

# **Gender Dimensions in the Teaching and Learning of Vocational Business Education in Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools**

**By**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## **Abstract:**

This study explores gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of vocational business education (VBE) in Nigerian senior secondary schools. The focus is on classroom participation of VBE boys and girls in commerce and economics class discussions in the schools. The study sets out to explore the VBE experience of girls, as compared with boys and was surprised to discover that although girls still experience gender inequality, they dominate classroom talk in many instances and have advantages from their role in their mothers' petty trading businesses.

The study is framed by three theories: schools' gender regime, social role and cultural capital theories. Qualitative case study methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and reviews of documents were adopted. Data was generated from four mixed sex high schools. Sixteen boys and sixteen girls were interviewed to gain understanding of gender issues in their schooling processes within and outside the classrooms. Four principals, four heads of VBE departments and eight teachers of commerce and economics were also interviewed. Twenty-four whole class observation sessions were conducted with VBE teachers and students in the two school subjects. Thematic analysis of the data undertaken focused predominantly on the ideas about gender that VBE teachers and students brought to their classroom interactions; gender in both informal and formal curriculum and gendered VBE classroom interactions as well as the gendered views about the business labour market.

The study conceives gender as a lived experience that males and females learned and produced through socialisation at home, in school and generally in the wider society. The study found that boys rarely dominate commerce and economics class discussions, especially in urban high schools where girls far outnumbered them. Moreover, it was discovered that school's physical and organisational environment, stereotyped curriculum contents, methods of teaching and teachers' and students' behaviour affected classroom participation in the two subjects. The study challenges simple understandings of gender inequality in schooling as it found that girls acquire cultural capital from domestic tasks and from the petty trading businesses of their mothers which helps to equip them with verbal communication skills, ability to work with teachers and others and interest in business subjects. This enables them to interact freely during their lessons in schools and to participate much more than the boys. Girls also outperformed boys in the two school subjects under study. This challenges research which upholds that boys tend to dominate every lesson. Boys in this study were often reluctant and quite reserved during class discussions; girls took more turns than them in the majority of the lessons. They were regarded by their teachers as highly conscientious. They were praised more by both male and female teachers and received more attention from them.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Gender in Vocational Business Education (VBE): The Case for Research in Nigeria**

The broader parameters of this study encompass a concern with the VBE experience of girls, how it compares with that of boys and the implications of this for the immediate socio-educational experiences of boys and girls in Nigeria. To be more specific, the study sets out to explore the interrelationship between gender and VBE classroom participation in commerce and economics lessons in order to investigate how schooling careers of VBE students in those subjects were gendered. The issue of girls' education has continued to be a focal point in political and academic discussions in Nigeria. According to Tahir (2004) "girls' education has so far received very low attention compared to that of boys" (p. 1). In agreement with this, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2003) points out that "girls' education has been given peripheral consideration in the country's national development and planning" (p. 5). Alele-Williams (2002) added that "this had resulted in the majority of Nigerian girls being illiterate, living in economic deprivation and living mainly in poor rural areas of their country" (p. 69). She further posits that "high illiteracy among Nigerian women leads to their marginalisation and exclusion from participating in most decisions which affect their lives and that of their children" (p. 69).

Alele-Williams argues that uneven distribution of wealth and limited access to education arising from gender inequality often throws a large majority of Nigerian women into situations where they suffer unequal treatment before the law, within the family and also suffer exclusion from and deprivation of opportunities for improving their lives. Research demonstrates that this situation is worsened because parents do not consider it necessary to send their girls to school because they will eventually marry outside their family and money spent on them is considered an economic waste (Ezeani, 2005). According to Adindu (2002) "Nigerian society looks at women basically as home managers whose major duties are to be faithful and submissive wives, caring mothers, nurses, traders, teachers as well as full-time farmers" (p. 85). These roles are played by women in Nigeria no matter the educational level attained because there is a culturally held belief that no matter how educated a woman may be, her duties will automatically end up in the kitchen (Tahir, 2004: 1). However, such negative beliefs about women's education are beginning to be challenged because Nigeria, like other countries of the world, has signed international treaties

on equality and human rights which address the education of their girls. International communities like the United Kingdom, USA, China and many other nations have sponsored the education of girls in Nigeria. International organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and UNICEF have taken up women's education in the country with a great deal of seriousness. Even so, change is slow for girls in poor and illiterate rural families where negative views about their education and their place are held doggedly.

This is the context for the present study which explores how gender affects the classroom participation of boys and girls during whole-class interactions in the two subjects in four mixed-sex senior secondary schools. I have a personal reason for wishing to explore gender issues at the senior secondary school level. When I was a secondary school student – and class prefect – in the late 1970s, I was aware that the girls in our class were usually neglected during our VBE lessons. It seemed that the teachers took girls' education for granted or as something that was not very important. Shortly after my graduation, in the early 1980s, I became a VBE teacher. As a teacher, I found boys dominated the Commerce and Economics classes. They were the students who asked and answered questions during lessons, highly conscientious, and were the ones that teachers actually enjoyed teaching while the girls, when they came to class, often remained silent. Later, I took up a job as a lecturer in a College of Education and observed similar trends in my new job. Puzzled about such an imbalance in the classroom participation of VBE boys and girls, when I enrolled on my Ph.D., I decided to write my research proposal on the gender imbalance in the lessons that I had observed, first as a student and second as a teacher. However, when I carried out the field work for this study in January, 2008, I was surprised that things had started to change. There were now more girls than boys in almost all VBE classes and it was girls who occupied the teachers' space and time in Commerce and Economics, asking and answering questions during the lessons much more than the boys. In contrast to the start of my teaching career, teachers now paid more attention to girls and often praised them more, too. I was also shocked by the ways some boys in VBE lessons reluctantly and unexcitedly responded to the teacher's questions during the lessons. I became curious about what was happening, and why it was happening now. So my interest in exploring how gender issues affect classroom participation of VBE teachers and students remained constant, despite what appeared to be a shift in where the imbalance lay.

School processes within and outside classroom experiences and the resulting educational outcomes constitute one set of determinants among many which work together to give boys and girls unequal educational experiences which, in turn, give them different educational outcomes and life chances. Social class, faith, race and ethnicity are acknowledged but not explored in depth (Peterson, 2006; Arnot and Weiner, 1987). Similarly, there are domains other than education through which aspirations are condensed and prestige conferred (Marchbank, and Letherby, 2007; Streitmatter, 1994) and again these implicitly rather than explicitly inform the analysis.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to provide a brief contextualising framework for the various issues which are pursued throughout the thesis. The discussion begins with a short historical account of gender inequality in traditional vocational education. This outlines the vocational education experience of boys and girls right from the informal/non-formal education era to the post-independence education period. This account demonstrates that gender inequality among boys and girls has been an age-old problem in the Nigerian education system. This inequality is not confined to education but has often been an overt feature in all fields of human endeavour - educational, economical, social and political. Therefore it is important to seek to address the differential educational experience of boys and girls in VBE classrooms in the Nigerian senior secondary schools because a wide range of issues in Nigerian education are gender-related. It is also relevant to briefly consider the nature of gender differences in the classroom participation experience of VBE boys and girls and this by implication will seek to explore the consequences of their vocational preparation experiences for useful living in their society and for further education (National Policy on Education (NPE, 2002 revised).

Even though a sociological interest in such concerns of VBE classroom interactions might be viewed as embracing the research project in terms of its substantive direction, they are not often subject to scrutiny within any attempts to unravel educative processes as they take place within the classrooms. Rather, the main concern has often been to explicate the intricacies of gender differences as they are incarnated in the routines and rituals of everyday life in the senior secondary schools. Thus in the present study, schooling processes which take place within the sphere of activity of classroom participation of boys and girls during VBE Commerce and Economics lessons are considered very important. On the basis of its methodological flexibility and potential for delving into the nuances of contextualised meanings and probing research participants' perceptual stances, a

qualitative case-study orientation was envisaged for the study from its beginning. This methodological impetus highlights all aspects of the investigation and the introduction continues with a consideration of the foci of the study as they are organised throughout the tens chapters. The section below discusses gender inequality in Nigerian vocational education: a historical perspective.

## **1.2 Gender Inequality in Traditional Vocational Education: A Historical Perspective**

It is helpful to set this study within a brief outline of the broader historical development of gender inequality in relation to Nigerian vocational education. This development has informal and non-formal dimensions. I discuss three phases of the development of vocational education in Nigeria in order to explore how gender inequality has shaped boys' and girls' vocational education experiences in the country. These phases are: Pre-colonial, Christian Mission education and the post-independence eras.

### **1.2.1 Informal and Non-formal Educational Aspects of Vocational Education (1600 – 1840)**

In discussing the development of vocational education in Nigeria, I wish to draw the reader's attention to the fact that in pre-colonial Nigeria, which is the era before the introduction of Western Education, Nigeria like other parts of the African Continent, had developed and perfected her system of vocational education, very similar to that of medieval Europe. According to Ekpenyong (1995: 25), "in the area of trade and crafts, black- and gold-smithing, basket making, painting and decorating and so on, were widely practised". He added that "traditional building technology was also well developed, as was evident from different styles of houses in different parts of Nigeria" (p. 25). According to him, vocational agriculture by way of farming, fishing and animal husbandry had gained ground in most Nigerian villages in response to increased population. In addition, during the pre-colonial era in Nigeria, people produced all what they wanted for the consumption. This implies that their wants were limited. Consequently there was little need for Commerce but as the society continued to grow, the needs of the people grew hand-in-hand with the need for exchange (Anyaele, 1991:12). Anyaele argues that this situation led to trade by barter, which helped to boost traditional vocational education in the country.

This traditional vocational education operated and still operates in two forms: informal and non-formal. In the informal education, children acquire vocational



knowledge and skills from their parents through participation in domestic labour. However, in the non-formal education, there was a conscious effort on the part of both master-craftsman and the learner to promote learning (Okoro, 2003: 56). The non-formal education in the Nigerian traditional vocational education era was identical to the apprenticeship scheme in other places. Therefore, in all the situations where the non-formal approach to traditional vocational education was used children, mainly boys were apprenticed to master craftsmen for a specified period of time (Okoro, 2003).

That informal and non-formal aspects of vocational education existed in Nigeria prior to the coming of Western education has been authenticated by educational historians (Fafunwa, 1974; Adesina, 1977 and Ekpenyong, 1995). According to Ekpenyong (1995: 65), 'education in certain skills was acquired informally in Nigeria'. He (Ibid) added that girls, for instance, were informally taught different aspects of home economics, namely, food preparation and child care (p. 67). According to him, when taken to the farms, girls were to observe how their mothers planted and tended vegetables, cocoa yam, and beans and in Ibibio land, such crops were and are still being regarded as women's responsibility (p. 70). In addition, weeding was and is still being regarded as women's responsibility (p. 71). Indeed, how best to weed without destroying the crops were shown to the young girls by mothers and the extended family female role models. On the other hand, bush clearing, the making of ridges and tending of yams were mainly the work of the men, and boys had to learn from their extended family male role models how these were done by accompanying them to the farm and closely observing the processes involved. Ekpenyong (1995: 77) further said that children were usually told to differentiate between the planting and harvesting seasons, and also the types of soils that would be suitable for certain types of crops and that punishments were sometimes imposed where a boy made a mistake in say planting or a girl made a mistake in weeding. Consequently, planting yam incorrectly or cutting the delicate part of the crop while weeding often attracted some punishment from the different extended family role models (Ekpenyong, 1995:77).

In addition, learning certain skills in pre-colonial Nigerian society was done non-formally (Ndahi, 2002). Ekpenyong (1995) also points out that trades, crafts and professions whose knowledge was restricted to certain families or communities were learned through apprenticeship by non-members of such families. They included carving, weaving, blacksmithing and medicine, and most parts of Nigeria were

particularly noted for some of those trades (Ekpenyong, 1995). For example, the Berom people of Plateau State in the North-central geo-political zone of Nigeria and their counterparts in Awka in Anambra in the Eastern geo-political zone were famous for blacksmithing. It is also pertinent to mention the Akwete weavers of Abia State and raffia makers of Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom State in the South-south geo-political zone of the country (Ekpenyong, 1995).

For effective learning of these and similar trades, boys from about the age of twelve were apprenticed to their relatives, family friends and master-craftsmen within the village or community whereas girls were taught domestic skills within the family (Olaitan, 1996: 126). The entry age of boys and the duration of the training did, however, vary from trade to trade. During the course of the training which could last from two to seven years, depending on the nature of the trade or profession, the apprentice lived and served the master's household while he was gradually being introduced to his intended trade (Okoro, 2003: 39).

Even though there were no school classrooms in Nigeria during that era and therefore no formal curriculum, traditional education was made up of the accepted vocational education experiences that suited the traditional socio-economic lives of the people (Mezieobi, 1996). Mezieobi further said its patterns of organisation were without any significant educational influences from the outside world. In addition, the majority of the indigenous population consciously or unconsciously learned informally or non-formally with or without the guidance of the adult or peer community members in order to adapt to the prevailing social life at the time for effective living (Adesina, 1977; Mezieobi, 1996). The vocational education curriculum was further determined by the traditional people's common ways of life accepted by community members, their events and by the human determinations to work against local or environmental problems which tended to frustrate the good life, survival and existence (Mezieobi, 1996).

The major aim of the informal vocational education was the development of knowledge and skills in line with traditional values (Fafunwa, 1974). This is because it was thought that the realisation of the cognitive and psychomotor objectives was obviously contingent on appropriate values and attitudinal socialisation (Mezieobi, 1996). Generally, the traditional vocational curriculum did not neglect any aspect of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains as it provided the indigenous people with the basic instrumental skills, knowledge, attitudes, value systems and

thought patterns that were deemed necessary for the survival and maintenance of the traditional society and its culture (Aina and Abdulla, 1995). The major goals of traditional vocational education were manual training, character building, political participation and spiritual and moral values for boys and girls (Ndahi, 2002; Fafunwa, 1974 and Olaitan, 1997).

The content of the traditional vocational education, though not in written form, was so diversified and many-sided that it covered all aspects of people's lives and very importantly, learning a vocation was considered part of the culture irrespective of one's tribe or region (Ndahi, 2002). As a result, people from different families, communities and regions specialised in certain trades (Ndahi, 2002). For example, Nigerian people in the mid-western region were known for brass work; in the eastern region, for their excellent work in woodcarving, in the northern region, for leather works, and iron casting was associated with people in the north central region of Nigeria (Ndahi, 2002).

The content of the informal vocational education curriculum was also integrative in nature because it had no place for knowledge or skills compartmentalisation but was concerned with the development of functional and practical knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and abilities which were meant to be applied in real life situations to successfully confront challenges, life problems and to better the lives of the Nigerian people (Mezieobi, 1996:20). Indeed, the traditional vocational education programme was society-sensitive because it reflected in its entirety, the ethos of the Nigerian society (Mezieobi, 1996:21). It was also mandatory and was universally directed to all members of the society who were to reap from it, given the knowledge and skills it inculcated in the recipients (Mezieobi, 1996:21).

With regard to the implementation of traditional vocational education, Mezieobi (1996) opined that it was predominantly a community affair. The teaching was not carried out in school classrooms but at home and in the master craftsman's workshop (Ndahi, 2002). The main teachers of traditional vocational education were either parents, extended family members, community members, and/or the master craftsmen (Obasi and Kanno, 1996). As learning a trade was a way to making a living; parents played an important role in determining what trade their boys and girls began to learn at a very early age so as to acquire what they would use to support their families when they grew up (Ndahi, 2002). Boys were exposed to different

trades outside their homes but girls were limited to activities within their homes to prepare them to be “good mothers” and obedient wives and sisters (Ndahi, 2002). This situation led to advantaging boys over girls which in turn resulted in gender inequality in the vocational education experience of boys and girls (Ndahi, 2002).

The nature of learning encountered anywhere during traditional vocational education determined the kind of instructional techniques that were appropriate to the given interactive process (Obasi and Kanno, 1996). The persuasive teaching-learning options were incorporated in the participative apprenticeship system in which the learners watched, observed, practised and demonstrated (Obasi and Kanno, 1996). Others included giving instructions, initiation into a guild, and value-laden story telling (Mezieobi, 1996). The key teaching style was mainly the socialisation of boys and girls into adult roles (Obasi and Kanno, 1996). Thus boys were socialised to the men’s role of providing protection, shelter and food for the family while girls were socialised to the women’s role of being homemakers (Gimba, 1996:60). The girls followed in the footsteps of women, and thus assisted their mothers in domestic chores: caring for the younger siblings, and accompanying them to the farms and local markets (Gimba, 1996). On the other hand, boys understudied adult men; accompanying them to the fields to rear animals, and to the forests during bush clearing and during hunting expeditions, whereas girls understudied their mothers’ roles (Gimba, 1996). Indeed, boys and girls were not given equal opportunities to acquire the requisite vocational knowledge and skills required for economic survival, but were immersed into the values and norms of the society in an inequitable manner (Audu, 1999).

As noted earlier, both boys and girls received unequal vocational education experience in that each person was prepared for the gender-specific functions of the society (Ndahi, 2002). There was therefore discrimination in the vocational education opportunities offered to boys and girls (Ndahi, 2002). What existed was the relative value and importance that was placed on the functions fulfilled by each sex in the society, which would later have profound implications for girls’ access to Western education (Ezeani, 2005). With regard to out-of-home vocational activities, women were engaged in the farming of food crops and in petty trading. Their earnings or contribution to the family income or national income from such activities has remained invisible to date (Nmadu, 2000). Even though most women were able to feed their children and husbands from the proceeds of the farm and petty trading, their husbands were still regarded as the breadwinners of their families (Ezeani,

2005). The reason why they were seen as such was because they cultivated cash crops that were readily translated into money (Nmadu, 2000). Nevertheless, sociologists have concluded that in traditional economies, women possessed some confidence in their ability to provide for the members of their households (Nmadu, 2000). In most polygamous homes, women have continued to provide for their own biological children without the husband's assistance (Nmadu, 2000). In short, the traditional education bestowed on each sex, reveals that it promoted unequal economic growth (Nmadu, 2000). Marriage obliged women to leave their parents' homes and live in their husbands' (Okoro, 2003). This nuance of male superiority, embedded in the culture, existed in traditional education (Okoro, 2003). According to Ndahi (2002), one gender group was favoured over the other, not because of the group's interests or abilities but rather because of the belief concerning what role the gender group should play in the Nigerian society. These practices continued for some years after the advent of Western education (Ndahi, 2002), and the extent to which the introduction of Western education has affected these values is discussed in the section below.

### **1.2.2 The Era of Christian Missionary Education (1845 – 1959)**

The mission schools were opened in Nigeria by Christian missionaries of varying denominational persuasions who came to evangelise the country (Fafunwa, 1974; Adesina, 1977; and Mezieobi, 1996). In addition to other authors, I draw mainly from the work of Leach (2008) on "African girls, 19<sup>th</sup> century mission education and the patriarchal imperative", as I found her discussion on the above-mentioned topic particularly helpful in exploring Mission schools. The major aims of the colonial schools were education for salvation, civilisation, and participation, as well as education for recreation and for vocation (Coates, 1994). Therefore the educational pattern during this era was humanist-oriented and attention was paid more to the non-economic aspect of education (Ezeani, 2005:104). The mission schools provided people-centred education and so, ethical and spiritual values were of primary importance and thus efforts were made to develop the basic education skills of reading, writing and arithmetic (Ezeani, 2005: 105).

The enrolment in these schools was heavily in favour of boys while the girls were left in the families to do domestic work (Ezeani, 2005: 105). This was as a result of the early belief that women and girls did not need the formal Western form of education (Ezeani, 2005:106). Ezeani also pointed out that many parents were using their money for title-taking rather than for the education of their daughters.

According to him, women's education was rejected, based on the idea that 'any investment in females was seen as a loss for the bride's family and a gain for the husband's'. Thus there were pressures to make greater investments in the education and training of boys because this investment would remain in the family, and might even serve to attract a better-suited bride (Ezeani, 2005:106). Nevertheless, as time went on, female schools were established too with the emphasis on domesticity, conjugal fidelity and selflessness (Leach, 2008). Here, Leach indicated that girls are being schooled into 'selflessness', and as such this is not person-centred. There is a competing explanations and analysis of colonial western education because Leach and Ezeani are offering two very fundamentally opposed interpretations of what mission education was all about. In this study, I came to realise that mission schools favoured boys at the expense of girls because boys' education was person-centred but that of girls was meant to channel them towards domestic sphere and I agree with Leach's opinion about mission schools.

According to Leach (2008:336) the development of the mission schools in British Colonial Africa in general and Nigeria in particular paralleled the advance of the Victorian age and the rise of British Imperialism, even though these schools started before Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 and before African countries became Crown colonies. Bryant (1979), cited in Leach, (2008: 336) points out that "the provision of girls' schooling reflected the socio-political changes taking place in Britain, changes which expanded educational opportunities for women while also imposing increasingly rigid views of their place in society, shaped by what was known as the 'separate roles' ideology". According to Leach (Ibid), "this required that women should focus their energies on the private and personal sphere of the home and family (with evangelical and philanthropic work being sometimes tolerated as an extension of their 'caring' role), while men occupied the public world of commerce, politics, civil administration, etc" (p. 336). She added (Ibid) that "this view of the gendering ordering of societies, already popularised in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe through the writings of Rousseau, provided the organising principle of formal education across the British Empire" of which Nigeria was a part (p. 336). Consequently, mission schools were to play a major role in promoting domesticity through a gender-differentiated curriculum in which girls were taught specific 'feminine' skills by female teachers, and preferably in separate schools (Leach, 2008: 337). "Central to this was the need for girls to learn to sew, as was also expected of working-class girls attending charity and Church schools in England at the time" (Purvis, 1989, as cited in Leach, 2008).

In agreement with the above, Izugbara (2004:22) opined that the mission schools were informed by the Victorian vision of the natural position of men and women in society and thus were typical sites for the production and regulation of gender identities. According to him (Ibid) in those schools, socialisation followed specific directions such that boys were taught civics, law and politics to equip them for leadership and control while education for women was directed towards sustaining their role as housewives, home-keepers and the inferior 'other'. Although this was not a stated aim, yet it could be deduced that the objective of girls' training was to channel them towards the domestic sphere. Consequently, they were taught sewing, domestic skills, nutrition, home economics and management (Leach, 2008 and Izugbara, 2004). Leach (2008) further pointed out that the curriculum of girls' schools prepared them to become obedient wives and dutiful mothers, thus disadvantaging them academically in relation to boys who were trained for leadership and control. For example, Leach (2008) shows that Christian missionaries drew on narrow ideals of middle-class femininity to create a new Christian identity for young African girls (p. 335). She added that central to the evangelising mission was the belief that girls needed to be educated to be suitable wives for Christian men, and this belief was to produce a curriculum infused with an ideology of gender bias and differentiation which privileged male interests and perceived male needs (Leach, 2008: 335).

The mission schools were first opened in southern parts of Nigeria notably Lagos, Calabar, Warri, Benin and Onitsha (Ndahi, 2002 and Ezeani, 2005). Because the northern part of the country did not welcome the Christian missionaries in their region, both men and women in those places did not possess the basic skills in so far as Western education was concerned (Ezeani, 2005:110). While missionary/Western education was taking firm root in the southern part of Nigeria, the contrary was the case in northern areas where the commitment to Islam led the northerners to reject Western education (Ezeani, 2005). Their resistance to Western education marked the beginning of educational disparities between southern and northern Nigeria. As western education continued to grow rapidly in the south, east and west of Nigeria (Okooboh, 2000), because of the Islamic religion it was slower in the northern part of the country where school enrolment was predominantly for boys (Okooboh, 2000). This is the reason why the present study decided to conduct the research in Plateau State, one of the states in the Northern Nigeria to uncover whether or not things have changed in the zone.

