying agent. The overall orientation is essentially antagonistic to that required for research, where the emphasis is on critical enquiry and in-depth analysis. Sustained engagement in consultancies doubtless has implications for how the academics involved subsequently carry out their research as well as teaching. The process applies just as much to men as it does to women, but the implications are likely to differ for different academic groups of women and men.

Those working in gender and women’s studies, for example, may experience considerable internal as well as external pressure to engage in consultancies, given the high profile of national machinery
for women in Nigeria (see, for example, Mama, 2000). The emphasis in such consultancies, however, is more likely to be on depoliticized, technicist and instrumentalist versions of Women in Development and Gender and Development than on an understanding of feminist theory and epistemology, or feminist movements and organizing. A radical focus on women and on gender is thus appropriated to serve instrumental ends. The consequences for the university system are complex. At the least, they include an undermining of the value of high quality research and teaching in gender and women’s studies; a subversion of the intellectual autonomy of researchers; and an undue privileging of technicist agendas over those concerned with relations of power.

The need for consultancy is greatest in the professional areas of accountancy, architecture, engineering, geology, medicine, mining, surveying and veterinary science – fields marked by the greatest shortage of experienced staff in universities. These are also areas marked by a paucity of women, as already seen in the evidence from the labour market (see Chapter 5). Whilst few women in these professional areas would be engaging in consultancies, those involved are likely to be already overburdened with teaching and public service, leaving little time for research or leisure. Since the prime aim of consultancy here is to generate income for the university, consultancies in this context are more likely to add to women’s existing burdens without necessarily providing much in the way of monetary reward to the women themselves.

The two spheres of commercial ventures and consultancy services constitute specific examples of the broader problem identified above, which is the shift away from knowledge-building as the primary goal of universities and the danger of this mission becoming displaced by market-led demands. Whether the market demands are for commercial ventures or for consultancy services, the ensuing epistemological and institutional problems remain essentially the same. These are the difficulties of raising questions about what kind of knowledge-building universities should be engaging in and how, and of locating the struggle for gender justice centrally within this context.

Externally generated funds

Whereas the previous section highlighted the activities universities may engage in to generate funds themselves, this section points to the external sources, national or international, from which universities may receive funds. Such sources include special grants provided by the federal government for special projects; grants provided by bilateral and multilateral organizations; loans provided by bilateral and multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank; and external
linkages with corporate bodies that fund courses and training programmes for their human resources development requirements. In addition, universities may receive donations from wealthy individuals and companies, and statutory contributions from industries, such as the 2 per cent education tax and 1 per cent training levy (FME, forthcoming).

Existing power relations in society are critical in shaping the benefits derived from externally generated funds. Hence the generation of such funds is not gender-neutral. Important questions to be raised are ones such as, which categories of women and men benefit from the funds? Who is determining the course of the fund raising? Is it possible to harness the funds to serve larger goals of gender equality and justice? Central to all this is the principle of women’s equal rights to gain access to, and use, the funds generated.

In general, the terms on which external funds are made available to the universities are terms determined by those in control of the funding sources. Few of these sources – the federal government, bilateral or multilateral organizations, or corporate bodies – have distinguished themselves by a commitment to feminism. The requirement by certain funding agencies that gender sensitivity should be a feature of the work that they support is likely to have unanticipated consequences, in the context of a lack of political will to address gender inequity in the university system and generalized resource constraints. The combination of these two dimensions seems to have furthered the opportunistic take-up of gender by some university authorities, particularly when it seems likely that this will attract funds to the institution. The climate of opportunism also seems to have deepened struggles within the universities for access to such funds.

Tuition fees

The second mechanism that has been generally debated with regard to cost-sharing is that of student fees. As far back as 1938, Yaba College introduced full tuition and boarding fees, although only a few Nigerians could afford to pay at the time. The question of tuition fees is hotly contested today, but its historical antecedents are not always recognized. The important point in 1938, as the Longe Report (FRN, 1992: 102) notes, was that, according to the authorities, ‘it was realised that unless the principle of fees was established, it would become increasingly difficult to collect them in future’. Students enrolled at the University College, Ibadan from 1948, and the Nigerian Colleges of Art, Science and Technology at Zaria, Ibadan and Enugu from 1952 were also charged tuition and boarding fees. A large proportion of the students received financial assistance from the universities and various outside agencies.
Clearly the reintroduction of university tuition fees is a politically sensitive matter, since any administration implementing it would be very likely to incur the potential wrath of students and parents alike. Paying tuition fees from the outset is fundamentally different from reintroducing fees after two and a half decades of tuition-free education in federal universities. Whilst past regimes have felt free to tinker with the institutional configuration of the university system to serve their own ends, none has been willing to risk its political existence on restructuring the system in this direction to address the question of funding. The charging of fees to students raises the question of access to university education for those with the intellectual capacity but without the ability to pay. Scholarships provide one way of catering for potential students in this category, but the scholarships would need to be large enough to cover the costs, there would need to be more of them, and they would have to be paid in good time.

With this in mind, what proposals have been put forward, regarding the payment of fees by students? One of the most recent commission reports, the Longe Report (FRN, 1992), recommended the re-introduction and deregulation of fees in order to cover ‘direct teaching costs’ only. These included salaries and allowances of teachers as well as teaching support units, such as libraries, laboratories and workshops. The commission highlighted the point that the fees to be charged should be seen as a partial recovery of costs – not a full recovery. Academic fees, as the commission referred to them, would cover between 20 and 30 per cent of the unit academic cost of educating a student at the university. This unit cost would vary not only from one institution to another but from one faculty to another, type of studentship (undergraduate or postgraduate) and so on.

The Association of African Universities (1977, cited in FME, forthcoming) estimates a minimum average educational cost per student per session of US$1,000.3 In the same document, the NUC estimates personal costs per student for the 30 weeks of an academic session to come to N94,550. The items budgeted for include toiletries (soap, toilet paper, detergent); meals; accommodation; transport; books; clothes; minor medical expenses; and miscellaneous expenses, such as clubs and stationery. Whilst the above list appears to be comprehensive, the budgeted items do not include the costs for menstrual care, such as sanitary goods, which are clearly necessary for female students. Their inclusion in an amount sufficient to cover the period of 30 weeks would increase the costs. It would be reasonable to

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1 US$1.00 = c.N135 at 2004 exchange rates.
assume that all costs would be covered in a modified budget of N100,000.

**Total student costs**

From the above, the average total cost of educating a university student for one academic session is as follows: academic cost N111,000; personal maintenance N100,000; total N211,000. This figure represents an indication of average costs. The variations referred to in the Longe Report – location, discipline, type of student-ship and so on – should still be recognized in the determination of actual costs. It follows, therefore, that only the university itself would be in a position to determine the variable nature of the fees to be charged.

Fees charged within the range of 20–30 per cent of the unit academic costs would amount to between N22,200 and N33,300 per academic session. The costs of personal maintenance would still have to be borne by the student, bringing the total per session to between N122,200 and N133,300. Only families mobilizing additional funds equivalent to roughly N11,000 to N12,000 per month could afford to pay these fees on a regular basis. The scale of mobilization of additional funds that would be necessary is hinted at by the following figures. According to the National Manpower Board (1998: 461), only the following categories of male employees earn over N11,000 a month: corporate managers (N14,280), general managers (N13,934), life science and health professionals (N13,404). For women (p. 462), only one category is listed – corporate managers (N13,725), highlighting the gender disparities within the labour market. Teachers, on the other hand, earned only N4,297 (men) and N4,539 (women), leaving us with a scenario in which those who teach will be unable to afford to send their own children to university in the future. In households headed by a female single parent, very few could afford to send their children to university.

Some students have agreed that some cost-sharing is necessary for effective university education, with the following provisos:

- fees should not be increased astronomically compared with current levels
- fees should not be suddenly introduced and applied to returning students, as has been the case in the past
- fees should be used for the improvement of students’ facilities, welfare facilities and academic activities
- fees should be introduced only after ensuring that there are adequate and functional scholarship schemes, bursaries and loans (FME, forthcoming).
The gender implications of the introduction of student fees are manifested not only at the level of the kinds of families that can afford to send their children to university. Clearly those who are better-off are more able to afford the cost of student fees, with female-headed households being particularly likely to be adversely affected. In addition to this, however, there is the question of whether the introduction of fees will affect the gender balance of the student population.

For those struggling to pay for university education, the magnitude of the fees is likely to influence decisions about whether or not to send daughters, rather than sons, to university. This has been the case lower down the education ladder (for example, Akande, 2001; Okojie et al., 1996), resulting in a pattern of consistently lower female than male enrolment in educational institutions from primary school onwards. When parents are unable to educate all their children due to financial constraints, girls are often kept at home.

Amongst the elite, decisions about whether it is daughters or sons who are sent to Nigerian universities are less likely to be shaped by the level of fees. Delays in the completion of degree courses due to strikes and frequent closures have given rise to a situation where those who can afford to pay for university education are more willing to pay for such education abroad. There are indications that some parents in this category may be more willing to send their sons abroad, preferring to keep their daughters closer to home as a way of countering ‘negative foreign influences’ on their behaviour and values. This is an area that requires further research, pointing to the possible mediation of gender and regional dimensions in intra-class differences in elite parents’ decisions about university education for their sons and daughters.

The Longe Report (FRN, 1992: 149) recommended that ‘any female who has earned a place in a tertiary institution on merit should be offered a scholarship or bursary in special areas, for example, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Technology, Statistics’. If implemented, such a recommendation would no doubt make a difference in terms of redressing the gender imbalances in the take-up of these subjects at university level.

How the economic resources of a nation are used is not determined simply by the nature of the economy, but more fundamentally by who governs the polity. The next section addresses some of the ways in which this fusion of politics and economics – the politics of funding – has repercussions for the kind of university education that is on offer, in other words, its quality.
Quality in the university system

How is quality defined at the systemic level?

I don’t think there is any definition of quality as such. I suppose quality means different things to different people. But I think, looking at it, I’d say that quality should be seen from the point of view of the programmes of the university system, the quality of the staff, the facilities available to the institution and the research and publication output of the institution. So you can’t use one sentence to define quality because very many factors bear a relationship to quality, and if one is lacking in the whole network there may be some erosion in the quality of all. (interview with Professor Adamu Baikie, Consultant to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 19 October 2001)

The first aspect of this conception of quality to highlight is that the different elements referred to above are ones that most people would agree constitute dimensions of ‘quality’. Features such as the programmes of the university system, the quality of staff, the facilities available to institutions and their research and publication output all relate to the conditions facilitating knowledge production and to indicators that knowledge is being produced. As with most discussions of quality, however, gender is absent from the debate.

Yet it is women’s studies and gender studies that have challenged the conceptual framework for the organization of what traditionally counts as knowledge. This challenge arises because of the omissions of such knowledge – the experiences, ideas and activities of more than half of humanity – across disciplines. ‘Malestream’ knowledge not only excludes women but most groups of men, those who are not white, not middle-class and from different ethnicities from the dominant group. In doing this, such knowledge defines all the groups that are excluded as less significant than those included. This is not only untrue but also unacceptable. In Nigeria, the formation of the Network for Women’s Studies in Nigeria (NWSN) in 1996 underscored the wishes of participants to introduce gender concerns in their teaching and research as well as to transcend traditional paradigms, many of which were inappropriate in the Nigerian context (Mama, 1996b).

Pigozzi (2000: 41) makes this point more explicitly in the context of education for girls:

Everybody agrees that quality is important but the experience of and challenge arising from girls’ education is that the very notion of quality must change in some very fundamental ways. A quality education includes learning the basics and learning how to learn in a safe, secure, gender-sensitive, healthy and protective learning environment. (emphasis in the original)

This finding presents considerable challenges to systems in which it is often difficult to offer university education that meets even the
conventional definition, let alone a restructured understanding of quality.

How has the university system treated the notion of quality? It is important to contextualize the discussion of quality by pointing to current mainstream thinking about what matters in terms of the intellectual content of different fields. Any effort to address gendered dimensions of quality, and a reconstruction of quality along feminist lines, has to engage with this content and with the thinking that gives rise to the specified priorities. Hence we begin with the NUC’s (1992) documentation of developments in the major academic subjects taught in Nigerian universities, which outlines their overall aims and objectives. Below are represented the aims and objectives of selected fields, as a way of highlighting the specific connotations of quality within particular intellectual spheres.

Social sciences

i  Develop and improve students’ theoretical understanding of the social system and the social problems at various stages of development and the Nigerian society, in particular.

ii  Develop the student’s critical judgement, his ability to observe, understand, analyse and synthesize data on socio-economic problems using social science methods and techniques to enable him to contribute to national objectives.

iii  Provide an appropriate environment that enables the students to raise their level of creativity and promote the spirit of self-reliance.

iv  Create an atmosphere for desirable behavioural changes that would help students to develop values that are in consonance with national objectives, such values to include hard work, probity, commitment, patriotism and discipline.

v  Produce graduates of the Social Sciences with a diversified but integrated intellectual background that fits into various fields of human endeavour, both in the public and the private sectors of the economy (NUC, 1992: 34).

Arts

i  The development and achievement of students’ awareness of the values, contributions and potentialities of their own social, cultural and spiritual environment.

ii  Equipping students to contribute meaningfully to the attainment of national goals and the satisfaction of national needs.

iii  Instilling in students the spirit of self-reliance, self-pride and self-actualization.

iv  Ensuring that all programmes give expression to national
aspirations in our socio-political developments, the economy, the pluralistic nature of Nigeria and the need to forge a strong and united country (ibid.: 3).

Education

i Training of high-level manpower for formal and non-formal educational programmes at all levels (pre-primary and primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational, etc.) of the education system.

ii Researching into the educational problems in the country and disseminating the findings for use in the country and by humanity in general.

iii Rendering educational services to the Ministries of Education and other educational agencies (ibid.: 44).

Science

i To make students self-reliant in terms of self-employment opportunities after graduation.

ii To adequately prepare students to participate effectively in the industrial development of the nation for self-reliance and self-efficiency.

iii To disseminate, promote and advance the growth of scientific knowledge and to explore the use of this knowledge resources (mineral) [sic], fauna and flora of the country at large for the advantage and advancement of the citizenry (ibid.: 62).

Engineering and technology

i To provide a learning environment that leads to the production of high-calibre manpower in the area of engineering and technology.

ii To carry out relevant research in engineering and technology for the total advancement of our society and to render such other services to the community as may be relevant from time to time.

iii To train engineers capable of meeting the challenges of the sustained technological development of Nigeria.

iv To provide the educational training and skills necessary for understanding, planning, designing, operating and maintaining the various processes and systems involved in modern technology.

v To provide opportunity for personal maturity and intellectual growth, for the attainment of professional competence and for the development of social responsibility.

vi To provide skilled engineering manpower which is regarded as a principal factor for economic development and the prosperity of any nation.
vii To establish universities of technology as a direct response to the needs of Nigeria for skills – innovative and technologically-oriented manpower resources – for the development of the technology base of our economy (ibid.: 148).

The intensely nationalist agenda of university education, linked as it was to state-driven development and funding at the onset of independence, is clear from the above statements. References to ‘contribut[ing] to national objectives’ (Social Sciences); the ‘attain-ment of national goals’ (Arts); and ‘participat[ing] effectively in the industrial development of the nation’ (Science) exemplify the links between the aims of university education and national development, across several fields. This is a throwback to the Second National Development Plan (1970-74), written in the historical period just after the Civil War, from which the aims and objectives of the disciplinary fields are primarily drawn. Constructions of the ‘nation’ in most parts of the world, however, are gendered in such a way that those who exercise agency within the nation and determine its trajectory are elite men. The agency of women, on the other hand, is barely visible except as ‘mothers of the nation’, ‘helpers’ of men and custodians of ‘culture’ (Yuval-Davis, 1997; McClintock, 1993; Enloe, 1990; Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989). Women as intellectual beings are far from the foreground of this scenario.

Returning to the NUC’s specified aims and objectives for academic fields, the aims in all cases combine both disciplinary and general objectives. This is not a problem in itself. In Education, the aims and objectives are derived from the objectives articulated in the National Policy on Education for higher educational institutions in Nigeria. Whilst the content of a national policy on education should be reflected in the aims and objectives of university education in this field, the policy should not determine the aims and objectives. Tying the latter to a single document is likely to result in courses that are unnecessarily time-bound and restrictive intellectually. For all disciplinary fields, the broader questions of who determines ‘national goals’ and the appropriateness of university education being bureaucracy-led are left unaddressed.

More specifically, for each of the above fields, the objectives – concrete statements about what students should be able to do at the end of courses in these fields – are not differentiated from the aims – general statements of what the courses are intended to achieve. Virtually all the items listed above fall into the category of aims, some of which are extraordinarily vague. What, for example, does the second aim listed under Arts – ‘Equipping students to contribute meaningfully towards the attainment of national goals and the
satisfaction of national needs’ – mean? Interestingly, there is nothing under Arts that mentions developing students’ creativity and imagination. For Science, only the last of the three aims – ‘to disseminate, promote and advance the growth of scientific knowledge and to explore the use of this knowledge ... for the advantage and advancement of the citizenry’ – is specific to science education. Even then, it is not stated clearly. For Engineering and Technology, the establishment of universities of technology – the last aim – is no doubt part of the national plans, but is not properly regarded as one of the aims of university courses in this area. We should note that all of the stated aims and objectives are ostensibly gender-neutral, whilst using masculinist language.

