

WITED 2019 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

COMMUNIQUE OF THE 1ST NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF WOMEN IN TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (WITED), ILARO CHAPTER

The 1ST National Conference Of Women In Technical Education And Employment (WITED), Ilaro Chapter held at the International Conference Center of The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro from 13th to 16th August, 2019 with the theme “WOMEN IN STEM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MANAGEMENT): REVAMPING TVET FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

The conference was formally declared open at about 13.00hr on Wednesday 14th August, 2019 by Arc. Olusegun Olanrewaju Aluko (Ph.D). The conference opening ceremony was chaired by Prof. Olubola Babalola (The First female Quantity Surveyor with Doctoral Degree in West Africa). The keynote address was delivered by Prof. Adenike Osofisan (The First female Professor of Computer Science in Africa).

The conference commanded the presence of the following dignitaries;

The National WITED coordinator (Princess Dr. Regina Elechi Amadi), Prof. Jumoke Bilesanmi Awoderu, Dr. Halira Babalola, Dr. Raheem Adisa Oloyo (Former Rector, Federal Polytechnic Ilaro), HRM Oba Kehinde Olugbenle (Olu of Ilaro & Paramount Ruler of Yewa Land) and his wife, Olori Olugbenle Abosede Omotayo, ably represented by Chief (Mrs) Yemisi Oloyo and Chief (Mrs) Adenike Akintade, respectively.

There were 390 participants from the academia, managers and policy makers with 107 scholarly papers presented cutting across; TVET, gender issues, enhancement of polytechnic education, engineering, pure and applied sciences and management.

There were 12 plenary sessions, 2 panel sessions, a health talk and poster presentations by 11 female students across all the schools in the polytechnic.

At the end of the conference the following challenges were highlighted;

- Students in TVET based institutions are ill-prepared with obsolete equipment, uncondusive environment and "analogue trained" teachers.
- The discriminatory funding policy of government inhibits the smooth running of TVET based institutions.
- Discriminations by the government, the society and even the institutions producing TVET based graduates are brought to fore.
- Women face a lot of difficulties in pursing science based and engineering courses because of poor access to funding, cultural and social prejudice.
- There is gross under-representation of women in science and technology teachers at all levels of education in Nigeria, that can serve as motivation and/or mentors for the girl child.
- Women scientists generally have unequal opportunities for employment. For example, only few organisations have child care supporting facilities for young women scientists during child bearing.

The following solutions were therefore proffered;

- Nigeria therefore, needs to start formulating policies to take advantage of both TVET and STEM in addressing the many challenges facing the country.
- The TVET programmes in Nigeria need to be better organised such that the youths in the society can be given the opportunity through TVET to learn basic skills and knowledge up to advance levels in a wide range of institutions and work settings.
- Every youth should in addition to their certificate be equipped with a sellable skill and entrepreneurship education that can be used to earn a living at the end of their education.
- There must be development of a high technologically driven sector that would provide the infrastructure, highly equipped TVET Schools, appropriate TVET curriculum, space and incentives principally for companies to produce TVET equipment.

- The Polytechnics in the country should be given the mandate to run BTech and higher degrees in technological courses
- The Polytechnics should stop discriminating against their products in favour of University graduates
- Most African countries lag behind in the generation of the human technological capacity on which further economic development is heavily dependent. Therefore, more girls should be persuaded to take up science and technology subjects in schools, so as to increase technological and vocational skills.
- ICT should be used for content delivery of science based subjects in primary and secondary schools in order to boost the girl-child participation in TVET
- Organisation of annual science fairs and quizzes at the state and national levels for both primary and secondary students, specifically targeting female, may create interest among them for higher scientific study. It is good practice to adopt a gender equity focus in career days, science fairs, competitions and information campaigns.
- Positive role models of female and male scientists from diverse racial/ethnic groups are to be interacted with the girl students for effective influence on them.
- Women should be provided with extended child care leave and allowed to attend conferences and seminars during maternity leave.
- There should be high level of awareness and sensitisation amongst women in TVET concerning programs and schemes run by the Government.

Conclusively, considering the highlighted challenges and the implementation of the solutions proffered, the women folk in particular and Nigeria in general would be taken out of the woods.