According to Fafunwa (1974), there were a total of 142 primary schools and over 35,000 pupils in the south in 1912, but fewer than 50 primary schools having less than 1,000 pupils in the north. This disparity, though narrowing today, has created two different pictures of educational opportunities within the same country. Indeed, the imbalance is greater in women's education in northern Nigeria because the country's Islamic tradition restricts girls and women to the home (Bakari, 2009). Furthermore, socialisation in the colonial schools was aimed at denying or forbidding the struggle over gender identities as gender was taken as a given which could not be negotiated (Izugbara, 2004). The false binary of male and female was taken as the natural order and proper gender behaviour and identity was taught in gendered terms (Izugbara, 2004). Heterosexual teachers, who were expected to lead exemplary sexual lives, disciplined students who did not fit the sexual 'graph' of the colonizer (Izugbara, 2004).

One significant facet of the colonial curriculum was that genuine efforts were made by the missionary bodies and colonial masters to implement it (Mezieobi, 1996). Teacher effectiveness was enhanced by the availability of a conducive teaching-learning environment, and curriculum resources were the agents of promoting discipline in the school and the society (Mezieobi, 1996). The colonial curriculum cohered school administration, teachers and student discipline (Mezieobi, 1996).

Since Vocational training was one of the main aims of the colonial education curriculum, industrial and vocational courses were introduced a few years later (Ndahi, 2002). Courses in carpentry and metalwork were then taught to boys but not girls while cooking, household management, tailoring were taught to girls and not boys (Ezeani, 2005 and Ndahi, 2002). This was because by that time, it was inconceivable to think of a female as a technician. Therefore the enrolment in the technical education courses was strictly boys while girls were enrolled for sewing and household management (Ndahi, 2002). The separation of industrial and home economics education for boys and girls was designed to conform to the pattern of the traditional schooling which existed before the introduction of Western education. Graduates of the new educational programme became catechists for the churches, teachers for schools, and clerks, messengers and administrative assistants for the trading companies and public services (Fafunwa, 1974; Adesina, 1977). These salaried posts were more attractive and suited men more than women since the jobs were outside the home. To receive the Western education which was the passport



to salaried posts, the recipients had to leave home for schools which were at a distance from their homes and as such, that was one way of privileging the boys over the girls (Leach, 2008). Consequently, schooling in the Christian mission schools also favoured the already outgoing males and discriminated against females whose traditional role was in the home. This situation gave men an advantage in education over women and ultimately created fertile ground for the subordinate position women occupy today in the socio-political economic life of Nigeria (Leach, 2008). The next section highlights the post independence era in Nigeria.

### **1.2.3 The Post-Independence Education Era (1960 - 1980).**

The post-independence education era began in October 1960 when the enrolment pattern in almost all vocational education subjects in Nigeria was still heavily biased in favour of boys (Ezeani, 2005:106). This was as a result of the belief that a technician was supposed to be a male who could repair mechanical or electronic devices or products (Ndahi, 2002). Ndahi argues that it was not conceivable at that period to think of a female as a technician. Consequently, enrolment in some vocational education subjects was strictly for boys while sewing and home economics were solely for girls. As the years went by, shorthand, typing and book-keeping were taught to girls (Nwaokolo, 1994:5). The separation of certain vocational education subjects for boys and girls was done for the obvious reasons of equipping them with different vocational knowledge, skills and experiences for different work in the business labour market (Nwaokolo, 1994:23). He (ibid) opined that boys were prepared for well-paid jobs while girls were prepared for lowly paid jobs.

I was educated, including training as a teacher, throughout this period and this gives an interesting perspective on the history of gender inequity. In sharing my experience of both the informal vocational education I acquired from my parents and society and the formal VBE that I received in school classrooms, I hope to illuminate some of the complexities of gender inequality in Nigerian vocational education.

### **1.3 My personal life history as a Vocational Business Student and Teacher**

I was born in Akpa-Utong Village in the South-South Geo-political Zone of Nigeria in October 1961. My parents were Ibibio by tribe and were Christians who attended church services every Sunday and so did we their children. They were peasant farmers and had received no formal education. In addition, my father was

the Chief of his clan and so his biggest task was to see that all his people lived together in peace, unity and progress. My mother was a committed farmer and trader. She often made sure that we her children went with her to the farm every Saturday morning and spent at least six to seven hours there working. On the farm, we the boys often tilled the ground while she and my only sister would sow the seeds. When we finished and returned from the farm, she normally asked my sister to help to cook, serve meals and afterward help her to wash dishes and clothes. When she had completed that, my mother would go with her to the evening market to sell some farm produce and buy food for the family.

As a faithful church member, my father married only my mother and had five boys and one girl. I am the second child and eldest son in the family and the one who has been educated to university level. All my other siblings had formal education up to secondary school and college of education level. Even though my parents were not educated, it was their prayer that all their children should be so. However, because of poverty, it was impossible for all of us to receive western education at the same time. My parents therefore decided that my sister who was the first child, born before me, should remain at home to help my mother with domestic labour while I, the eldest son, should go to school first. In order to generate money to pay my school fees, domestic animals like sheep, goats and some chicken were sold.

Although from a monogamous family set-up, we have aunties, uncles, cousins and other relatives who make up an extended family system. These relatives normally visit us from time to time with food and drinks and by the time they returned, my father often gave them chickens and clothes. The extended family members normally took us as their children and taught us the things that they expected us to learn. So our days as boys were full of excitement as we often had lots of time at our disposal to play football along the foot path leading to our family compound. When it was evening, we returned home, ate our meal and went to bed.

When I was five years old, I started attending our village primary school from 1966 and completed it in 1972, a period of six years. As my parents were peasant farmers, there was no money for tuition fees for me to start secondary school the following year. Therefore I had to spend two years at home assisting my parents to farm in order to raise money to pay the fees. In September, 1974, I started attending a coeducational secondary commercial school, located in a rural community where I was taught Accounts, Commerce, Economics, Shorthand, and Typewriting, in addition to English Language, Mathematics, and other subjects. In this school, there

were more boys than girls and during class discussion I remember that we the boys often talked much more than the girls. Therefore we were able to attract more of our teachers' attention than them. Again at this school, I was good at my school work and as a result, I had the opportunity to benefit from a scholarship award from my state government which was often given to brilliant students based on their internal exam performance. It was this award that helped me to complete my secondary education in 1979. At the school, my teachers liked me because I usually took first position in all the terminal examinations and I had a good relationship with almost all the students and teachers.

As it was not easy to get another scholarship to further my education after my secondary schooling in 1979 - I took up employment as an auxiliary teacher in the State Secondary Education Board where I was posted to a village secondary school. On my arrival, the school principal, who was male, asked me to teach commerce and economics. Thus from 1980 to 1981, I taught these two VBE subjects in classes four and five. Again in these two classes, I discovered boys were the majority in the two subjects. Moreover, the girls in those classes often remained silent while the boys did the talking. This was my first teaching experience and at that time, I did not know what it meant to teach. Thus, I tried to emulate the good example of my teachers at my alma mater. However, I did not really know how to treat the boys and girls equally in class and consequently, it is most likely that I allowed, and was unaware of a gender imbalance to prosper during class participation. After teaching in that school for a year and half, I was able to save money to go to polytechnic to study for the national diploma in business administration between 1981 and 1983. There, the programme was overwhelmingly dominated by young men who were highly vocal as would-be managers. However, there were a handful of young women too. There was a striking difference between the girls that were my classmates in secondary school and those in the polytechnic. At the polytechnic the girls dressed and talked like men. It might be because they were training to be managers. Unlike the girls in my Commerce and Economics classes of the rural secondary school, the girls in the business administration programme of the polytechnic were very assertive and very bold. However, as for myself, life there was very tough as I neither had enough money to feed myself nor to buy books. In spite of everything, through the support of my poor parents, I was able to complete the course with an upper credit. Indeed, I was the best graduating student in my department.

On leaving the polytechnic, I took up a job as a company sales representative and my salary was not fixed but based on whatever sales that I made. This meant that if there were no sales, then I would earn nothing for the week or month. This compelled me to leave that job for a teaching appointment with a private commercial college, located in an urban centre in September 1984. In this school, boys outnumbered girls in the ratio of two to one. The subjects offered included Mathematics, English language, Commerce, Economics, Book-keeping and Accountancy, Shorthand and Typewriting, Office Practice, Secretarial duties and Business Management. The proprietor of the school who was a woman asked me to teach commerce and economics. In the classrooms, the boys often dominated classroom talk as well as misbehaved and attracted my attention and that of the other classmates but the girls were quiet and well-behaved. Moreover, the girls were more hardworking than the boys, even though they remained silent during class discussion. In this school, I worked so hard that the owner of the school decided to appoint me as acting principal, the position which I held until 1986 when I left for a B.Ed degree in vocational business education.

During my first degree programme, I was able to land another scholarship award from my local education authority covering my tuition fees only. In the B.ED programme, men also outnumbered women but the few women in our class were experienced vocational business educators who had been teachers for some years just like me and as such they were highly vocal. In order for me to obtain money to support myself, I started organising evening classes for secondary school students who lived near my university for a monthly charge of five naira (less than 20p) per student. I taught them business subjects and because the fee paid was low, many parents sent their children to be taught. This evening teaching later gave birth to a fully-fledged commercial college in 1987. At that point in time, I was able to employ other student teachers on a part-time basis to teach all the courses offered in similar colleges. When I completed my BEd degree in July 1989, my vocational training centre was where I took up my first appointment as principal. After some months, I felt I could secure an appointment in a tertiary institution while I left my school in the hands of another person as the principal. In order to achieve my goal, I applied to a number of Colleges of Education in the country. Fortunately, I was employed by one of them in November, 1990 as Assistant lecturer, but through hard work and promotion during my twenty years of working with the college, I have now been promoted to the rank of a chief lecturer. In addition, after teaching there for two years, I decided to study for my master's degree in vocational business education at

the University of Nigeria, Nsukka on a two-year part-time programme, as my employer did not accept my taking it up a full-time basis there. During the course of this study, the academic staff of Nigerian universities embarked on a series of strikes, and as a result, the programme lasted longer than anticipated. Consequently, instead of completing it in 1994, I was able to do so in 1997.

As an individual, my participation in both informal and formal vocational education has connected my interest and ability to it as lived experience, which in turn helped me to cultivate a great interest in the teaching of vocational business courses, first in senior secondary schools and presently in a Nigerian college of education. I have an enormous regard for gender equality in the classroom participation of boys and girls in VBE subjects. This in turn has given birth to the thesis you are reading now because it is born out of my classroom experiences in teaching such material for over twenty years in a variety of places. During those years, I considered the issues of gender imbalance during classroom participation in relation to the lives of my students. In doing so, I came to believe that students' ideas about gender affects VBE classroom participation in certain ways. Indeed, like other VBE teachers and students, from the prevailing social background I have been influenced by the dominant culture. Just like the majority of them I was a Christian belonging to the leading ethnic group; while a few of them were Muslims and a handful of others were traditional religious practitioners. As Christians, we believe that both men and women should be given fair and equal treatment at all times. Moreover, women and girls should be given equal opportunities to maximise their potential through schooling (Alele-Williams, 2002). Despite these beliefs, in practice, girls seemed to be denied equitable treatment in education matters (NCCE, 2003). Certainly, as a Christian, from the South-South Geo-political Zone, now living and working in the North-Central Geo-Political Zone, I belonged to the dominant religious group in the College of Education, and I am aware of the gender imbalance in our educational practices. I am a chief lecturer and indeed a high-ranking member of staff, and I therefore feel that this is the right time for me to contribute my quota towards gender imbalance in classroom participation of VBE boys and girls in the case study schools. Indeed, my students' ideas about their gender identities appears to be affected by socialisation, religion and other social issues that tend to impact on classroom participation during whole class interactions in Commerce and Economics class lessons.

## **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

There is little or no research completed on gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of vocational business education (VBE) in Nigerian senior secondary schools. Therefore this study will focus on gender in VBE classroom participation with specific reference to Commerce and Economics class discussions. According to research studies in the UK, the ways in which boys and girls display their gendered identities impacts significantly on their participation and engagement with school, both in terms of their performance and in the way they behave and relate to others (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Gilbert, 1998, cited in Lori, 2001). Indeed gender has been shown to be a significant factor determining the participation and engagement of boys and girls in schooling. It is therefore reasonable to assume that similar process will be going on in other contexts, but this has not been widely researched in Nigeria. Therefore, the VBE boys' and girls' ways of displaying their gender within and outside Commerce and Economics lessons appears to affect classroom participation during the teaching-learning process. Nevertheless in the Nigerian VBE classrooms, gender has not been recognised as a feature that needed to be catered for during whole-class interactions, and as such, it is often ignored by both teachers and students during class discussions. However, since gender is a part of their personal identities, a pervasive aspect of their cultural life, a principle of social life and a relational concept (Wood, 1996:8 – 10), indeed, the totality of their everyday lived experience, the VBE teachers and their students are not able to leave it behind when they enter their school classrooms. Thus gender becomes a part of the everyday life of the school. Consequently, it is important to create awareness among VBE teachers and their students so that they understand how negative ways of acting out their gender identities could affect their studies and therefore take steps to address gender in their teaching-learning process.

## **1.5 Outcomes of the Study**

### **1.5.1 Information on gender in Classroom participation**

The literature on classroom participation of boys and girls in the Western Nations indicates that boys usually monopolise class lessons while girls remain silent (Paechter, 1998; Francis, 2000; Younger et al 1999; Howe, 1997; Pellegrini and Blatchford, 2000; Skelton and Francis, 2003). Is this finding worldwide or limited to certain places?; would a study of gender in classroom participation in Nigerian VBE commerce and economics produce the same finding as we have in the Western literature? It was anticipated that the current study could bring to the fore

the ways that the students' gender affects the teaching and learning of VBE commerce and economics in the Nigerian senior secondary schools. Literature from Nigerian studies shows that gender impinges on student talk during class discussion as a result of early socialisation and dominant culture (Animasaun, 2000; Archibong, 2001). However, there is no information about gender in VBE classroom participation in commerce and economics in the Nigerian senior secondary schools. A study of this nature is very important because it would help to bring out issues on gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of VBE and would therefore facilitate decisions concerning the steps to take to fruitfully achieve gender equality during VBE classroom interactions in such schools.

### **1.5.2 Contributing to National and International Literature on Gender in VBE**

There is a plethora of research literature on gender and science education in Nigeria, but it seems there is no specific information about gender in the teaching and learning of vocational business education (VBE) in Nigerian senior secondary schools. Commenting on the latter, authors like Williams and Yeomans (1994) pointed out that business education has been a neglected area of research because academic commentators have paid little attention to the business education curriculum in schools and further education colleges. Even though their comment was made about business education in the UK, it has implications for vocational educators in other nations of the world. This study therefore seeks to make a contribution towards both national and international literature in advancing our understanding of gender issues in the classroom participation of boys and girls during the teaching learning of VBE courses in Nigerian senior secondary schools.

### **1.5.3 Teacher education and training**

The study ascertained that VBE teachers in the schools studied had a very limited understanding of the concept of gender because they were not taught anything about gender all through their teacher education programme. As a result of lack of training on gender during their teacher education, the teachers felt that it was not an issue in VBE commerce and economics class discussions. The teachers further claimed that they saw all of their learners merely as students and treated them equally; and therefore did not differentiate between boys and girls. When asked about gender during their training, they pointed out that they did not study it or any associated courses. An examination of the content of the teacher education programme shows a lack of gender-related courses (Federal Republic of Nigeria - NPE 2002 revised). As VBE teachers were not taught anything about gender issues

during their teacher education, they tended to promote gender inequality during their lessons. This study therefore would suggest the inclusion of gender training in teacher education programmes in Nigeria.

#### **1.5.4 Towards making VBE classroom environments more gender-sensitive**

The study reveals that the school and classroom environments are particular contexts which affect the classroom participation of boys and girls in VBE commerce and economics class discussions. In his report, Bakari claimed that the physical school and classroom environments were not conducive to girls' education (Bakari, 2009). This is because they were often overcrowded and lacked sufficient seats for the number of students participating. Consequently, boys often rushed in first and occupied all the back seats and the periphery while the girls often sat on blocks in the front and middle rows to receive their lessons. Again, the seating arrangement shows that girls sat with girls and boys with boys (Bakari, 2009). Thus, there was a clear homo-sociability in the VBE classroom social network. According to Roberts (1988), homosocial means the seeking, enjoyment, and/or preference for the company of the same sex. The present study is an attempt to make the VBE classroom more gender-sensitive so that boys and girls can participate on an equal footing in class discussion.

#### **1.5.5 Promoting the Utilisation of qualitative research on gender in class participation**

The past research studies in teacher-student relationship in the Nigerian classrooms utilised quantitative research. This is because not much is known about qualitative research. This study is one of the few qualitative research on VBE classroom participation of boys and girls in the Nigerian senior secondary schools.

According to Jupp (2006) qualitative research investigates aspects of social life that are not amenable to quantitative measurement. Therefore, qualitative research uses a variety of research methods to focus on the meaning and interpretation of social phenomena and social processes in the particular contexts in which they occur (Jupp, 2006). Therefore, this study would encourage the use of qualitative research in gender, education and other social science research in my country through research projects, conferences, workshops and seminar papers.



## **1.6 Focus and Organisation of the Thesis**

The study explores gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of Vocational Business Education in Nigerian senior secondary schools. The focus of the study is on the interrelationship between gender and VBE classroom participation of boys and girls in Commerce and Economics lessons in four mixed sex high schools in Plateau State of Nigeria. Specifically, the study discusses the ideas about gender that VBE teachers and students brought to their classroom discussions and how such ideas tend to affect teacher-student and student-student interactions during lessons. It also highlights both the formal and informal curriculum in the case study schools and discovered that it was highly gendered. The study further explores the perceptions of VBE teachers and students about the business labour market which also was discovered to be highly gendered. Whilst these appear at specific stages within the investigation of gender differences in the classroom participation of VBE boys and girls, they are not woven as explicit threads throughout the fabric of the analysis. Rather, as suggested earlier, emphasis is placed on how schooling processes are gendered with specific reference to classroom participation in Commerce and Economics class lessons. At this point in time, a look at the internal structure and logic of the discourse, as particular facets are presented and pursued, may enhance an appreciation of the sequence of issues as they are considered throughout the research project.

Chapter 1 begins with an introduction to the study and then discusses a brief historical development of gender inequality in Nigerian vocational education. It also discusses my personal history as a VBE student and teacher and highlights the statement of the problem, and the expected outcomes of the study. It concludes with the focus and organisation of the thesis.

Chapter 2 discusses the Nigerian context of the study. It provides some background information on how religion, administrative structure and gender profile, gender and social institutions and gender in formal and informal employment sector tend to impact upon gender issues in the country. It further examines the Nigerian education system and sheds some light on gender and secondary education in Nigeria where the research is based. In order to explain some gender issues in relation to Nigerian vocational business education, the chapter traces a brief historical development of VBE in Nigeria. It also points out that the research was carried out in Plateau State, Nigeria where citizens appeared to be adamant about gender issues.

Chapter 3 explores the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study. It draws from the schools' gender regime, social role, and cultural capital theories to understand, explain and illuminate the qualitative data generated in four mixed-sex senior secondary schools. Gender Regime helps me to think about the structural and contextual issues raised by the study; Social Role theory helps me to think about how the respondents are socialised into the context while the theory of Cultural Capital helps me to think about how those respondents operate within the context.

Chapter 4 sets out the methodology and methods used in the study. It discusses the nature of the research which prompted the use of qualitative case study methodology and the rationale for the adoption of this approach. The chapter also shows reflexivity on my position as the researcher in conducting and analysing the study.

Chapter 5 discusses in brief the schools' gender regime which was developed by Connell (1996). It discusses the key elements of that gender regime such as power relations, gender division of labour, emotional relations and symbolic relations. It further discusses school and class environments in the case study schools. The notion of cultural capital in relation to gender regime was used to frame the study.

Chapter 6 focuses on the ideas about gender which emerged from observation and discussion with respondents in the case study schools. It further considers major themes such as how gender identities and stereotypes influence on classroom participation, home influences on gender identity, as well as other markers of gender such as dress, first names and students' social networks. The chapter also discusses the VBE teachers' ideas about gender at these schools.

Chapter 7 examines both the informal and formal curriculum at the case study schools and demonstrates how all the schools' organisation either explicitly or implicitly gendered. It also reveals that VBE curriculum contents reflect commercial and economic activities often undertaken by men and women.

Chapter 8 explores how ideas about gender affect VBE classroom interactions of boys and girls in the four case study schools in terms of teacher-student and student-student interactions. It shows that the VBE boys were reluctant to participate in Commerce and Economics lessons while the VBE girls were compliant, obedient and quite ready to participate in their lessons. The chapter begins with the VBE patterns of classroom participation and teacher-student

interaction. The next discussion was on unequal attention to boys as well as the teachers not taking some boys and girls in their classes seriously. The chapter goes on to discuss biases in classroom communication, methods of teaching, and student-student interactions, including the VBE boys' and girls' interactions during playground activities.

Chapter 9 provides information about the perceptions of VBE teachers and their students on business labour market as being highly gendered. It highlights that the study of Commerce equips students with knowledge and skills leading to careers in the secretarial, clerical, and petty trading as well as skills for managing micro small enterprises. This subject tended to be dominated by women and girls. On the other the study of Economics equips the students with live skills leading to professional and managerial skills and it tended to attract a greater mixture of boys and girls.

Chapter 10 begins with the summary of key findings and they include the following: It was discovered that the ideas about gender which the VBE teachers and their students brought to their Commerce and Economics classroom interactions stemmed from the different gendered experiences that had shaped their everyday lives. The study also found that VBE boys rarely dominated classroom talk in all the schools observed and both the formal and informal curriculum in those schools were gendered. It was further discovered that the perceptions of the VBE teachers and their students about the business labour market were highly gendered. These research findings have implications for practice, policy and teaching and for research. The chapter also discusses the strengths of the study and contributions to the field. It includes by enumerating the limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further research in the field of vocational business education (VBE).

## **Chapter 2: The Nigerian Context of the Study**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The role of this chapter in the thesis is to explore the broader contexts within which my case studies are located and to provide the readers with some basic facts about the country context: her geography, climate, rivers, religion, administrative structure and gender profile, gender and social institutions, gender in the formal and informal sector employment as well as states how female economic activity change with socio-economic status (SES). In addition, it distinguishes between cultural, social and economic capital and discusses how petty business trading activity in the family provides cultural capital to girls and how that is later translated into economic or educational capital. The chapter also explores how gender differentiates across different ethnic, religious, urban/rural and SES groups in the traditional Nigerian society and the interaction of gender with these social identities. It further explores the country's education system and shed some light on the historical development of Nigerian vocational business education (VBE) as the subject area being researched, as well as discusses about senior secondary school students who go into this programme: their sub-choices and prior examination results. Lastly, it highlights senior secondary school students' enrolment by gender through references to national and state level data on retention across levels by gender and concludes by examining what the VBE students do after they completed senior secondary schools in Nigeria.