In practice, the emphasis on disciplines as the basis for the organization of knowledge institutionalizes the partitioning of such knowledge in ways that work against cross-fertilization and innovation. By contrast, gender and women’s studies have from the outset recognized the value of interdisciplinary approaches to research and teaching (see, for example, Robinson, 1993). In Nigeria, the institutional divisions among disciplines have tended to work against the crossing of theoretical boundaries and the examination of issues from a variety of intellectual standpoints. The latter are features that are increasingly associated with feminist orientations to knowledge production, including science (see Mayberry et al., 2001; Maynard and Purvis, 1996).

In systemic terms, quality is regulated through the NUC’s Approved Minimum Academic Standards, which have been generated on a disciplinary basis. In 1989, Standards were available for the following sets of disciplines: Sciences; Arts; Pharmaceutical Sciences; Dentistry; Veterinary Medicine; Nigerian Languages; Administration, Management and Management Technology; Medicine; Environmental Sciences; Social Sciences; Agriculture; Engineering and Technology. Upholding quality on a disciplinary basis, however, is likely to perpetuate often-archaic partitions among fields of knowledge, and works against the development of innovative work at an interdisciplinary level. Even the 60:40 Science to Arts ratio presumes a clear dividing line between the two. More recently, however, there has been a dissolution of borders. Artists, for example, increasingly use computer technology to develop as well as refine their creative work, while scientists often draw on the reflective and analytical capacities of philosophers, in fields such as genetic engineering, to consider the human implications of ‘scientific’ development.

The Minimum Academic Standards stipulate minimum staff: student ratios, which are difficult to adhere to in the context of the
braindrain and poor conditions of service. The following scathing critique of the NUC’s emphasis on ‘minimum academic standards’ was produced by the Longe Report (FRN, 1992: 63):

All in all, the picture is that there are not enough members of academic staff to run the existing ‘minimum academic standard’ system.

Even if there were, they would still be quantitatively inadequate to run a progressive and flexible academic programme that could propel the nation to greatness. The reason is that the present ratios are based on the NUC’s ‘minimum academic standard’ formula. This formula, when translated into staff needed, produces ‘minimum (sic) academic staff allowable’. No allowance for additional staff is given to any faculty that may wish to do something more than the minimum standard. No flexibility is allowed for faculties that may wish to pioneer new fields through research. This ‘minimum’ idea without flexibility is inimical to development.4

Quality control is supposed to be provided by accreditation exercises carried out by the NUC once every five years. When asked if such exercises worked effectively, the former Executive Secretary of the NUC had this to say:

The accreditation exercise is supposed to be regular, every five years. Unfortunately, because of instability in the system and other factors, it hardly does work that way. The last one, before the last one, was in 1991. We should have had another one in 1996. You know there was a strike, several strikes between ’91 and ’96. We didn’t have one until February 1999 and even that was partly disrupted because two universities were on strike. So we couldn’t get to them until February the following year. The results were compiled around July 2000 and sent to the Minister of Education so that the Minister could forward them as a memo to the Federal Executive Council [FEC] because by law, it has to approve them. You can’t believe that up to now they have not been tabled before the FEC. The Ministers are not interested. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

In concrete terms, quality control is carried out in the following ways:

Basically, they [NUC] assess quality in institutional and capacity terms. They look at basic infrastructure, including facilities that may be necessary, they look at staffing, the distribution of staffing between different categories, the qualification[s] of the staff, their seniority, and out of this, they try to make a general assessment whether that department meets a certain minimum standard, which I think is useful in the sense that they try to determine levels below which departments cannot fall. But since the NUC does not have much of a capacity itself and relies on members of these same universities – basically it takes people from one university to go and assess another. So

4 The ‘minimum academic staff allowable’ above should read ‘maximum academic staff allowable’, since the lack of flexibility referred to is that of not being able to recruit additional staff for innovative or new programmes.
those you are taking from that university – are they much better than the university you are taking them to? That’s the eternal problem. (Interview with Dr Jibrin Ibrahim, Abuja, 12 November 2001)

An additional mechanism for assessing quality at the systemic level is the annual estimate hearing between the universities and the NUC.

[Universities] make returns on their activities, funds generated [and] spent, staffing, everything, student admissions, compliance with the admission requirements. These are like performance indicators, which could be analysed and brought out as a scoresheet for each university in the system, although this is not usually done but the data exists. If you work at NUC, and you sit through just one month of estimates hearing, you get an idea of which universities are managed well and which ones are not. In fact, the Vice-Chancellors are under examination, because sometimes you find how little a Vice-Chancellor knows about what is going on in his own university. He is not in control or he’s not interested … But some are on top of their universities. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

In Chapter 4, several serious criticisms levelled at the NUC were outlined. The excessive control exercised by the NUC over the universities was highlighted. In this regard, a number of key dimensions affecting the quality of teaching may be identified. These include, first, the centralization of curriculum development by the NUC, such that only the NUC (and not individual lecturers) are officially empowered to develop new courses. Secondly, these curricula are intended to operate in a standardized fashion, so that all courses on a given topic across the country are taught in an identical manner. The third point is the compulsory character of the prescribed curricula and course content: lecturers are officially obliged to cover the content of NUC-approved courses as defined by the commission. A key assumption underlying the role of the NUC here is that quality, as it relates to teaching and the development of knowledge, may be prescribed in a rule-bound manner. This is assumed even in the face of Nigeria’s considerable diversity – regional, sub-regional, ethnic, religious – expressed as much within the society as it is within the university system. Yet the different universities across the country are expected to specialize in different spheres of knowledge-building, as opposed to all attempting to replicate the same institutional blueprint. Standardization, however, runs contrary to this principle, manifesting a conceptualization of diversity in terms of weakness as opposed to identifying and building on its strengths.

The overall effect of centralization, standardization and compulsion in curriculum development is to block innovation and stifle creativity. In terms of building knowledge, quality implies being on
the cutting edge of one’s field – a space that defies prescription. Moreover, the need for attention to local contexts, alternative sources of knowledge, and global developments rests on an understanding of quality that is open-ended and profoundly shaped by the possibility of change. This is particularly true of relatively new fields of knowledge, such as gender and women’s studies, that are interdisciplinary and that challenge the terms on which ‘malestream’ knowledge is founded. A conception of quality that can take such fields on board has to transcend the notion of quality as one that requires policing by bureaucracies.

The question of whether quality can be returned to the Nigerian university system is a burning one. Professor Adamu Baikie, a prominent educationist, had this to say:

When we talk about the quality of the past, it didn’t just happen. It was made to happen by … commitment to excellence in academics, the right type of attitude to learning, the facilities for learning, the environment for learning and the seriousness that will go with all these, and then the quality of the input of students from the educational system.…

So quality can be sustained if all these things are in place. (Interview with Professor Adamu Baikie, Zaria, 19 October 2001)

The Longe Report’s (FRN, 1992: 145) recommendations concerning students in higher education remain salient to the question of how to promote quality within the university system. They are reproduced below:

6.41. i. All the various categories of institutions of higher education should undertake a rethink of their programmes to:
   a. inculcate in their students self-actualization, self-reliance, originality and inventiveness;
   b. facilitate social and cultural transformation of the society;
   c. facilitate exploitation and enrichment of indigenous technology;
   d. promote social justice and national integration; and
   e. develop in the students proper attitudes and values which emphasise that:
      • national interests rate higher than personal and group interests;
      • success at all costs through cheating, fraud or other negative behaviour, like membership of secret societies, is not an honourable way of life and cannot breed the public-spirited leadership which the country desires;
      • Nigeria has a value system which can be modernised to evolve new and more relevant paths to national development.

It is clear that a rethink of many university programmes is necessary and that the impetus for the rethink should come from within and beyond the universities, simultaneously addressing multiple facets of the education system. What is less often appreciated is the
need to address gender disparitites and concerns in the restructuring of academic content, in research as well as teaching. The institutional contexts shaping such restructuring have a significant bearing on this process, and it is to this theme that we now turn.
The gendered composition of universities has recently come under scrutiny. This chapter deals with the area that has received the most attention – that of the levels of female student enrolment. The chapter begins by addressing the question of access to university education before moving on to look more closely at student and staff numbers in academia.

Access to university education

As early as 1959, the Ashby Commission raised questions of equity and access to higher education. The commission reported that in 1958 there was an imbalance in educational opportunities between the southern and the northern parts of Nigeria. Only about 9 per cent of children in the then Northern Region were at primary school, and in many districts the percentage was as low as 2 per cent. Out of the roughly 2 million children of secondary school age, only around 4,000 were enrolled in secondary schools. Those northerners who were at university were either at the University of Ibadan or studying engineering at Zaria or attending university abroad. The commission further reported that university enrolment places were inadequate for the country’s workforce needs (Ashby Report, 1960).

The above highlights the commission’s appreciation of the need for an understanding of the specificities of educational development in the different parts of the country. At the same time, the commission emphasized the need for addressing diversity within the regions. Although the discussion referred to a minimum of one university per region – a situation that has long been superseded by the spread of universities nationwide – the terms in which the commission discussed the theme of diversity are still relevant today:

The distances in Nigeria, the variety of peoples that comprise her population, and above all, the need for diversity in higher education, all point to the need for at least one university in each Region. But we go on at once to say that it would be a disaster if each university were to serve only its own Region. That there are strong regional loyalties in Nigeria we fully understand. But the borders between Regions must not become barriers to the migration of brains. Nigeria’s intellectual life and her economy will suffer unless there is free migration of both staff and students from one Region to another. We know we are echoing the convictions of Nigeria’s leaders when we say that one of the purposes of education in this country is to promote cohesion between the Regions. Universities should be a powerful instrument
for this purpose . . . It is not only for reasons of finance, therefore, (though these reasons alone are weighty enough) but for reasons of national unity that we believe that no Region should be self-sufficient in its higher education. There must, of course, be subjects common to all universities; but all universities should, for the sake of the nation as a whole, refrain from aspiring to teach the whole spectrum of knowledge. (Ashby Report, 1960: 25)

Equity and access to university education were, up to this time, conceived of primarily in regional terms. The gendered dimension of access – specifically, the question of women’s access to universities – was not yet on the agenda. It took just over thirty years for this to happen. The Longe Report (1992: 146) began its examination of the issue of women’s access with the following insightful statement:

The problem of access of women to higher education can be examined in different ways. Unequal opportunity at the pre-tertiary level is the most obvious approach but the sequel to this implies disparity within the higher educational system itself and unequal representation in job opportunities in the world of work. It is a vicious cycle of inequities leading to an iniquitous and manifestly unjust system. Any nation committed to the principles of social justice must seek all means at its disposal to break down old prejudices and redress the imbalance.

The report posed two salient questions about access to higher education (ibid.: 151):

• Should all, who are eligible, be admitted into the different forms of higher education?
• Can all who are qualified to be admitted be offered places in our institutions of higher learning?

The answer to the first question was yes, ‘In keeping with the

**Table 17 Enrolment in education by level and sex, 1960–90**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>1,087,147</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>1,829,471</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,295,000</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>2,205,000</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>28.538</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>106,826</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>119,200</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>244,800</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>2,349</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,074</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>12,394</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

concept of a free and egalitarian society with equal opportunities for all’. As for the second question, the answer here was ‘unquestionably no, having regard to the limited available resources. In the circumstances therefore, it stands to reason that competition for places is inevitable and so the real issue is to make this as fair as possible to all and sundry’ (p.151). These two questions highlight the tensions between the ideal – a free and egalitarian society – and the reality of limited resources and the need to choose amongst those considered eligible. What is obscured from the picture here is the nature of the obstacles to access.

The Longe Commission rightly pointed out that gender disparities in student enrolment at the university level could not be treated in isolation, since they reflect imbalances occurring at preceding levels of education. Table 17 shows enrolments in primary, secondary and university institutions in the years 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990. At all levels of education, the enrolment of female students is lower than that of males. There is a clear drop in the absolute numbers of girls moving from primary to secondary school, from which an even smaller proportion go on to university.

In 1990, the proportion of girls attending secondary school was 21.2 per cent of those attending primary school, compared with 2.6 per cent of girls going from primary to secondary school in 1960. The proportion of female students at university was 3.9 per cent of those attending secondary school in 1990, in contrast to the 1960 figure of 0.7 per cent. The rapid expansion in the numbers of students attending university between 1960 and 1990 is evident for males as well as females. Although female students constituted a miniscule proportion of all university students in 1960, between 1960 and 1990 the proportion of women attending university has been steadily increasing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1980</th>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,970,244</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>7,807,729</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>5,877,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>821,784</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>1,523,820</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>1,243,669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17,099</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>60,692</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>48,855</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18 shows the levels of male and female student enrolment for the sessions 1992/93 to 1997/98. Women students comprised around a quarter of the total student body up to the 1995/96 session, after which their proportions began to increase. The absolute number of women students in the 1995/96 session represented a 17.8 per cent increase over the previous session, whilst the respective increases for the 1996/97 and 1997/98 sessions were 21.2 and 14.2 per cent. Whilst women constituted an increasing proportion of the total student population from 1995/96 to 1997/98, the rate of increase began to decline by the last session. By the 1997/98 session, one-third of the overall student population was made up of women. Female enrolment had gone from 7.7 per cent in 1960 to 27 per cent in 1990 and 33.1 per cent in 1998.

The discussion so far highlights the way in which access has generally been conceptualized in terms of student enrolment. In the absence of consistent figures on the retention of female and male students, however, enrolment figures do not tell the whole story about access to university education. This should be borne in mind in examining the sex-disaggregated figures for student enrolment since the 1990s across the federal universities.

Student enrolment since the 1990s

This section analyses student enrolment for selected years from 1992/93 to 2001/2. The overall mean figures for enrolment presented in Table 18 obscure considerable regional disparities, as well as differences within regions, in terms of the absolute numbers of men and women students enrolled at a given university. Table 19 presents student enrolment in federal universities in 1992/93 and 1997/98. In 1992/93, there were five universities with over 35 per cent female enrolment: University of Benin (38.5 per cent), University of Port Harcourt (39.4 per cent), University of Uyo (36.6 per cent), University of Awka (46.3 per cent) and the University of Abuja (43.9 per cent). All except the University of Abuja are in the south of the country. Three universities had below 20 per cent female enrolment:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>57,926</td>
<td>55,212</td>
<td>65,032</td>
<td>78,087</td>
<td>89,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>158,481</td>
<td>174,198</td>
<td>189,429</td>
<td>181,213</td>
<td>181,724</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Federal Universities of Technology in Akure (14.9 per cent) and Makurdi (15.4 per cent) and the University of Sokoto (17.9 per cent).

It is the differences in women’s enrolment from 1992/93 to 1997/98 (and between 1997/98 and 2001/2, as we see later) that hint at complex changes unfolding in different parts of the country. In most of the universities (13 out of 21), women’s enrolment actually increased, although the rates varied in different subregions. There were two universities where the rates of enrolment stayed virtually the same: Obafemi Awolowo University at Ile-Ife and the Federal University of Technology at Makurdi.

In three of the five universities that had over 35 per cent female enrolment in 1992/93, the rates had dropped by 1997/98. These

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**Table 19 Student enrolment in federal universities: 1992/93 and 1997/98**

(figures presented graphically in figures 9 and 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>1992/93 Female</th>
<th>1992/93 Male</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>1997/98 Female</th>
<th>1997/98 Male</th>
<th>% Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>3929</td>
<td>10,021</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>8432</td>
<td>14,076</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>4681</td>
<td>9813</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>7601</td>
<td>10,661</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nsukka</td>
<td>6405</td>
<td>12,792</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>9888</td>
<td>14,490</td>
<td>40.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ile</td>
<td>4798</td>
<td>12,163</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>5875</td>
<td>14,469</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
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<td>38.5</td>
<td>6778</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jos</td>
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<td>28.7</td>
<td>4376</td>
<td>7719</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calabar</td>
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<td>32.1</td>
<td>6348</td>
<td>9089</td>
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<td>Kano</td>
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<td>3603</td>
<td>7914</td>
<td>31.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maiduuguri</td>
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<td>7325</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>3802</td>
<td>10,042</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>1113</td>
<td>5092</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>1463</td>
<td>6149</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilorin</td>
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<td>8650</td>
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<td>4764</td>
<td>9776</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Harcourt</td>
<td>3888</td>
<td>5969</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>6253</td>
<td>8858</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uyo</td>
<td>3290</td>
<td>5708</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>6002</td>
<td>7203</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awka</td>
<td>2367</td>
<td>2745</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>2509</td>
<td>1815</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>1815</td>
<td>2526</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owerri</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>3762</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>4637</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akure</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>2267</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>5466</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauchi</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>2221</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>5064</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yola</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>2697</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>5459</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makurdi</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>1838</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>2392</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abeokuta</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umudike</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4987</td>
<td>13,705</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minna</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>3442</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data generated by the NUC, 2001.
were the universities of Abuja, Benin and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The sharpest drop was at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, in the east, from 46.3 per cent to 39.6 per cent. This seems mainly due to an increase in men’s enrolment (from a total of 2,745 in 1992/93 to 3,819 in 1997/98), since women’s enrolment also increased during this period but at a lower rate. At the Federal University of Technology in Owerri, women’s enrolment dropped from 30.7 per
cent in 1992/93 to 20.7 per cent in 1997/98. The most worrying trends, however, were evident in two northern universities. At Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University in Bauchi, women’s enrolment shrank almost threefold, from 21.7 per cent in 1992/93 to 7.5 per cent in 1997/98, and at Yola’s Federal University of Technology the enrolment rate for women declined to less than half, from 23.3 per cent in 1992/93 to 9.6 per cent in 1997/98.

