



Institutionalizing Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria: Lessons from Redeemer's University, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This Paper explores emerging trends and prospects for institutionalizing the interaction of gender, humanitarian and development studies in Nigeria's Tertiary Institutions. Using secondary data, this Paper draws key lessons from the two-track programmes pioneered by the Centre for Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies (CGHDS) based in Redeemer's University, Osun State. Relying on extant literature and experiences from the field as a pioneer student of the CGHDS, this Paper recommends that Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies should be adopted and institutionalized in all public and private tertiary institutions across Nigeria in order to expand the field of knowledge and practice, and reposition the academia to contribute to the Gender, Humanitarian and Development Sector.

Keywords: Gender; Humanitarian; Development Studies; Institutionalizing.

Introduction

Globally, there is increasing interest in gender, humanitarian and development issues in emergencies and humanitarian assistance. Gender studies emerged from the sphere of women's studies which focuses on studies on women, feminism, gender and politics (Wiesner-Hanks, 2019).





Gender Studies is a recognized discipline which integrates methods and approaches from other disciplines (Essed, Goldberg, & Kobayashi, 2009) According to Krijnen & van Bauwel (2015), a variety of disciplines often contribute to gender studies including literature, geography, history, political science, sociology, psychology, among others. Similarly, gender studies are also influenced by human development, law, medicine and other related disciplines. Humanitarian studies or education teaches a variety of subject areas from a humanitarian standpoint, and based on the assumption that people have an instinctive yearning to assist others which is centrally concerned with our shared humanity (Tawil, 2002).

Development studies evolved as an academic field of study in the middle of the twentieth century due to the growing fear about economic potentials for the third world after the colonial era. It has become an increasingly trans-disciplinary area which incorporates different social scientific fields (Abbott, 2003).

Conceptualizing Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies

Gender refers to the distinctive patterns of ideas, beliefs and norms which shape the way of life and relations of males and females as groups in society (Reeves & Baden, 2000); included in these patterns of ideas are expectations and characteristics, as well as aptitudes and likely behaviors of manhood and womanhood (Chauraya, 2012). Gender also refers to a range of socially-constructed roles and relationships, personality types, perspectives, behaviour, ethics, authority and control that the society assigns to both males and females on a discriminatory basis (USAID, 2007).

Gender is a critical component of humanitarian and development studies as it enhances an understanding of people's needs in a humanitarian and development context as well as takes into account and addresses the differences and inequalities that exist between men and women, boys and girls. Gender is an essential element of the lives of individuals, socio-economic development of the society, and those of the diverse responsibilities given to males and females by the society. Sustainability of policies on development can be hinged on gender mainstreaming in the areas of poverty reduction, family life, work, employment, health and nutrition, education, public life, decision-making and the environment (FAO, 1999).



Gender studies evolved from Women's Studies and merged into an academic discipline in the 1970s (Wiegman, 2002). Though gender studies developed from women's studies, it consists of both men and women studies and has been viewed from different dimensions: an academic discipline that focuses on gender identity, and linked social-political issues (Berg, 2020); A multidisciplinary educational field dedicated to analysis of gender identity and gendered representation (Chitadze, 2022); and the academic study of the aspects of gender or a discipline which views the world from gender perceptions (Anti-Feminist Praxis, 2017). Gender studies are a multi-faceted discipline which understudies the assignment of roles by the society to males and females, and how this assignment of roles engender socio-political and economic circumstances for both males and females. Gender studies examine the inequalities between men and women and the effects of such inequalities within societal settings. Gender studies examine how gender is used as an instrument for discrimination particularly in education, leadership and political processes as well as in distributing care, income, labour, and assets among males and females. Gender studies promotes gender viewpoints across all aspects of life (Ogundiya & Amzat, 2012).

According to Adebayo (2022), Gender Studies continues to grow as an academic field globally; such growth has been noticed both in the expansion of traditional disciplines and as an independent academic discipline with autonomous structure—research institutes and centres—for knowledge production. Gender Studies is an academic discipline which views the world from the standpoints of gender, gender identity and gendered representation as vital classifications of analysis; it enables academics and learners to study analytically the way gender influences identities, social interactions and the world (Kurebwa, 2020).

Bammeke (2011) believed that as an academic discipline, gender studies is an integral part of the social sciences; thus, due to its interdisciplinary nature, gender studies exists as a full-fledged department in the faculties of Arts or the Social Sciences where undergraduate and postgraduate students major in this area of scholarship. Gender Studies represent a comparatively novel field in humanism and social sciences, and has influenced key changes in academia and across the society. It is somewhat responsible for the outlook of the social universe in modern times, continues to outline its form, draws attention to gender inequalities, and designs methods to address injustice (Kurebwa, 2020).