### **2.2 Background Facts on Nigeria**

The country called 'Nigeria' first became a single political entity under the British Empire in 1914 when Lord Lugard, a British colonial administrator amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates to form what is now known as the Republic of Nigeria. The name 'Nigeria' was coined by Flora Shaw, the wife of Lord Lugard after the Niger River that runs through the country (Inyang, 2003). However, Portuguese explorers were the first Europeans to reach Nigeria, giving Lagos its present name after the Portuguese town of Lagos in the Algarve (Obot, 2004: 160). Nigeria gained its independence from Great Britain on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960 and the new republic incorporated a number of peoples with aspirations to sovereignty (Obot, 2004: 160).

#### **2.2.1 Geography, Climate, Rivers and Religions**

Nigeria is one of the countries in West Africa that occupies an area of 923,769 square kilometres and shares land borders with Niger in the north, the Gulf

of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean in the south, Cameroon and Chad in the east and the Republic of Benin in the west. In 2006, the country's population stood at 140,003,542 (NBS, 2008) and there are more than 250 ethnic groups who speak more than 400 languages, while the three largest and most influential ethnic groups in the country are the Hausa, Igbo and the Yoruba (Bakari, 2009). Nigeria is also blessed with vast oil reserves, solid minerals, forests, water resources and rich human resources.

Nigeria lies between the equator and the tropic of Cancer, which means that its weather is often very warm throughout the year. Specifically, there are two main temperature regions, the tropical region in the South, which usually has temperatures around 38°C, and the subtropical region of the North, where temperatures range between 32 and 38°C. There are two main seasons: the rainy season from June to September in the North but April to October in the South, while the dry season, usually with no rain and a period of very high temperature, runs for the remainder of the year.

The two main rivers that flow through Nigeria are the Niger and the Benue. The confluence where the Niger meets the Benue is at Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria. However, there are very many other rivers and a part of the Atlantic Ocean borders on Nigeria.

Religious faith is an important aspect of the daily lives of the Nigerian people, affecting the laws and how the people think and act. There are two main religions in the country: Christianity and Islam. The Christian population in Nigeria is approximately 45 per cent of the population and that of the Muslims is also 45 per cent. Traditional and other religions as well as those who are not religious make up the remaining 10 per cent.

### **2.2.2 Administrative Structure and Gender Profile**

Nigeria has a history of military dictatorship, civilian corruption and ethnic tension (Inyang, 2003). The nation is currently having another elected civilian government, which is faced with the challenge of building on the recent work of former democratic leaders who made efforts to revive the economy after the many years of military rule that ended in 1999. Nigeria operates a federal system of government with 37 administrative units that are divided into 36 States and one Federal Capital Territory in Abuja (Inyang, 2003). Again, under the 37 administrative units, there are 778 local government councils which serve the Nigerian people at the grassroots' level. Although the country is blessed with several solid mineral and

oil reserves, its people are poor due to political instability, corruption and poor leadership. Currently, the Nigerian government's economic policy of New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) are geared towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Inyang, 2003).

Nigeria has a low Human Development Index being ranked 158 out of 177 countries (UNDP, 2003) while her Gender-related Development Index (GDI) stood at 0.551 in 2006 being ranked 139 out of 157 countries (Bakari, 2009). This implies that the quality of life in terms of longevity, knowledge and a decent standard of living is generally poor. Moreover, there are often religious conflicts and regional tensions in certain parts of Nigeria. In line with this, Bakari (Ibid) asserts that the struggle for economic and political dominance frequently leads to assassinations, religious intolerance and ethnic clashes at the slightest provocation. For example, the Boko Haram set in the some parts of the northern Nigeria who are against Western education and consequently has burnt down primary school buildings in Borno and other Northern states of Nigeria. Bakari (2009) also adds that the above situation, coupled with the political influence of kinship, lack of transparency in government and other factors, creates space for corrupt practices and disregard for the rule of law. The consequences of the afore-mentioned circumstances often result in the exploitation of women and girls and any other less powerful groups and individuals (Bakari, 2009).

In Nigeria, there are different ways women and girls are mistreated and such abuses include male violence and negative widowhood practices which in turn diminish the status and well-being of women (Bakari, 2009). Generally, these abuses appear to rest on social, cultural and religious beliefs and practices in the country, and they in turn tend to impede women from realising their full potentials (Alkali, 2000). For example, in the trade unions, the gap between men and women strongly reflects beliefs and practices in the wider society. Trade unions are supposed to be democratic and empowering organisations, yet ironically, there is a lack of awareness of gender issues amongst their members (Ogala, 2000). Consequently, negative gender practices are common and are deeply ingrained social habits. As noted earlier in chapter one, women are under-represented at the leadership level and in decision-making bodies. Where they manage to feature, they are elected or appointed to the women's socially-expected roles of welfare officers or treasurers (Alkali, 2000). In view of the above-mentioned viewpoints, it is a commonplace that issues sensitive to women do not usually received the required

attention, whereas those of their male counterparts normally do (Ogala, 2000). However, things have started to change because there is a growing awareness regarding their human rights and the need for affirmative action. For example, the trade unions have been drawn into the growing debates and activities on gender issues and they must provide leadership in the struggle for gender equity and justice. In the next section, some social institutions affecting the position of women and girls in Nigeria are discussed briefly in terms of gender in the 1999 constitution and in the family code, such as physical integrity, ownership rights, and civil liberties (CEDAW, 2003).

### **2.3 Gender and Social Institutions in Nigeria**

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria forbids discrimination against women on grounds of gender, but customary and religious laws continue to restrict women's rights (CEDAW, 2003). As Nigeria is a federal republic, each of the 36 States has the authority to draft its own legislation (CEDAW, 2003). A combination of federal and a tripartite system of civil, customary and religious law makes it difficult to harmonise legislation and to remove discriminatory practices against women and girls (CEDAW, 2003). Moreover, most States in northern Nigeria follow Islamic Sharia law, which reinforces customs that are unfavourable to females. The federal government has established a National Committee on the Reform of Discriminatory Laws against Women, which has drafted a decree for the abolition of all forms of discrimination against them (CEDAW, 2003).

Also in the family, Nigerian women are not sufficiently protected because several inequalities remain there as a result of customs and tradition (United Nations, 2004). There are three forms of marriage in Nigeria and these include monogamous marriage registered under the civil marriage law, customary marriage and Islamic marriage (United Nations, 2004). In southern Nigeria, the minimum legal age for marriage is between 18 and 21 years of age, depending on the States; but in northern Nigeria, it ranges from 12 to 15 years (United Nations, 2004). In some States of the north, customary law allows girls to marry from the age of only 9 years; such marriages are prohibited in two states, but remain common in other northern States (United Nations, 2004). The incidence of early marriage is high mostly among Muslims in northern Nigeria: a 2004 United Nations report estimated that 28 per cent of girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married, divorced or widowed. Polygamy is also prohibited in civil marriages, but authorized under customary and Islamic law (United Nations, 2004). The practice is widespread: more than one-third of Nigerian women are in polygamous unions. In civil marriages, parental authority is

shared by the mother and the father, but in two-thirds of Nigerian households, husbands alone make decisions about the health and education of their children (United Nations, 2004). Customary law seldom recognises women's claim to inheritance. In many instances, the family of a deceased husband will insist on entitlement to the couple's property, leaving the widow destitute. In civil marriage, widows are guaranteed the right to inherit at least 30 per cent of the couple's property.

Moreover, women's physical integrity is not sufficiently protected in Nigeria (Bakari, 2009). Only one Nigerian state has a law in place to address violence against women within marriage, and the country's Penal Code (applicable in the north) grants husbands permission to beat their wives, provided the violence does not result in serious injury (Bakari, 2009). Domestic violence is common, especially in polygamous families and affects one-fifth of couples (United Nations, 2004). Rape is punishable by life imprisonment in Nigeria, but there are no sanctions in the Penal Code against spousal rape (Bakari, 2009).

According to CEDAW (2006), Nigerian women also have very limited ownership rights. Civil law entitles women to have access to land, but certain customary laws stipulate that only men have the prerogative to own land. In practice, women can obtain access to land solely through marriage or family. As a result, women represent a tiny portion of landowners in Nigeria and little is known about how much authority they have to administer their land holdings (CEDAW, 2006). However, under civil and Islamic law, married women have the right to have access to property other than land. By contrast, customary law denies them any entitlement to household property or to assets acquired by their husbands. In the everyday life of the Nigerian people, men generally make all decisions regarding property.

Nigerian women face severe limitations in the exercise of their civil liberties. This is because women's freedom of movement is restricted in that they are obliged to obtain their husbands' permission to obtain a passport or to travel outside the country (Bakari, 2009). The practice of purdah, whereby women are secluded from public view, prevails within the Muslim community in some northern states. Such women cannot leave their homes without permission from their husbands and must be accompanied by a man at all times when in public (Audu and Achor, 1999). This custom also restricts women's freedom of dress in that Muslim women must be veiled in public. Widows in the Muslim community face the greatest degree of



discrimination because they are often confined to the home and must keep their heads shaven and wear mourning dress.

Still, boys in Nigerian culture are often seen as 'warriors' (Egbue, 2006). What this means is they are often perceived to be the protectors of women and girls. Due to that perception, boys are usually given special consideration in apprenticeship training as a means of privileging them over the girls. For example, among the Ibibios in the south-south geo-political zone, boys are normally initiated into what is termed the 'Uko-iden' apprenticeship scheme at the age of twelve. From that age, boys are attached to their fathers and other extended family male members to learn to climb tall palm trees of about 20 to 30 metres in height using ropes but not ladders. In fact, using ropes to climb to the top of very tall palm trees to harvest their fruits is considered a masculine activity and therefore not for women and girls. The Ibibios initiate their men and boys into this apprenticeship programme early in life because of the rich financial benefits that go with it. Thus, boys and men are financially empowered and they occupy a better socio-economic position as they continue to make use of the products from the palm trees. For example, the palm leaves, which are about 3 – 5 metres long, are processed and bound together, to produce brooms that are used for environmental cleaning. In addition, the palm fruits are processed to obtain red palm oil, palm kernel oil and cakes. The former are often used for cooking and making a local brand of soap, while the cakes are used as feed for different kinds of animals. The palm frond is used for roofing huts in villages, while palm wine is drinkable and medicinal. The importance of palm trees among the Ibibios can be seen in its empowering effect on men and boys through improving their social and economic position in their society. The next section discusses gender in the formal and informal sectors of employment in Nigeria.

#### **2.4 Gender in the formal and informal sectors of employment in Nigeria**

The term 'employment' refers to any economic activity engaged in by men and women in order to earn a living. According to Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2012), employment is any engagement in any form of economic activity which attracts reward in the form of salary, wages or profit. This definition then excludes work done by women and girls within the homes but does include petty trading. According to NBS, (2012) employment is an indicator of the economic growth of any population and thus one of the ways of empowering the Nigerian citizens for economic production. There are two major sectors in any economy where people can find employment and these include the formal and informal

sectors. Formal employment refers to recruitment of employees to work in public and/or privately- owned organisations, while informal employment refers to people who work in small enterprises as both employers and employees, and self-employed persons who are involved in extractive, manufacturing, constructive, commercial and service occupations (Ahukannah et al, 1989). Formal employment in this study refers to men and women who might be employed in the Nigerian civil service and/or private formal sector while informal employment refers to those who are engaged in private agricultural or non-agricultural organisations that are owned by one or more persons. The discussion below focuses on gender in formal employment in the Nigerian civil service.

#### **2.4.1 Gender in Formal Employment in Nigeria**

The table below shows the percentage of men and women in formal employment in the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria between 2006 and 2010. From the table, it can be seen that there were more men than women in one of Nigeria's biggest formal employment sector (NBS, 2012). The percentages for men and women in those years were as follows:

**Table 2.1: The Percentage of Men and Women in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Men %</b>	<b>Women %</b>
2005	68.5	31.5
2006	70.6	29.4
2007	68.3	31.7
2008	70.1	29.9
2009	69.2	30.8
2010	65.5	34.5

**Source: Head of Service as cited in NBS, 2012**

From the table above, it can be deduced that male dominance in the federal civil service is also clearly reflected in some selected federal ministries such as the Presidency, Defence, Justice, Labour, Power, Women and Works (NBS, 2012). So far, there was no data generally on the state civil services especially that of Plateau State. Table 2.2 below indicates the percentages of men and women in the above-listed federal ministries.

**Table 2.2: The Percentage of Men and Women in some Federal Ministries**

<b>Ministries</b>	<b>Men%</b>	<b>Women%</b>
Presidency	67.38	32.62
Defence	59.35	40.65
Justice	55.60	44.40
Labour	78.40	26.60
Power	65.64	34.36
Women	56.90	43.10
Works	78.15	21.85
Average	65.55	34.45

**Source: Federal Civil Service Commission, 2008 as cited in NBS, 2012**

From table 2.2 above, it can be seen that there were more men than women even in the Federal Ministry of Women's affairs where there were 56.9% while women made up only 43.1% (NBS, 2012). However, these data did not indicate anything about the levels at which women work within the ministries. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2012), the national distribution of employment by economic activity between 2006 and 2010 was also biased in favour of men across the Nigerian civil service. In this regard, the percentage for men was 78.4, compared to 21.6 per cent for women (NBS, 2012). The highest for men was in 2006 which stood at 78.81 per cent while the least was 74.54 per cent in 2010. As mentioned earlier, the average employment for women for the whole period was 32.8 per cent while that of men was 67.2 per cent. This figure reveals that it was only few women who got employment within the civil service and in the private formal sectors. The NBS (ibid) pointed out that it was in the traditional caring professions, that is, the Health Services that women were in the majority throughout the period with an average of 63.11 per cent while men constituted 36.89 per cent. The highest figure for women in this profession stood at 74.59 per cent in 2007 as against 25.41 per cent for men during the same period (NBS, 2012). The least for women was 65.37 per cent in 2010 while men recorded 34.46 per cent (NBS, 2012).

The implication of the above situation is that many Nigerian women have been excluded from formal paid employment in many areas of formal economic activity and this in turn propels women into employment in the informal sector. Moreover, the statistics on the number of men and women who work in registered privately-established organisations, such as private companies, private schools and other medium and large-scale organisations in Nigeria seem to be lacking as such records could not be obtained from the National Bureau of Statistics. It appears that the informal sector is where a significant number of women are employed in low-paid work that tends to make them economically dependent on men.

### **2.4.2 Gender in the Informal Employment Sector**

There are two main aspects of the informal sphere in Nigeria and these comprise the agricultural and the non-agricultural sectors. Agriculture employs about 60 to 70 per cent of the total population in West Africa including Nigeria and it is mostly carried out in rural communities at subsistence level (Anyaele, 1987:103). However, the non-agricultural aspect of the informal sector employment consists of people who are engaged in constructive and manufacturing activities that are privately owned, and in commercial activities and direct and indirect services carried out at privately-owned levels.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2002) over the past ten years, informal work is estimated to have accounted for almost 80 per cent of non-agricultural employment, over 60 per cent of urban employment and over 90 per cent of new jobs in Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa including Nigeria, the informal sector accounts for three-quarters of non-agricultural employment, having increased dramatically over the last decade from about two-thirds (ILO, 2002). In sub-Saharan Africa, the informal sector outside of agriculture is large. Seventy one (71%) percent of job opportunities are for men while it also represents the vast majority (92%) per cent of job opportunities for women outside of agriculture sector (ILO, 2002). Moreover, in sub-Saharan Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, street vending predominates in much of the informal economy with women traders forming the majority in a number of countries (ILO, 2002). In Nigeria and other African countries such as Angola, South Africa and Uganda, it is estimated that over half of the informal workers are engaged in the retail trade (ILO, 2002). Considering the large size of the informal economy, formal retailing establishments, distributors and manufacturers often use informal workers in order to expand their markets to low-income groups and those in rural areas who can be reached most easily by itinerant traders and street vendors. The major sources of livelihood for women in informal activities include home-based tasks, domestic service, food-processing, street vending and hawking as well as other forms of petty business trading activities. Despite all these roles, it seems to me that women's breadwinning role in the traditional Nigerian society has often been ignored in the scheme of things. Even though all those roles are performed by women in their households and within their society, the economic activities carried out by them in informal sector employment tend to be socially and statistically invisible (Kabeer, 2003).

It is also important to note that female economic activity appeared to change with socio-economic status (SES). This is so because the economic activity of

women from high SES family helps them to secure prestigious well-paid jobs in the state bureaucracy and in multinational and large Nigerian companies. Indeed, such high SES women appear to use social capital obtained from their family backgrounds to get into those prestigious well-paid jobs which in turn bring to their hands large economic capital. On the other hand, low SES women involve themselves in petty business trading activities tended to use small amount of economic capital for their trading activities. Generally, low SES women make use of cultural capital gained from petty business trading in their mothers' business. According to Anyaele (1987:233) "what makes the difference between the economic activity of people from a high and lower SES family backgrounds is unequal access to the forms of capital available to different family backgrounds". This implies that, having access to a large amount of economic capital tended to determine what class of economic activity the females are able to engage in. Indeed, some females from wealthy families are often found carrying out economic activities that involve substantial amount of economic capital. Again, their cultural and social capital tend to be with others at the same level of economic capital where those females from lower SES families are often found doing business with small amount of capital and their cultural capital tended to be at that level of economic activity. At this point, I will discuss the distinction between the three forms of capital - cultural, social and economic capital that tend to affect female economic activity.

#### **2.4.3 Distinction between Cultural, Social and Economic Capital**

As noted in section 3.6.3 of this thesis, Bourdieu (2004) listed economic, social and cultural capital as forms of capital. According to Vryonides (2009:130) "economic capital is money, property and other material objects". On the other hand, "social capital refers to social networks and connections, which can provide access to valued social goods while cultural capital refers to legitimised knowledge present in the home environment, which allows parents and children to secure advantages from the educational process" (Vryonides (2009:130). For Bourdieu, "cultural capital may take many forms: it can be reflected in behaviour, dispositions, knowledge and habits acquired during socialisation. Or, it can be accumulated through investment in education and training or in the acquisition of cultural goods" (p. 130). Bourdieu (2004) points out that cultural capital is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications while social capital is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital. There is therefore, an interrelationship between these three forms of capital. I therefore argue that the greater the access a person has to these forms of capital,

the greater the chances that that person is positioned in one of the high socioeconomic classes. Thus, these 'capitals' therefore tend to produce class inequality in the society. In particular, cultural capital appeared to produce inequality in education attainment of students. When I talk about cultural capital in this thesis, I mean "family cultural capital" (Robson, 2009, p. 109). The latter refers to the knowledge and skills inculcated into girls and boys in the family home through socialisation into cultural activities. For example, there is a plethora of literature that states that girls in the Nigerian families are often socialised into participating in cultural activities such as helping their mothers to cook meals, serve meals, wash dishes, welcome and entertain visitors, fetch water and firewood, weed grass on the farmlands, and to help in carrying out petty trading. Indeed participation in these cultural activities inculcated certain behaviours into the girls which tend to improve their "linguistic and cultural competence" (Dumais, 2002), cited in Robson (2009:106). It is possible that such cultural capital can be translated into educational capital as the girls are able to use knowledge of the cultural activities inculcated into them during family socialisation to interact effectively with teachers and other students. If this occurred, these girls might obtain educational qualification as well as acquire job skills such as secretarial skills, marketing skills, and management skills. The educational credentials so obtained might help them to be employed which would in turn bring to them economic capital (money) from their employment. I explore these as the potential implications of the different forms of capital in this study. However in the traditional Nigerian society, gender tends to differentiate across different ethnic, religious, rural/urban and SES groups as discussed below.

The traditional Nigerian society can be described as a complex one with very obvious and unique ethno-religious role that in turn influences to some extent, the type of work engaged in by men and women in informal sector employment. What men and women do in work, in the family, in general social life, and in aesthetics and rituals differs greatly (House-Midamba and Ekechi, 1995). There is often a physical separation of the sexes, marked by separate living rooms for husbands and wives, distinct eating arrangements, generally contrasting roles in farm work, as well as different socialisation patterns for boys and girls (Adewuyi, 2000). These gender interactions affect the manner in which children learn their own sex roles and the rules of gender behaviour and interrelationships. Based on the foregoing, gender division of labour in traditional Nigerian society may be described as the manner in which tasks are allocated within the household which means the distribution of work

among husband, wife, children, and other members of the household and this in turn affects their gender behaviour and later work roles.

In addition, the concept of the gender division of labour in Nigeria is known to be in operation not only at the household level, but also more broadly to encompass the social division of labour within the society as a whole (House-Midamba and Ekechi, (1995). This includes labour relations between different social categories in the rural and urban communities (House-Midamba and Ekechi, (1995). Generally, most Nigerian traditional societies permit women to participate in almost all the agricultural and non-agricultural economic activities of the informal sector. On this basis, it is argued that the enduring stereotype in male-female relations which holds that women are brought up to believe they have limited parts to play in daily affairs outside their domestic domain, does not exist in most states of Nigeria (Ekechi, 1995). This is so because men and women have played and continue to play vital roles both in the domestic economy and elsewhere (Ekechi, 1995). However, where there have been gender limitations, women have continually challenged the status quo (Ekechi, 1995). For example, in the agricultural and non-agricultural spheres, women are not only active participants; they actually facilitate entry into these sectors of the informal economy for their husbands. They do this by helping the latter to carry out a majority of the activities associated with such spheres.

In agriculture, rural women usually carry out all the major farming tasks: breaking up the soil, planting, weeding, harvesting and carrying the harvest home (Ekechi, 1995). Not surprisingly, Africa has been described as “the region of female farming par excellence” (Ekechi, 1995). In other words, those women not only develop the farming system but they grow sufficient food crops with which they feed their households. In recognition of their role in agriculture, there is a popular dictum among African men that states that “it is women who own us” meaning that it is women who cook and give men food (Ekechi, 1995). Yet, women’s domestic activities in the informal sector often elude official statistics because they are understood in terms of the gender division of labour. This is so because in Nigeria, men and women traditionally perform different roles, generally defined along sex or gender lines (Ekechi, 1995). Hence, in the agricultural arena, certain activities were and still are defined as men’s or women’s work (Ekechi, 1995). In this way, while women’s work on the farm includes the planting and weeding of crops, as well as carrying the harvest home, men are responsible for clearing the bush and preparing the farm for planting (Ekechi, 1995). In the case of yams, men are solely responsible for staking them (Ekechi, 1995). On the whole, the men help with the heavier parts

of the farm work but there are months when they have little or nothing to do, whereas all year round, though particularly in the wet season, the women are occupied with weeding, planting and tending crops (Ekechi, 1995).

There is a clear difference between men's crops and women's crops in traditional Nigerian society (Ekechi, 1995). As noted earlier, men's are cash crops, which mean they can easily be sold to earn money. On the other hand, women's are food crops, meaning that they are to be used for feeding the family. Men's crops earn them money which is a type of economic power, whereas women's crops are meant for food and as such has no economic power; and are rendered invisible. Moreover, women are segregated because their roles are allocated on the basis of gender. For instance, take the case of palm tree climbing that I cited earlier: only men are taught to ascend the trees with ropes to harvest the fruits, cut the leaves and even to tap for wine. Women are not initiated into the apprenticeship cult of climbing with ropes because ethnically, the society did not design it as a feminine activity. Yet in the background of such apprenticeship training, there are complex issues, some of which aim to enhance the socio-economic status (SES) of males at the expense of females. Therefore, I argue that in Nigeria, there is a direct relationship existing between the gender division of labour and the socio-economic status of men and women. This implies that in the traditional African society, gender division of labour is often accompanied by a complex division of authority and responsibility between the sexes and the generations, which has tended to ensure that while women do the bulk of unpaid domestic work, the husband, who is seen as the head of the family, receives the bulk of any cash proceeds from any economic activity coming from it.