By the 2001/2 session, four of the five universities in which female enrolment in 1992/93 was over 35 per cent were still more or less in that position – the Universities of Benin (37.8 per cent), Abuja (44 per cent), Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (45.5 per cent) and Uyo (46.2 per cent). Women’s enrolment declined at the University of Port Harcourt (from 39.4 per cent in 1992/93 to 31.9

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### Table 20: Student enrolment in federal universities: 2001/2
(figures presented graphically in Figure 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>% Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>8499</td>
<td>12,594</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>9048</td>
<td>13,780</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsukka</td>
<td>12,420</td>
<td>16,179</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>8682</td>
<td>19,740</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>8661</td>
<td>14,297</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jos</td>
<td>4266</td>
<td>8,315</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calabar</td>
<td>3330</td>
<td>15,747</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>4369</td>
<td>20,878</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiduguri</td>
<td>5637</td>
<td>14,635</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>10,367</td>
<td>12,885</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilorin</td>
<td>6,175</td>
<td>12,313</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Harcourt</td>
<td>8,584</td>
<td>18,348</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uyo</td>
<td>8,618</td>
<td>10,042</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awka</td>
<td>8,175</td>
<td>9,785</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owerri</td>
<td>3,264</td>
<td>10,802</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akure</td>
<td>1,249</td>
<td>6,742</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minna</td>
<td>1,584</td>
<td>6,809</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauchi</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>5,349</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yola</td>
<td>2,383</td>
<td>9,578</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makurdi</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>3,730</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abeokuta</td>
<td>1,320</td>
<td>3,887</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umudike</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>1,336</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

per cent in 2001/2). More men seemed to be enrolling here during this period than women.

Over the decade, the absolute numbers of students enrolling had increased enormously in several universities. In the South East for example, the numbers rose from 2,367 women at Awka in 1992/93 to 8,175 in 2001/2, and 2,745 men to 9,785 over the same period. Elsewhere in the region, however, the dynamics were quite different. The University of Calabar witnessed a major drop in the enrolment rate for women, from 41.1 per cent in 1997/98 to 18.3 per cent in 2001/2. Unlike Nnamdi Azikiwe University, the numbers of women enrolling at Calabar had actually dropped, at the same time as an increasing number of men were beginning to enrol at the university. The South East is the region where men’s enrolment at university level has been recognized for some time as being much lower than that of women. The findings outlined above suggest that, whilst this overall trend may still be the case, there are changes in the underlying dynamics affecting men and women’s university enrolment in this part of the country. Further research would be needed to determine the substance of these changes.

At Bayero University, Kano (BUK), male enrolment increased phenomenally from 7,914 in 1997/98 to 20,878 in 2001/2, leading to a decrease in the female enrolment rate from 31.3 to 17.3 per cent. Women’s enrolment also increased during this period but at a much lower rate than that for men. At Usman dan Fodiyo University...
(UDU), Sokoto, also in the North West, the dynamics of men and women’s enrolment were quite different from those at BUK. Women’s enrolment increased at UDU from 19.2 per cent in 1997/98 to 44.6 per cent in 2001/2. Enormous increases were evident in the absolute numbers of both men and women students enrolled, but here the overall trend resulted in greater enrolment for women. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University in Bauchi, in the North East, also saw a great increase in the absolute numbers of women students enrolled, bringing the female enrolment rate up from 7.5 per cent in 1997/98 to 19.1 per cent in 2001/2.

**Drop-out rates**

To analyse the gender composition of Nigerian universities, student numbers were examined in selected federal universities, namely, the University of Ibadan; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Bayero University, Kano; and the University of Port Harcourt. In addition, three universities where the science: arts ratio is greater than 60:40 are included: the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; the University of Benin; and the University of Maiduguri (Source: NUC, 2000: 50). The disciplines selected include: arts, education, engineering and technology, sciences and social sciences for the academic year 1997/98.

Even in those disciplines stereotyped as 'soft' – the arts and education – there were fewer female students than male. In the arts, there was only one university where women outnumbered men, namely, the University of Benin. At the Universities of Ibadan and

![Graph showing gender composition and drop-out rates in selected disciplines and universities, 1997/98](image)
Port Harcourt, the differentials between men and women arts students were considerably narrower than those at other universities, bringing the numbers at Ibadan and Port Harcourt closer to parity. In education, there were more female than male students at only two universities: Benin and Nigeria, at Nsukka. The numbers of male and female education students were close to parity at the University of Ibadan, as was the case for arts students. As expected, male students outnumbered female students in engineering and technology, as well as science, across all universities. The same was true for the social sciences.

Drop-out rates for women were as much as a third in a number of instances (Ile-Ife, administration – 37.1 per cent; Benin, arts – 30.3 per cent; Jos, law – 36 per cent). More alarming are those cases where female drop-out rates were two-thirds and above, for example arts at Ile-Ife (60 per cent), education at both Ile-Ife (54.6 per cent) and Nsukka (62.5 per cent), and social sciences at Ile-Ife (61.8 per cent). The very high drop-out rates for women in the three above subject areas in arts and humanities at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife (combined with others below and in the sciences) strongly suggest that institutional factors are at play here.

The highest drop-out rate was shockingly high – at 87.2 per cent for women students reading law at OAU. For male students, those reading administration at the same university had the highest drop-out rate at 67 per cent. The lowest drop-out rates in humanities and social sciences for women were in administration, at the University of Port Harcourt, where the rate was 1.2 per cent. For men, the rate was 0.4 per cent, also in administration, at the same university.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Social sciences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Male</td>
<td>Female Male</td>
<td>Female Male</td>
<td>Female Male</td>
<td>Female Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>2.1 33.6</td>
<td>24.5 21.6</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>3.2 16.4</td>
<td>5.8 34.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsukka</td>
<td>11.3 62.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ile-Ife</td>
<td>37.1 67.0</td>
<td>60.0 17.0</td>
<td>54.6 14.6</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>61.8 58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>30.3 47.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jos</td>
<td>36.0 52.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiduguri</td>
<td>1.9 16.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Harcourt</td>
<td>1.2 0.4</td>
<td>1.7 14.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The many gaps in Tables 21 and 22 show how unevenly data on drop-out rates are collected by the NUC.
As shown in Table 22, the highest drop-out rates were also phenomenally high in the sciences, at 88.5 per cent for women reading medicine at the University of Calabar and 75.9 per cent for men reading medicine at the University of Sokoto. In several instances, there were drop-out rates for women students at around half or more of the numbers enrolled. This was the case for women students reading agricultural science at the Universities of Benin (67.9 per cent), Bauchi (85.7 per cent) and Abeokuta (57.1 per cent); engineering/technology at OAU, Ile-Ife (60.5 per cent); science at Lagos (61.7 per cent) and Umudike (57.1 per cent); and veterinary medicine at Sokoto (66.7 per cent). Subject areas with the most universities in which women’s drop-out rates were 50 per cent or more, were medicine at OAU (65.5 per cent), Sokoto (81.3 per cent), Ilorin (51.3 per cent) and Port Harcourt (78 per cent); and environmental science at the universities of Lagos (63.9 per cent), OAU at Ile-Ife (71.1 per cent), Uyo (75 per cent) and Yola (50 per cent). The lowest overall drop-out rates were those for women
studying engineering/technology, at the University of Ibadan (3.0 per cent), and for men studying agriculture, at the University of Calabar (2.6 per cent).

As is clear from the above, drop-out rates are high in certain areas of the arts and humanities as well as the sciences. Overall, the extent of these drop-out rates portrays graphically how misleading it can be to rely on student enrolment rates alone, for an indication of the actual student numbers retained across subject areas.

Academic staff & gender

The academic staff strength at 23 Nigerian universities for the years 1992/93 and 1997/98 is shown in Table 23. A smaller proportion of academic staff is female, as compared with students. In 1992/93, the following universities had fewer than 10 per cent female staff: the Federal Universities of Technology at Akure (9.1 per cent), Minna (9.6 per cent) and Yola (6.7 per cent); the Universities of Maiduguri (8.8 per cent), Ilorin (7.3 per cent) and Port Harcourt (6.3 per cent); Usman dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto (4.8 per cent) and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi (10 per cent). Only two of these universities are in the south – the Federal University of Technology at Akure and the University of Port Harcourt.

In the same session, those universities with more than 15 per cent female staff were: the Universities of Ibadan (18.2 per cent), Lagos (21.3 per cent), Nigeria, at Nsukka (18.1 per cent), Benin (15.6 per cent), Uyo (15.8 per cent), Abuja (15.9 per cent); Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (24.1 per cent); and the Federal University of Agriculture at Abeokuta (27.8 per cent). Of these, all except the University of Abuja are in the south of the country. The university with the highest proportion of female staff was Abeokuta (South West), whilst the site with the fewest was Bauchi (North East). Regional disparities, therefore, are also evident in the presence of female staff in universities.

Between 1992/93 and 1997/98, a dramatic decline in the proportion of female staff (see Table 23) could be seen at the Federal University of Agriculture at Abeokuta (from 27.8 to 9.8 per cent) and at Bayero University, Kano (from 12.2 to 7.7 per cent). At Abeokuta, the actual number of female staff decreased whilst the number of male staff had more than doubled. Interestingly enough, in Kano the absolute numbers of male as well as female staff decreased but at a level that was greater for women than for men. More alarming was the situation at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, where the proportion of female staff dropped fourfold – from 10 to 2.5 per cent. Whilst the absolute number of
The Gendered Composition of Federal Universities

women decreased considerably at the university, the number of men recruited increased markedly.

The overall trend was for more women to be recruited into university education. In 11 out of 21 universities, the proportion of female academic staff rose from 1992/93 to 1997/98. The greatest increases were at the Universities of Jos (from 12.6 to 21.3 per cent), Maiduguri (8.8 to 15.4 per cent) and Port Harcourt (6.3 to 12.1 per cent). In 1997/98, academic female staff strength reached a maximum of 21.5 per cent in Awka (South East) and a minimum of 2.5 per cent in Bauchi (North East).

Table 24 shows the staff profile by professors and other academic staff, for the 2001/2 session. The university with the highest proportion of female professors is the University of Agriculture at Umudike (16.7 per cent). Following this are two first-generation universities,
Gender in the Making of the Nigerian Universities

the Universities of Ibadan (13.1 per cent) and Lagos (12 per cent). All first-generation universities – the Universities of Ibadan, Lagos, Nigeria, at Nsukka, Benin, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) and Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) – have female professors. Of these, OAU had the lowest proportion of female professors. It is possible that, as the first set of universities to be established in
Nigeria, the first-generation universities attract some of the most competent and qualified staff in their fields, including female professors.

Amongst the second-generation universities – the Universities of Calabar, Maiduguri, Ilorin, Port Harcourt, BUK and UDU – two universities had no female professors at all. These were BUK and UDU, both northern universities. None of the second-generation universities had more than 5 per cent female professors.

There were far more universities with no female professors at all among the third-generation universities, the most recently established set of universities. These comprise the following: the Universities of Uyo; Abuja; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; the Federal Universities of Technology, at Owerri, Akure, Minna and Yola; and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi. Five of the eight universities had no female professors. Of the five, only one (Uyo) is not in the north.

Table 24 Staff profile: professors and other academic staff, 2001/2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Professors</th>
<th>Other academic staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsukka</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ile</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calabar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiduguri</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilorin</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Harcourt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uyo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minna</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauchi</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yola</td>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makurdi</td>
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<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abeokuta</td>
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<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umudike</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Universities with more than 20 per cent non-professorial female academics were spread across three first-generation universities (at Ibadan, Lagos and Nsukka), one second-generation university (Calabar) and two third-generation universities (at Awka and Abuja). From Table 24, the presence of female professors at a university does not suggest any predictable relationship with the presence of non-professorial female academics at the same university.

The figures available are not disaggregated by sex. It is clear that most universities are experiencing a huge shortfall of staff. On the question of whether there was a gendered pattern in staff undertaking the core functions of teaching, research and community service, Professor Baikie had this to say:

Even if there is any evidence of that, I don’t think it is deliberate. If you don’t have women coming forward to be recognized as equals and be offered

### Table 25 Academic staffing and shortfall in federal universities, 1998–99

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Actual no. of staff</th>
<th>Required no. of staff</th>
<th>Shortfall</th>
<th>% additional staff required</th>
</tr>
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appointment as equals, there is just nothing you can do about it. And I don’t think any university administration will deliberately go all out to make sure that women are not embraced in the process. But inevitably, you find that in many cases, it is when you have a lady, a woman who is qualified and is taken that the problem of gender bias comes in. In other words, the opportunity for men and women, in terms of academic opportunity, is equal.

(Interview with Prof. Adamu Baikie, Zaria, 19 October 2001)

This view is widespread and generally thought of as ‘common sense’. There are three main elements to the argument:

- academic opportunities are equal
- it is up to women to put themselves forward
- discrimination does not occur without intention.

The following chapter shows how academic opportunities cannot be constructed as equal, given the constraints on women’s autonomy that men do not experience. Secondly, there may be obstacles to women putting themselves forward that are not immediately obvious, a point that is closely related to the first one. Finally, it is quite possible, if not likely, that gender disparities occur without anyone specifically willing them to do so. Features such as routines, accepted practices, gendered processes and structures all combine to give rise to disparities between women and men. Intention is not necessary to bring the disparities about, although it may be present. Intention is, however, necessary to dismantle gender disparities.
Institutions create shadowed places in which nothing can be seen and no questions asked. They make other areas show finely discriminated detail, which is closely scrutinized and ordered. History emerges in an unintended shape as a result of practices directed to immediate, practical ends (Douglas, 1987: 69-70).

Institutional culture

‘Institutional culture’ refers to the characteristic ways of being and of doing things that are accepted in particular institutions as ‘the way things are’. There is no single culture in a given institution, any more than there is in the wider society. The concern here is with the dominant culture that prevails over other, subordinated cultures. Many aspects of institutional cultures are not easily open to scrutiny, either because they are hidden or because they are so ephemeral that it is hard to name them. Other aspects of how institutions operate, usually the more formal pronouncements, are much clearer to perceive, as Mary Douglas observes above.

The underlying inequality of women and men in male-dominated societies is a defining feature of the dominant institutional culture. From accumulated experiences rooted in biographical as well as social histories of unequal gender relations, many men expect respect, deference and service from women. This is rarely qualified by any aptitude (or lack of it) inherent in the man. In Nigeria, it appears that it is not men’s claims to superior rationality that justify their sense of entitlement to deference from women. Rather, it is simply the authority that is associated with being a man. If women do not respond in the ‘appropriate’ way, they are subject to sanctions ranging from being labelled deviant to violence.

Gender differentiation and discrimination are entrenched in universities, as in other institutions. Much of this is embedded in informal as well as formal routines and practices that the majority of people take for granted and think of as ‘normal’. They include, for example:

- the assumption that women are married, unless they are too young or known not to be married
- the reference to women by their husband’s name
- the use of masculinist language – ‘he’, ‘him’, etc. are assumed to be generic
• the absence of women in formal decision-making offices
• the assumption that it is acceptable for male lecturers to have female students as 'girlfriends'
• the prevalence of sexual harassment.

Two of these features seem to be particularly salient in shaping the ethos of the dominant institutional culture in universities: the absence of women in certain offices, particularly those at the top of the academic hierarchy, and the prevalence of sexual harassment. Women's strategic absence in certain places could be interpreted to mean that they have not been involved in decision-making in academia. To what extent is this true? The rest of this section examines these two themes: women's contribution to policy issues and sexual harassment.

Women at policy level

Women's representation in higher education management, an arena where authority to formulate policy issues is located, is abysmal (Odejide, 2001):
• There have only ever been three female Vice-Chancellors of universities since the first Nigerian university was set up in 1962.
• Recently, there has been only one female university Vice-Chancellor.5
• The most visible gains have been in administration: 7 registrars; 4 bursars; 4 librarians; and 3 directors of administration.

When (male) university authorities are asked about women's involvement in decision-making and policy issues, there is often a tendency to discuss the matter as if opportunities were the same for women as they are for men.

Women are involved to the extent that they are working through the prescribed system of the university. The university has a system, the system is [a] committee [system] and any woman who gets into the committee system has the franchise or the right to make contributions as will be required by the system. You don't go out to create a particular avenue especially because of women. If the women stand for election, [and] they win, they will be allowed to play their role in the usual way. If the women are assertive enough to make sure that their worth is known in the general university community, nobody will deprive them of being involved. To that extent, I'll say yes, those women who are found capable of participating, just as anybody else, are not debarred from participation. (Interview with Prof. Adamu Baikie, Zaria, 19 October 2001)

5 At the University of Abuja, until the end of June 2004.
In addition to poor representation in higher education management, the representation of women in staff and student unions is also poor. The National President of ASUU had this to say about women's involvement in the union:

We have women in leadership positions in various campuses. However, not anything near enough, and because of obvious disadvantages of the kind of union ASUU is, women have not really been encouraged or they have not really found themselves in a position to be in large numbers as officials of the union. This is something that I think we have to tackle, although some of the most committed people in ASUU have been women. We have people like Bene Madunagu who had been a very committed Branch Chairperson of the Union. We have Folapo Ajayi, who is now in America, and there are many women today who are ASUU officials, but I think that not near enough women are participating at the level of decision-making. But as members of the Union, we have no problem. The problem we have is that at the level of leadership, women are not sufficiently represented. (Interview with Dr. Oladipo Fashina, 17 July 2001, Zaria)

It is not clear here why the 'obvious disadvantages' referred to above are not tackled.