Humanitarian Studies as an academic field of knowledge is an emerging field that is concerned with humanitarian crises caused by natural disaster, conflict or political instability and deals with the study of how humanitarian crises evolve, how they affect people and their institutions and societies, and the responses they trigger (Routledge, 2023).

Humanitarian education is an academic field which focuses on building leadership and capacities to save lives, promote dignity of the human person, and alleviate human sufferings. Humanitarian Studies is an academic multidisciplinary programme which studies the global impact of disasters, disease, poverty, conflict, human rights violations, and policies. The Interdisciplinary Concentration in Humanitarian Studies facilitates a systematized programme of study which focuses on the norms and practice of humanitarian response. Humanitarian Studies covers subject areas such as civilian protection, international humanitarian law, human rights, disaster response, coordinated aid, crisis dynamics, sector-based assistance, health and human security of internally displaced people, geopolitical context, monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, situation analysis, ethics and standards (Harvard School of Public Health, 2023).

Development studies is a trans-disciplinary division of social science which has become a popular subject area since the early 1990s, and has been most extensively taught and researched in emerging economies and post-colonial countries including the United Kingdom it evolved as a discipline (Kothari, 2019). Development studies covers a wide spectrum of subject areas including gender studies, community development, diaspora studies, ecology, economic development, governance, human rights, peace and conflict studies, human security, sustainable development, among others. According to Development Studies Association of Australia (2023), development studies is an integrative discipline comprising law, anthropology, sociology, gender, economics, political science and international relations, human geography, critical historical studies, environmental humanities, indigenous studies, decolonial and postcolonial studies, and some related technical and natural sciences.

Development studies is a trans-disciplinary subject focused on the emergence of nations from political, cultural, geographical, and socio-economic standpoints. It evolved as an academic discipline towards the end of the 20th century in the middle of intensified calls for third-world economies to establish themselves in the postcolonial period. Development studies combine arduous academic study with applied knowledge; students learn the importance of the nexus



between policy and practice, understand theoretical, and learn how to develop proposals and budget plans (Keystone Masterstudies, 2019).

Relevance of Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies

Gender studies contribute to an enhanced understanding of gender, and the modification of socio-cultural practices (Kurebwa, 2020). According to Ogundiya & Amzat (2012), Gender Studies enables students and practitioners to understand the meaning of gender and gender division of labour across societies; explains the variations in gender roles historically and culturally and factors responsible for such variations; examines the lived experiences of both men and women and how pleasant or unpleasant such daily experiences are; and treats gender as a critical factor that influences access to life needs – both material needs (such as food, shelter, educational and work opportunities, among others), and immaterial needs (such as justice, rights, leisure, freedom, among others). Anti-Feminist Praxis (2017) believed that Gender studies examine how the standards and mode of behaviour connected with masculinity and femininity emerge, and features of these standards and mode of behaviour in order to understand why such traits, norms and patterns exist. Gender studies also try to understand how the stereotypes among males and females emerge, their impact, and what factors influence such changes?

Humanitarian Studies or education mostly relates to providing support to people during emergencies or crises; it also focuses on building the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for individuals and communities to provide assistance among them. Humanitarian studies help to build the confidence and resilience of communities, individuals and associations to be capable and eager to help one another during emergencies. Humanitarian studies concern how humanitarian crises evolve, how they affect people and their institutions, communities and societies, and the responses they trigger (International Institute of Social Studies, 2022).

Humanitarian Studies has since the 1990s, evolved as an innovative and impactful field of study which leverages theories and approaches from other disciplines (such as international development or security) in creating its own distinctive class of scholars, methodologies, problem areas and inquiries that concentrate mainly on the policy, practice, theory and principles of relief during and after a crisis. Humanitarian Studies evaluate responses to conflicts, disasters, climate change, pandemics and other emergencies from different viewpoints, and leverage existing approaches from other disciplines in



dealing with such crisis situations which are often are multifaceted. Tufts University (2023) views humanitarian studies as a field of study which seeks to equip students with an understanding of both how these crisis environments evolve, how communities caught up in them survive and what role the international aid system plays in that survival. Humanitarian Studies builds the capacity of learners and practitioners on the theory and practice of humanitarian action as well as equips them with the knowledge, critical, analytical and research skills and core competencies grounded in practice to anticipate evolving and emerging humanitarian threats and manage widening vulnerability and crisis response (University College London, 2021).