As noted earlier, women are the majority in the distributive trade or home-based activities in the urban and rural communities of the informal sector. For instance, they are responsible for the sale of farm products and other locally-produced goods in the rural markets. Again, to the Nigerian women, trading is second only to farming as a means of livelihood. In the urban cities, petty business trading is a vital ingredient in the lives of many Nigerian women whether they are from the north or south of the country and for any woman to be doing well in petty trade is a signal for generous congratulation (Ekechi, 1995). Through petty business trading, a woman's value is calculated because this affects her socio-economic status (SES) and wellbeing; and men often take it into consideration when choosing a wife, and a husband's favour is bestowed or withheld largely according to the degree of the wife's success in the petty business trading activities (Ekechi,



1995). Nigerian women embark on petty trade in a variety of items including vegetables, cassava, palm oil, groundnut, pots, rice, beans and baskets in urban/rural cities. Some even trade in wrappers, head-ties, shirts, trousers, and shoes in urban cities and in the process make large amounts of money, thereby improving their SES. Women are, therefore, engaged in small and large retail shop businesses where a range of regularly-demanded household goods are sold depending on the different forms of capital at their disposal. Such accumulation of wealth often enables women to support their families and even sponsor their children to attend senior secondary school.

Home-based work in the informal sector can also follow as a result of cultural, religious, social and economic factors. For religious reasons, Muslim women are expected to participate in the Islamic institution of purdah, in which they must remain secluded in the house. Thus, working in their homes or at a workplace near their homes becomes a suitable means of employment. Such women often engage in home-based informal work often termed the “hidden trade” (VerEecke, 1995), that is, a type of trading activity often carried out by Muslim women in purdah through their daughters and other girls while they stay at home. According to VerEecke (1995), the reason northern Nigerian Muslim women conform so readily to the rules of purdah is to enjoy more leisure time at home. Such women need only to prepare food for the family and to keep themselves looking good so that their husbands can love them dearly, while the latter provide money for their personal use and family upkeep. However, most Muslim women do not opt for a leisurely life; preferring to establish their own micro-enterprises in order to support themselves financially (VerEecke, 1995).

This type of business normally begins with a woman investing a small percentage of the money provided by her husband for the household, or for her personal use in buying regularly-demanded household items for resale. She may then package and give the girls such finished products as detergent, sugar, groundnuts, grain, cigarettes, candy, and soft drinks for resale. She may also process and sell other non-perishable cooking items such as groundnut oil or locust bean paste or perishable foods, like porridge and bean cakes through the daughters. Some also sell luxury items such as cloth, clothing, perfume, cosmetics and jewellery or provide services such as weaving, sewing and hair-plaiting. Moreover, many in fact engage in multiple small-scale business activities. Despite the prevalence of these activities, the Muslim women need not leave the house on account of trading, but the problem with their type of trade is the issue of child

labour. Generally, Muslim women employ some of their own daughters and other girls outside school hours to do street-vending for them. The child traders, in some instances, become full-time street hawkers, with their own incomes, and consequently cannot go to school any longer. This explains why there is so much gender imbalance in favour of boys' education in northern Nigeria and why many girls cannot attend school. Because the proceeds of trading or any income they earn belong to the husbands, the latter do not prohibit their wives' trading activities, provided they do not leave the house and food is available for meals at the prescribed times, regardless of who prepares it (VerEecke (1995).

## **2.5 Nigeria's Education System**

### **2.5.1 The Concept of Education**

According to Ekpenyong (1995:101) education from the cradle to the grave has been recognised as a reliable means for the development and wellbeing of nations and individuals. This explains why many countries normally review their education system in order to bring about rapid national development because a country's level of social and economic growth largely depends on its philosophy of education or the type of education system in operation. Ekpenyong (1995:101) points out that in pre-independent Nigeria, the attempt to promote a vibrant system of education could be traced to a series of commission reports and memoranda put in place by the then government. However, since education in Nigeria, like other nations of the world, is adopted as the instrument par excellence for achieving national development (National Policy on Education, 2002, revised); and as an important vehicle for upward social, and political mobility as well as for economic wellbeing, the search for a really down-to-earth system of education was forced to continue soon after the attainment of political independence from Britain in October 1960. The result of one such search was the formulation of the first national policy on education which took place in 1977 (Ekpenyong, 1995, p.101). The section below discusses Nigeria's National Policy on Education.

### **2.5.2 National Policy on Education (NPE)**

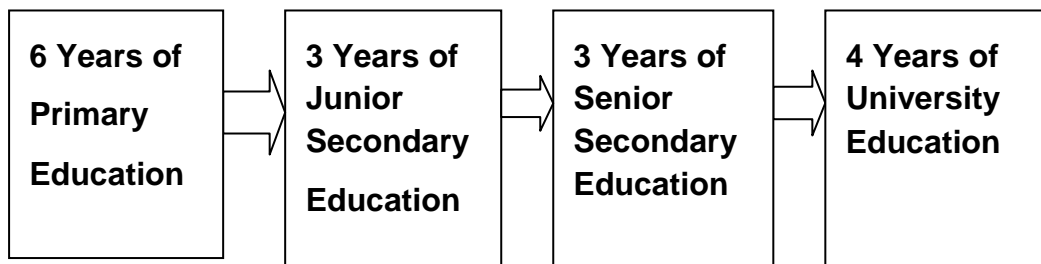
The National Policy on Education (NPE) originated during the national curriculum conference which was held in Lagos in September 1969, under the auspices of the former Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) (Ekpenyong, 1995:101). The conference attracted attendees from representatives of local educational and professional bodies such as universities, schools and colleges and from international bodies such as UNESCO and USAID (Ekpenyong, 1995:101-

102). The forum deliberated on a wide range of issues surrounding what should be the mission and structure of education for the country (Ekpenyong, 1995:102). The terms of reference guiding the conference were: (i) Identification and clarification of a national philosophy, goals, purpose and objectives of Nigerian education, (ii) Statement of issues and problems and (iii) Development of implications and recommendations for a national curriculum (NERC, 1972). Before the end of that conference, a number of recommendations were made and one of the most outstanding was the 6-3-3-4 system of Education which is discussed below.

### 2.5.3 The 6-3-3-4 System of Education

The Nigerian education system is commonly referred to as a 6-3-3-4 system of education.

**Figure 2.1: The Nigeria's Education System**



Source: Nigeria's National Policy on Education (NPE, 2002, Revised)

This is made up of six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, three years of senior secondary education and four years of university education. Primary education lasts for 6 years and it is designed for children aged 6 to 11 years (NPE, 2002, revised). The junior secondary school is for children aged 12 to 14 years and it consists of academic and pre-vocational courses taught for 3 years, while senior secondary education lasts for 3 years and is designed for both vocational and academic courses and is meant for children aged 15 to 19 years (NPE, 2002, revised). University education is of 4 years duration and it is designed for students aged 18 years and above.

According to Bakari (2009:241), the overall philosophy of Nigerian education, as outlined by the National Policy on Education (NPE 2002 revised), is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen, his/her full integration into the community, and the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of Nigerian education. Bakari (2009:241) also argues that the general philosophy of Nigerian education is to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded

on the principles of freedom, equality and justice, and to promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding. It is based on the five national objectives of Nigeria as contained in the second National Development Plan, which aims at building:

- A free and democratic society
- A just and egalitarian society
- A united, strong and self-reliant nation
- A great and dynamic economy
- A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (NPE, 2002 revised, p. 7).

Additionally, for the philosophy of Nigerian education to be in harmony with the said national objectives, the NPE (2002) maintained that it had to be geared towards self-realisation, better human relationships, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity as well as social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress. Therefore, these national aspirations are seen as a necessary foundation upon which the philosophy of the current Nigerian system of education, expressed in terms of aims and objectives, is built (Ekpenyong, 1995). These goals for schooling are broad, general statements which are expected to inform policy and practice at all levels of the education system (UNICEF, 2000). The national educational aims and objectives to which the philosophy is linked are as follows:

- The inculcation of a national consciousness and national unity
- The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and Nigerian society
- The training of the mind in understanding of the world around, and
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as an apparatus for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (NPE, 2002 revised, p. 8).

UNICEF (2000) points out that through the curriculum development process, these broad education goals are refined into useful statements that give direction to teaching, learning, and curricular materials development in the nation's schools. Thus the education planners and curriculum developers need to actively keep in mind the relationship between macro-level educational goals and students' learning outcomes (UNICEF, 2000). The Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria has to set up clear linkages between the common national goals, the common competencies

that students are expected to achieve at the end of the teaching-learning process, and the general aims of the syllabus (UNICEF (2000)). Consequently, the national education goals also need to be related to national assessment, student learning outcomes, and the teacher training curriculum (UNICEF (2000)). In this way teachers become aware of the “big picture” and of their place in it as they enact the curriculum in the classroom (UNICEF 2000). Identifying national assessment with national goals can give a country an indication of how its goals are being met (UNICEF, 2000). From the foregoing, I observe that an enormous weight of expectation is being placed on education as an engine of development worldwide (Nigeria is far from being alone in this!). The questions then are as follows: Is this weight on education as an engine of development too great? Are the expectations placed on it realistic? Does this allow other social institutions and practices to avoid change? Indeed, these questions appear to be relevant since I guess that one of the ‘big questions’ in relation to gender is how far change can (if at all) be achieved through education in my country. These issues require a separate research work.

#### **2.5.4 The Senior Secondary School Students and VBE Pathway in Nigeria**

As defined by the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2002 revised), secondary education is the form of education given to children after the primary and before the tertiary stage. As mentioned earlier, secondary education lasts for six years in Nigeria: the first three are for the junior secondary school (JSS) while the next three are for the senior secondary school (SSS) (NPE, 2002, revised).

The broad aims of secondary education within the overall national objectives are as follows:

- Preparation for useful living within the society; and
- Preparation for higher education (NPE, 2002 revised, p. 16).

According to Ekpenyong (1995), the first broad aim of secondary education is in line with the fourth national educational aims and objectives which talk about the ‘acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as a framework for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society’. The NPE (2002, revised) maintains that education at the junior secondary school level should teach both academic and pre-vocational subjects but at the senior level, it should embrace vocational and academic subjects. In agreement with the foregoing, Ekpenyong (1995) noted that secondary education in Nigeria was intended to achieve two main goals: general and vocational. He (ibid) added that the two goals of secondary education in Nigeria

were those of developing cognitive and productive skills which should enable the young learners [boys and girls] to function effectively through life. The implication of these ideas of vocational education is that while general education seeks to develop cognitive competence in boys and girls, the vocational aspect tries to develop productive skills which will enable them to function with versatility, either as employees or self-employed, while at the same time having the opportunity for further education and training (Ekpenyong, 1995). He (ibid) defined productive skills as those which emphasise all types of activities which are directed towards making a living or producing goods and services at any level of economic requirement.

In Nigeria, primary education is near universal. By this I mean that a greater percentage of primary age children attend school. It is unfortunate that there was no national figure of such children but according to Okooboh (2000), in 1999 nearly all children of primary school age were in school. However, he added that 97 percent of primary school leavers continued to junior secondary school (JSS) by the year 2000. Out of this percentage, 50 percent were boys while girls were 47 percent. The Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) was no longer necessary for selection purposes as it is mandatory for them to proceed to JSS. Hence, the 3 percent that failed to proceed appeared to do so because of untimely death, sicknesses and other unforeseen circumstances of which girls were more than boys. In line with this, Archibong (2001) pointed out that the Junior Secondary Certificate Examination (JSCE) plays a highly selective role in determining those who continue to Nigerian senior secondary schools. There were no national figures for this at the time of this study. However, Archibong (2001) presumed that 85 percent of junior secondary school leavers continued to SSS. He made this presumption on the basis that he believed the JSS students liked going on to senior secondary schools along with their classmates except in the events of lack of sponsorship or death, sicknesses or other unforeseen circumstances as earlier mentioned. Even though he (ibid) gave such opinion, yet making a judgement on such might be inaccurate as it is the opinion of one person. Consequently, I think a separate research is needed to determine the proportion of JSS students in Nigeria who proceed to SSS for the past five years.

In line with the above, Esene (1997) opined that in the case of vocational business education (VBE) where the emphasis is on the acquisition of specialised skills in accounting, commerce, economics, typewriting, shorthand, office practice, secretarial duties and salesmanship, a great majority of SSS students continued to offer VBE. According to Esene (ibid), about 80 percent of these students continued

to offer one or more of VBE courses because of what they believed the courses will provide to them in future. As VBE programme was introduced into the Nigerian secondary school curriculum in 1982 in order to address the country's economic and technological deficiencies, many SSS students have been encouraged to study those courses (Ehiamezor, 1990). Generally, the objectives of VBE courses are to create an opportunity for senior secondary school students to have a broad understanding of business activities, their functions, interrelationships between business organisations, and to provide them with skills for processing business information (Ehiamezor, 1990). As a practitioner, I am aware that these courses are designed to furnish the students with specialized clerical training relevant to business and its management. At the Nigerian junior secondary level, business studies is one of the pre-vocational subjects taught as units of a single subject. It consists of book-keeping, commerce, office practice, shorthand, and typewriting. It was considered that by this approach it will be possible for the students to lay a sound foundation in the field of business, and make better career choices in the future (Ekpenyong, 1995). Thus, while junior secondary school business studies seeks to give a generalized and broad idea of the field of business, the corresponding senior secondary course tries to narrow them down to the study of specified vocational business subjects, some of which they may wish to specialize in the future (Ekpenyong, 1995). However, the senior secondary school VBE subjects, which include accounting, commerce, economics, typewriting and shorthand, are allowed to stand on their own as separate subjects because, at this level, individual student is expected to have a more in-depth knowledge of each of the VBE subjects and to prepare not only for the senior secondary school final examination but also for entry into the world of work or further studies. The student therefore moves towards a career option, which he/she is likely to study at the tertiary level of education.

Concerning VBE senior secondary (SS) students' sub-choices, the National Policy on Education (2002, revised) states that all of them are required to offer a minimum of eight or maximum of nine subjects with the following as core subjects: English Language, Mathematics, One Science subject, One Social Science Subject, One Nigerian Language, One Vocational Subject and any other two or three subjects according to the students intended area of specialisation. Vocational Business Education (VBE) is one of the major vocational subjects often dominated by girls and Home Economics is another. Other vocational courses such as Woodwork, Metal Work, Electrical/Electronic are mainly dominated by boys. In

agreement with the above, Esene (1997:28) pointed out that majority of the senior secondary school girls in Nigeria often go into VBE because they are interested in office jobs and business occupations in future. According to Esene (1997), boys who did not go into the technical courses mentioned above do go into VBE too. He (ibid) felt that the majority of the senior secondary school (SSS) boys preferred to study vocational-technical courses of which VBE is one. Apart from that, offering VBE in SSS is dependent on two other things namely sub-choices at JSS level/JSS examination scores and on the decision of the parents. What this means is that all SS students who go into VBE should have opted to study it during the JSS level. They wrote the JSCE examination on it and obtained at least a good pass. According to Ekpenyong (1995), a sound knowledge of VBE at the JSS level is needed for success in the individual business courses offered at the SS level. However, most subjects are not offered at JSS level but at SS level only. This is the case with economics which is studied only in senior secondary (SS) level and as such, the subject is open to all SS students. This appears to eliminate the effects of JSS gender stereotyping and might be part of the explanation for a greater proportion of boys taking economics. Another factor that influences students to offer VBE in their SSS is the decisions of the parents. Indeed, it is the parents who appeared to have the final say on the subjects that their children study in the senior secondary schools.

A national curriculum is used for all secondary schools in Nigeria and all students are required to sit for a common school certificate examination towards the end of their final year (Ekpenyong, 1995). This examination is controlled and conducted by a national body known as the West African Examination Council. The examination results from this body are used for admission into tertiary institutions and for employment purposes. The implication of the national curriculum offerings is that the VBE curriculum is expected to:

- Provide the student with the introductory materials to be covered at a tertiary level;
- Build a strong background and help create attitudes towards a selected career option;
- Help the student develop attitudes towards a particular profession and plan for a future career in business (Ehiamezor, 1990, p. 86).

A student is free to study all of the vocational business subjects in the first year of the senior secondary school but his/her school will expect him/her to concentrate on at least two of them that he/she would like to



select and can do very well in the exams during the last two years, in addition to the core subjects which include English language, Mathematics, one science subject, and one social science subject, one Nigerian language and a vocational subject. This means a vocational subject in addition to VBE. Such a vocational subject may be one of agricultural science, home economics or fine arts.

Indeed, vocational business education or business studies as it is now officially known at the secondary school level, occupies a unique position in the national curriculum (Ekpenyong, 1995). This uniqueness arises out of the fact that this is the first time that the Federal Government has clearly specified a number of subjects under a business-related programme and given them official recognition alongside other secondary school subjects.

### 2.5.5 Gender and the SSS Students' Enrolments

According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2012), senior secondary schools' (SSS) total enrolment for boys was higher than that of girls between 2005 and 2010. The table below shows the total enrolment in secondary schools by year, percentage distribution and gender.

**Table 2.3: Total Enrolment in SSS by Year, Percentage Distribution and Gender**

Year	Total	Boys	Boys%	Girls	Girls%
2005	5,304,250	2,949,993	55.6	2,354,112	44.4
2006	5,997,248	3,370,906	56.2	2,626,343	43.8
2007	6,809,775	3,832,453	56.3	2,977,321	43.7
2008	6,995,986	3,939,468	56.3	3,056,338	43.7
2009	7,250,930	4,005,781	55.2	3,245,149	44.8
2010	7,536,380	4,240,871	56.3	3,295,509	43.7
Average	6,649,169.8	3,723,245.3	55.9	2,925,924.5	44.1

**Source: Universal Basic Education, as cited in NBS (2012)**

From the table, it can be deduced that more boys have access to education in Nigeria than girls. The implication for their future lives is that men are privileged to occupy a higher socio-economic position than women in all walks of life. As indicated earlier, the first specific goal of the Nigerian secondary school prohibits discrimination in pupils' admissions from primary to secondary schools on the grounds of gender (NPE, 2002 revised). As a result, the senior secondary schools

do observe this specific goal in their admission policies. Generally, more boys than girls are regularly admitted in the SSS because of sons' preference by parents in matters of education and training. According to Bakari (2009), Nigeria is also a signatory to international commitments that guarantee human rights, especially those to do with the entitlement to girls' education.

Nigeria has signed up to the Dakar Framework for Education for All (EFA goals) which includes eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a particular focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of high quality (Bakari, 2009). Nigeria has also expressed its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and targets to be achieved by all United Nations member states by 2015 (Bakari, 2009). Member states are expected to reflect the MDGs in Programmes of Action as part of their development plans (Bakari, 2009). All MDGs are gender-responsive, but specific to education and gender equality are Goals 2 and 3, which aim to achieve primary and secondary education for all children and to eliminate gender disparity in education (Bakari, 2009).

In 2005, the Universal Basic Education databank in Nigeria released projected figures for primary school enrolment up until 2016 (Bakari, 2009). The expected number of students enrolling for junior secondary school in 2005, for example, was 20,688,772 out of which girls were 9,230,417 while boys were 11,458,355 (Bakari, 2009), indicating a gender parity of 0.81. The growth rate for enrolment is assumed to be 2.5 percent; therefore, a total of 32,326,206 would register for junior secondary school in 2007 (Bakari, 2009). Of this figure, 14,422,527 would be girls while 17,903,680 would be boys (Bakari, 2009), showing a steady gender parity of 0.81. The enrolment trends in the senior secondary schools are lower than those of the junior secondary schools. Moreover, the drop-outs of boys are lower than that of girls from the Nigerian senior secondary schools. This is examined in the section below.

#### **2.5.6 Retention across National and State Levels by Gender in Nigerian SSS**

The National Policy on Education (2002 Revised) stresses that "educational activity will be centred on the learner for maximum self-development and fulfilment" (p. 8) and therefore supports educational access for all children irrespective of sex, gender, social, religious, ethnicity, location, disability or age (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2002, p. 16). The positive results of this policy recommendations show that,

over the years, a large number of students has been enrolled in the Nigerian senior secondary schools. However, the retention across national level by gender shows that more girls than boys dropped out of school before graduation. As indicated in tables 2.4 and 2.5 below, the drop-out rate for girls at the national and state levels have been greater than that of boys between 2005 and 2010.

**Table 2.4 National Drop-outs from SSS Classes for boys and girls in Nigeria**

Year	Retention	SS 1		SS2		SS3	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
2005	Drop-outs	8,450	17,100	7,910	20,190	15,514	25,190
	Students	848,977	710,508	890,544	658,900	807,412	684,704
	Rate (%)	0%	2%	1%	3%	2%	4%
2006	Drop-outs	11,800	23,800	13,510	20,300	9,300	19,200
	Students	910,850	730,580	908,433	725,381	901,623	720,182
	Rate (%)	1%	3%	1%	3%	1%	3%
2007	Drop-outs	45,890	60,100	48,750	75,300	40,990	58,200
	Students	1,220,817	950,100	1,340,500	960,700	1,101,134	936,521
	Rate (%)	4%	6%	4%	8%	4%	6%
2008	Drop-outs	286,142	368,700	296,400	289,400	159,980	296,800
	Students	1,180,996	920,500	1,200,456	915,480	1,158,016	903,934
	Rate (%)	26%	33%	25%	32%	14%	33%
2009	Drop-outs	310,011	368,700	320,400	299,300	150,099	280,100
	Students	1,200,500	950,100	1,345,595	948,210	977,686	945,846
	Rate (%)	26%	39%	24%	32%	15%	30%
2010	Drop-outs	275,610	295,300	315,512	291,400	250,775	271,115
	Students	1,215,293	970,500	1,320,116	965,100	1,107,462	957,567
	Rate (%)	23%	30%	24%	30%	23%	28%

**Source: Federal Republic of Nigeria (2008), as cited in National Bureau of Statistics (2012).**

From table 2.4 above, the drop-out rate for 2005 was between 0% and 4% while in 2006; it was between 1% and 3%. However, there was a dramatic increase in dropout for both boys and girls between 2007 and 2008. As could be seen above, it was between 4% and 8% in 2007 but then jumped to 25% and 33% in 2008. The reasons behind this sudden increase in dropout rates for both boys and girls according to NBS (2012) were poverty, poor quality of lives and poor academic

performance. NBS (2012) also pointed out that many parents could not pay school fees of their children and their quality of lives deteriorated so much so that many of them dropped out from schools. Thus, NBS (2012) said that due to the above factors, some of them were performing poorly in school and consequently, they failed their exams from SS2 to SS3. This led to their dropping out from the school. From the reasons given above, it is not quite clear why there should be such a sudden increase in the drop-out rate between 2007 and 2008 and this study felt that the reasons given by NBS are unconvincing.