In the student union, women's involvement is discussed in the following terms:

Women play [a] crucial role in the functioning of the students' union. In specific terms, in the case of the University of Abuja, it is very clear that if a head count is to be taken, at least 60 per cent of our students are women; there are so many departments including my own (Political Science) where about 80 per cent of the student population are women. Therefore you cannot neglect their importance and their role. In our student union government, one third of our elected officials are women. So, actually some women participate very well in the activities of the student union, either as electorate or even as officials. (Interview with Umar Kari, Abuja, 14 August 2001)

The proportion of women in the student government is considerably lower than the quoted proportion of women in the student population. What is not addressed here is why this is not perceived as a problem, rather than an indication that 'some women participate very well in the activities of the student union'.

Women's involvement in SSANU has been described as follows:

As long as they are bona fide members of staff of the university and they are women, they are deeply involved. There is no discrimination whatsoever. They are free, of course, to be members; they are free to leave. As members they are also free to contest any position they like. (Interview with Olatunji Olaniyan, Jos, 20 September 2001)

When asked if there were any female members at present in the
executive committee, the National Deputy President of SSANU responded:

At the moment, there is none. But we used to have them in the past. When I was the Chairman of the branch (Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife), there was a woman in my executive holding the position of financial secretary. (ibid.)

It should be noted, as mentioned earlier, that the position of financial secretary is gender stereotyped as ‘acceptable’ for women. This is partly because women are thought to be more financially ‘trustworthy’ than men and partly because allowing women to occupy this position seems not to involve too much of a surrender of power.

Elsewhere in academia, women have organized autonomously, sometimes with men, on a range of policy issues. The Nigerian Association of University Women (NAUW) has focused on the education of girls and women and the provision of day-care centres in universities. Women In Nigeria (WIN) has drawn attention to the need for research on women’s lives, recognizing gender and class as key dimensions of social division. The Nigerian Association of Women Academics (NAWACS) has highlighted self-improvement for female academics and the need to raise awareness of conditions affecting women. All the above are national bodies.

Women’s capacity to raise policy issues, as discussed earlier, is shaped by several factors, including micro-level dynamics (see Chapter 5). Working at the departmental level is one that is accessible to most categories of academic staff. A female lecturer describes her attempts to engender academic work:

Even in my department, by then of course, it was known that everything I did, I did from a gender perspective, because I had now carried my crusade, as it were, to the meetings. And that is maybe the most strategic way to do these things sometimes, informally. And within your own assigned space, it’s possible to effect change. If you talk to colleagues, you involve them, share materials, because basically, they will say, ‘Where is the literature?’ By this time also, I had grown a bit more within the ABU Gender and Women’s Studies Group, I had a role to play in the Network for Women’s Studies in Nigeria, so I was much more aware of where to get literature. (Interview with Amina Salihu, Programme Officer (Training), Centre for Democracy and Development, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

The increased visibility of women who are active in raising issues of gender equality is manifested in a number of ways, some more benevolent than others:

People now begin to give you names and all that. They [the male students] call you ‘Gender’, for instance. My male colleagues were a little bit more,
would I say, refined. ... If anybody's going to say something sexist, they'll say, 'Well, Amina is nearby . . . ' (ibid.)

Certain masculinist assumptions undermine women's capacity to engage in decision-making within the institution. One of the most fundamental is that men's autonomy is taken for granted, whilst women have to struggle for theirs. It is viewed as 'normal' that men should take account of their own interests, first and foremost, without necessarily having to determine these in relation to anyone else. It is masculinist interests such as these that define the terrain on which women have to carve out the restricted spaces in which they can exercise some degree of autonomy.

Then my husband had difficult times at Ibadan, there was a lot of politics in their Department. He decided he wanted to go to Lagos, so he got a job in Lagos; they gave him a Chair there and all that. . . . And I was in a quandary [about] what to do, whether I should go to Lagos or not. You know, it was a good opportunity to stay in Ibadan . . . there were a lot of vacancies, and I think people were being promoted. The opportunities were greater. I had difficulty deciding so I spoke to one or two colleagues whom I respected. One of them, whom I respected very much, he is a man, he said, 'Look, I can't advise you. If you want a career, you can stay here but if you care for your family, you go to Lagos, but it's your decision.' And [he] left me standing there like that, you know [laughs]. So in the end I said, 'Well I have three boys and I think they need their father as much as their mother.' so I decided and I went to Lagos. (Interview with Prof. Bolanle Awe, Abuja, 29 October 2001)

It is worth pointing out that it is virtually unheard of for male academics in Nigeria to have to juggle family and career, much less concede career to family.

Masculinist assumptions are also evident in apparently more banal routines, such as the choice of times for meetings. It is through banal routines, however, that spaces are constructed for groups and/or individuals to influence events through the decisions made at such fora.

You know, if you have [for example] union meetings at times when, according to the prevailing gender division of labour, women are getting their kids home from school, or making sure they eat their supper, or supervising their homework, or whatever it is, then obviously, you're going to have far fewer women at the meeting. You can't do that and then also complain that women are less interested in union issues. (Interview with Dr Ayesha Imam, Lagos, 19 October 2001)

Even the freedom to leave the university is not the same for women as it is for men. Reflecting on the gender pattern of the brain drain, the National Deputy President of SSANU had this to say:
You see, women that leave the university normally leave with their husbands, in most cases. Very rarely do you see them leaving on their own. But the thing affects men more than women because the freedom to leave the system, because of the family ties in Nigeria, because of the marriage institution in Nigeria, the tendency to leave is not there for the women. That is not to say that women are not affected by the brain drain. (Interview with Olatunji Olaniyan, Jos, 20 September 2001)

Whilst the above excerpt shows an awareness of gender disparity in freedoms and the effects of having and not having them, it is easy to conclude from this that there is something about women themselves, something 'natural', that makes them less likely to leave the university. We need to get away from essentializing 'explanations' such as those located in 'nature' towards ones that address the structural aspects of the situation. It is important to problematize the gendered divisions of labour arising from the marriage institution. After all, men are also part of the marriage institution. But it is women who are constructed as having the responsibility for doing the work that holds it together. The argument is not so much that women should be free to be part of the brain drain. It is rather that the capacity to make decisions about university education rests on the capacity to exercise personal autonomy. Both of these form an integral part of intellectual freedom, which, in differing ways, women are very often not free to exercise.

**Sexual harassment**

The flipside of women’s poor visibility at the top appears to be its subterranean complement, sexual harassment. Women’s awareness of the need to highlight those areas where it is clear that women are not visible – such as decision-making positions – seems to be relatively high. Women tend to be more reluctant to address those areas where women’s submergence is necessarily blurred, such as sexual harassment. Paradoxically, talking about subterranean activities such as sexual harassment renders women more visible in male-dominated, often hostile environments. This is threatening for women as well as men, in different ways. Some men react very negatively, if not with violence, when they feel threatened. Where sexual harassment is discussed, it concerns male academics harassing female students. There is virtually no discussion of the sexual harassment of female academic or non-academic staff.

Sexual harassment was noted in official documents as far back as 1981, in the report of the Cookey Commission:

The Commission is particularly concerned over allegations of female students failing their examinations for reasons other than scholastic, and feels that
some machinery for redressing such victims and punishing the offending teachers must be involved. Punishments meted out should be widely publicized in order not only to act as a deterrent but also to assure the general public that the university system is sensitive to public apprehensions (Cookey Report, 1981: 11)

Since that time, however, there has been little in the way of official action to back up the concern expressed above.

WIN was one of the first women-centred national organizations to take up the issue of sexual harassment in universities. The incident that sparked it in the early 1980s is described below.

A young woman whose younger sister had gotten pregnant with a young man from Suleiman Hall was unhappy with the way he was treating her younger sister and had gone over to the Hall to see him. They got into an argument, and then many of the other male students in the Hall started attacking her, pulled her clothes off, thrust fingers at her, including thrusting a piece of wood up her vagina. She was quite traumatized but also physically injured by this and completely humiliated – in the middle of a crowd of boys with her clothes torn off. So this gave rise to a huge feeling of protest and insecurity among the girls of Amina Hall.

So we [WIN] started holding meetings in Amina [Hall], therefore closed to males, where girls started getting up and talking about their experiences of sexual attacks, including sexual harassment by lecturers. ... they also complained about male students loitering and harassing them on the way to and from classes and [being] unable to read at night, unless they went in groups ... They also talked a lot and far more, in fact, about harassment from lecturers.

And so WIN was going to write a report and promised to keep everybody’s names confidential and so on. In the event, very few people were willing – you know, it was the first time that this had ever been tried, or promised, or talked about publicly. Girls were crying when they were talking about their experiences, and lots and lots of people were saying, ‘It wasn’t me, it was my cousin but this is what happened,’ and you know, forgetting and saying ‘I’ at some point in the discourse.

So in the end, the report actually never came to much. We had quite a lot of scattered notes, but what was quite noticeable was the male lecturers who stopped talking to Hauwa and me in the staff club. And the only thing that we could think of was that they were really, really afraid that somebody was reporting them. It was really dramatic, and it just gave us an indication of how widespread the problem was and the level of fear that women students had about whether or not anything was going to happen, or whether they were going to then be further victimized by the publicity as well as anything that might be done in retaliation. (Interview with Dr Ayesha Imam, Abuja, 19 October 2001)

This extract graphically depicts the complexities of addressing sexual harassment. The difficulties of naming the abuse, the extent of trauma associated with it and the tremendous fear of retaliation...
are some of the obstacles to female students’ reporting of sexual harassment. In the absence of reports, however, it is difficult for the university authorities to take action against the perpetrator(s). All this is located in a social context where women who have been the target of abuse may be subsequently vilified for attempting to seek redress. Yet this only serves to emphasize the serious need to prevent such abuse from occurring, however difficult this may be.

In the first national survey of the prevalence of violence against women in Nigeria (Effah-Chukwuma and Osarenren, 2001), Project Alert, the women’s rights organization, examined the extent of violence against young women in universities and polytechnics. The federal universities involved were the Universities of Ibadan, Lagos, Calabar, Nigeria, Port Harcourt, Benin, and Jos; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kano and Bayero Universities and the University of Agriculture at Abeokuta. Abia State University was also involved, as were the Federal Polytechnic, Yola, and Calabar and Kaduna Polytechnics. Questionnaires were administered to an average of 15 students in each institution, ranging from first-year undergraduates to postgraduate levels.

A third (33.4 per cent) of the respondents admitted that male lecturers, heads of departments and deans made ‘love advances’ to them; 28.9 per cent stated that these men got angry when they were rejected by the women (Effah-Chukwuma and Osarenren, 2001: 42). The difficulties in finding appropriate terminology to describe experiences of sexual harassment is evident in the use of the phrase ‘love advances’ to refer to (what appear to be) sexual advances. A number of women (14.4 per cent) were failed in courses following their rejection of such advances. A substantial proportion of the respondents (45 per cent) alleged that they knew of cases of rape over the past year in their institutions. Moreover, 44.5 per cent of the respondents said that female students were ‘forced into having sexual relationship [sic] with cult members particularly after [the latter] threaten[ed] to hurt the female students’ (ibid.: 42).

In 1989, the then Federal Minister of Education circulated to all Vice-Chancellors a document prepared by the National Council of Education on the theme of sexual harassment in educational institutions in Nigeria. The circular advised universities to set up standing committees on sexual harassment and, in further communications, the Federal Ministry of Education defined the composition of such committees. Whilst it has not been possible in this study to determine the extent to which such directives have

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6 Communication from Dr Sani Ibrahim, Chairperson of ad hoc committee on sexual harassment, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
been followed up and their effectiveness, this would be worth uncovering in future research.

The question of transparency and accountability within the system is generally thought of as applicable primarily to financial corruption. When asked whether transparency and accountability apply to sexual harassment, the former Executive Secretary of the NUC responded as follows:

Yes, I think transparency and accountability would cover sexual harassment. As you know, it’s a tricky issue. It’s underreported for obvious reasons. Some of the victims don’t like to report, and then it’s difficult to prove. Because for you to be able to prove [it], you have to go in with a concealed tape recorder or something like that because it is usually something that happens between two people, a lecturer in his office with a female student, and she is vulnerable. Maybe because she is going to fail a course or because she deserves to fail or because the lecturer fancies her and she wouldn’t cooperate. So it is very difficult to prove.

But to the credit of the universities, I think wherever the female students have had the courage to report and are adequately equipped to gather evidence, I think actions have been taken. Even though I would say again, the actions do not go far enough because they simply say to the lecturer, ‘Well, come, look. Just give us your letter of resignation’ or just move and just get a letter of warning or something like that. But the full force of the law should have been applied, which is to put him through the Disciplinary Committee, dismiss him for serious misconduct and then hand him over to the police. But this is hardly ever done because, you see, the system is still male-dominated and gender insensitive. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

Whilst sexual harassment has been officially recognized for some time, widespread sexual corruption in academia has not often been formally discussed or exposed. The phrase sexual corruption is used here to refer to what appears to have become a widespread, virtually institutionalized acceptance of asking for and receiving sexual favours in exchange for a reward of some kind, which is often illegal or dishonest. Within academia, it often occurs in the context of male lecturer-female student relationships and refers to the use of sex in exchange for academic gain, such as improving examination marks or getting a better course grade. In the case of sexual corruption involving students and lecturers, the student generally wants something from the lecturer that she feels unable to get through regular means. Unlike sexual harassment, sexual corruption involves consent on the part of both parties. This, however, makes it neither acceptable nor professional behaviour on the part of male lecturers. Both sexual harassment and sexual corruption are difficult to unearth.

Once the theme of sexual harassment is brought up in discussion with male academic staff, the latter often point to the existence of
sexual corruption. The terms of the discussion are relatively restricted and notably selective. Typically, the following points tend to be made: female students harass male lecturers; female students dress too provocatively; female students should know better. The points that tend not to be raised or acknowledged are that sexual harassment involves coercion and cannot be condoned, and that there is a difference between coercive sexualized relationships and those that are based on consent. In other words, the existence of widespread sexual corruption is not synonymous with sexual harassment. This does not, however, render sexual corruption any more acceptable than sexual harassment, even if there is consent on the part of the female student. This is because a lecturer is in a position of institutional power vis-à-vis a student and that power is reinforced when the lecturer is male. Conversely, the subordination of the student is reinforced when she is female.

The point that lecturers, and adults in general, are expected to be responsible for their actions appears to get lost somewhere in the generalized corruption of the university system. The specificities of sexual corruption and sexual harassment are grounded in the reality that male promiscuity is condoned in the society, for married and unmarried men alike, whereas female chastity is upheld as the ideal for women. Female students respond, for different reasons, to the environment of male promiscuity in which they find themselves. In times of economic hardship, sex has become common currency for students and lecturers alike. Clearly, sexual corruption also has implications for transparency and accountability. These need to be raised and discussed, instead of sexual corruption being assumed to be just ‘one of the perks’ of the job.

The equality agenda

Where equity is addressed in the literature, it tends to be subsumed under discussions of access. Access clearly constitutes one component of equity. However, equity is a much broader concept than access. There is also the question of the relationship between equity and equality. Is equality in the institutional arena to be conceptualized in terms of formal equality (equity) or substantive equality (equality of outcome)? What are the implications for recruitment, promotion and performance? What does gender equality entail in terms of academic practice? What are the implications for teaching, research and community service? What policies are required to promote the prevailing understandings of equality? If affirmative action is supported, what form will it take in practice? What are the budget requirements for bringing about gender equality in the
diverse facets of the university system? A holistic understanding of equality would need to address the varied ways in which these aspects of gender equity and equality are articulated or disarticulated, as the case may be, and the implications for strategic action in the direction of greater gender justice. The present study raises these questions, though it is clearly beyond its scope to hope to address all of them. More research is definitely needed in this area.

Women-centred organizing

What would it take for universities to move away from the function of producing ‘high-level manpower for the nation’ and serve instead the alternative purpose of deconstructing contradictions in society, such as gender and class inequalities? The engagement of academics in feminist politics and processes of democratization seems to be critical here.

... one of the comments that is very often made about any form of activism is that it’s detrimental to university functions, particularly in research, because it’s ‘less objective’. My personal view is that, first of all, the whole concept of completely objective research is a fallacy – there’s no such thing – but secondly, that the extent to which one wants one’s research to be valid, for me, is heightened by my position as an activist because if I want to change the world, I have first to know what are the appropriate points at which applying pressure or a particular strategy will make a change. And so if I don’t do the research and make it as empirically based, valid, as reliable as possible, then it puts in question my activism itself. So to me, in fact, activism makes you want to make your research more effective ... within the terms of the framework that you’re using. I would think that, in fact, activism first of all aids research. I think it also aids teaching, in the sense of two things, both transmission of given bodies of knowledge but more importantly, the facilitation in one’s students of an ability to critique, meaning to analyse and evaluate both good and bad points, as opposed to only [engaging in] criticism. (Interview with Dr Ayesha Imam, Lagos, 19 October 2001)

The first major grouping of women to be formed in academia was the Nigerian Association of University Women (NAUW), which was founded in Ibadan in 1959. Professor Bolanle Awe recalls those early days:

It was really the things outside the campus that also excited one, like starting the Association of University Women, NAUW. That was quite an experience for me too. The initiative I think came from Lady Ademola, who was the provost on the campus. She’s the first Nigerian woman to have the post. She went to Oxford, actually. Then a number of other more senior women like Lady Jibowu, the first woman scientist, she got her Ph.D. in science, Mrs Ighodalu who’s the old senior permanent secretary in the Western Region, then Mrs Flora Azikiwe, who also already had a degree from some American
university, Dr Irene Ighodaro, who is a medical doctor – she actually became the first President. ... I remember Miss Judith Attah was also there. They came to Ibadan to start this, we had the first conference ... It was the concourse, this assembly of all these distinguished women, saying that they wanted to start this Association of University Women to encourage women’s education, give scholarships for girls ... make a study of the situation of women, as regards their education. ... we had a pre-primary education programme in the West, and the Ibadan Branch had a project to look into the situation of primary education and why the drop-out rate was higher for girls than boys. (Interview with Prof. Bolanle Awe, Abuja, 29 October 2001)

The historical reality of regionally differentiated access to education, and within that, of gender-differentiated access for girls and women, was a key dimension of the conditions shaping opportunities for education. NAUW’s focus, as the above quotation makes clear, was on education for girls and women. Coupled with the fact that the first Nigerian university to be established was at Ibadan, it is not surprising that NAUW was born there.