Development studies examine current political landscape and their origins so as to empower the academia, policy makers and development practitioners to make improved plans for the future. The significance of development studies emanates from its diverse approaches in evaluating and addressing problems. An evaluation of the past, present, and the future helps to discover the causal relationship between cultural and political institutions and the lives of ordinary people across the globe. More importantly, its students and graduates propose and enact practical, real-world solutions designed to build fairer societies in which we all have the chance to live dignified and meaningful lives (Keystone Masterstudies, 2019).

Development Studies Association of Australia (2023) believed that development Studies is a trans-disciplinary field of research and education which views 'development' as its principal area of concern in dealing with the processes of socio-cultural, environmental, economic and political change as well as the individuals, institutions, practices, and knowledge involved in these development-related processes. Development Studies is concerned with the improvement and use of mechanisms, processes and policies of development in a systemized and purposeful manner. Development Studies also involves serious evaluation of the goals of development and their application towards enhanced policies, approaches and results.

Prospects for Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies in Nigeria's Tertiary Institutions – Lessons from Redeemer's University, Osun State, Nigeria

Globally, there is an emerging trend of combining two of three subject areas in academic and professional spheres. Leveraging key lessons learnt from the Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies introduced by Redeemer's University, Osun State, Nigeria. This Paper



however, proposes the adoption of a nexus approach that combines the three subject areas into one post graduate course in order to enhance academic scholarship and programming geared towards sustainable development.

The Centre for Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies (CGHDS) is a Centre of Excellence for the interdisciplinary study of Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies hosted in Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. The Centre was established to promote gender, humanitarian, and development studies, which have been globally accepted as strategies to attain development through teaching, research, policy advocacy, training, educational outreach, and partnership with the governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, and development partners. To deliver on its mandate, the Centre engages in innovative research, training, and production of knowledge that bring about: reduction in social inequalities, accelerate sustainability and build more inclusive, resilient, and secure societies; make governments and social institutions more accountable and responsible for the use of resources; ensure that 'no one is left behind' in the process of development; and ensures the promotion of standards of good practice in humanitarian responses for sustainable human development.

The Centre runs a twin-track programme: Gender and Development Studies; and Humanitarian and Development Studies introduced in February 2022 and approved by the National Universities Commission in September 2022 to be run as Post Graduate Diploma, MSc, MPhil and PhD Courses.

The Gender and Development Studies (GDS) track explores the intersectionality of gender and development at the levels of theory and practice, policy, and planning for development. The Humanitarian and Development Studies (HDS) track exposes students to the overall humanitarian system and the context of emergencies and disasters with multiple effects on livelihoods, food security, nutrition, forced migration, protection, and governance; and how these overlap with development, conflict management, human rights, and gender analytical frameworks. Professional courses are also mounted to build core competencies in such areas as Social Impact Analysis and Management, Humanitarian Services, Disaster Management, and Procurement and Supply Chain, amongst others.

The Centre commenced her academic programmes during the 2021/2022 session with 25 post graduate students, currently has a total of 43 students drawn from different walks of life, and has so far



contributed to scholarly works especially as regards gender-related programming, peace and sustainable development, humanitarian actions and innovative ways for addressing complex humanitarian emergencies, among others. Through the Programme run in a hybrid manner (virtual and classroom), the Centre builds a culture of empathetic leadership, social inclusion, accountability and community service among her students and staff. The 25 Pioneer Students of the Centre formed the Association of Postgraduate Students of Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies (APGS-GHDS) in June 2022 as a strategic platform for mutual learning and as a means of contributing to academic scholarship and gender-sensitive humanitarian and development practice across Nigeria and beyond.

Conclusion and Recommended Actions

Adopting and institutionalizing the Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies (GHDS) in Nigeria's Tertiary Institutions will help in grooming a new cadre of scholars, leaders, analysts and practitioners who can mainstream gender into humanitarian action and development planning, policy and administration in line with the sustainable development goals. Therefore, the National Universities Commission should incorporate GHDS as a General Studies Course for undergraduates and as an elective or mandatory course in its Post Graduate Curricular especially for social science students to enhance their knowledge and experience in the field. Scholars and Experts in the field of Gender, Humanitarian and Development Practice should be allowed to teach or run the GHDS programmes in the universities for optimum result and in order to regulate the contents of such programmes and avoid passing misconceptions to the learners.

Finally, there is a need to incentivize the Gender, Humanitarian and Development Sector through Innovative Research Scholarships, Travel Grants, Training, Community Service and Projects Grants in order to spur more scholarly works in the subject areas. Research outcomes and other deliverables from the GHDS programme should influence development planning, policy, administration and programming in line with the National development agenda.



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