In agreement with the table above, Alika and Egbochuku (2009, p. 136) in a study of “dropout from school among girls in Edo State, Nigeria” pointed out that research findings in Nigeria indicate that girls’ dropout rate from school is higher than that of boys. Other authors who worked on school dropout among girls such as Osakwe, Osagie, Madunagu and Usman (1995) observed that Nigerian girls, for various reasons bordering on religious, cultural, socio-cultural and school-related factors are not given a fair chance in the educational sector. UNICEF (2004) cited in Alika and Egbochuku (2009) pointed out that, in Nigeria, about 7.3 million children do not go to school, of which 62 percent are girls. The same UNICEF report indicates that girls’ completion rate is far behind that of boys, being 76 percent compared with 85 percent for boys. This gender gap implies that more girls than boys are dropping out of the Nigerian senior secondary schools each year. Alika and Egbochuku (2009) pointed out the reasons why many girls dropped out from the SSS classes include the following: Poverty (53%), poor academic performance (16 %), bullying by opposite sex (10%), unfriendly school environment (9%), distance of school from home (5%), Pregnancy and early marriages (4%) while ill-health, poor teaching and deaths of parents amounted to 1 percent respectively. In the same way, the state level figure for drop-out of students follows a similar trend. The table below shows drop-outs of boys and girls from senior secondary schools in Plateau State by gender between 2007 and 2009.

**Table 2.5 State Level Drop-outs from SSS Classes for boys and girls in Plateau State**

Year	Retention	SS 1		SS2		SS3	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>2007</b>	Drop-outs	1,100	1,630	980	1,243	680	839
	Students	15,200	14,120	14,980	13,210	12,530	11,466
	Rate (%)	7%	12%	7%	9%	5%	7%
<b>2008</b>	Drop-outs	1,202	1,534	1,159	1,380	989	1,128
	Students	16,321	14,200	15,750	13,530	13,575	13,388
	Rate (%)	7%	11%	7%	10%	7%	8%
<b>2009</b>	Drop-outs	1,830	2098	1645	1,820	1,265	1,540
	Students	15,490	15,100	14,760	13,940	12,342	12,005
	Rate (%)	11%	14%	11%	13%	10%	13%

Year	Retention	Male	Female
<b>2007</b>	Total Drop-outs	2,760	3,712
	Total Students	42,710	38,796
	Rate (%)	6%	10%
<b>2008</b>	Total Drop-outs	3,350	4,042
	Total Students	45,646	41,118
	Rate (%)	7%	10%
<b>2009</b>	Total Drop-outs	4,740	5,458
	Total Students	42,592	41,045
	Rate (%)	11%	13%

**Source: Plateau State Ministry of Women Affairs 2008**

From the table above, it could be seen that the total drop-out of girls was greater than that of boys in the senior secondary schools in Plateau State. However, it was clear that the drop-out rate in Plateau State was much lower (less than half) the national rates given in earlier tables. Thus, it could be said that senior secondary girls in Plateau State are far less likely to drop-out than girls in other States of the Federation. The reasons for this are uncertain and require further research.

## **2.6 Historical development of Vocational Business Education in Nigeria**

The development of vocational business schools has a long history. Before the coming of Western Education, parents and master craftsmen were the main sources of informal vocational education. The major aim of the latter was vocational knowledge and skills acquisition as well as character building, as good character and possession of adequate skills were highly valued by traditional society. Indeed, possessing adequate knowledge and skills was a part of the traditional societal culture, no matter where the person hailed from (Ndahi, 2002). The reason for this was that learning a skill was acknowledged as a way to making a living and as such parents played vital roles in determining what skills their children began to learn at a very early age (Ndahi, 2002). The parents made it obligatory for their children to learn skills so that they could support themselves later in life and support their parents when they were old. As mentioned in chapter 1, boys were exposed to different skills acquisition outside the house while girls were limited to domestic activities within the home to prepare them to be “good mothers” and obedient wives (Ndahi, 2002). However, there were some exceptions to such limitations because women and girls were allowed to farm and to trade (Ekechi, 1995). According to Ndahi (2002), those practices continued for many years after the introduction of western education by missionaries and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, with the coming of western education, parents and children showed a disdain for the handwork provided in informal vocational education and they tended to prefer elitist or western-type education. Consequently, they started sending their boys to school. The first school to offer a western style of education in Nigeria was established in 1843 at Badagry by missionaries (Nwaokolo, 1994). Then the Church Missionary Society founded their first training school in Abeokuta, Ogun State in 1859. However, the curriculum of those early schools was loaded with religious and literary arts courses but no vocational courses because the missionaries at that time were more concerned about the spiritual lives of the people. In essence, the missionaries wanted men who could study the Bible and interpret it to the people in their local language (Ndahi, 2002). Within a period of ten years, that is, between 1843 and 1853, the missionaries introduced vocational courses into their school curriculum. In 1892, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland made plans to establish a unique school in Nigeria for the training of primary school leavers in vocational skills as well as for teachers and preachers for their schools and churches respectively. Following that plan, the Hope Waddel Institute was

opened in Calabar, Cross River State in 1895 for the afore-mentioned purposes. Another mission school that taught vocational business education in Nigeria was Saint Andrew's College, Oyo, now known as Saint Andrews College of Education, founded in 1896. This school taught simple book-keeping to student teachers and some of them later learnt typewriting and shorthand on their own during vacations. The Baptist Mission also established the Baptist Training College at Ogbomosho in 1897 while the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society founded an institution for the training of catechists and teachers in Ibadan, Oyo State in 1905 (Nwaokolo, 1994). Following these trends, vocational business education was one of the consistently vocational subjects taught by church missionaries and Nigerian school proprietors who owned private business schools.

In fact, training in vocational business education, or what came to be called commercial education, continued to increase with the establishment of a clerical training centre in 1930 in Oshogbo (Ehiometalor, 1990). The purpose of the centre was to train clerical officers that were urgently needed at that time to fill positions in most offices in the country (Ehiometalor, 1990). Indeed between 1940 and 1960, the missionaries, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, founded many schools in Nigeria for the training of girls as secretaries and there were also many schools opened by private Nigerian entrepreneurs (Nwaokolo, 1994).

The vocational business education programme has remained similar up to the present day, although "commercial" education has become "business" education and now "business studies" and book-keeping has become accounting while general business is now business law under commerce. Esene (1997) stated that traces of the formal type of vocational business education were found in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when some Nigerian nationals in partnership with overseas exporters had to learn simple commercial arithmetic, book-keeping, business communication and some form of typewriting to facilitate business transactions. It is believed that those early Nigerian entrepreneurs sent their children to study vocational business education in order to help them meet the needs of their export market. However, in his view, Nwaokolo (1994) said that business education has been with us in Nigeria since the birth of man at least in the informal sense. He added that from preliterate society up to the modern time, Nigerian people had used their business skills and knowledge informally acquired in the application of business transactions. According to him, they have always engaged in production, distribution, exchanges, sorting, transporting and so on. He concluded that one cannot say precisely when the formal type of business education started in Nigeria.

## 2.7 Background of the Research Area

This study was conducted in four mixed-sex senior secondary schools offering VBE commerce and economics in Plateau State which is in the north central geo-political zone of Nigeria. The state is located on a plateau so the weather is cool. Thus most places, such as Jos, Barkin Ladi and Pankshin enjoy a temperate climate. In terms of landmass, Plateau is one of the largest states in Nigeria and is full of rocks, valleys and mountains. It is bounded by the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja in the north, Taraba State in the south, Benue State in east and Bauchi State in the west. The major tribes are the Beroms and Jarawa in the north senatorial district; Ngas, Mwaghavul and Hausas in the central senatorial district; and Tarok and Fulanis in the south senatorial districts. The predominant economic activities in Plateau State are agriculture, small-scale trading and private and government work. The state is blessed with many minerals such as tin, bauxite, precious stones and gold. It is often referred to as the “home of solid minerals”.

In recent times, Plateau state has experienced a lot of religious crises. This is because Christianity and Islam are practised side by side in addition to traditional religion. The crises are caused by, a poor interpretation of religious tenets. Such misinterpretation has led most parents and teachers to believe that women’s place is in the kitchen and therefore they are trained to be good wives and mothers. This does not mean that there is a link between the religious violence in Plateau State with the beliefs about women’s place in their society. Generally, religious practices such as ‘purdah’ often hinder the effective participation of girls in VBE classroom interactions and thus, affect their academic achievement. In fact, in education, Plateau State is one of those that are educationally disadvantaged in terms of girls’ education and has very many poor people living in rural communities who seem not to support their daughters’ access to senior secondary schools. The beliefs enumerated above aroused my interest to set out to explore whether or not girls do fail to join class discussions during their VBE commerce and economics lessons.

This area was chosen because there are many cultural factors militating against the education of children in Plateau State. One of these factors is the belief that girls’ education is not incompatible with their traditional beliefs and religious practices (NCCE 2003). The total population of Plateau State in 1991 was 3,312,412; of which, men totalled 1,657,209 while women numbered 1,655,203, that is, 50 per cent men and 50 per cent women (NBS, 2008). Again, in 2006, the total population was 3,178,712 of which, men comprised 1,593,033 and women 1,585,679 (NBS, 2008). Thus in 2006, the percentage of men was 50.1 while that of



women was 49.9 per cent. Even though women have always formed half of the total population of Plateau State, it seems they are always marginalised regarding political participation. Because of their traditional views of gender, from 1999 to 2007, Plateau State has never elected a female senator in the National Assembly. In addition, the State did not elect any woman to represent them in the House of Representative during the 1999 and 2003 political era. However, in 2007 there were 2 women and 6 men from the state in the House of Representatives. In the Plateau State House of Assembly, men occupied 22 seats out of 24, leaving only 2 in the 1999 election; in 2003, the men totalled 23 whereas there was only one woman. During the 2007 political era, there were 22 men and only 2 women. As the result of a number of crises, local government elections were not conducted and so there are no figures on what transpired. Overall, men dominate the political, social, and educational arena in Plateau State while women and girls are left to occupy subordinate positions.

However, the VBE students who complete their senior secondary education and obtained credit level passes often write JAMB examinations to gain admission to tertiary institutions such as the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. Those who do not have the means to further their education often seek for employment as clerical workers in both private formal and public organisations. As getting employment in such places is hard nowadays, VBE graduates who are girls often go into petty trading businesses while boys take up farming. According to Esene (1997) unemployment has been a common characteristic of many VBE senior secondary school students. This explains why many of them go into retail business as a means of generating income for their upkeep and those of their families.

## **2.8 Summary**

This chapter explores the broader contexts within which my case studies are located. It provides the reader with some basic facts about Nigeria as a country: her geography, climate, rivers, religion, administrative structure and gender profile, gender and social institutions, gender in the formal and informal sector employment as well as states how female economic activity change with socio-economic status (SES). It further distinguishes between cultural, social and economic capital and discusses how trading activity in the family provides cultural capital to girls and how that is later translated into economic or educational capital. The chapter also explores briefly how gender differentiates across different religious, urban/rural and SES groups in the traditional Nigerian society and the interaction of gender with

these social identities. It further discusses the country's education system and shed some light on the historical development of Nigerian vocational business education (VBE) as the subject area being researched, as well as explores senior secondary school students who go into this programme: their sub-choices and prior examination results. Lastly, it highlights senior secondary school students' enrolment by gender through references to national and state level data on retention across levels by gender and concludes by examining employment opportunities open to those VBE students who complete senior secondary schools in Nigeria.

## **Chapter 3: Literature Review: Theoretical Framework**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The issues that I discussed in chapter 2 included basic facts about Nigeria as a country: her brief history, geography, rivers, administrative structure, gender profile, social institutions, her education system and the issue of gender in formal and informal employment as well as the background of the research area. The purpose of my study is to explore gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of vocational business education (VBE) in Nigerian senior secondary schools. This chapter sets out the literature review and the theoretical framework for the study. In order to achieve this purpose, first I consider the difficulties that I had in working with theories in general and with the three theories framing this study. Then I review the relevant literature because that has an important role to play in the formation of my study's theoretical framework. Very importantly in this chapter, I discuss how gender roles are germane to the subject under consideration and how I can know them as well as explore the interaction of gender with other social identities, socio-economic status and educational attainment.

Generally, the study aims to answer the following research questions: (1) What ideas about gender do VBE teachers and their students bring to commerce and economics classroom interactions in Nigerian senior secondary schools (2) How do these ideas affect teacher-student and student-student interactions in the teaching and learning of the two VBE subjects in the schools? (3) How is gender inequality reproduced through informal and formal curriculum of teaching and learning in the schools? and (4) What views of gender in the context of business practice are held by VBE commerce and economics teachers and students in the Nigerian senior secondary schools? These research questions are explored within the theoretical framework that constitutes the underlying structure on which all other aspects of the study rest (Merriam, 1998). Table 3.1 below shows the research questions and the most appropriate strategies for obtaining the data to answer each research question.

**Table 3.1 Research Questions and Strategies for Data Collection**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Purposes of the Study</b>	<b>Information that most appropriately will answer specific research questions</b>	<b>Strategies that are most effective for obtaining it</b>
1. What ideas about gender do VBE teachers and their students bring to Commerce and Economics classroom interactions in Nigerian SSS?	To explore ideas about gender that VBE commerce and economics teachers and their students bring to classroom interactions during their lessons.	Views about Gender that VBE Commerce and Economics teachers and their students bring to classroom interactions of the Nigerian senior secondary schools during their lessons	Participant Observation and Semi-structured interviews
2. How do these ideas affect teacher-student and student-student interactions in the teaching and learning of VBE in Nigerian SSS?	To determine ways that their ideas about gender affects teacher-student and student-student interactions during the lessons in commerce and economics	Direct class observation notes and interview text materials taken down during semi-structured interviews	Participant Observation and Semi-structured interviews
3. How is gender inequality reproduced through formal and informal curriculum of teaching and learning in the schools?	To examine how gender inequality is reproduced through formal and informal curriculum of teaching and learning in the schools.	Field notes taken during Direct school observations, interview texts got during semi-structured interviews and texts from documents analysis	Analysis of documents, semi-structured interviews and participant observation.
4. What views of gender in the context of business practice are held by VBE commerce and economics teachers and their students in Nigerian SSS?	To explore views about gender in the context of business practice that is held by VBE commerce and economics teachers and their students in the Nigerian senior secondary schools (SSS).	The views about gender in the context of business practice that are held by VBE commerce and economics teachers in the Nigerian SSS.	Analysis of documents, semi-structured interviews and participant observation

**Derived from the Study's Research Questions**

A close examination of the research topic and questions shows that I am focusing on the interrelationship between gender and VBE classroom participation of teachers and students in commerce and economics lessons. Although gender interacts with other social identities such as age, educational attainment and socio-economic status, yet the research problem and purpose of this study are centred mainly on ideas about gender that VBE teachers and their students bring to their classroom interactions, gendered VBE classroom interactions as well as gender in both the informal and formal curriculum. Furthermore, I am concerned with their gendered views about employment after graduation from the senior secondary schools. Generally the discussions in the thesis acknowledge how gender roles are germane to the VBE classroom participation of teachers and students in commerce and economics lessons in the Nigerian senior secondary schools.

### **3.2 Difficulties of Working with Theories**

In order to explore both the purpose of the study and the research questions deeply, I was constrained to work with a number of theories for the first time in my academic career. During my first and second degrees, I did not make use of any theories. Indeed, at the early stages of my PhD, I was forced to work with theory in general and gender theory in particular, as well as to figure out what theoretical framework I needed to use for my study. The need to work with gender theories became so strong that I had to study many of them in the area of gender and education. When I was writing my proposal, I reviewed approaches to understanding gender in the Western Nations and in my country. Consequently, I engaged with theoretical perspectives such as biological determinism, sex-role socialisation, and the construction of gender. Other theoretical perspectives that I studied at that time include individualist, interactionalist, institutional perspectives and social constructivist theory. The reason why I had to study all those theories was because I was not sure which of them would help me to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning involved in my research study and which of them would work well in my context.

Moreover, I needed theories that could assist me to describe, understand and analyse the data that were to be generated during my field work. During the early parts of my studies, I found out that biological determinism maintains that boys will be boys and girls will be girls, thus indicating that sex should be construed as gender. Indeed, such views would be given plausibility in Nigeria where gender and

culture are seen as members of one family. In addition, I faced the problem of finding a theory in Nigeria that could be used for the study but none was suitable. This problem was exacerbated because of having to use concepts and ideas from Western theories to think, organise and analyse the situations in my country. Indeed, one of the main issues that I found somehow complex in my study was making use of gender theory propounded by gender specialists in the Western nations in the Nigerian school classrooms in order to establish an empirical emphasis for the study.

The research data for the study were generated through semi-structured interviews, participant observation and review of documents. I explored gender differences in classroom participation in VBE commerce and economics classrooms of the case study schools using the Schools' gender regime theory (Connell, 1996) and Social Roles theory (Eagly 1987). In particular, I found the first theory very helpful in examining gender regimes at the case study schools and the second theory helped me to explore the VBE teachers' and students' ideas about gender in terms of gender roles carried out during family socialisation and socialisation at school. These two gender theories proved useful for investigating the gendered experiences of schooling among the VBE students and their teachers. Moreover, the theories also helped to reveal the effect of the gendered school environment on boys' and girls' learning opportunities, gendered segregation and on stereotypical gender behaviour across all the case study schools. For example, the schools' gender regime theory provided gendered accounts of school life that went on in the four case study schools.

The social roles theory (Eagly, 1987) was also used to explore how the VBE teachers and students learn the usual ways to act in a masculine and feminine manner through assigned tasks at home and in school. With regard to gender roles of boys and girls in Nigeria, the theory helps to highlight how the home influences of parents during cultural participation especially that of the mothers, assist in teaching the children to act in ways thought appropriate for their genders. The theory also helps to show whether or not boys and girls learn to fit into the regular discipline of school work. On the other hand, Cultural capital theory (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1997) was also used to shed light on the interconnection between home influences and school life because the knowledge and skills acquired from assigned domestic tasks and such cultural participations seemed to boost girls' academic work at schools more than those of the boys.

The theoretical framework helps to guide the gender issues that I observed at school, the questions that I asked the research participants and the school documents that I reviewed. Utilising interpretive techniques of observation, interviews and document reviews, the theoretical framework used helped me to anticipate and made sense of institutional life at the case study schools. Indeed, the sense made of the research data that I generated on the ideas about gender that the VBE students and teachers brought to their commerce and economics classroom interactions, gendered interactions during lessons, the gendered curriculum (both informal and formal) and gendered expectations about the labour market, were equally influenced by the theoretical framework. In addition, the analysis and interpretation of my study's findings would reflect the three theories that structured the study in the first instance. This is so because the research data generated from the four mixed-sex high schools were analysed and interpreted in the light of the concepts of a particular theoretical orientation. For example, concepts such as power relations, division of labour, sexuality and symbolisation were used to look at gender regimes in the case study schools. Similarly, issues of gender socialisation were examined in terms of gender identify, behaviour, roles played by both sexes in society and other signifiers of gender such as dress, first names, and the students' social networking.

The section below seeks to identify what is already known about classroom participation and gender differences in it. In reviewing the literature, my research questions lead me into a dialogue with past research projects already carried out in the field of gender differences in the classroom participation of boys and girls mostly in the western nations. At this juncture, I define classroom participation and discuss what is already known about gender differences in the literature, particularly in relation to VBE. Next, I state my own views about the existing literature. I then frame the study using three theories: the schools' gender regime theory, social roles theory and cultural capital theory. The section below discusses the meaning of classroom participation.

### **3.3 Classroom Participation**

Classroom participation has been defined in various ways within the literature. According to Schultz (2009:6) 'classroom participation is to be understood as an act that is fundamentally about contribution and connection'. In this context, 'participation consists of any verbal or nonverbal contribution in aural (spoken), visual (pictorial), or written (textual) form that supports learning for the individual

student and/or other members of the class' (Schultz, 2009:6-7). She further defines it 'as any contribution to a group activity that creates and extends the spaces for understanding in the classroom' (ibid, p.7). In addition, Petress (2006) 'operationally defined participation as comprising three aspects by which students could be evaluated: quantity, dependability and quality' (p. 3). According to Housley Gaffney (2008) 'other researchers have conceived of participation in terms of specific classroom behaviours such as asking and answering, participating in class discussion, and refraining from negative behaviours' (p. 3). Generally, 'behaviours that make up participation vary greatly, ranging from breathing and staying awake in class to giving oral presentations' (Housley Gaffney, 2008:4). For the purpose of the present study, classroom participation refers to the ways that VBE teachers teach their lessons such as the manner in which their students would take turns to respond to their queries as well as have opportunities to ask them (teachers) some questions during whole class interactions. According to Wenger (1998: 56) "participation involves a social experience of sharing with other people in a particular activity or event". For this study, VBE classroom participation involves the social experience of sharing with the teachers and students in the commerce and economics lessons and their activities.

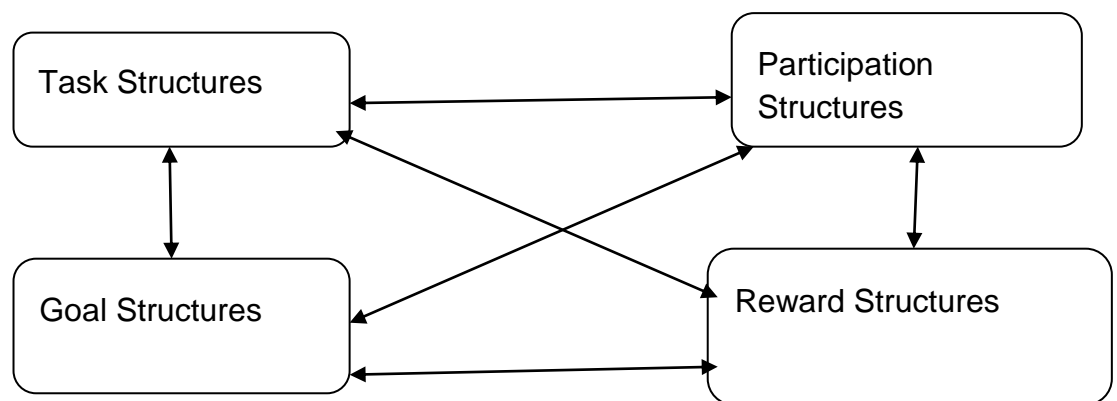
In his attempt to discuss learning environments and motivation, Arends (1994: 103) put forward a model of classroom environment which was made up of four dimensions: climate, properties, processes and structures. Although the Arends model was meant for Western settings, it was relevant to the current study because of its focus on classroom environment in schools. According to Arends (1994: 103), classroom climate is made up of both personal and social dimensions while classroom properties are understood in terms of ecological system where both the teachers and the students interact with each other and the environment. The six classroom properties include multidimensionality: classrooms are crowded places in which people with preferences and abilities compete for scarce resources; simultaneity: many things happen at once in classrooms; unpredictability: classroom events take unexpected turns and often distractions and interruptions are frequent; publicness: classrooms are public places and lessons are attended by many students; immediacy: classroom events proceed at a rapid pace and history: classes meet five days a week for many months and thus accumulate a common set of experiences, routines and norms. These processes shape both students' and teachers' behaviours, thus affecting their participation (Arends, 1994, p. 105). Arends (Ibid) further points out that classroom processes are interpersonal and are



group processes. The latter consist of the following elements: expectations: both for themselves and each other; leadership: this refers to how power and influence are exerted in the classroom and their impact on group interaction and cohesiveness; attraction: this refers to the degree to which people in a classroom have respect for one another and how friendship patterns within the classroom affect class atmosphere and learning; norms: these are shared expectations that students and teachers have for classroom behaviour; communication: this relates to classroom interactions which could be verbal or non-verbal; and cohesiveness: these are feelings and commitments that teachers and students have towards the classroom group as a whole (Arends, 1994:106).