A younger, more radical grouping called Women in Nigeria was formed in Zaria in 1982.

In the early years, research was absolutely one of the four objectives that WIN had, but not so much in terms of research for itself or talking about the objectivity of research. [It was] more in terms of ‘There is so much mythology and ignorance about what women’s situations are, what women’s conditions are, what women’s rights might be that you need to do the research and find out what’s happening first, precisely before we can work on how we might attempt to deal with problems and structural situations therein.’ I think the other thing there too, which was tied to a certain idea about practice in WIN at that time, was that we needed to start from where people were as opposed to our ideas of where people should be, and so again, we needed to do research, to find out where people were, both in terms of their ‘objective, structural conditions’ but also in terms of how they think, thought and constructed to themselves, [different] situations. (Interview with Dr Ayesha Imam, Lagos, 19 October 2001)

WIN’s focus was on women in the totalities of their lives, rather than the narrower focus of NAUW, on girls’ and women’s education. The significance of research and the relationship of research to activism are highlighted above. WIN’s orientation was people-centred, starting from ‘where people were’, rather than where WIN thought they should be. As the first federal university established in the North, it is not surprising that WIN should have begun its existence at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Among students, it was the marginalization of women in NANS’ politics that led to the formation of the National Association of Nigerian Female Students (NANFS). The National Co-ordinator of
NANFS, Yemisi Ilesanmi, described her experience of elections at the Bauchi NANS Unity Convention (Aluta Woman, n.d.: 8-9) in this way:

Well, for one thing, the atmosphere was oppressive, the election itself fraudulent and manipulated, the atmosphere was not conducive for female students to come out and vie honourably for positions in the NANS body. Out of about 15 positions only one female candidate contested and that was my humble self. I contested for the position of Vice-President (National Affairs), I was threatened, my security was at stake. On [sic] the long run, I had to dissociate myself from the election. At last we emerged with a NANS body that is male-dominated, with no single female in the body, as it has been for some years now, and as it will continue to be if we don’t force a change. That change can only come through a conscious layer of the female students. One person cannot do it alone; we have to come together, let our common experiences bind us together, push us forward. Because after all almost the whole delegates [sic] that are voters in NANS elections i.e. the President, Secretary General of Unions, are men. How do we achieve equal participation in NANS? I felt we needed an umbrella body. I spoke with other ladies present there and together we declared NANFS.

The oppressiveness of NANS in terms of its electoral machinations and gender politics, as highlighted above, portrays the extent to which ‘civil’ society is embedded in highly misogynistic and anti-democratic relations. Given that students in general, and NANS in particular, present themselves as the future ‘leaders’ of society, the above scenario is a sad manifestation of the inability of such ‘leadership’ to transcend existing divisions and abuses of power.

Turning to NANFS, the association aims to effect change in the lives of its members in political as well as social domains. Politically, NANFS encourages female students to stand for top elective positions – such as president, secretary general, member of Senate, public relations officer – as opposed to low-ranking positions, in their local branches of NANS. Socially, NANFS encourages its members to join together and fight sexual harassment and victimization by male lecturers and male colleagues; discourage undergraduate prostitution; and raise political and social consciousness. This it does through rallies, seminars and conferences. The rallies are described as ‘more like a rap session where female students are encouraged to discuss the various problems and together find lasting solutions to them’. So far, the costs of transport, mobilization and communication have been borne by the members themselves (ibid.: 9).

Engendering academic work

One of the major impacts of women’s movements on the academic establishment is the emergence of women’s studies as a field of teaching, research and scholarly endeavour. Within women’s
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studies, the realities of women’s lives, their stories and experience and the content of their lives have all become the focus of investigation, research and intellectual discourse. The importance of women’s studies lies in its attempts not only to make the different strata of women more visible in academic discourse but also to understand how and why they have been marginalized in the first place. This encompasses thinking about what needs to be done to change the situation. In the process, we need to rethink accepted notions of what constitutes knowledge.

Professor Bolanle Awe describes the circumstances under which the Women’s Resource and Documentation Centre (WORDOC) was set up at the University of Ibadan:

There was so much pressure from everybody to go to Nairobi for the ’85 Conference.7 There was so much pressure from Nigerian women who wanted to go – we were not sure what the purpose was. ... The government wasn’t able to sponsor too many people. We decided that perhaps the best thing for us was to have a conference in Ibadan. By then, I had become the Director of the Institute so it was easier to organize and justify things, as director. ... We then had a very successful conference ourselves. People came from all over. ... What was so striking for us was the fact that we had over 70 papers produced. ... We were shocked because we didn’t realize that there were so many people working in the area of what one could regard as women’s studies. ... Some of the papers, you could see, would have benefited from networking. There were overlaps and duplications and so on. We thought, well, let’s start a resource centre, a place where we could assemble all documents and publications on women ... And also, a place where we can start networking and doing research on women. And that was how the Women’s Resource and Documentation Centre [WORDOC] started. (Interview with Prof. Bolanle Awe, Abuja, 29 October 2001)

One of the issues raised by centres such as WORDOC is the extent to which they can be autonomous.

I think part of the problem is that [WORDOC] is still located in the Institute [of African Studies], and the institute feels that it has control. The coordinating committee had come out with a lot of proposals, which haven’t seen the light of day. They even drew up a programme for women’s studies, to teach it as a course. They had to go through the institute. There is resistance at the curriculum level of the university itself; they might not like the idea. There’s now a new chairperson. She’s good but I think she’s hamstrung by the structure ... if she were a member of the institute, then she probably would not have the same problem. But the director feels that this is part of his unit, without really understanding too much of what we want to achieve (ibid.)

7 United Nations third World Conference on Women.
Some of the dimensions at play here are the character of the institutional affiliation or location, relations between the head of the institutional locus and the centre, and the extent to which these differing bodies share overall aims and agendas. These are all mediating factors in the degree of autonomy that a centre such as WORDOC can effectively exercise in practice.

The growth of women’s and gender studies has led to the creation of the following centres and networks in Nigeria:

- WORDOC, University of Ibadan – focus on women’s studies, documentation and link to other centres
- Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife – capacity-building in gender, social policy and development
- Women’s Studies Unit, University of Nigeria, Nsukka – documentation, teaching and research
- Documentation and Analysis of Women’s and Gender Studies Unit, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka – documentation
- Network for Women’s Studies in Nigeria (NWSN) – building capacity for teaching and research in gender and women’s studies
- Ahmadu Bello University, Gender and Women’s Studies Group (ABUGWSG), Zaria – documentation, capacity-building in gender and women’s studies.

All the above are local centres, except for NWSN, which is a national network.

Apart from whether structures are set up for gender and women’s studies in academia and the institutional locations for such structures, there is the question of building capacity to engage in such work.

We were aware of the fact that we needed to have better theoretical grounding than we had. And I think there’s still that weakness. Because of that, we have not succeeded as well as we should to argue this out on an intellectual basis with those who are not convinced, both men and women. . . . A lot of what goes into it is . . . emotion and sympathy. But we need much more than that (ibid.)

One of the criticisms of the shape that women’s studies has taken in Nigeria is that a great deal of empirical work exists on certain aspects of women’s lives, but not much theory has been generated from within (see Mama, 1996a).

Theory isn’t good or bad because it originates here or there. It’s good or bad to the extent that it addresses problems of here and there. The more based it is in a particular reality, the more possible it is to configure that
Problems have arisen, however, where theories configured in the West have been assumed to have universal applicability, even when this has clearly not been the case (see e.g. Imam et al., 1997).

Despite the weaknesses of gender and women’s studies, in many ways their significance lies in the opportunities they provide for rethinking academic practice and linking this to questions of social change and gender equity:

I was teaching Public Policy then in the Political Science [Department] at ABU. ... I had read Kate Young, Planning from a Gender Perspective and said, ‘Yes, it’s important. You can actually bring in a gender perspective to planning, there is literature about women and policy, about the way policy leaves out women’ ... Understanding what gender means, because it’s the basic concepts that people don’t understand, why women are also important as a social category – that should be addressed. Our students don’t understand the basics. Why there are differences, why those differences are not important, I mean, those are not the important differences – in terms of whether you’re a man or a woman. ... It was all about rethinking, for me, and the challenge was in helping my own students to rethink. (Interview with Amina Salihu, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

Resistance to change

The persistent inequalities between men and women mean that men have material privileges to defend. When men do not get the respect, deference and service from women that they expect and feel entitled to, they feel threatened. This is the case both within and beyond academia. Inside academia, men will often use their privileged positions to block any change in prevailing conditions. Hence, considerable resistance can be expected from many categories of men to any initiatives to change gender relations in academia. Resistance is also likely to come from women whose interests are tied up in maintaining the status quo.

Below are some of the ways in which men’s refusal to accept women as well as their resistance to changing gender relations are expressed. Various combinations of patronizing behaviour (putting women down), marginalizing behaviour (keeping women out) and intimidating behaviour (attempts to frighten women through a show of strength) may be manifested. Some forms of behaviour are more likely to be exhibited by certain categories of men in particular contexts.

From academic colleagues, these may include:
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- jokes
- snide remarks
- insinuations
- derogatory comments in class to students
- derogatory comments in settings such as the office of the dean/head of department, on the Faculty Board, in the staff club
- laughter when women speak, for example, at meetings
- selective monitoring of female (but not male) academics by heads of departments.

Men in audiences may exhibit the following behaviours towards female speakers:

- heckling
- continual background noise/movement during the presentation
- leaving when women are scheduled to speak
- asking irrelevant questions at the end
- offering advice that implies the woman lacks experience/basic understanding, etc.

University authorities may make the following responses to proposals from women’s groups to engender academic work:

- no response
- apparent co-operation but no follow-up
- endless requests for more information/documentation/time, etc.
- suggestions to include extraneous/unrelated items
- suggestions on how to change the proposal (sometimes beyond recognition).
What Constitutes Reform?

Feminists should neither dismiss the State as the ultimate mechanism of male social control nor embrace it as the ultimate vehicle for gender-based social change. Rather, under different political regimes and at distinct historical conjunctures, the State is potentially a mechanism either for social change or social control in women’s lives. (Alvarez, 1990, cited in Rai, 1996: 12)

In the wake of new challenges appearing daily, emanating from global, national and local sources, the crucial question remains - of how the university system needs to be changed in ways that will support critical understanding of women’s realities and strategies for social change. Many of the most important sites for transformation of the university system are actually sites of intense power struggle. They include struggles over epistemic power in the domain of intellectual freedom and knowledge production, and struggles over the power to administer public universities as autonomous institutions in the context of serious underfunding. Also important are struggles in domains that are thought of as separate from the university system, all the while being intimately related to the capacity of the system to operate equitably and appropriately. These include struggles to eliminate violence against women as well as struggles for freedom of information.

In other areas more directly related to the university system, reform takes place through the application of more technical skills, such as strategic planning and improved financial management. The fact that skills are technical, however, does not preclude the possibility of power struggles surrounding their use. This chapter addresses ongoing struggles as well as reform initiatives impinging on the university system, with a view to highlighting their gender implications.

The production of knowledge

The previous chapter described the emergence of women’s studies as a field of teaching, research and scholarly initiative, as exemplifying one of the major impacts of women’s movements on the academic establishment. The rethinking of accepted notions of what constitutes knowledge, or the epistemological challenge of gender and women’s studies, constitutes one of the potentially most significant arenas for transformation of the university system.
Creating spaces for women’s studies and gender studies

One of the former co-ordinators of the Ahmadu Bello University Women’s Studies Group (ABUWSG) describes how she joined the group:

I had been a graduate assistant at ABU for about three years. . . . the first meeting [of the ABU Women’s Studies Group that] I attended was . . . in Zaria. I was quite impressed by the fact that it was a small group but they already had a link to policy in the university because there already was a proposal towards institutionalizing gender and women’s studies in ABU: there were already efforts being made to actually get a resource centre started . . . And the fact that it was all about information, it was all about academic support for your work, sisterhood, and with people that I knew and some people that I hadn’t met, with senior colleagues – gave it credibility. . . . And I could feel a space for the emergence of young leaders, because everyone was being encouraged to do one thing or another. That . . . was my first formal introduction to a real . . . academic women’s circle, as it were, in ABU. And that first impression has been quite a powerful one for me because [of] the lessons I learned from that initial contact. . . . Language. I learned, was critical. Language was power, it wasn’t just about semantics. . . . This happened in an informal way, and it kind of stuck with me. (Interview with Amina Salihu, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

There were many challenges involved in sustaining such centres and networks, which were usually poorly funded and staffed. The challenges involve different aspects of the general aim of broadening the space for feminist intellectual work and sustaining past gains. For networks, this means the opportunity to meet more regularly, share more information, document experiences, and gain strength through institutional support. In addition, it is necessary to raise funds, support the work of members whilst continuing to build their capacity, generate more publications and make more effective links between research and advocacy. Finally, there is the question of providing avenues for feedback: what are the new challenges and what new strategies are needed to address them?

Feminist initiatives aimed at creating space for gender and women’s studies have implications for teaching as well as research. Each of these is addressed below.

Implications for teaching

At NWSN’s inaugural workshop (Mama, 1996b), the intellectual resources available for teaching gender and women’s studies were reviewed and discussed. It was observed that teaching curricula exist with regard to the disciplines of literature, politics and public administration, and history but not for philosophy. Bibliographical resources are adequate in history and literature but not in politics
and public administration, philosophy and oral literature. There were gaps in the literature in all the disciplines, and a particular lack of research on women in the northern parts of the country. In the fields of agriculture, the informal sector and the environment, there was sufficient material for teaching in the first two areas but not in the third. In sociology, bibliographical sources were limited and not well circulated. Literature on education in general was available, but there was very little on science and technology. The fields of health and sexuality were primarily addressed from a medical perspective, with little awareness of gender. Bibliographic resources for teaching in the areas of health, sexuality and reproductive rights were inadequate (Mama, 1996b: 33-46).

In terms of course organization, the two main options available to those wanting to teach gender and women’s studies in academia are integration into existing courses or the teaching of separate courses, which may mean also developing new courses. Some disciplines, such as sociology, are more receptive to the teaching of separate courses, but this is not the case with medicine. In view of the centralization of course development, the introduction of new courses in gender and women’s studies requires approval by the NUC. This is a protracted and energy-consuming process, often taking years and with no guarantee of success. Alternatively, scholars could start from their existing courses and teach these from an orientation grounded in concepts and pedagogies from gender and women’s studies (see Pereira, 1997; Odejide and Isiugo-Abanihe, 1999).

The practical implications of this for teaching in the Nigerian context are highlighted below. The following section draws extensively on an interview with a former co-ordinator of the ABU Gender and Women’s Studies Group to highlight the micropolitics of change. The need to rethink teaching practice was critical:

I just realized that if you couldn’t link the politics of it to the academic aspect of it, you weren’t really a feminist. It’s all about helping others discover their potential and standing up for themselves. And even the way you taught in class was important. And some of these things we had come to take for granted, like the teacher as the sole authority and ‘knower’ of all things, and the student as the recipient, at the other end, soaking it in and regurgitating it for exams. And this particular [arrangement] was actually questioned, because the essence of knowledge was not just to write exams but to learn for life and to transfer to others [what you learned]. And that for me was profound. (Interview with Amina Salihu, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

The significance of feminist pedagogies was highlighted at the third
meeting of the NWSN, on curriculum development. Some of the evaluative criteria for feminist pedagogy included questions such as whether the course empowered women, whether it challenged men and the status quo, the extent to which it drew on students’ experiences and the type of teaching methods used (Odejide and Isiugo-Abanihe, 1999).

**Stating your case**

Co-teaching a course with a senior colleague presented its own challenges. Very often, engaging in feminist pedagogy meant challenging gender-blind academic and age-based sources of authority. Taking a stand on how to teach a given course was immeasurably facilitated by being prepared with intellectual arguments and literature obtained from the collective work of the Women’s Studies Group.

I was able to say, ‘I want people to understand, as a basic concept of politics, the sexual division of labour, issues of gender and sex, international frameworks that protect the human rights of women’. And he was quite willing to allow this thing. And we taught it. (ibid.)

**Assignments**

A single undergraduate course may have anywhere from two to six hundred students, if not more, in attendance for lectures. The challenge then becomes how to get the most out of such large classes, in situations where a lack of teaching support means that tutorials are simply impossible.

My assignments actually had to do with societal issues. … I wanted these things connected to their understanding of their environment. …

They did these things in groups, maybe a group of ten, and there had to be gender balance. That was the first assignment. Everyone now screamed, ‘Gender balance!’… I said, ‘Well, what I mean by gender balance is not strictly 5:5 but at least, I need to have fair representation of both genders. And you know what I mean when I say both genders.’ They said, ‘More women!’ … They had to grapple with that basic thing about a diversity that nobody ever bothered about before. They now had to make sure that the list [of group members] had at least three or four girls. That was what we agreed to, because even the number was skewed. There were more boys than girls in the class. It’s a throwback to the wider society. But they had to find [the balance]. I wasn’t going to take any group that was all girls or all boys. It took some [groups] a week! And they’d come and say, ‘Well, we can’t …’ And I’d say, ‘But I know you can because I have a registration list!’ (ibid.)

Assignments took the form of group debates. These have also been used in gender-blind contexts as a strategy for engaging students in intensive learning experiences that do not rely on one-to-one
contact with the lecturer. The difference above in the use of debates revolves around the attention given to issues of gender in planning, in the constitution of groups and the structuring of arguments in presentation.

Reflecting on the NWSN 1997 curriculum workshop, the former co-ordinator of the ABUGWSG discussed the role of questions in the teaching process:

[I saw this] in terms of practising what I’d learned at that curriculum workshop, in terms of having a non-hierarchical class, where people could interact and they could talk and share ideas and carry it forward outside the class and see the response in [their] essays. So when the boys [called me] ‘Gender’, it was because they had recognized that someone was making them think differently. And they wanted to hear more, you could tell. And they asked quite intelligent questions . . .

... one intelligent question that I thought I heard, that kept recurring, was, ‘Where do we begin to change society?’ They had now recognized that they were doing things differently because I [had previously] asked them [in class], ‘How do you treat your sisters in your family? How do you respond to your mothers? What kind of support do you give in the home? How do you treat your female colleagues in class?’ I mean, these are the personal questions that you have to begin to grapple with. And then we talked about socialization. . . . And one of the crazy questions, I thought, was, ‘Well, it’s women who do these things to themselves.’ You know, the usual thing. I’d say, ‘You haven’t really delved into this thing. The question is, Why do women do these things to themselves?’

... And then they’re now confronted by that wider society out there that’s still resistant to change. Many of them kept asking, in different ways, ‘Where do we begin?’ In terms of changing worldviews and getting our parents and the society to think differently. [About] child marriage,8 for instance, because this was a northern university, and hawking. [About] almajiranci,9 where the boys are given off to mullams10 and the girls are asked

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What Constitutes Reform?

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Asking questions

8 In the northern part of the country, girls may be married off as young as 12, particularly amongst the poor in rural and semi-urban areas. The practice is often justified as Islamic, although it is generally not found amongst the Muslim elite.

9 Almajiranci – a traditional system of religious education for young Muslim boys, originally supported by the community. The young boys, almajirai, would be sent from their homes to stay with mullams. During the morning they would receive religious education and, in the afternoon, would be sent into the community to solicit for food and alms. As a consequence of increasing poverty, the system no longer receives community support, leaving the mullams and almajirai without sources of food or money. The result is that almajirai rarely receive the religious education that they are sent away from home for and are often found begging on the streets of urban centres in the north.

10 Mallam – originally, a religious scholar and teacher, now more often used to refer to a teacher, not necessarily religious.
to go hawk groundnut and the next thing, they’re married off, they’re taken away from school. (ibid.)

The importance of asking questions is critical in the context of Nigeria’s history of authoritarian rule, whether military or civilian. Intellectual cultures, like political cultures, have been marked most severely by the suppression of questions, which have all too often been interpreted as challenges to authority and manifestations of dissent. The above excerpt highlights the need to generate a learning culture where students feel free to ask questions, and where the things they have learned inspire them in turn to ask further questions about their environment, about gender roles and practices and the role of learning in society.

Experiential learning
Amina Salihu discussed the importance of learning from experience in the following:

The very basic example I used to use was in terms of things that connected to their experiences. For instance, I would say, ‘What do you expect if a young girl is told every time, “You have to go and help your mother in the kitchen”? And a little boy is told, “Go out and play, what are you doing here?” So the girl begins to think this is what is expected of her. ‘A good girl should help her mother in the kitchen’. And ‘A good boy should be out there, growing his muscles’ [Laughter]. I said [to the male students], ‘But here you are sitting with all the girls. And some of the best essays I’ve graded in this class have been written by girls.’ And then they all go, ‘Heeeee!’ [in disbelief]. I said, ‘I can give you the scripts!’ You know, it’s like connecting [them] to the realities and giving them evidence. And then, they have to begin to rethink. (ibid.)

In the context of course content being generally disconnected from lived experience in Nigeria, the process of engaging in learning that places experience in the foreground is not only invigorating but clearly necessitates ‘rethinking’.

The performance of female students
Supporting female students was an integral part of gender-aware pedagogy:

Initially it was hard … especially for the girls. Because they thought they were going to be intimidated by the class. You know, people saying, ‘Oh, what’s she saying? No! Speak louder!’ But you know, it took [the performance of] one girl who was absolutely assertive to earn the respect of the class, male and female. She was able to stand firm and give a very good presentation, answer the questions so absolutely well, for them to begin to realize. ‘This is a girl who has done this. She has not only stood before the
class, she's given a very good presentation, she's also helped the group out.' You know, damage control when they couldn't respond to questions. And the next week I had the presentation with [the class], the response was quite different. Whenever a girl came on, there was absolute silence.

... What I also did behind the scenes was to talk to the girls a lot more, you know, to support them, boost their self-esteem. Probably the best three essays in that class were written by girls – they had As. They not only had As, I learned that in other courses they were a lot more visible, in terms of contributions, in terms of relationships with their colleagues and all that. For me, I felt quite happy. (ibid.)

In view of the aggressive class ethos in which female students were having their right to speak challenged by male students, the significance of female confidence and authority cannot be underestimated. Generating that confidence was not only boosted by the strong performance of a single female student in the class, it was also specifically nurtured through the additional support and mentoring given to the generality of female students by the lecturer, outside the classroom. The positive impact that this made on the students was notable across the board, in their academic performance and social relations.

**Implications for research**

In its *Directory of Ph.D. Theses Awarded in the Social Sciences in Nigerian Universities, 1988–1998*, the Social Science Academy of Nigeria (SSAN) records a total of 361 doctorates being awarded in the ten-year period. The low number of Ph.D. degrees completed and awarded reflects the numerous difficulties faced by those attempting to undergo the training involved in a Ph.D. and to carry out their research. The very small proportion of such doctorates in the fields of gender and women’s studies – 11 in all – is an indication of not only the general difficulties referred to above but also the more specific constraints faced by those working in a new field that is underfunded and lacking in institutional support. The Ph.D.s in the SSAN Directory that appear to come under the rubric of gender and women’s studies are outlined in Table 26. The majority of these are located in the discipline of sociology.

Several key dimensions of the implications of gender and women’s studies for research were discussed at NWSN’s inaugural workshop (Mama, 1996b). The need for locally grounded theory was stressed, bearing in mind how the experiences of African women differ from those of Western women. Emphasis was also placed on the need for such grounded theory to guide research. One of the suggested reasons for the tremendous difficulties posed by the teaching of theory in Nigeria was the disconnection between theory and
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<td>Samuel Ajayi</td>
<td>Participation of Women in Agriculture in Kwara State, Nigeria: A Spatial Analysis</td>
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<td>Nkoli Ezumah</td>
<td>Women Development: The Role of Igbo Rural Women in Agricultural Production</td>
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<td>Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Olabisi Aina</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Yerisoibiba George</td>
<td>Marriage Patterns, Female Autonomy and Fertility: A Study of Kalabari Women Work and Reproductive Behaviour Among Women in Two Esan Communities, Edo State, Nigeria</td>
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<td>University of Benin</td>
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<td>P.T. Ozo-Jos</td>
<td>Pattern Trend [sic] and Control of Female Criminality in Nigeria</td>
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<td>University of Benin</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>U.R.Obi</td>
<td>Determinants of Career Mobility of Women in Selected Banks in Benin City</td>
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Source: Social Science Academy of Nigeria, n.d.
Nigerian women’s experiences. Even when researchers in this country draw on theories formulated elsewhere, it seems necessary to ground the basic concepts in local conditions and realities. At the same time, it was considered an advantage to be familiar with Western theories, if only to identify areas of convergence and divergence in African women’s experience and that of other women. The need for more research and more adequate dissemination was emphasized.

At NWSN’s second workshop, on concepts and methods for gender and women’s studies in Nigeria (Pereira 1997), locally grounded understandings of key concepts in the field – ‘woman’, ‘gender’ and ‘feminism’ – were developed. Participants engaged in a process of identifying their own vision of feminism and using this as a basis for guiding research and practice. The implications of the key concepts for research practice were explored. This took place through discussions of the aims and principles of feminist research, based on case studies. The extent to which the case studies were empowering to women was examined. The processes outlined above culminated in the production of suggested guidelines for feminist research.

University autonomy

The issue of university autonomy has been contested since the late 1960s. The former military governments, with centralized systems of rule antithetical to the notion of institutional autonomy, opposed the freedoms inherent in the principle of university autonomy. Military rulers also resisted university autonomy because they believed that such autonomy would create pockets of resistance to military rule all over the country (interview with Hon. Tunde Lakoju, Abuja, 12 November 2001). ASUU has been championing autonomy for universities, insisting that they should be able to operate autonomously as institutions with minimal interference from government.

Autonomy for Nigerian universities would be likely to mean:

- freedom to determine course content
- freedom to select students
- freedom to appoint the Vice-Chancellor and all other principal officers, and
- freedom to promote staff.

Gender dynamics operate in each of these spheres, affecting what counts as knowledge; the gendered composition of the student body; the gendered composition of senior staff; and the upward mobility of staff within the institution.
It should be noted that autonomy in the Nigerian university context would not mean financial autonomy: 

Autonomy . . . simply means the total capability of the university to be run according to its own laws. It does not mean financial autonomy in the sense of a university that is turned into a commercial enterprise. We have to have universities that do research and do researched teaching. (Interview with Dr Oladipo Fashina, Zaria, 17 July 2001)

The struggle for university autonomy is located historically within the context of struggles for increased funding and democratization of university governance. At the same time, administrative autonomy has been differentiated from financial autonomy, since high-quality university education requires more funds than universities alone can raise. Given that administrative autonomy comprises the autonomy to determine policies, academic programmes, and to administer the university as an institution, without such decisions being made for the university by the government, the question arises of how such autonomy may be used to either restrict or expand the space for gender justice in academia. Addressing this question requires attention to some of the key concepts used to understand ‘university autonomy’ in Nigeria and the assumptions underlying their use.

The Cookey Commission described ‘autonomy’ as combining academic freedom with university autonomy. The Commission applied the term university autonomy to university governance, ‘that is, the power to appoint, dismiss and discipline staff, financial autonomy and other things necessary for a self-governing community’ (Cookey Report, 1981: 121). The term academic freedom was used to refer to ‘those aspects of university life which deal with academic work; for instance, freedom to select, teach and examine students, freedom to decide on what to teach, freedom to carry out research and to publish the results of such research’ (ibid.). The freedom to ‘select, teach and examine students’, however, seems to be as much about university governance as it is about academic freedom. This is clear when we recall that this freedom is applied using some forms of affirmative action and not others. The form of affirmative action that is generally accepted and widely utilized is one relating to geographical proximity to the university, namely, the inclusion of a percentage of students from the surrounding ‘catchment area’. However, there has been no formal discussion of the possibility of using affirmative action to increase the number of female students in universities. Nor has affirmative action for women been considered in relation to female staff in academia.

As a concept, ‘academic freedom’ is more appropriately reconfigured as ‘intellectual freedom’, since the latter is more inclusive of
the intellectual needs of other actors within academia, such as
students, and significant freedoms outside academia, such as freedom
of information. Whilst the Cookey Commission was ‘of the view that
university autonomy has more to do with the governance of the
university than with its academic activities’ (p.121), it also pointed
out that it was often difficult to distinguish one concept from the
other and that ‘it might be more convenient to include the concept
of academic freedom within that of university autonomy’ (ibid.). The
conflation of ‘academic freedom’, or even ‘intellectual freedom’, with
‘institutional autonomy’ is not only unwarranted, however, but is
also problematic.

It is true that, in the history of the development of federal univer-
sities in Nigeria, the state has eroded the capacity of universities as
institutions to operate autonomously, and this has had serious
repercussions on the intellectual freedom of staff as well as students.
However, the existence of university autonomy may not automatically
translate into intellectual freedom. Private universities, for example,
are of necessity autonomous, but there is no guarantee that they will
be bastions of intellectual freedom, particularly intellectual freedom
that integrates gender justice. The assumption that institutional
autonomy is sufficient for intellectual freedom rests upon two other
planks. The first is one that obscures the significance of universities
articulating and realizing a mission of critical enquiry and social
justice, in which activities such as research are central. The second
plank emphasizes the state as the main threat to intellectual free-
dom, to the exclusion of all other categories of social actor, including
academics themselves. Yet it is not only the lack of autonomy from
the state that is responsible for the denial of intellectual freedom.
Many university academics may be key actors in the denial of
intellectual freedom to others, such as when male academics ridicule
and exclude female academics because they dislike their views on
gender equality.

Following the handover from military to civilian rule in May
1999, the Obasanjo government has also championed university
autonomy, but from a somewhat different perspective.

University autonomy in our situation implies that while the founder/propri-
ator provides a minimum level of investment or funding to an institution,
the employer, which is the Governing Council, determines policy directions
regarding judicious utilisation of material and human resources. This is with
a view to making the university self-sustaining and maintaining the highest
standard of infrastructure, learning, teaching and welfare for both staff and
students.

The Federal Government will restore autonomy to the universities in all
facets of their operations, especially in areas such as funding, programme
development and other internal regulatory policies. The autonomy will also be extended to other areas as would be determined, from time to time, such as the appointment of Vice-Chancellors and the admission of students, all of which border on internal regulatory policies (Obasanjo, 2000).

In return for this operational autonomy, President Obasanjo foresaw that universities would establish their own endowments and raise a much larger proportion of their recurrent expenditures than the 10 per cent which is currently expected. Financial autonomy has been coupled with administrative autonomy in a move that has been widely interpreted as a way of the government trying to reduce the costs of university education whilst being seen to hand over control to the universities. Some have justified this position on the grounds that decision-making in the universities is contingent on funding. The counter argument has been that the federal government’s responsibility for funding federal universities should not translate into virtual control of their affairs. The overall effect of the government’s position would also be to undermine the central bargaining power of ASUU.

Since President Obasanjo’s inauguration of university councils, a Bill on university autonomy has come before the National Assembly. The contentious aspects of the Bill have been discussed by the ASUU. They include defining the objectives of universities simply in terms of providing ‘manpower’ training, and neglecting the primary aim of expanding the frontiers of knowledge through research. Rather than strengthening university autonomy, the Bill undermines it by placing key academic powers in the hands of the NUC, including determining course content, the academic calendar and so on.

The Bill also invests enormous arbitrary powers in the Visitor, including powers that were previously wielded by internal organs of the university, such as the power to determine the composition and tenure of governing councils. The powers of the Vice-Chancellor are also magnified, to include the power to hire and fire, coupled with the power of the Senate to discipline students and the power of the Council to discipline staff. Moreover, the Bill introduces insecurity of tenure for academic staff at the same time as it lacks a specific tenure for the Vice-Chancellor. It attempts to change the existing relationship between lecturers and students, one currently defined by lecturers being in loco parentis in relation to students, to a purely

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contractual arrangement. In addition to violating existing agreements between the federal government and ASUU, the overall effects of the bill are viewed as weakening university autonomy, and attacking the principle and practice of democratic governance within universities whilst breaching the Constitution. The overall effect would be to generate general instability and accelerate the brain drain (Fashina, 2002). In this context, it is difficult to see how a receptive climate may be created for addressing ways in which the exercise of university autonomy is likely to be gender-aware.

The reality is that the gendered implications of university autonomy are generally ignored. Interestingly, of the mainstream unions, it was only the student representative who could point to any gender implications of autonomy:

The single most important implication of administrative autonomy is that it will throw up many eligible women to positions of authority, to positions of professional excellence and whatever, within the system. So it will be like expanding the scope of their activities ... we believe that university autonomy is going to allow more women [sic] participation and it is going to boost their status and their chances. (Interview with Umar Kari, Abuja, 14 August 2001)

What seems likely is that if universities were in a position to exercise greater administrative and financial autonomy, several scenarios would be possible. These could span diverse positions antagonistic to or supportive of gender equity, or combinations of both, which could be contradictory or disconnected in their effects. Some of these differing possibilities and ways in which gender equality could be advanced are outlined below:

I don’t think government is aware that if you allowed the universities [to have] control of recruitment, students, and funding – you could probably have more women coming in or you could have fewer women coming in. I don’t think they’re concerned about that. ... If the universities have more powers, in terms of decision-making, then the argument can be advanced and supported that now you can begin to have curriculum reform which takes care of gender issues, without having to go to the NUC to have to sanction ... or delay it for a certain number of years. You can have collaborations with institutions that can help facilitate this process. Internally, yes, you have more room to do things differently and then we can now begin to say, ‘You have no excuse not to plan from a gender perspective, curriculum-wise, and not to allocate funds from a gender perspective as well’. What are the needs of female students? Hostels for crying out loud, why can’t you have more hostels built? Why can’t you have other courses that would allow married women, for instance, to come in, take an adult education course, or an outreach kind of thing? If they had greater autonomy, yes, they’d [universities would] be able to respond more to gender issues. (Interview with Amina Salihu, Abuja. 30 October 2001)
Some of the ways in which university autonomy could advance gender equality include research on gender that furthers theoretical development, gender-aware curriculum review and reform, gender planning and gender budgeting. Changing patterns of expenditure would need to take account of increased funds for gender research; new teaching requirements following the curriculum review accompanied by the purchase of appropriate books and journals; the needs of female students such as increased hostel accommodation; and the needs of female staff especially through staff development programmes.