Lastly, classroom structures are arrangements that shape the class and the demands that particular lessons place on students (Arends, 1994). Most researchers maintain that behaviour in the classroom is partially a response to the structures and demands of their environments (Doyle and Carter, 1984; Doyle, 1979). Arends (1994) believed that “this view of the classrooms pays close attention to the kinds of structures that exist within classrooms and to the activities and tasks students are asked to perform during particular lessons” (p. 107). Classroom structures comprise goal structures, task structures, reward structures and participation structures (Arends, 1994). Figure 3.1 below shows a modified classroom structures derived from Arends’ (1994). The four structures in this diagram make up the lesson and its activities and they interact and shape each, thus influencing classroom behaviour. My study takes keen interest in the classroom behaviour of boys and girls during their lessons in commerce and economics. This model is therefore very useful to my study.

**Figure 3.1: Classroom Structures and Its Activities**



**Sources: Modified from Arends (1994:106) Classroom Structures and how they organize classroom life, Figure 4-3**

According to Arends (ibid), 'the classroom tasks refer to what is expected of students and the cognitive as well as social demands placed on them to accomplish the tasks' (p. 107). The goal structures refer to the ways the students relate to each other and to the teacher while working towards an instructional goal (Arends, 1994: 108). For example, the goal structures could be individualistic, or cooperative. The reward structures refer to the ways that students who do well are praised while those who misbehave are reprimanded. According to Cazden, (1986) cited in Arends, (1994: 108) participation structure tends to determine "who can say what, when and to whom". Arends (ibid) further points out that 'participation structures include the way students take turns during group discussions and the way they ask questions and respond to teacher's questions'. This aspect deals with turn-taking during classroom interaction. According to Mercer (1995: 29), turn-taking comprises 'variants of the kind of classic teacher-pupil exchanges recorded by language researchers the world over, and usually called 'IRF' or IREs' because they consist of three parts: an Initiation by the teacher; a Response by the pupils; and some Feedback or (Evaluation) by the teacher to that response'. An example of teacher-student exchange goes like this:

**Teacher:** How many days are there in one year? (Initiation)

**First Student:** 365 days (Response).

**Teacher:** That's correct (Feedback or evaluation). If two weeks are taken out, how many days still remain? (Another Initiation).

**Second Pupil:** 351 days (Response).

**Teacher:** That's fine (Feedback or Evaluation).

The teacher uses these exchanges to allocate speaking turns to students and evaluate the arithmetical understanding of the students as well as enforce a class norm for classroom talk. In this study, turn-taking or teacher-student exchanges are observed and recorded because they are a part of classroom structures. However, Arends (1994) introduced the classroom structures as if they functioned in isolation or independently from each other. However I found his (Arends') viewpoint to be problematic because these four classroom structures interact with and shape each other, thus impacting on the teachers' and students' behaviour and their participation in the lessons. For example, the classroom processes such as norms and expectations impact on classroom behaviours and participation. Figure 3.1 represents my modification to Arends' diagram to show the

interactions between the four classroom structures. Utilizing Arends' (1994) understanding, my motive is to explain how these notions can be used as a tool to describe, illuminate and interpret the main findings on gendered classroom interactions.

To close this matter, it is worth mentioning that classroom participation of boys and girls involves complex issues, for example, Paechter (1998) and Wood (2003) shed light on unequal attention to boys and girls during classroom discussions. I will now discuss what is already known about gender differences in classroom participation.

### **3.4 The Existing Literature on Gender Differences in Classroom Participation**

In the Western World, researchers who have studied gender issues in classroom interaction include Myhill (2002); Carrington et al, (2007); Aukrust, (2008); Paechter, (1998); Francis, (2000); and Einarsson and Granstrom (2002). Similarly, in Africa, researchers who have worked on these issues include Dunne et al (2005) in Ghana and Botswana; O-saki and Agu (2002) in Tanzania, Brenner (1998) in Liberia; Anderson-Levitt et al (1998) in Guinea and Bakari (2009) in Nigeria.

I draw on some of these past research projects for the current study because they helped to shape my own understanding of gender in VBE classroom participation. To start with, research studies on the teacher's gender in Western settings show that it seemed to matter little in the pupils' responses about an ideal teacher' (Carrington et al, 2007:3). Drawing upon their study on the topic 'does the gender of the teacher really matter?' The authors discovered that 'both boys and girls placed more value on teachers' consistency and even-handedness than on gender' (Carrington et al, 2007:3). This suggests that the gender of the teacher is open to doubt as far as the classroom participation of boys and girls is concerned. What matters to the students is how they experience the interactive aspect of the teachers' teaching or the ways that the teachers involve them in the lesson to their satisfaction as well as treats them fairly. This implies that the teachers' gender does not matter as much as helping the students to learn effectively what they need to learn. However, earlier research shows that the student's gender affects classroom interactions (Francis, 2006; Skelton, 2006, Arnot, 2006; Renold, 2006 and Bakari, 2009). Even though the results tended to vary, research studies indicate that boys and girls participate differently in class discussions (Francis, 2004; and Myhill, 2002). In fact, the major finding in classroom participation literature is that boys take

part much more than girls in any lessons (Francis, 2000; Liu, 2006; Bakari, 2009). In addition, a number of research studies concluded that during whole-class teaching and learning, boys usually dominate class discussions and that they often attract more attention from teachers and interact more with them than do girls (Francis, 2000; Paechter, 1998, Drudy and Chathain, 2002 and Bakari, 2009). Furthermore, during whole-class discussions, boys make more contributions by raising hands more and misbehaving more (Howe, 1997), call out answers more, ask more questions and are evaluated more (Francis, 2000). Again, they are often rebuked much more than the girls (Younger, et al, 1999).

Recent studies have concluded that boys receive the lion's share of teachers' attention compared to girls. They also participate in more complex and challenging interactions with teachers and receive more constructive responses (Pellegrini and Blatchford 2000; Page and Jha, 2009). Even though some studies conclude that there are no differences to be found between boys' and girls' classroom involvement (Merritt and Wheldall 1992), most reckon that boys participate very much more than do girls. However, the bad thing about the apparent dominance of boys during classroom talk is that it disadvantages girls in some ways. According to some researchers (Swann and Graddol, 1988, cited in Smith et al, 2007), boys' dominance of classroom talk lowers girls' expectations; affects their attitude to learning, and provides a negative experience in terms of a woman's role within discussions in later life (Howe, 1997, cited in Smith et al, 2007).

Kelly (1988) carried out a meta-analysis of 81 research reports, all of which were about boys' and girls' interaction with teachers. The majority of studies Kelly used as a basis for the analysis were carried out in the West, with none in any of the African countries. Kelly found that boys interacted more with their teachers across different Western countries, across different social classes and ethnic groups and across different subject areas. According to Aukrust (2008), none of the studies in the meta-analysis found that the teacher interacted more with girls than with boys. This author (*ibid*) pointed out that boys initiated contact more often with the teacher and the teacher more often with them than did the girls. Croll and Moses (1990) as cited in Aukrust, (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of the same type in England and came to a similar conclusion to Kelly's. Eccles and Blumenfeld (1985) also discovered that a greater proportion of the teacher's talk during class discussion was directed towards the boys than to the girls. Nevertheless, they found no significant difference in the relative distribution of the different kinds of address to

boys and girls; the difference was that the teachers talked more to the boys (Aukrust, 2008).

Other studies, still in the USA, UK and Australia, have observed differences in the quality of the teacher's interactions with boys and girls (Aukrust, 2008). According to Aukrust, it has been reported that boys get more questions directed to them by teachers and receive more verbal encouragement and criticism, as well as non-verbal encouragement. Grayson (2001), cited in Aukrust (ibid) found that teachers gave a shorter response time to girls, asked them less complex questions and gave them fewer follow-up questions. Likewise, Duffy, Warren and Walsh (2001) and Tsouroufli (2002) discovered that teachers had a tendency to interact more with boys in the classroom than they did with girls. According to Aukrust (2008), this did not result from boys initiating more direct verbal contact with the teachers but from the teachers themselves allowing boys to speak and initiate contact with them. Indeed, boys have also been found to receive more negative attention in the form of rebuke and to request less help from the teacher, while girls received more positive attention thus supporting their learning (Younger et al. 1999, cited in Aukrust, 2008).

In summary, most studies of gender differences in classroom interactions found that boys take a greater part than girls in the lessons (Aukrust, 2008; Francis, 2000; Skelton and Francis, 2003). Such studies conclude that 'the differences are first and foremost in the *quantity* of girls' and boys' participation while other studies have reported differences in the *quality* of girls' and boys' interaction in the classroom' (Streitmatter, 1994; Liu, 2006; Aukrust, 2008). 'These qualitative differences are partly connected with teacher behaviour when they address girls and boys during class discussions, and it is also connected to the behaviour of girls and boys during such classroom interactions' (Younger et al. 1999, cited in Aukrust, 2008:238).

However, there is only one piece of research that did not seem to support the belief that boys monopolise classroom talk, and that research is the study of Dorset schools carried out by Myhill (2002: 4). She (ibid) found that "high-achieving boys shifted significantly from being very likely to volunteer a response in Year 1, to showing a marked reluctance in Year 8". According to Myhill, 'those boys began to exhibit similar interaction patterns to the under-achievers' (p. 4). This suggests that the age of the students is a factor which tends to affect their classroom participation. It also implies that the older the boys are the more unwilling and reluctant they are when it comes to joining in whole class interactions.

### 3.5 Implications for Studying Gender in classroom Interactions

The strengths of the existing literature are that they provide the foundation for contributions to the knowledge-base of the field (Merriam, 1998). These studies show that the interpersonal behaviour of the teachers towards the students during class lessons tends to determine whether boys or girls are equitably connected to talk at any particular point in time. Therefore, the existing literature also shows that teachers' behaviour tends to prompt boys to talk much more than girls during classroom interactions. It is equally clear from these studies that boys usually control classroom interactions, by taking more turns than girls, attracting more of teachers' attention and receiving more feedback from their teachers than do the girls. These situations are partly the result of teachers' behaviour and partly because of students' actions, and these are affected by the dominant culture, differences in socialisation and a number of other complex issues. Again, teacher practice and student response affect each other during teacher-student interaction. As noted earlier, teachers are supposed to connect boys and girls equally during class lessons for them to make verbal contributions to the lessons (Schultz, 2009: 8) but where a teacher tends to connect with more boys than girls; or pay most attention to boys than girls for any reason, then that leads to the boys taking over the classroom talk. The implication of such an action is that girls are then inclined to remain silent during sessions. The big question here is whether or not the teacher gives an equal opportunity to both genders during class discussions using an appropriate classroom management and control strategy. If the boys harass the girls when the teachers calls on them to talk in class, would it not be possible for the teacher to control the boys in such a way that the girls feel protected by him? I believe that when class control is good, girls are able to talk without any form of molestation from boys. Moreover, if the girls remain silent during lessons; did their teacher encourage them to make a verbal contribution to the lesson? On the other hand, if the boys took over the discussion, how did the teacher control their behaviour so that the girls could join in the discussion? After all, "teaching depends on being able to control the students" (Connell, 1985, p. 127, cited in Dunne, 2010, p. 122). Dunne further points out that "the principal classroom activities of teachers included maintaining order, teaching their subject and monitoring the students" (p. 122). Therefore, the attitude and behaviour of the teacher towards linking both boys and girls to talk are very important and the issues at stake are complex and require more exploration.

We need to keep in mind that boys and girls are socialised differently in different communities and most Nigerian cultures teach girls to be nice, friendly, and

caring while boys are conditioned to be strong, assertive and self-reliant. These attributes are taken to the classroom during lessons and they affect boys' and girls' contribution to discussions. Moreover, cultural interpretation of silence for boys and girls appears to differ from one society to another and this in turn affects the students' disposition to participating in class lessons. For instance, where girls are taught to interpret silence as respect when an adult such as a teacher is talking, they feel reluctant to take part in class discussion. Other issues that might lead to boys' controlling class discussion depend on whether or not boys are the majority in the classroom and what the subject/ academic topic under discussion is, for example, English Language, Mathematics or Science. Where English Language is the subject under discussion, research shows that boys are unlikely to dominate but where Mathematics and Science are involved, boys are likely to be in charge (Liu, 2006; Okooboh, 2000). Even then, these issues go hand in hand with the teacher's connectivity with the students during the discussions. These and other complex issues appear to affect students' involvement in class lessons. Consequently, boys' monopoly of classroom talk, as shown in the existing literature, appears to be too general because it seems that little attention has been paid to gender issues that support girls' dominance of class lessons, hence motivating them to participate in classroom interactions. Such issues may include girls' interest in the subject, socialisation, friendship networks, etc. This suggests that generalising about boys' universal control of discussions about every school subject without giving consideration to what might lead to girls' possible domination, is somewhat erroneous and problematic because of the diverse issues that impinge on classroom interactions in schools. Indeed, I have not come across any research studies that explore in detail boys' dominance of class lessons with specific reference to vocational business subjects, which the present study is aiming at.

My study investigates gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of vocational business education (VBE) in terms of the classroom participation of boys and girls during commerce and economics lessons among senior secondary students mixed-sex schools in Nigeria. In chapter one of this thesis, I noted that vocational business education (VBE) is a neglected field of study by educational researchers because there are no current research projects in this aspect of education. The only research study which is similar to the present one was carried out by Jane Gaskell in the autumn of 1983 in a high school in Vancouver, Canada. The focus was on 'the way the business education curriculum in one high school reproduces class and gender relations' (Gaskell, 1992:91). The questions that

informed that study were: 1) 'Why is business education so closely connected to preparation for work for young women?; 2) What does this connection mean for the quality of instruction in the classroom?; 3) What does it mean for the reproduction of class and gender categories through schooling?; and 4) What are the possibilities and direction of change?' (Gaskell, 1992:91) That research was carried out by two persons who employed observation, interviews, questionnaire and document review as their methods of data collection. The research participants included 8 business teachers, 50 business students and a guidance counsellor. The data collection lasted for about four months. One of the findings of that study was that 'business education is a very important school subject for young women because it has a major impact on how they plan at school and at work' (Gaskell, 1992:91). Indeed, there were other findings too but the similarity between that study and mine resides in the fact that it was carried out at secondary school level and in the field of business education using business teachers and students as research participants. Additionally, it was similar because most of the research methods adopted – observation, interviews and document review - are also used in the current study. On the other hand, the differences lie in the overall focus of the study, the nature of the research questions as well as the research area and the number of case study schools involved.

### **3.6 Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study**

This study is based on three theoretical perspectives and they consist of Schools' Gender Regime theory (Connell, 1996); Social Role theory (Eagly, 1987) and Cultural Capital theory (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979). These theories were selected on the premise that in order to explore the gender dimensions of an institution, it is necessary to understand the social structures and practices by which such an institution constructs gender among the teachers and students (Connell, 1996). Arguably, it is essential to have some form of understanding of their gender relations and their social world. Gender involves relationships between people and the environment and how it interacts with other social identities in the environment. One important way of understanding gender relations is to understand social behaviour and social setting (Connell, 1996).

When beginning to plan the study, I had the intention of using social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory argues that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the ways boys and girls learn. Vygotsky (1978) maintains that every function in the child's cultural development appears twice, first, on the social level and later, on the individual level; first between people and then



inside the child. My research was not purely about teaching and learning, however, I was interested in exploring how gender affects the classroom participation of VBE teachers and students in Commerce and Economics class lessons. I concluded that social constructivist theory would be inappropriate to examine the complexities associated with gender differences in classroom participation of boys and girls in the school procedures and processes within and outside the classrooms. Moreover, I discovered that the theory would not work in the Nigerian context because of the traditional teaching methods used in the VBE classrooms of the case study schools. Consequently, I had to drop social constructivist theory and search for other theories that might help shed light on the type of data that I generated in my field work. As a result, I decided to frame the study under schools' gender regime theory (Connell, 1996); social roles theory (Eagly, 1987) and cultural capital theory (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1997) as the theories for organising, analysing and interpreting gender issues at the four case study schools.

### **3.6.1 The Schools' Gender Regime Theory**

One gender theory underpinning this study is the schools' gender regime theory. According to Kessler et al (1985) in Liu (2006: 426) "gender regime at work in every school can be defined as the pattern of practices that constructs various kinds of masculinity and femininity among staff and students, orders them in terms of prestige and power, and constructs a sexual division of labour within the institution". These authors further pointed out that "gender regime is a state of play rather than a permanent condition and that it can be changed deliberately or otherwise but that it is no less powerful in its effects on pupils for that it confronts them as a social fact, which they have to come to terms with somehow" (p. 426). In agreement with the above, Connell (2002:53) pointed out that 'every institution has a regular set of arrangements about gender: who is employed to do what work; what social divisions are recognised; how emotional relations are conducted and how these institutions are related to others'. He (ibid) added that such a pattern in gender arrangements may be called the gender regime of an institution (p. 53).

Connell (2002:54) also defined gender relations as a set of relationships existing between men and women in everyday school life and through them gender identities are formed. Bradley (2007) says that gender is a lived experience and a set of sociological relationships (p. 4 – 5). This definition stresses gender identity formation through everyday gendered experiences through socialisation. Therefore, gender regime is usually used to show how accounts of everyday life in a school can

construct gender inequality through “normalisation” of specific forms of gendered behaviour and interaction (Dunne, 2007:502). Generally, by normalising forms of behaviour and interaction in school life, gender regime is set up with which teachers and students identify and through which they play out their gendered identities (Dunne, 2007:502). According to Connell (1996: 9) the theoretical work on gender allows people to sort out the different dimensions of a school's gender regime which is made up of power relations, division of labour, patterns of emotions and symbolisation. The reason why this theory is first of all explained here is that it provides the study with the necessary theoretical foundation from the literature which I intend to use later in the thesis for the analysis of schools' gender issues at the case study schools.

Below are the explanations of the four components of schools' gender regime theory and their interactions with other social identities.

First, Connell (1996:9) points out that power relations include supervision and authority among teachers and patterns of dominance, harassment and control over resources among students”. According to Connell (2002:58), power as a dimension of gender, carries with it the idea of men as a dominant ‘sex class’ and women as another sex class on whom men exercised their own authority on. This seems to be applicable to Nigeria because men tended to dominate and control the women. Generally, gender interacts with other social identities such as class, socio-economic status (SES), and educational achievement. Indeed, gender as an important social division interacts with class because men and women are differently placed in the class structure. According to Connell (1996:9), “a familiar and important pattern of the class structure is the association of masculinity with authority, and the concentration of men in supervisory positions in school systems”. However, women are often associated with subservient positions such as clerical work, matrons, cooks and junior teachers in the schools (Bakari, 2009). Thus, men appeared to belong to higher SES group while women belong to lower SES group in the Nigerian society. Still, in terms of educational attainment, men and women could attain higher educational levels depending on economic capital, willingness to study, etc although sometimes women pursued and obtained higher educational qualifications than men. As higher educational attainment is often associated with higher SES group, women often attained higher educational levels with their male counterparts or in some cases more than men. Consequently such women tend to supervise and control the men who work under them. Furthermore, power relations among the students are visible in how boys dominate and control the playground

space for informal football activities and thus maintaining the hegemony of an aggressive, physical masculinity in the school's peer group life (Connell, 1996:9). On the other hand, girls often gathered in small groups, mostly on the edges of the playing field and some on the footpaths for their informal playground activities (Dunne, 2007:506). Consequently, boys are the dominant class of people utilising the gendered playground space while girls are the class of people managing the periphery (Dunne, 2007:506). In my thesis, I intend to examine whether or not power relations among the staff and students will give what other researchers quoted above found.

Secondly, Connell (2002: 60) states that "in many societies, and in many situations, certain tasks are performed by men and others are performed by women". He (ibid) added that "such divisions of labour are common throughout history and across cultures but while gender divisions of labour are extremely common, there is not exactly the same division in different cultures or at different points of history" (p. 60). Connell (1996: 9) points out that this includes "work specialisations among teachers, such as concentrations of women in domestic science, language, and literature teaching and male teachers in science, mathematics and industrial arts". Here gender interacts with work specialisations of teachers as well as with their socio-economic status and educational attainment. This is so because men appear to be found in a certain class of teaching profession while women tend to be in another class. With respect to the latter, I recognise the interaction of gender and class, but I did not set out to study this systematically, as such; I have limited data which can inform that particular debate.

Additionally, informal school duties among students tend to be gender specific as well as interact with other social identities. For example, general school duties are often allocated according to gender. Generally, girls are often given the responsibility of cleaning the classrooms and offices while boys are saddled with the responsibility of performing heavier duties like tree cutting (Dunne, 2007:505). Thus boys are put in the class of students who can do heavier duties while girls in the class of those who can do light duties.

Thirdly, emotional relations are made up of emotional relations, attachments or commitments (Connell, 2002: 62). It is what most sociologists referred to as the "feeling rules" for occupations which are often found in teaching and are often associated with the performance of specific roles in a school (Connell, 1996:9).

Connell (2002: 63) claims that emotional commitments may be positive or negative, favourable or hostile towards the object. Also, according to Connell (2002), a major area of emotional attachment is sexuality which involves culturally-formed bodily relationships. In Nigeria, heterosexuality may be particularly important in the definitions of masculinity and femininity. For example, among the secondary students, boys often wrote love letters to girls asking them to befriend them. Similarly, most girls who wanted to have boyfriends often wrote similar letters to boys to befriend them. Even among their secondary school teachers who are married, heterosexuality is preferred to homosexuality. In these heterosexual relationships, the burden of domestic tasks falls heavily on the women while men serve the public. For boys and girls, such heterosexual friendship relationships often resulted in illicit sex among youngsters, most of which resulted in teenage pregnancies, and in this way affects the girls very seriously.

Fourthly, Connell (1996:9) points out that "schools import much of the symbolisation of gender from the wider culture, but they have their own symbol systems too: uniforms and dress codes, formal and informal language codes, and so forth". Another important symbolic structure in education is the gendering of knowledge by which certain areas of the curriculum are perceived by people as masculine while others as feminine (Connell, 1996). It is through such intersecting structures of relationships that schools construct institutional definitions of gender. Such definitions can be impersonal; they exist as social facts and teachers and students participate in this gender construction by entering the school and living within its structures (Connell 1996). The terms on which they participate are negotiable, that is, whether adjusting to the patterns, rebelling against them or trying to modify them (Connell, 1996: 9).

### **3.6.2 Social Roles Theory (Eagly, 1987)**

Eagly (1987) proposed Social Roles theory arguing that 'social roles account for sex differences in social behaviour' (p. 10). She further argued that 'the sexual division of labour and societal expectations based on stereotypes produce gender roles' (p. 12). She defined the latter as 'shared expectations about appropriate qualities and behaviours which apply to people on the basis of their socially identified gender' (p. 12). According to Eagly (1987) 'gender roles are germane to explaining sex differences which occur in typical research settings [school classrooms] and such gender roles are applicable to a large portion of people's lives, including that portion which might occur in the classroom setting' (p. 12). Eagly

(ibid) argued that 'gender roles do have a direct impact on social interactions that occur in the classroom settings' (p. 12). These gender roles are often established upon social norms which are 'the standards or rules of behaviour for men and women expected by a given society or culture' (Statt, 2003:145) Such social norms are usually perceived as 'stereotypes' which are 'shared beliefs that people hold about a group of people' (Archer and Lioyd, 2002:19). Moreover, 'gender roles are the social roles that a society defines for men and women while the stereotypes that people hold about men and women are gender stereotypes' (Eagly, 1987:6).

Eagly (1987) further makes a distinction between 'the communal and agentic dimensions of gender-stereotyped characteristics' (p. 16). The 'communal dimension describes a concern with the welfare of other people and women are believed to manifest this concern more strongly than men' (Eagly, 1987:16). The communal role therefore is characterized by attributes such as caring, nurturance and emotional expressiveness, and is commonly associated with women and domestic activities' (p. 16). On the other hand, the 'agentic dimension is characterized by attributes such as assertiveness and controlling tendencies, and is commonly associated with public activities, and thus, with men' (p. 16). Eagly (1987) therefore associates the stereotypes of the agentic role with masculinity and argues that these attributes are the results of men's roles in the public sphere. Similarly she associates the stereotypes of the communal role with femininity and argues that these qualities emanates from their roles in the private sphere or in the domestic activities' (p. 21). Nevertheless, Eagly (1987) maintained that 'the gender stereotypes about agentic and communal roles do not represent men and women as widely separated categories because people do not believe that all men are domineering and that all women are submissive' (p. 17). She argued that 'instead, people believed that the sexes are somewhat heterogeneous, partially overlapping groups, possessing different average levels of various attributes' (p. 17). Therefore, using the distinction of Holmes (2009), masculine and feminine are not necessarily clear and opposite categories' (p. 2). Consequently, 'gender roles and physical characteristics are considered to be consistent or inconsistent with masculine and feminine roles' (Eagly, 1987:24). The behaviours of school children are likely to be connected to their gender roles when the specific cultures approve gender stereotypes and hold firm expectations based on those stereotypes (Eagly 1987). Gender roles in the Nigerian background refer to socialisation experiences which boys and girls are taught in their homes. Such experiences often influence their

behaviour and they normally bring such behaviours into classroom settings during teaching and learning process.

Eagly (1987) also posits that 'skills as well as attitudes and beliefs learned from performing gender roles are often carried from one setting to another and therefore, men and women often bring with them such knowledge and skills into the research settings' (p. 28). As a result, the 'behaviour of men and women tends to differ in the classroom even though they are treated equally and are assigned the same specific role' (p. 28). Consequently, gender roles are germane to this study because they do influence certain kinds of behaviours in the Nigerian boys and girls. As earlier noted, during Nigerian family socialisation, boys and girls learn and accept certain roles taught to them by their parents. In the Nigerian family background where I grew up, there is total role segregation for men and women and this is also applicable to boys and girls. One of the gender roles in the Nigerian society is the issue of housework. For example, housekeeping and caring for children are the primary responsibilities of women and as such men are expected to partially participate in them. In the same way, girls help their mothers to keep their houses clean and to care for younger children while boys are expected to partially take part in those duties. In many families, parents prefer to leave their younger siblings in the care of their girls as they are often socialized to do this. Indeed, parents hardly leave them in the care of their boys because as they are not socialized to be doing that. As a result, it is generally believed that boys will not be able to care of them very well. In addition, the Nigerian women and girls take care of the largest part of child care and character formation, including educating them and caring for them in every way. This is because girls are expected to be sensitive and caring. From my experience, there are male and female roles in the Nigerian family background. For example, as a boy I was taught not to think, act and behave like a girl or woman but like a man at all times. Again, I was taught to work harder to be successful in my life pursuits and to be aggressive and self-reliant. On the other hand, girls are taught to appear beautiful at all times, be loving and kind and to bear long with people no matter how badly they are treated. Therefore one major way that we can know the effect of gender roles is the issue of gender-specific education as these often influenced their choices of future occupations. This type of education entails boys and girls studying at school, subjects that best go well with their genders. This is because in the traditional family background where I grew up, many parents think of high professional education as being important for men and boys while women and

girls could study courses such as those of teaching, nursing and secretarial, sales and clerical courses that appeared to go well with their genders.

‘The socialisation of boys and girls in the Nigerian cultures appears to be tailored towards making them separate people with different capabilities, potentials and constitutions’ (Izugbara, 2004:9). Thus, ‘while boys are socialised to see themselves as future heads of households, breadwinners, and owners of their wives and children, girls are taught that a good woman has to be obedient, submissive, meek and a humble housekeeper’ (Izugbara, 2004:9). Again in the area of skill learning, boys and girls tend to be socialised differently at home. As noted earlier in chapter one, girls are informally taught different aspects of home economics (Ekpenyong, 1995). Ekpenyong also (ibid) adds that the greater part of farming activities are carried out by women and girls. Furthermore, mothers who were engaged in petty trading also socialised their daughters into the business by giving them opportunities to serve as sales assistant in their small businesses with the result that they make contacts with very many customers, develop skills of good communication and the skills of working with other people (Toby, 2000:34). However, Ekpenyong (1995) suggests that ‘cattle rearing, bush clearing, planting and tending of yams are mainly the work of men and the boys had to learn from their fathers how these were done by following them to the farm and closely observing the processes involved’ (p. 26). However, most feminists argued that gendered behaviour is to some extent socially constructed, given that these behaviours and those assigned appropriate to one gender or the other, vary between cultures and historic periods (Francis, 2006:11). The next section deals with cultural capital theory.

### **3.6.3 Cultural Capital Theory**

The third theory that underpins this study is Cultural capital. This theory is the work of the French Sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, developed in the early 1960s. He argues that cultural habits and dispositions inculcated in children from the family are fundamentally important to school success (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979). Bourdieu maintains that those cultural habits and dispositions comprise a resource capable of generating ‘profits’, they are potentially subject to monopolisation by individuals and groups, and under appropriate conditions, they can be transmitted from one generation to the next. The theory thus points out that capital, habitus and field all work together to generate social action or practice (Bourdieu, 1984, cited in Dumais, 2002). The field is the setting in which practices occur (Dumais, 2002) or

any structure of social relations (King, 2005:223). In my study, fields refer to three places: household, school and classroom. For domestic work, the field refers to households where parents and other extended family members socialise their boys and girls into family cultural activities, and each field [family] has somewhat similar or different domestic tasks assigned to their children through whom they acquired knowledge and skills for useful living within their society. Bourdieu and Wacquant, (1992) argue that capital does not exist or function except in relation to a field. In education, the field refers to the schools and classrooms and in this study specifically to Commerce and Economics classrooms.

Cultural capital is one of three different types of capital that Bourdieu (1997) described. The others are economic and social capital. Economic capital involves control over economic resources such as cash and assets while social capital consists of resources based on group membership, relationships, and networks of influence and support (Bourdieu, 1997). Cultural capital comprises forms of knowledge, skills, education and advantages that individuals have and which give them a higher status in society (Bourdieu, *ibid*). Bourdieu maintains that parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the current educational system (Bourdieu, 1973).

For this study, cultural capital refers to the dispositional knowledge and skills that parents instil into their boys and girls through making them participate in domestic work and how that explains their differential participation in the teaching-learning process in VBE classrooms. Therefore, cultural capital is perceived in this study from the perspective of what parents inculcate into their children and as something that is taken from cultural participation in the household tasks to school classrooms. Cultural capital is very crucial to my study because it helps me to think about how VBE boys and girls operate within the context of my study.

According to Dumais (2002), 'Bourdieu distinguished among three forms of cultural capital: objectified cultural capital, which refers to objects that require special cultural abilities to appreciate, such as works of arts and music; institutionalised cultural capital, which refers to academic credentials and the credentialing system; and embodied cultural capital, which consists of both the consciously-acquired and the passively-inculcated properties of one's self' (p.46). It is this embodied cultural capital that most researchers have tried to problematise in educational research. Dumais (2002) points out that institutionalised cultural capital develops as a result of one's having embodied cultural capital and successfully converting it via the educational system.



In addition to capital and field, habitus refers to manifestations of cultural participation which are seen in daily practices and behaviours that 'go without saying' (Jordan, et al, 2008). Bourdieu (1997) argues that habitus should also include personal constructs, belief and value systems as well as disposition. According to Dumais (2002), habitus is one's disposition, which influences the actions that one takes; it can even be manifested in one's demeanour, such as the way one perceives oneself or walks. It is generated by one's place in the social structure; by internalising the social structure and one's place in it, one comes to determine what is possible and what is not possible for one's life and develops aspirations and practices accordingly (Dumais, 2002). In this study, habitus is the product of everyday lived and homeplace experiences of boys and girls acquired through cultural participation in domestic tasks assigned to them by their parents and other extended family members.

According to Dumais (2002), the importance of the development of habitus which in my study refers to homeplace experiences of boys and girls is large. Bourdieu (1997) argues that the reproduction of the social structure results from the habitus of individuals. Dumais (2002) contends that on the basis of class position that people are born into, they develop ideas about their individual potential, for example, those in the working class tend to believe that they will remain in the working class, unless the exceptional children from that class sees the accumulation of cultural capital as a way to overcome the obstacles which are typical for those in their class position. She adds that these beliefs are then externalised into actions that lead to the reproduction of the class structure.

Overall, then, people's practices or actions are the consequence of their habitus and capital within a given field (Dumais, 2002). In terms of schooling, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), as cited in Dumais (ibid), describe the school system as a field. Thus, participation within and outside school classrooms and doing the school work assigned by the teacher are the types of practices taking place in this field. Within this educational field, it is argued that the most valuable form of capital is cultural capital and that academic success is directly dependent upon cultural capital and on the desire to invest in the academic market (Bourdieu, 1973: 96, cited in Dumais, 2002). According to Dumais, both Bourdieu (1984) and DiMaggio and Useem (1978) found that within the dominant classes, teachers have the most cultural capital, value it and seem to reward students who possess it. Therefore boys and girls who have cultural capital instilled into them in their households tend to feel more comfortable in school, communicate easily with

teachers and are therefore more likely to do well in school (De Graaf, and Krasykamp, 2000), cited in Dumais, ( 2002).

The habitus of boys and girls also plays a role in student success in school (Dumais, 2002). This means that the way in which they participate in schoolwork depends to a large extent on their homeplace experiences of early socialisation. Therefore girls' decisions to take their schoolwork seriously; study hard and go to university, polytechnic or college of education depend on the stock of cultural capital that they have acquired from socialisation during cultural activities. On the other hand, boys' decision to participate in schoolwork or to withdraw from it depended on complex issues and cultural capital is one of them. These complex issues are found in other theories already discussed, such as being good in communication, and boys' attitude and behaviours towards the class lessons as well as their ways of constructing masculinity.

In terms of gender, Bourdieu (1984) argues that cultural capital is important to boys, girls and women for two reasons. Firstly, women make use of cultural capital for acquiring husbands (Dumais, 2002). Secondly, they play the key role of transmitting the cultural capital to their children (Dumais, 2002). Indeed, cultural capital is fundamentally a reproductionist position because it tends to reproduce the skills and knowledge of the parents in the Nigerian boys and girls. For example, the Nigerian girls often acquired cultural capital through participating in their mothers' businesses while boys' cultural participation in their fathers' trades equipped them with skills and knowledge of such trades. They can utilise such skills and knowledge to carry out their own marketing transactions or trades whereby they generate a lot of money for themselves. For boys and men, cultural capital is used for getting jobs and for achieving their occupational expectations (Dumais, 2002). The cultural capital was also used by men to attract prestigious and well-paid jobs.

It is important to note that gender is often mediated by other social identities such as class, socio-economic status (SES), race, ethnicity and age in the children's school experiences. It is observed around the world that, in the schools and in the classrooms, boys and girls are influenced by both gender and other social identities (Liu, 2006; Francis, 2000 and Kimmel, 2000). In my own experience of schooling in Nigeria, throughout my primary and secondary school days, boys and girls learn to display their gender and other social identities in schools. For example in my schooling experience, boys and girls from high socio-economic families often had better quality school experiences than those from low SES families. Usually those from high SES families often had their school fees paid at the first day of resumption

of school, put on the approved school uniform and sandals at the beginning of the term, had the recommended textbooks on time, had some money on them to enjoy their break time lunch and often had regular attendance at school. Indeed such children were teachers' favourites during the classes and were often appointed school and class prefects (Liu, 2006). The opposite was the case for children from low SES families. This is so because of the low economic capital at the disposal of low SES families. On the other hand, the high economic capital at the disposal of high SES families empowered them to pay up their school fees and other charges at the beginning of the school session.

Besides, in decision making matters in the Nigerian families, men have the final say in issues such as the choice of schools for their children, conflict situations, buying decisions etc. while women are expected to support the decisions of the men.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter explores the review of related literature and the theoretical framework for the study. It therefore draws mainly on schools' gender regime, social role, and cultural capital theories to highlight the interrelationship between gender and VBE classroom participation. The chapter also acknowledges the interaction of gender with other social identities, socio-economic status and educational attainment. These theories would be used to understand, describe and illuminate the qualitative data generated in four mixed-sex secondary schools. The next chapter deals with the methodology of the study where the qualitative case study research design is described in detail.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods of the Study**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I outline and discuss both the methodology and methods used for the study. I also define qualitative research and state the reasons why it was the best approach for my study. The case is outlined in section 4.5 and is about four co-educational senior secondary schools in Plateau State, Nigeria while the sample for the study consists of all the final year students of Commerce and Economics and their teachers in those four schools. The study investigates how gender impacts on the classroom participation of VBE students and teachers during commerce and economics lessons. The chapter further highlights the methods and data analysis adopted and why they were used for the study. Finally, it explores reflexivity on the position of the researcher in conducting and analysing the research.

### **4.2 Differences between Methodology and Method**

According to Dunne, Pryor and Yates (2005, p. 163) methodology refers to “the study of, or a theory of, the way that methods are used”. On the other hand, the same authors (ibid) define methods as “the systematic means by which something is accomplished” (p. 162). They further point out that in research, “methods denote the ways in which data are produced, interpreted and reported. Again, methods consist of procedures and techniques exemplified by particular research instruments so questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, participant observations and role playing are all examples of research methods” (p. 163). Based on the above definitions of methodology, the current study uses case methodology. On the other hand, the methods used for obtaining the data for the study comprised participant observation, semi-structured interviews and review of documents. First of all, I define both qualitative research and case study.

### **4.3 An Interpretive Researcher**

As an interpretive researcher, I studied the VBE teachers and their students in the social context they were part of. I therefore have to interpret their gendered experiences within these contexts. As individuals they interact with one another but how they interact is typically based on their personal interpretations of something real to them and therefore not an objective reality. This explains why Bassey (1999:43) points out that “Because of differences in perception, in interpretation and in language it is not surprising that people have different views on what is real”. As a

result I consider 'reality' to be how each individual interprets reality; it is dynamic and is influenced by other people. Building on gender regime, social role and cultural theories, I see my interpretations of the VBE teachers' and students' lived experiences as my attempt to gain understanding of gender dimensions that I am a part of.

#### **4.4 Qualitative Case Study Research Design**

This section contains a brief discussion on why I use a qualitative research approach in my study.

Gorard (2001) argues that some researchers often choose a research approach before deciding what to research and therefore recommends that "You must decide on your research topic and the questions you are curious about first, and only then consider how best to answer them" (p. 8). I came across this warning from Gorard at the beginning of my PhD study and his warning worked as a guide in my own process of choosing my research approach. At an early stage, I considered combining qualitative and quantitative approaches by conducting a survey with the VBE teachers and students in Plateau State, Nigeria. However, when I gradually framed my research questions and considered my research aims within gender dimensions, I concluded that a qualitative approach suited my purposes best. My main aim was to focus in depth on the gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of VBE among teachers and students at the four mixed sex senior secondary schools. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005),

...'Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studies' use and collection of a variety of empirical materials: case study, personal experience, introspective life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand' (pp. 3 – 4).

Generally, all types of qualitative research are based on the fact that 'realities' are constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds and qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people make sense of their social world and the experiences that they have in the world (Merriam, 1998: 6). In line with the above methodological assumption underpinning the study, the study is guided by feminist methodology. The methodology conceptualises gender

as a lived experience that involves everyday knowledge and experiences that are learned, produced, contested, reproduced and legitimized by boys and girls through primary socialisation (Bradley, 2007; O-saki and Agu, 2002). Through qualitative inquiry, I was empowered to explore deeply and in critical ways, thus allowing the participants to take me where they might.

As noted earlier, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic inquiry into the world of educational practice (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, my study is situated within the interpretivist research paradigm. The latter is a distinctive paradigm because it sees people, and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings, as the primary data sources (Mason, 2009). However, Interpretivism does not have to rely on 'total immersion in a setting' and this explains why it can happily support a study which uses interview methods for example, where the aim is to explore people's individual and collective understandings, reasoning processes, social norms, and so on (Mason, 2009). As Blaikie puts it:

Interpretivists are concerned with understanding the social world people have produced and which they reproduce through their continuing activities. This everyday reality consists of the meanings and interpretations given by the social actors to their actions, other people's actions, social situations, and natural and humanly created objects. In short, in order to negotiate their way around their world and make sense of it, social actors have to interpret their activities together, and it is these meanings, embedded in language, that constitute their social reality'(2000:115, cited in Mason, 2009:56).

According to Mason (2009) 'an interpretivist approach therefore not only sees people as a primary data source, but seeks their perceptions or what Blaikie calls the 'insider view' rather than imposing an 'outsider' view' (p. 56). She further said that 'other data sources are possible according to this approach but what an interpretivist would want to get out of these would be what they say about or how they are constituted in people's individual or collective meanings'. (p. 56). The present study sees VBE teachers and their students as the primary data sources and thus seeks their perceptions on ways that gender affects the teaching and learning of VBE commerce and economics in the Nigerian senior secondary schools in terms of gender differences in class discussions. However, I am the 'primary instrument for the data collection and analysis' (Merriam, 1998: 7). The data for the study was generated through fieldwork and qualitative research is said to build upon concepts that focus on process, meaning and understanding (Ibid, p. 7). The product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive (Merriam, 1998: 8).

What is more, there are many types of qualitative research and these comprise ethnography, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, case studies, etc. (Merriam, 1998). The concern of the present study leads to a focus on case study, a technique often 'employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved' (Merriam, 1998: 19).

Qualitative research also has factions within its proponents. These factions include the positivists and naïve realists, who believe in an objective verification of reality while other factions consist of relativists and constructivists who believe that reality is socially constructed (Rice and Ezzy, 2000). The positivists believe in a methodology that leads to true and objective results by attempting to remove interpretations that may influence the research process, resulting in objectivity (Rice and Ezzy, 2000). However, relativists reject the idea that the world has an existence independent of people's perceptions of it, thus for them, the issue of objective reality is not simply 'out there' but what is viewed as reality is bound by people's perceptions (Askia, 2001). In other words, relativists maintain that research findings are based on subjective, interactive constructions by the people and further interpretation by the researcher. Consequently, findings based on research studies are not objective facts (Askia, 2001). This study tended to belong to the faction that upholds reality is bound by people's perceptions.

Denscombe (2003) points out that qualitative research involves finding out what people think and how they understand things. Indeed, it implies a direct concern with experiences as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone' (Sherman and Webb, 1988, as cited in Merriam, 1998: 6). Certainly, the lived experiences of people are a product of the ways that their society is organised which in turn shapes them into particular kinds of men and women (Holmes, 2009: 2). This means that in qualitative research, the researcher attempts to observe, interview and review documents in order to obtain what Patton (1990: 55) calls an "empathic neutrality" while focusing on the experiences and meanings that people bring to them in order to analyse and interpret how and why people behave in particular ways (Rice and Ezzy, 2000). This qualitative research is also concerned with lived experiences of the VBE boys and girls and their teachers such as those in all the case study schools of this thesis.

In the present study, quantitative research was rejected in favour of qualitative study since the former deals with a means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) while my aim was to explore in-depth the interrelationship between gender and classroom participation of VBE teachers and students in commerce and economics class discussions, which

could best be achieved by utilizing a qualitative approach. Moreover, the quantitative approach, based on positivist principles, mainly measures phenomena and attempts to bring the human world under scientific control and in this way, missing out essential subjective qualities of people's experiences (Bryman, 2001; Silverman, 2001).

In qualitative research, the interpretation and analysis are often guided by two things: first, the research design which indicated the logic for the research and second, approaches to the analysis and interpretation of research texts that emerge from the dynamic interplay of the substantive interests, theoretical frameworks and the empirical experiences of the researcher (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, cited in Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005, p.77). Thus, as a qualitative researcher, what guided my interpretation and analysis included my values, interests, engagement with literature and theories, tacit fieldwork experience and my systematic engagement with data. Here, I acknowledge that while my approach is predominantly qualitative, I have also made use of quantitative methods too particularly in the calculation of turn-taking in lessons.

However, it is important to realise that the qualitative research has its weaknesses just as other research approaches do. To successfully adopt the qualitative research approach depends on a number of issues such as a solid understanding of its principles and values, effective use of the research tools by the researcher, the ability of the researcher to ask relevant questions, to remain flexible, to stay alert to non-verbal cues, as well as to record and analyse data effectively. Other issues that pose problems for qualitative research include: the willingness of the respondents to participate in the study, issues that interviewees are willing to discuss and what they are wary of discussing; reliance on the honesty of respondents to provide accurate information and the convenience of the respondents for interactions. This is particularly relevant for interviews. As qualitative methodology allows for reflexive research, the continuous analysis of data and refinement of data-gathering tools, these weaknesses were tackled. The next section highlights the case study as a part of the qualitative research used in this study.

#### **4.5 Case Study Approach**

Case study has been one of the most widely used research approaches in education, law and political science. It is an approach that uses in-depth investigation of one or more examples of a current social phenomenon, utilising a



variety of sources of data (Jupp, 2006). Yin (2003) says that the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, international relations and the maturation of industries. According to Bell (1999), the case study approach is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale (though some case studies are carried out over a long period of time). Furthermore, Adelman et al (1977) as cited in Bell (1999:10) describe case study as 'an umbrella term for a family of research methods having in common the decision to focus on inquiry around an instance'. Bell (Ibid) added that it is much more than a story about or a description of an event or state but that as in all research, evidence is collected systematically, the relationship between variables is studied and the study is methodically planned. Thus, case study is mainly concerned with the interaction of factors and events and, as Nisbet and Watt (1980:5), cited in Bell (1999:10) point out, 'sometimes it is only by taking a practical instance that researchers could obtain a full picture of that interaction'. Bell (Ibid) opined that even though observation and interviews are most frequently used in case study, no method is excluded as methods of generating information are selected which are appropriate for the task.

Based on the foregoing, I approach the present study adopting the case study method to investigate gender dimensions in teaching and learning of vocational business education (VBE) in Nigerian senior secondary schools, and making use of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and review of documents as methods of collecting information. According to Bell (1999), the great strength of the case study method is that it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify, or attempt to identify, the various interactive processes at work, adding that these processes might remain hidden in a large-scale survey but might be crucial to the success or failure of systems or organisations. In order to achieve the benefits of the case study method, it is important to ask the question, 'what is a case?'

According to Gillham (2000, p. 1), "a case can be an individual: it can be a group – such as a family, or a class, or an office, or a hospital ward; it can be an institution – such as a school or a children's home, or a factory; it can be a large-scale community – a town, an industry, a profession". He (ibid) points out that all of these are single cases; but a person can also study multiple cases: a number of single parents; several schools; two different professions. From this perspective, it

will suffice to say that the cases of the present study are four coeducational senior secondary schools while the sample consists of all the final year VBE commerce and economics students and their teachers and therefore a study of multiple cases. Gillham (2000) further states that a case study is one which investigates, for example in my own study, senior secondary schools to answer specific research questions and which seeks a range of different kinds of evidence, evidence which is there in the case setting, and which has to be abstracted and collated to derive the best possible answers to the research questions. This tended to explain why many PhD studies including the present one are conducted using this approach.