What is significant is that the possibility of promoting greater gender equity provides a platform for demanding change in this direction of greater university autonomy and for specifying some of the changes that could take place.

Private universities
The introduction of private universities into the university system in Nigeria is taking place in the broader context of privatization of state utilities, market reforms and the deregulation of education, particularly higher education.

The criteria for establishing private institutions of higher education in Nigeria are laid out in Decree No. 9 of 1993 – Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) (Amendment) – the provision of which showed much more concern for the financial viability of the new institutions than for their academic quality. Among the provisions of the decree were the following:

• Evidence shall be produced to show that the Institution would be provided with adequate:
  – funding, both capital and recurrent
  – academic and support staff
• The proposed staffing guidelines shall meet with the current guidelines of:
  – the National Universities Commission; or
  – the National Board for Technical Education; or
  – the National Commission for Colleges of Education, as the case may be, based on the courses contemplated.
• The federal government must be satisfied that, upon approval being given, the sources of funding and necessary funds will be available.
• A proposed institution shall have an adequate enrolment base and shall be open to all Nigerians, irrespective of ethnic derivation.
social status, religious or political persuasion.

- The proposed Institution shall have a well-articulated mission and set of objectives that may be original and innovative but unequivocally in consonance with the socio-economic and political aspirations of Nigeria.

To date, however, the impact of the private universities has been limited because their rate of expansion has been slow:

Deregulation, of course, implies the coming in of private education providers, who are already there. But their impact is so small, because even the level of financial investment required for them to take off properly is just not there. The proprietors don’t have the capacity to invest that kind of money and also the parents who can afford to send their children there are relatively few.

... we were hoping that [private universities] would actually impact on the system, by innovative management styles, creative curricula and other ways of teaching the public universities to be better managed and to be more focused, and then to also create competition by providing the students with an alternative. (Interview with Prof. Munzali Jubril, Abuja, 30 October 2001)

Although the formal aspects of creating new private universities appear to be better planned than has often been the case with the federal universities, whether the practice will correspond to the regulations remains to be seen. Also unclear is whether institutions such as private universities will show either the inclination or the will to promote gender equality within their confines. The provision in Decree No. 9 that specifies the need for ‘an adequate enrolment base’ that includes ‘all Nigerians’ does not refer to differential access on the basis of gender. In view of the fact that private universities have so far been sponsored predominantly by religious organizations, and that religion in practice has tended to be a source of restriction rather than expansion of women’s rights, the prospects look uncertain, at best.

Financial management

A uniform accounting system

There are gender concerns with the efforts to develop a uniform accounting system for Nigerian universities. For any institution, the accounting system provides the tool for measuring and collecting financial data, classifying and processing the data and summarizing the significance of the data in financial reports for the use of decision-makers. Each university in the country produces financial information using its own accounting system and format, which is unique.
The only common element in the different reports produced has been the observance of generally accepted accounting standards. Consequently, there has been no basis for comparing resource utilization within the university system. In addition, universities have been run on a 'going concern' basis, meaning that as long as there were funds in any of the accounts, for example, the research account, the duty of the administration was to keep the university going, even if this meant using research funds for non-research purposes (NUC, 1996).

Attention has focused on the need for management information in the university system, particularly financial information, to be consistently recorded and comparable across institutions. The efforts to produce a uniform accounting system constitute one example of such initiatives. The following benefits are ascribed to the use of the system. Within universities, it is possible to highlight inter-fund borrowing when a uniform accounting system is adopted and fund accounting becomes the basis of operating the system. This allows the bursar to track the inter-fund borrowing that takes place and inform the administration accordingly. Across universities, a uniform accounting, reporting and information retrieval system provides a basis for meaningful comparison. In relation to the government, the use of such a system facilitates the preparation of financial reports and estimates for government consideration. For the NUC, a uniform accounting system would allow it to consolidate reports from universities for use during funding request sessions with federal government officials. Overall, it was expected that the use of a uniform accounting system would enhance efficiency and accountability. The system requires sound internal control to prevent the possibility of fraud within and across universities. It also requires constant review and monitoring to be built into its operation, in order to address the variability in operating conditions across universities (NUC, 1996).

Efforts to institute a uniform accounting system began as early as 1979, but the project was never finalized as the National Universities Commission and the universities subsequently lost interest (ibid., 1996). In 1987, the Committee of Bursars of Nigerian Universities (COBNU) persuaded the NUC to revive interest in the project and authorize COBNU to develop a Unified Accounting System. Support came from the UK government’s Overseas Development Administration, in the form of a visit in September 1989 and the sharing of information about good practice. Interest in and activity on the project have intensified since 1994, when the then NUC Executive Secretary, Prof. Idris Abdulkadir, asked the Committee of Bursars to produce a manual of recommended accounting practices (uniform accounting systems manual) for all Nigerian universities.
The uniform accounting system was to be complemented by computerization of the Management Information Service (MIS) (see Fielden, 1994). The data comprising the MIS are essentially data on staff, students and funds in the university system. Whilst both the uniform accounting system and the MIS are presented and discussed without any discussion of gender, it is critical that their data are gender disaggregated as far as possible. This applies across the board, for the data on staff and students as well as funds. The data on funds should be amenable to gender budgeting. Funds should be disaggregated in such a way as to enable the analysis of patterns of expenditure, in terms of the utilization of services by women and men, as well as an assessment of the relative impact of expenditure on women and men. If all this were done, the uniform accounting system and the MIS would be better able to live up to expectations of them. Improved financial as well as management information is crucial for the next topic, strategic planning.

**Strategic planning**

The impetus for strategic planning in Nigerian universities came initially from the World Bank. Prior to this, the Bank’s credit scheme, instituted in 1989, provided support for universities in the form of books and journals as well as hardware and software for library automation. By 1994, the Bank was assessing university receptiveness to strategic planning with a view to supporting strategic planning exercises within a significant number of federal universities (Fielden, 1994).

Large sections of the academic community in Nigeria view the current activities of the World Bank in the university education system with considerable cynicism. This is not surprising, given the role of the Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the imposition of a structural adjustment programme on the nation in the mid-1980s. The SAP’s devaluation of the naira, alongside the removal of state subsidies to the education, health and social sectors, not only brought about profound immiseration and hardship for the general population but also directly undermined the education system. Under the circumstances, many have posed the question of why the World Bank should be so interested in African universities today, when we recall that it was barely a decade ago that it espoused the view that Africa’s educational priorities in terms of funding should be primary, secondary and technical rather than higher education.

Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that certain activities, such as strategic planning, can be worth engaging in because they have the potential to move the system forward, regardless of whether it is
the World Bank that proposes them or not. In his discussion of the
time of a transformed higher education sector for an ‘emergent
Nigeria’, Obanya (1999: 17) has this to say:

Strategic planning will, in my view, help to make the management of higher
education institutions more democratic and more scientific, especially if
improved strategic thinking is made the starting point. Democratic manage-
ment is just another term for democratic governance, for participatory
management in higher educational institutions. . . . we believe that there is
still room for improvement, that we may have to ask how democratic is our
internal democracy, how ethical is our internal politics, to what extent are
all interest groups within the institutions (including Students, Women
Academics, Non-teaching Staff, the group commonly known as ‘intermedi-
ate and junior staff’, etc.) adequately represented on our various committees?
The process of strategic thinking, which we should set in motion, could help
elucidate this point further.

Whilst it was not possible in this study to collect data on the
current situation regarding the uptake of strategic planning at the
systemic level, the fact that the NUC has been encouraging univer-
sities to engage in such planning for a number of years now is worth
noting. As a site for potential gendered reform of the university
system, it would be of considerable interest to know what level of
strategic planning (if any) is carried out, say within the NUC; who
participates in the strategic planning exercise (and who does not); and
to what extent women’s concerns are reflected in the plans produced.

Strategic planning, if carried out from a gendered perspective, has
considerable potential for furthering the goal of gender justice in the
universities. This could be done by a gender analysis of all levels of the
institutions, including enrolment, retention and performance of female
and male students; recruitment, retention, promotion and productivity
of female and male staff; and management and administrative
practices and effects. A gender-aware review of curricula, pedagogy
and research across departments could also form the basis for capacity-
building for academic staff. Capacity-building for administrative,
technical and support staff would similarly be required. Gender-
aware policy appraisal would be necessary, as would expenditure
analysis by gender for staff and students, as well as disaggregation
of the impact of expenditure on female and male staff and students.

Enabling legislation

In addition to the Bill on university autonomy discussed earlier,
there are two other proposed Bills in which legislative advocacy and
the changes arising from such advocacy have a bearing on the
university system and the pursuit of gender justice. Enabling
legislation has the potential for furthering gender justice by changing the context within which the university system is embedded. The proposed Bills – on violence against women and freedom of information – have the capacity to change the gendered context and conditions framing the university system. They may do this by restricting the support for masculinist and misogynistic practices in the society at large and creating the possibility of greater openness in the availability of information within and beyond academia, respectively. Administrative and other practices within academia that discriminate against women, as we saw earlier, are generally supported by similar ideologies of gender outside the university system. Initiatives aimed at changing the social context of the university system in the ways outlined above thus play an indirect role in shaping the possibilities for more equitable treatment of women in a university environment that is more transparent and accountable to women.

**The Bill on violence against women**

Women’s regulation, within and beyond academia, takes place through structures and processes that effectively enforce dominant understandings of gender with the threat of sanctions in the form of violence. Women’s lack of personal autonomy, discussed earlier, is predicated on the possibility of sanctions of varying degrees. The belief that the abuse of women is somehow ‘normal’ pervades not only interpretations of ‘tradition’ or ‘custom’ but also ostensibly more ‘modern’ institutions such as universities. The neglect of cases of sexual violence perpetrated against women in academia and the failure to effectively address sexual harassment, are manifestations of this general orientation. The widespread nature of violence against women in Nigeria, in new as well as old forms, has often been ignored, denied or justified in official circles.

Nigerian women, however, have resisted this state of affairs and have organized in national and international fora in diverse ways in the effort to eliminate violence against women. Support has come from some mainstream human rights’ organizations, such as the International Human Rights Law Group, as it was then known, and others. At the end of January 2001, the Law Group convened a meeting of stakeholders active in pursuing a legislative agenda on issues of concern to women. The focus of the meeting was on violence against women in all its forms. At the end of the meeting, a number of points of consensus emerged in the resolutions.

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12 Now known as Global Rights.
Participants agreed to form a coalition that would take responsibility for proposing a Bill on violence against women and working towards its enactment and review. The Bill would be comprehensive in its coverage of violence against women as opposed to addressing a specific form or manifestation of woman abuse, as had previously been the case in earlier bills passed at state level.\textsuperscript{13} The coalition recognized that a bill in itself would not eliminate violence against women. Ultimately, violence against women was seen as too complex a phenomenon to be eliminated by a law alone, or by the use of any other single strategy. If combined with other strategies, however, the law could provide a basis for changing consciousness of the issues and gaining public acceptance of the need for change. The Bill was thus regarded as a focus for widespread sensitization and community advocacy around issues of gender-based violence as well as one of a number of tools for the elimination of such violence (LACVAW, 2001).\textsuperscript{14}

If passed and effectively implemented, the Bill on violence against women could be used in litigation concerning cases of gender-based violence, including sexual violence and sexual harassment. The law could be applied to instances of violence within academia, whether perpetrated against female students, lecturers or support staff, as well as beyond. A key dimension of institutional cultures and social ‘norms’ characterized by the acceptance of violence against women is the accompanying sense of impunity on the part of perpetrators. As a countermeasure, the advocacy surrounding the Bill and its use in litigation would hopefully help to eliminate the notion that violence against women, whether in academia or the society at large, can take place with impunity.

The freedom of information Bill

Freedom of information does not exist in Nigeria today. Along with many other freedoms, freedom of information was one of the many casualties of military rule; an informed citizenry was regarded as an ‘unruly’ citizenry. The tendency to view information in the same light continues today. Policy matters are regarded as closed matters, unavailable for discussion with either researchers or journalists. Information from government circles, in particular, is constructed as

\textsuperscript{13} Examples include the Malpractices Against Widows (Prohibition Law 2000) of Anambra State; the Girl-Child Marriages and Female Circumcision (Prohibition) Law 2002 of Cross River State; and the Female Circumcision and Genital Mutilation (Prohibition) Law 1999 of Edo State.

\textsuperscript{14} The Bill was gazetted on 6 May 2003 and is now before the House of Representatives of the National Assembly.
either ‘confidential’ or ‘secret’, not as a resource for the public. The result is a complete absence of information about public affairs, the workings of the state and the various facets of the formal sphere. This reality affects women and men researchers alike. In the absence of regular access to public information, however, men often utilize informal networks to facilitate their access to such information. Few women are part of these networks. The situation is compounded when the focus of research is gender relations, where official data have only recently been collected by some government agencies and are often incomplete.

A draft Freedom of Information Bill, which has been campaigned for since 1993, is now in the House of Representatives of the National Assembly. Organizations such as Media Rights Agenda (MRA), the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) and the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) were at the forefront of this campaign (Kadiri, 2001).

If passed and effectively implemented, the Freedom of Information Bill would affect the university system in two main ways. The first implication would be to open up the space for democratization through the flow of information between and among diverse categories of stakeholders in the university system, and the society at large. Very importantly, the increased availability and accessibility of information on sexual harassment offenders would afford greater scope for tracking and challenging sexual harassment in universities. The second would be to significantly expand the scope for research on the state, its institutions and related agencies, policy developments and the like. Making public information available to all would have a considerable impact on the possibilities for both female and male scholars to engage in research, not only on the workings of the university system but on a host of other processes in the formal public domain.
Conclusions & Recommendations

This study has sought to engender an understanding of the workings of the university system. The approach taken has meant going beyond viewing the problem as primarily one of ‘access’ or even of ‘mainstreaming gender in university education’. Rather, it has attempted to show how the mainstream needs to be transformed. This has entailed examining the role of gender in socio-political and economic processes and institutions in order to understand better what needs to change for gender equity to be enhanced in the university system and to identify change where it has already begun.

The study has attempted to address a number of questions, the findings of which are summarized below.

How have gendered structures & processes at the contextual & systemic levels affected the institutional level, namely, universities?

Nigeria’s colonial history modified pre-existing gender relations in ways that created new forms of oppression that were overlaid on existing forms of inequality. It was in this context that the university system was born, modelled on its colonial predecessors. In the post-colonial context, the nature of the ruling regime and the character of its politics have had an inordinate influence on the development of the university system. Military and civilian regimes alike have distinguished themselves by their authoritarian and anti-democratic dispensations, which, unsurprisingly, have spawned highly discriminatory societies. It is in these societies that the university system has developed, and so discriminatory features present in its social context are also to be found within the walls of academia. At the same time, universities as institutions have differentiated themselves from the larger society through their mission statements and the conception of their particular role as articulated in government documents. This role has been viewed, unproblematically, as one of providing implicitly [male] leadership in the pursuit of ‘development’, also unproblematically constructed.

Of all Nigeria’s military regimes, it was those of General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha that were marked by ‘First Ladies’ who championed women’s ‘empowerment’ in the form of highly visible state-supported programmes for women. In the absence of feminist politics and public understanding of gender
discourses, such programmes were often mistaken for women’s autonomous efforts to bring about gender equality. Furthermore, the backlash surrounding ‘First Ladyism’ was such that many could not distinguish between the high-profile Better Life Programme (BLP) and the Family Economic Awareness Programme (FEAP), on the one hand, and women’s studies and gender studies, on the other.

The appropriation of radical discourse on women – namely, WIN’s discourse on rural women – by First Ladies meant that gender and class configurations for women were most easily recognized when it was ‘rural women’ who were the object of attention. University women, whose class positioning is not that of rural women, and who may or may not experience their class locations as partially mitigating gender oppression, have hardly been the focus of state discourses on gender. This is not particularly surprising. However, it places university women in an invidious position when they are omitted from governmental discourses on women at the same time as they are absent from gender-blind discourses on university education.

The lack of attention paid to gender and university education, due to national discourses, has been reinforced at the international level by the priority placed on basic education, particularly for girls. University academics, whose memory of the role of the Bretton Woods institutions in the imposition of Nigeria’s SAP and its destructive aftermath is still fresh, reacted against the World Bank’s championing of Universal Basic Education (UBE). The false dichotomy that subsequently ensued between basic education or university education should have been recognized as the inevitable result of resistance to an externally defined agenda, in the context of a generalized under-funding of education. Instead of the recommended UNESCO proportion of 26 per cent of the national budget, the 2002 draft Budget was proposing that between 7 and 8 per cent of the total budget should be spent on education. If the overall budget for education had been higher, there would have been no pressure to choose between basic and university education. Clearly, Nigeria needs both – a position made manifestly clear when considering university education for women and the need to increase basic educational skills for girls and women so as to expand the potential pool for enrolment.

Within academia, women are regulated not only by the structures and processes of academic life but also by additional structures bearing differing relations to it, including constraints that overlap academia and other institutions, such as administrative and legal constraints. They also include structures and processes that work independently of academia at the same time as they are imported into it, such as misogynist interpretations of custom, tradition and...
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religion as well as laws that normalize violence against women. Men
are able to act as if it is only the structures and processes of
academia that regulate academic life, precisely because they are not
subject to those structures and processes outside and overlapping
academia that constrain women’s autonomy. Not only are university
women subject to gender discrimination within academia but they
are expected to do more work (at home and in the community, in
addition to academic life); to have little or no time for leisure and to
be paid less (since it takes longer for them to complete their Ph.Ds
and therefore get promoted, once domestic labour is added to the
workload).

Prolonged authoritarianism and militarism have given rise to
tremendous resistance, on the part of men, to changing the power
relations between women and men. Women’s secondary citizenship
status is not even acknowledged as a problem by most categories of
men, even those championing the rights of academics. The insistence
on gender ‘neutrality’ in university education, by those in positions
of authority, flies in the face of pervasive gender disparities, sexual
harassment, gender violence and gender struggles in academia. At
the very least, it is testimony to the denial of reality that is required
to maintain oppressive systems. It is worth noting that in the
political arena, women’s organizing and advocacy around affirmative
action – in the form of quotas for women’s entry into politics (30 per
cent) – have been accelerated since 1995. Debates on the nature and
scope of affirmative action for women in university education in
Nigeria have yet to begin.

In what ways have the workings of the university
system contributed to bringing about gender
differentials?

At its inception, the university system in Nigeria was conceived of as
a means of producing ‘high-level manpower for the nation’. The
linkage between universities and ‘high-level manpower’ has
continually been reiterated in National Development Plans, although
the modalities for implementing the plans have rarely matched the
pronouncements. More importantly, the fact that most groups of
women have rarely had any say in how ‘national’ needs are
determined and how priorities are set has generally been viewed as
non-problematic. It is clear from the plans that an understanding of
the realities of the lives of diverse groups of women was not viewed
as necessary to planning. Hence, no attention was paid to gender
divisions of labour, gender-segregated labour markets and the
ubiquity of gender violence in social relations and institutions. The conception of universities as the breeding ground for the grooming of the nation’s elite – leaders who are presumed to be men – is fundamentally at odds with the notion of the university as a site for deconstructing the contradictions in society at large.

The university system is tied to government bureaucracies which, on the whole, are male-dominated at decision-making levels and not renowned for their gender sensitivity. The government agencies that are most involved in policy-making, such as the NUC, the Federal Ministry of Education and the National Council of Education, are far removed from women in academia. Whilst the presence of women in decision-making positions in these agencies would not in itself remove gender inequities overnight, no consistent efforts are made at present to ensure that a plurality of perspectives is included in policy-making, other than those of the elite men at the top. This is clearly not equitable.

The lack of constancy of funding, the mismanagement of resources and the problems of accountability all lead to a situation in universities in which many abuses go unchecked and transformation of the system is less likely to be on the agenda. Long-term planning is difficult, hence effecting change is also difficult. Uncertainty about the future of planned programmes results in low staff morale, which makes it more difficult to get the required co-operation for effective change. The generalized corruption over student admissions means that the students enrolled, female and male, are not keen on learning. This affects the institutional culture and climate of teaching and learning, with implications for staff commitment. These conditions apply whatever the equity agenda may be.

Recently, the gendered composition of universities has come under scrutiny. This has been mostly at the level of female student enrolment, which has increased such that roughly one-third of the students enrolling in federal universities today are female. The high drop-out rates for women students across the arts and humanities, and the even higher drop-out rates in the sciences, belie a simple reliance on enrolment rates alone for an indication of female presence in the student body. In the context of poor living conditions and widespread sexual harassment, obstacles noted by the Longe Commission in 1991, it is not so clear how many female students actually stay on at university. These were not the focus of direct enquiry in this research, but by all accounts these dimensions continue to characterize university life today.

Among academic staff, an even smaller proportion is female than among students. One of the implications is that in an overwhelmingly masculine environment, female students find few role
models of women who have pursued further studies. This is so across the board, although some disciplines are more male-dominated than others. At the same time, the women who are most concerned about systemic oppression and about changing power relations may often be at the lower end of the academic hierarchy and therefore do not always have access to those in decision-making positions. And, even if they do have access, they are not always taken seriously.

Few academic staff, female or male, are adequately grounded in an understanding of gender relations and have the capacity to carry out gender analysis. This also means that female academic staff without Ph.Ds have few opportunities for mentoring from gender-aware staff. The lack of capacity in this area results in an over-burdening of the few staff who do have capacity. It also results in difficulties in developing the conceptual and analytical frameworks for making the case against gender discrimination and advocating gender justice. This situation unfortunately tends to feed the resistance to arguments for gender justice, since those who ridicule attempts to voice gender exclusion may seldom be faced with strong counter arguments.

It is much easier to increase access to university education for women than it is to change gendered power relations. Such relations operate at micro- as well as macro-levels. At micro-levels, they include the ridicule mentioned above, subtle forms of exclusion, widespread assumptions about ‘what women should do (and not do)’, ‘how women should behave’, ‘a woman’s responsibilities to her family’ and so on. At the macro-level, they include patterns of expenditure - on capital costs as well as funds for research, modes of governance and what counts as knowledge. At present, it is not even considered necessary to ask how the funds for universities will benefit women and men, respectively. Clearly, we need to know much more than we currently do about the gendered processes involved at the different sites at which power is exercised.

In the sphere of knowledge production, a gendered perspective on education highlights the important point that the concept of quality has to change to include not only engendering the content of knowledge but also the enabling conditions of learning how to learn in a safe, gender-sensitive environment. The politics of funding places too much emphasis on the quantitative dimensions of the budget as opposed to the nature of the programmes to be run, which ought more appropriately to include gender studies, women’s studies, programmes engendering the social sciences, the humanities, the sciences and technology, and so on. Getting new courses approved by the NUC is a long-drawn-out process. Funding for research ought to be determined by the nature of agreed programmes, not by a one-
to-one relationship with the student population, as happens at present. In this way, the case for increasing funds on gender research would be based on its own merits, as opposed to having to compete with hegemonic fields of study.

How have women contributed to policy issues in university education?

Women’s representation in higher-education management as well as in executive positions in staff and student unions is very poor. Elsewhere in academia, women have organized autonomously, sometimes with men, on a range of policy issues. NAUW has worked on the education of girls and women, and provided day-care centres in universities across the country. WIN stressed the need for research on women’s lives, recognizing gender and class as dimensions of division, as a prerequisite to social change. The Nigerian Association of Women Academics (NAWACS) focuses on improving the conditions for female academics in universities and raising awareness of the conditions affecting women. NWSN engages in building capacity for teaching and research in gender and women’s studies. All the above are national bodies. A number of university-based centres for gender and women’s studies have also been established.

Women’s ability to raise policy matters is shaped by a range of issues, including where they are placed in the social hierarchy and who they can get support from. The dynamics at a micro-level, not least of which include the differences among women, are particularly salient here. Even among female academic staff, women may be differentiated by status, experience, and age and sometimes by race and nationality, if not by ethnicity, and/or religion. It cannot be assumed that women will necessarily always work together across all differences that may be socially significant at any given time, any more than that men will do the same, simply by virtue of being men. In the male-dominated context of university departments and faculties, women’s ability to raise policy issues may be as likely to be a function of the support they get from gender-sensitive men in strategic positions, as it is from a reliance on women alone.

The flipside of women’s poor visibility at the top appears to be its subterranean complement, sexual harassment. Women’s awareness of the need to highlight those areas where it is clear that they are not visible – decision-making positions – seems to be relatively high. Women seem to be more reluctant to address those areas where their submergence is necessarily blurred, such as sexual harassment. Paradoxically, to talk of subterranean activities such as sexual harassment renders women more visible in male-dominated, often
hostile environments. This is threatening for women as well as men, in different ways. Some men react very negatively, if not with violence, when they feel threatened. When sexual harassment is discussed, it generally concerns male lecturers harassing female students. The sexual harassment of female academic or non-academic staff is rarely discussed.

What are the gender implications of existing reforms of the university system?

Multiple shifts are taking place in the conception of university education and, correspondingly, in the organization of the university system. From a functional conception of university education as serving national needs for high-level 'manpower', there has been a move towards viewing the university system as a free-market, deregulated system. For some actors, this is overlaid by a student-centred conception of education as 'lifelong learning', with a concomitant shift in emphasis towards distance learning. For the government, the concern seems to be about increasing access without a corresponding increase in federal funding. Within the university system, struggles for increased democratization without threats to federal funding continue. At the same time, private universities are being set up by predominantly religious bodies. The balance of these forces will significantly shape the possibilities and parameters for gender transformation of the university system.

Many of the most important sites for transformation are actually sites of intense power struggles. They include struggles over epistemic power in the domain of intellectual freedom and knowledge production, and struggles over the power to administer public universities as institutions in the context of serious underfunding. Also important are struggles in domains that are thought of as separate from the university system, all the while being intimately related to the capacity of the system to operate equitably and appropriately. These include struggles to eliminate violence against women as well as struggles for the freedom of information. In other areas more directly related to the university system, reform takes place through the application of more technical skills, such as strategic planning and improved financial management.

The gender implications of university autonomy are not often highlighted. What seems clear is that if universities were in a position to exercise greater administrative and financial autonomy, several scenarios would be possible. These could span diverse positions antagonistic to or supportive of gender equity, or contradictory combinations of both. Some of the ways in which gender equality
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could be advanced include research on gender that furthers theoretical development, gender-aware curriculum review and reform, gender planning and gender budgeting. Changing patterns of expenditure would need to take account of increased funds for gender research; new teaching requirements following the curriculum review accompanied by the purchase of appropriate books and journals; the needs of female students such as increased hostel accommodation; and the needs of female staff especially through staff development programmes. What is significant is that the possibility of promoting greater gender equity provides a platform for demanding change in this direction and for specifying some of the changes that could take place.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, a series of recommendations outline what needs to change in order to transform the university system in the direction of greater gender equity.

**Short- to mid-term**

The following short- to mid-term measures would work towards increased gender justice in the university:

**Students**
- Provide scholarships for as many female university students taking science and technology subjects as possible
- Provide scholarships for female and male university students in any field of study (other than science and technology) in the ratio of 2:1 female to male students.

**Gender-sensitive associations and networks**
- Strengthen groups engaged in gender and women’s studies
- Strengthen groups working to resist violence against women
- Strengthen groups advocating gender equity in the structures of universities and the university system.

**Policy debate**
- Open public debate on gender and the purposes of university education in the context of national development
- Create opportunities for ministers in the Ministries of Education, Women’s Affairs and Youth Development and Finance to hold dialogues on gender and university education with their counterparts in other African countries, such as Mozambique and South Africa.
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- Create opportunities for legislators in the National Assembly, particularly those in the House of Representatives and Senate Committees on Education, Women’s Affairs and Finance, to hold dialogues on gender and university education with their counterparts in other African countries, such as Mozambique and South Africa.

Research
- Provide funds for research on gendered change in institutions as well as social relations. Areas for fruitful investigation include:
  - comparative studies of universities in terms of women’s empowerment
  - histories, policies and practices of differing gender discourses justifying change
  - women’s roles in university education planning, policy formulation and implementation
  - longitudinal studies of universities and diverse forms of inequity
  - a gendered history of nation-building and the role of universities in it.

Legislative change
- Support advocacy on the proposed Bill on violence against women
- Support advocacy on the proposed freedom of information Bill.

Mid- to long-term
In the mid to long term the following measures are recommended to the federal and state governments, to the NUC on its own, to the NUC along with the Division of Higher Education in the Federal Ministry of Education and to the National Planning Commission, as well as to the universities themselves.

Actions for the federal government to carry out in conjunction with state governments:

- Increase the overall proportion of the national budget allocated to education in line with UNESCO’s recommendation of 26 per cent
- Strengthen the collection of sex-disaggregated data on staff, students and pupils across the education system
- Build cross-party support for a decade of rehabilitation for the whole education system, from primary and secondary levels through to university and other forms of higher education
- Plan the decade of rehabilitation alongside gender activists, female and male representatives of all stakeholders, including staff and student unions, educationists, the Parent-Teachers Association,
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industrialists, community members, education coalitions and interested others
• Call a stakeholders’ meeting to review the ten-year plan
• Allocate and disburse appropriate funds for the implementation of the plan arising from the stakeholders’ meeting
• Designate responsibilities to specific offices/individuals to facilitate monitoring and evaluation by stakeholders.

Support for the National Universities Commission:
• Support strategic planning for the NUC to facilitate its shift from a monitoring to a co-ordinating role
• Strengthen the functions of data collection using sex-disaggregated data on the following aspects of students and staff:
  Students:
  • enrolment
  • retention
  • performance
  Staff:
  • recruitment
  • promotion
  • productivity
• Strengthen the collation of data on gender reviews in universities (see below)
• Strengthen the inter-library loan system.

Support for the National Universities Commission along with the Division of Higher Education in the Federal Ministry of Education and the National Planning Commission:
• Carry out a review of management and administrative practices, with particular attention to which offices (specify whether male or female staff) carry out which practices and their effects on which categories of staff (specify whether female or male)
• Support capacity-building in:
  • gender analysis and organizational development
  • planning
  • budgeting, especially gender budgeting
  • financial management
  • policy formulation on a participatory basis
  • policy implementation
  • monitoring and evaluation of systemic operations
  • monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation
  • supervision of staff.
Support for universities:
• Develop sustainable fundraising strategies
• Strengthen gathering of sex-disaggregated data on all levels of students and staff
• Carry out a review of management and administrative practices, with particular attention to which offices (specify whether male or female staff) carry out which practices and their effects on which categories of staff or students (specify whether female or male)
• Support capacity-building for female and male senior management staff in:
  • gender analysis and organizational development
  • planning
  • budgeting, especially gender budgeting
  • financial management
  • policy formulation on a participatory basis
  • policy implementation
  • monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation
  • supportive supervision of female and male staff
• Carry out a gender review at all levels of the institution, including:
  • determining enrolment of female and male students
  • determining retention of female and male students
  • determining performance of female and male students
  • determining recruitment of female and male staff
  • determining retention of female and male staff
  • determining promotion of female and male staff
  • determining productivity of female and male staff
  • investigating sexual harassment of:
    • female students (undergraduate/postgraduate)
    • female staff
  • determining action to be carried out on the basis of findings on sexual harassment
• carrying out expenditure analysis by gender
• carrying out gender-aware policy appraisal
• disaggregating expenditure according to its impact on:
  • female students (undergraduate, postgraduate)
  • male students (undergraduate, postgraduate)
  • female staff (all levels of academic and non-academic)
  • male staff (all levels of academic and non-academic)
• Use the results of the gender review to develop a gender policy with provisions on:
  • student enrolment
  • student retention
  • staff recruitment
  • staff retention
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- staff promotion
- sexual harassment
- Carry out gender-aware curriculum reviews across departments
- Carry out gender-aware pedagogical reviews across departments
- Strengthen groups working on gender and women’s studies
- Support capacity-building for academic staff in gender-aware teaching
- Support capacity-building for academic staff in gender-aware research
- Increase funds for research on gender and women’s studies
- Form links with individuals and groups (for example, autonomous women’s organizations, independent research centres, non-governmental organizations) outside the university engaged in gender research and advocacy
- Draw on the expertise of individuals and groups outside the university to support capacity-building within the university in:
  - gender-aware teaching and research for academic staff
  - gender-aware research and supervision for postgraduate students
- Explore options for institutional linkages within Africa and internationally in gender and women’s studies for staff development and other forms of institutional strengthening
- Strengthen communication systems through the use of information and communication technologies
- Update and increase acquisitions (books, journals, newspapers, ‘grey’ literature) in gender and women’s studies
- Strengthen documentation across institutional units through the use of information and communication technologies
- Support staff development in self-identified areas for female staff:
  - senior academic staff
  - senior administrative staff
  - junior to middle-level academic staff
  - administrative and support staff
  - technical staff.

Conclusions

The process of carrying out this research study has raised more questions than it claims to have answered. The whole domain of questions – which questions are asked and which are not, how to answer those questions that are asked – is critical for systems and institutions that are ostensibly dedicated to producing knowledge, such as the university system. At the same time, the domain of knowledge production has been central to feminist epistemology and the development of research capacity in gender and women’s studies.
Feminist researchers have not always asked questions that are destabilizing for university systems. Yet change that transforms oppressive social relations cannot take place without destabilization. This whole nexus – the power relations that need to be changed, the nature of the change that is required and the kinds of questions that researchers ask and do not ask – is one that needs to be more critically explored, particularly in view of the authoritarian social and political contexts within which most African universities are located. Changing this state of affairs in ways that promote gender equality and social justice will not be easy. Yet the need for such change is ever more necessary to shape more appropriate orientations towards the future that are mindful of the present and the past. One way of doing so is by being more reflective and more critical about the way in which research is carried out.

Gender analysis such as this study has outlined the parameters of the university system in Nigeria and its development, highlighting gendered implications even where none were presumed to exist. In the process, attention has been drawn to precisely those things that are taken for granted within and beyond academia. They include the voice of authority being male, the producer of knowledge being male, the targets of knowledge being men, the majority of decision-makers being men. It is these assumptions that should be held up for scrutiny. What is ‘normal’ about this state of affairs? That this is the prevailing system across the country is not an adequate justification of its inequity. To insist that such a system is ‘gender-neutral’ obscures the weight of its capacity to set the norm. It is the masculinist processes and structures of norm-setting that ought rightly to be recognized as the problem, rather than simply recognizing the effects in terms of the absence of women in universities.

Simply increasing the numbers of women may mitigate the effects of male supremacy in academia, but it will not address the root problem. In short, increasing the numbers of women at all levels – students, academic staff, and non-academic staff – is necessary but not sufficient. Much more needs to be done, in the way of both research and advocacy, before the gendered transformation of the university system becomes a tangible possibility. More theoretical work on the concepts of gender, class, equality, citizenship, and the state – grounded in empirical analyses of the university system, universities as institutions and the social relations within which they are embedded – would certainly enhance our knowledge base. It should also help to refine strategies for transformation of the university system in the direction of greater gender equality and social justice.
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