According to Stake's (1995) categorization, there are three types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective and these three are differentiated from each other by their purposes. An intrinsic case study is carried out because the researcher wants to have a better understanding of the salient characteristics of the phenomenon and its complex relationship with its context (Stake, 1995). Therefore, the main interest in an intrinsic case study is the particularity of the case in showing a specific characteristic and not the typicality of the case (Stake, 1995). On the other hand, an instrumental case study is investigated to provide insight into an issue or the refinement of a theory (Stake, 1995). Here, the case is explored because of its typicality or representativeness of other cases and as such, its emphasis is not on the particularity of the case (Stake, 1995). It is pertinent to note that it is not essential that the case should be a typical illustration of possible cases (Stake, 1995). Lastly, a collective case study is examined in order to inquire into the phenomenon, population or general condition with the aim of obtaining a healthier generalisation from the case (Stake, 1995). The present study includes elements of all three types of case study because it seeks to have a better understanding of gender and provide insight into interrelationship between gender and VBE classroom participation in commerce and economics lessons in the Nigerian senior secondary schools with the aim of obtaining a healthier understanding on how VBE students' schooling careers are gendered. It is believed that understanding those cases will lead to a better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases (Stake, 1995). As noted earlier, the present study involves a collection of four mixed-sex senior secondary schools and I choose them because I believe that understanding gender issues in them will lead to a better understanding or theorizing about gender issues in other senior secondary schools in Nigeria.

Qualitative case studies in education, according to Merriam (1998: 19), 'are often framed with the concepts, models and theories from anthropology, history, sociology, psychology and educational psychology'. This author further affirms that 'these would all be educational case studies as well, since the focus is on some aspect of educational practice' (p. 19). In addition, the essential features of a qualitative case study are particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive (Merriam, 1988:11). According to the author (Ibid), particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular situation, event, programme or phenomenon while descriptive means that the end product of a case study is a rich, "thick" description of what is being examined. According to Merriam (1988:13) heuristic means that case studies illuminate the readers' understanding of the phenomenon under study, thus bringing about the discovery of new meanings, while inductive means that, for the most part, case studies rely on inductive reasoning.

Case study supporters generally stress that even though case study approaches are not safe ground on which to make generalisations, their depth and contextualisations means that analytical generalisations based on an examination of cases are of significance. It appears that the problem emanates from the common perception that the only way of making generalisations is through statistical inference which according to Yin (1989) is a fatal flaw. Yin (ibid) perceives generalizing from cases to theory as analogous to scientists' generalisation from experimental results to theory, and multiple cases as analogous to multiple experiments using replication logic. Moreover, Bell (1999) points out that inevitably, where a single researcher is gathering all the information for a study, selection has to be made. According to this author (Ibid), the researcher selects the area for study and decides which material to present in the final report. Based on this, it is difficult to cross-check information and so there is always the danger of distortion (Bell, 1999). Critics of the case study approach draw attention to this and other problems and point to the fact that generalisation is not always possible, as well as questioning the value of the single events while others disagree (Bell, 1999). Denscombe (1998: 36 – 7), as cited in Bell (1999:11), makes the point that 'the extent to which findings from the case study can be generalised to other examples in the class depends on how far the case study example is similar to others of its type', and, drawing on the example of a case study of a small primary school, cautions that

this means that the researcher must obtain data on the significant features (catchment area, the ethnic origins of the pupils and the amount of staff turnover) for primary schools in general, and then demonstrate where the case study example fits in relation to the overall picture.(p.37)

Bassey (1981:85), cited in Bell (1999:12), holds similar views but prefers to use the term 'relatability' rather than 'generalizability'. According to Bassey (Ibid) an important criterion for judging the merit of a case study is the extent to which the details are sufficient and appropriate for a teacher working in a similar situation to relate his decision-making to that described in the case study. The relatability of a case study is more important than its generalizability (Bassey, 1985:85, as cited in Bell, 1999:12). Bell points out that Bassey considers that if case studies

are carried out systematically and critically, if they are aimed at the improvement of education, if they are relatable, and if by publication of the findings they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research (p. 86).

According to Bell (1999), a successful study will provide the reader with a three-dimensional picture and will illustrate relationships, micro-political issues and patterns of influences in a particular context. The present study intends to provide its readers with a 'multi-layered portrayal' relating to gendered VBE classroom participation, thus showing ideas about gender, how such ideas affect teacher-student and student-student interactions during commerce and economics lessons and gender in informal and formal curriculum as well as the views of the VBE teachers and students about the business labour market. However, Bell gave a word of warning to single researchers working to a deadline and within a limited timescale about the need to be very careful when selecting a case study topic. Citing Yin (1994:137), Bell (1999) cautioned researchers as follows:

Case studies have been done about decisions, about programmes, about the implementation process, and about organizational change. Beware these types of topic – none is easily defined in terms of the beginning or end point of the 'case' (p. 12).

Yin (1994:137), as cited in Bell (1999), considers that 'the more a study contains specific propositions, the more it will stay within reasonable limits'. Bell concludes that all researchers have to keep their research within reasonable limits, regardless of whether they are working on a 100-hour project or a PhD.

## 4.6 Methods of the Study

The section deals with the methods used for data generation for the study. The section begins with the discussion of the sampling principles. Next to be explained is the account of the data-generation methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and the review of documents. Finally, data analysis and the rigour of the study are discussed.

As noted earlier, the purpose of the study was to explore gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of VBE in Nigerian senior secondary schools and to focus mainly on the interrelationship between gender and classroom participation in commerce and economics lessons.

### 4.6.1 Sample Selection

According to Burgess (1982), cited Merriam (1998: 60), sampling in field research involves the selection of a research site, time, people and events. For this study, four research sites, that is, four mixed-sex senior secondary schools in Plateau State, Nigeria were chosen based on non-probability sampling. I chose the four schools because they would give detailed and greater insights into gender in VBE than in other schools. These four co-educational institutions comprised the cases for the study. However, the sample for the study consists of all the students who offered commerce and economics in senior secondary class three in those schools plus their teachers. Merriam (1998:61) states that the non-probability sampling method is the best for qualitative research because it tends to solve qualitative problems such as discovering what occurs, the implications and the relationships linking occurrences. This author (Ibid) further says that the most common form of non-probability sampling method is purposeful sampling. The latter is 'based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned' (Merriam, 1998: 61). As a result, the four sites used for the fieldwork were selected through purposive sampling. Patton (1990), cited in Merriam (1998), argues that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Merriam says that 'information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling' (p. 61). The sampling selection (inclusion) criteria comprised the following: First, they accepted that I could carry out a research project in their schools. Second, they were all coeducational senior secondary schools offering Commerce and Economics. Third, All four schools had

students studying either commerce or economics in their third year. Fourth, the students had prior ability, English Language fluency together with willingness and parental permission. Fifth, their principals, heads of VBE departments and commerce and economics teachers agreed to be involved in the study. Lastly, these schools were in urban and rural areas that were accessible to me and the cost and time of reaching them were not too onerous. On the other hand, I did not study other subjects other than VBE in the schools because of lack of time and resources. This means that I am not able to comment on what happened in non-VBE lessons. This therefore raises questions about whether some of the phenomena that I observed were specific features of VBE or more general aspects of classroom interactions in the four schools. This then raises the possibilities for further research.

The time for the field work was between January and July 2008. The interview sample for the study included four principals, four heads of business studies departments, four Commerce and four Economics teachers; sixteen boys and sixteen girls studying commerce and economics in their final year in the four case-study schools were interviewed. The students were about to graduate from their senior secondary education and most of them were planning to enter the labour market directly, although this was not a criteria for selecting them. The four schools that volunteered to participate in the study were in different parts of the state. However, two of the schools were in urban areas while the other two were in the rural. The occupations of the students' parents could not be systematically surveyed because the school principals asked me to delete such questions from the list of questions. However, none of the students who volunteered had professional parents but were considered to be of higher socio-economic status. The students' sampling was drawn by first sending letters to parents seeking their permission for their children to be part of the interviews. The children of those parents, who gave their permission, were asked to sign up for the interviews. The final selection of the interviewees was thus more or less based on parental permission and the individual subject teachers helped to select representative students based on a good mixed of all the percentile of their scores in the school internal exams. In addition to semi-structured interviews, 24 class observations were conducted with the commerce and economics teachers and students and I also reviewed some relevant school documents such as the National Policy on Education, Commerce and Economics textbooks, school registers, teachers' lesson plans, etc. In order to start class observations, I told the VBE students and teachers that I was interested in gender

issues affecting the teaching and learning of VBE commerce and economics in their schools. The main methods of generating data are discussed below.

#### **4.6.2 Participant Observation**

Participant observation is one of the main methods of generating data in case study research. According to Merriam (1998: 102), 'it gives a first-hand account of the situation under study, and when combined with interviewing and document analysis, allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated'. Participant observations involve watching what goes on at the study sites, listening to what is said and asking questions (Denscombe, 2003; Mason, 2002). In this study, I used this method of data generation because it provides me with direct information about the behaviour of both the teachers and students during whole class interactions and in this way allows me to understand how gender is played out within and outside the classrooms.

Merriam (1998) points out that participant observation is often equated with fieldwork. Merriam (ibid) says fieldwork involves going to the research site, programme, institution, setting – the field – to observe the phenomenon under study. The checklist of the things that I observe included the following: school, class, date, time, subject, topic, teacher's gender, number of boys and girls in class, seating arrangement, teacher-student and student-student interaction. Other issues observed comprised basic facilities and equipment such as toilet, drinking water, furniture, physical environment, use of space, and other non-classroom activities. Field notes and audio-taping were taken in order to keep an account of turns taken by the following: boys, girls, and teachers besides other purposes. In order to minimise costs and travel both Commerce and Economics lessons were observed on each visit to each school. In Timo High School, the Commerce and Economics class observations took place on:

**Table 4.1****Timo High School Observation Schedule**

<b>Date of observation</b>	<b>Observation Round</b>	<b>Commerce Lesson Duration</b>	<b>Commerce Topic Taught</b>	<b>Economics Lesson Duration</b>	<b>Economics Topic Taught</b>
28.1.2008	1	10.50 - 11.30 am	Sole Proprietorship	9.00 – 9.40 am	Factors that bring about changes in demand
11.2.2008	2	10.50 – 11.30 am	Private Limited Company	9.00 – 9.40 am	Public Finance
28.4.2008	3	10.50 – 11.30 am	Transport and Communication	9.00 – 9.40 am	National Income Determination

**Source: Classroom Observation Data**

The dates for Mary Monk high school Commerce and Economics classroom observations were as follows:

**Table 4.2****Mary Monk High School Observation Schedule**

<b>Dates of observations</b>	<b>Observation Rounds</b>	<b>Commerce Lessons' Durations</b>	<b>Commerce Topics Taught</b>	<b>Economics Lessons' Durations</b>	<b>Economics Topics Taught</b>
30.1.2008	1	10.10 - 10.50 am	Management: Meaning and functions	1.00 - 1.40 pm	Demand and Supply Elasticity: Calculations
5.2.2008	2	10.50 – 11.30 am	Functions of Commercial Banks	1.00 - 1.40 pm	Public and Private Enterprises: Differences
29.4.2008	3	10.5. – 11.30 am	International Trade: Meaning, Merits and demerits	1.00 - 1.40 pm	Theory and cost of production

**Source: Classroom Observation Data**

For Pascal high school, the Commerce and Economics class observations took place as follows:



**Table 4.3****Pascal High School Observation Schedule**

Date of observation	Observation Round	Commerce Lesson Duration	Commerce Topic Taught	Economics Lesson Duration	Economics Topic Taught
29.1.2008	1	10.50 - 11.30 am	Transport and Communication	9.00 – 9.40 am	Importance of Agriculture in Nigeria
21.2.2008	2	10.50 – 11.30 am	Sole Proprietorship	9.00 – 9.40 am	Basic tools of Economic analysis
2.5.2008	3	10.5. – 11.30 am	Public Limited Companies	9.00 – 9.40 am	Inflation: Meaning and effects

**Source: Classroom Observation Data**

The dates for Bingo high school commerce and economics classroom observations were as follows:

**Table 4.4****Bingo High School Observation Schedule**

Date of observation	Observation Round	Commerce Lesson Duration	Commerce Topic Taught	Economics Lesson Duration	Economics Topic Taught
31.1.2008	1	11.30 – 12.10 am	Meaning and Factors of Production	12.20 – 1.00 pm	Demand and Supply Elasticity
13.2.2008	2	11.30 – 12.10 am	Partnership – Merits and demerits	12.20 – 1.00 pm	Unemployment – Meaning and Types
30.4.2008	3	11.30 - 12.10 am	Principles of Insurance	12.20 – 1.00 pm	Money – Meaning and Functions

**Source: Classroom Observation Data**

In order to achieve the purpose of my study, I had to observe the behaviour of the teachers and students during Commerce and Economics classroom interactions. I also interviewed them as well as analysed relevant school documents. In those Commerce and Economics classrooms, apart from off-task talks, some interactions do occur at once, and much was subtle and incredibly complex. In all the classes, all the students talked within the time left for them by their teachers. Therefore, I was quite aware that the speech recorded by my written observation

notes covered a part of the total classroom talk. I used both note-taking and audio-taping in the Commerce and Economics classroom observations. The notes made were then cross-referenced with the audio-tape for triangulation to check my interpretations and to add more information. Taping the classroom interactions, to some extent tackled the problem of hearing the chatter of some students at the expense of others by making me aware of such chatter. I also kept an exercise book to record observations and conversations on the school sites outside the classrooms: this contained on-the-spot observations. I always made an effort to make notes in this notebook as soon as possible after the events took place.

In this study, I overtly adopted the role of observer-as-participant. Merriam (1998:101) describes observer-as-participant as a situation whereby the researcher's activities are known to the group but participation in the group is secondary to the role of information gatherer. This was how I was known to teachers and students, and I occasionally came to observe their lessons, take down field notes and tape record their interactions. The trade-off in this perspective is between the depth of the information revealed to me and the level of confidentiality that I promised to the class in order to obtain the needed information.

The main advantages of participant observation are the use of human beings as instruments. It is argued that 'one relies totally on one's sensitivity, one's ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviours, customs and the like and upon tacit as well as propositional knowledge (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, cited in Merriam, 1998). Merriam (Ibid) further suggests that the human instrument is capable of understanding the complexity of human interaction encountered in even the shortest of observations and that it could be refined, through training, to be attentive and responsive to data gathered through participant observation.

The main problem of this method of data generation is the acute biases that most researchers bring to their research situation. Indeed, one of such acute biases that I brought to my study was that boys always dominate classroom discussions while girls often kept quiet during such discussions. Although I held this bias within me as a male researcher, I tried to accept the real evidence that I met out there in the field. According to (Merriam, 1998), these biases which are often inherent in all investigations and affect how data are seen, recorded and interpreted. This author adds that an observer cannot help but affect and be affected by the setting, and this interaction might lead to a distortion of the real situation. Merriam further points out that the schizophrenic aspect of being at once participant and observer is a by-product of participant observation. According to her, overall, there is no substitute for

the participant observer. As Guba and Lincoln (1981), cited in Merriam (1998), state: "In situations where motives, attitudes, beliefs, and values direct much, if not most of the human activity, the most sophisticated instrumentation we possess is still the careful observer, - the human being who can watch, see, listen....question, probe, and finally analyze and organise his direct experiences." (p. 23). In this study, the problems of the investigator's manipulation and selection of events were minimised as I decided to discuss my field notes with the teachers and students in order for them to confirm that what I had observed was rightly reported. However, during the discussions, the male students felt that I got it wrong when I observed that they were not the ones dominating classroom discussions. Even the female students appeared to support their male counterparts in the assumption that they were the ones dominating. They even thought that I had missed the student group that was dominating class discussions. Therefore, they were really anxious to challenge my data.

Indeed, I acknowledge that power and status entered into this discussion because the boys believed that they were the people dominating class discussions while the girls tended to support that assumption. Nevertheless, both the boys and girls were convinced when I showed them from my data that only very few boys often participated in the class discussions while many of them were reluctant to join the discussions. In a similar way, I explained to them many girls often participated in their class discussions and this was followed up by the raw evidence from data. By carrying out this discussion, I expected them to verify the findings and approved them as the multiple realities observed during the lessons in line with Lincoln and Guba, (1985:296) method of returning to the participants for verification. It is argued that if my interpretations were good representations of my participants' realities, they should be given an opportunity to react to them (See Polit and Beck, (2008). It is not uncommon that the participants could see what I saw if my interpretations of the multiple realities observed fit their lived experiences. In this way, "credibility is established by having the findings approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 296). The main issue here is that both boys and girls misrecognised, as Bourdieu (1984) would have it, the 'objective' patterns of classroom participation. They thought boys participated more when in fact they did not.

#### **4.6.3 Semi-structured interviews**

In a qualitative case study, interviewing is the major source of qualitative data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998). This

author writes about three types of qualitative interviewing: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. In this study, a semi-structured interview was adopted as this enabled me to probe and explore within the predetermined areas of interest.

In-depth semi-structured interviews can be distinguished from structured interviews by the fact that they are guided by a set of questions and issues to be explored but neither the exact wording nor the order of questions is predetermined (Merriam, 1988: 86). This implies that they are flexible and permits the free probing of responses. Indeed, semi-structured interviews are also respondent-friendly because within the bounds of a general research design, they are oriented toward the respondent's knowledge, feelings, recollections and lived experiences. This enables the interviewer to uncover the research participants' meanings and interpretations rather than impose his own understanding upon them.

In this study, the in-depth semi-structured interview approach was chosen because it provided a focus and at the same time, my questions for the interviewees were flexible. Such interviews helped me to elicit information from knowledgeable teachers and students on gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of VBE in Nigerian senior secondary schools. Thus, in-depth and focused interviews were conducted with VBE commerce and economics teachers and their students, HODs of VBE departments, and School Principals in two urban and two rural senior secondary schools in Plateau State of Nigeria. The use of semi-structured interviews allow room for a deeper probing, and explanation of issues raised and the respondents were given opportunities to ask questions and to clarify answers to previous questions, to reflect on the implications of issues or ideas put forward, and to raise points which from their own perspectives are important but which may not have been anticipated by the researcher. In this study, such interviews were conducted either in the school libraries or laboratories.

The process of interviewing is not an occasion to cross-examine the individual or criticise the research participants but an opportunity to learn by gathering useful information from interviewees as well as to classify and organise their views of reality. Generally, qualitative interviews have been critiqued for their various weaknesses, including being subject to personal characteristics such as race, gender, class and ethnicity (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). However, such interviews have the potential for providing rich data in understanding people's perceptions, and lived experiences depending on the ability of the interviewer in

asking questions. In this study, the research questions were used as a guide in formulating the procedures followed during the interview sessions.

Another advantage of the interviewing method is that it allows time to establish a relationship of trust and rapport which tends to generate qualitative information about behaviour and give a clearer understanding of the social world of the participants. Generally interviewing, especially semi-structured interviews, fares well when compared to other data generation methods in terms of the validity of the information obtained (Merriam, 1988:86). She (Ibid) adds that 'there is ample opportunity to probe for clarification and ask questions appropriate to the respondent's knowledge, involvement and status.' According to Merriam (1998), the interview also provides for "continuous assessment and evaluation of information by the inquirer, allowing him to redirect, probe, and summarise" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, cited in Merriam, 1998).

Lastly, interviewing, like any other data collection method, has its own limitations. Interview data can be very time-consuming to transcribe and to analyse. Yin (2003) suggests that interviews should always be considered as verbal reports only and as such they are subject to the problems of bias, reactivity, poor recall and poor or inaccurate articulation. In this study, I tackled these problems by corroborating interview data with information from other sources.

#### **4.6.4 Interview Procedures**

The interviews were intended to provide information on gender issues affecting the teaching and learning of vocational business education in Nigerian senior secondary schools. As a result, the following procedures were followed.

A single interview session for students lasted on average for thirty minutes whereas for teachers, it lasted from forty-five minutes to one hour. The libraries or laboratories available in the schools were conducive to data gathering, as the seating arrangements allowed comfortable interaction between me and the interviewee at a ninety-degree angle to each other, facilitating "eye contact without the confrontational feeling arising from sitting directly opposite." (Denscombe, 2003:173). The interviews were conducted in the English Language because this was the language of instruction in the senior secondary schools and as such the interviewees did not encounter any difficulty in conversing freely in English. Audio-taped interview responses were later transcribed verbatim and used for analysis. The interview excerpts used as evidence in the thesis were coded as follows: the first letter of each school was taken first, followed by position of the speaker, that is,

teacher or student, and lastly by the sex of the speaker, that is, boy or girl for students and male and female for teachers. In this way, excerpts of interviews from the four schools were represented by the following codes.

**Table 4.5 Codes for Interview Excerpts**

Sex	Timo High School	Mary Monk High School	Pascal High School	Bingo High School.
Boys	TSB	MSB	PSB	BSB
Girls	TSG	MSG	PSG	BSG
Male Teachers	TTM	MTM	PTM	BTM
Female Teachers	TTF	MTF	PTF	BTF

**Source:** Field notes written during fieldwork

### **Interview Schedule**

An interview schedule was a list of questions that I intended to use to explore gender issues during each interview. The questions (listed in Appendix C) were divided into three sections: those dealing with the principals and heads of departments of VBE, those of teachers and those of the students. Although a guide was prepared to ensure that roughly the same issues were explored with each interviewee, there were no fixed responses, because in semi-structured interviews, the interviewer is free to probe and explore within the predetermined areas of interest. Interview guides ensure good use of limited time; they make interviewing multiple subjects more systematic and comprehensive; and they help to keep interactions focused (Hoepfl, 1997). In keeping with the flexible nature of qualitative research designs, interview guides could be modified over time to focus attention on areas of particular importance or to exclude questions that I found to be unrelated to the aims of my study.

In this study, the guide was further developed by the use of prompts, such as repeating the last words spoken by the interviewees, of probes, when I asked for clarification, and of checks, by summarising what had been said. According to Dunne, Pryor and Yates (2005) “the social relations of the research in the interview are about power relations between researcher and respondents alongside the substantive research concerns” (p. 32). These authors posit that in recognition of the power asymmetries and the potentially intimidating encounter of the interview, an informal, conversational style is often encouraged to put the interviewee at ease (p. 34). They further said that both the researcher’s methodological stance and the specific substantive interests make the interview more than a conversation. In my study during the interviews, quite a number of gender interaction issues came up

between me and the commerce and economics students. Indeed, it was my first time to interview young people from the 17- to- 19 years year old group, and one of the first things that shocked me was how unwilling and reserved the boys were in an individual interview situation compared with their girls' counterparts in the same Commerce and Economics classes. However, some boys exceptionally open up during the discussion – indeed some of them were very vocal, and some came to the interview looking for the opportunity to talk. Furthermore, a small number of girls also appeared uneasy or reluctance in the interviews, although such reluctant was far more prevalent among boys. Indeed, I remembered that the boys who often sat at the back of the classes during lessons were reluctant to interact with their Commerce and Economic teachers. Consequently, they appeared to be indifferent and/or hostile to my research especially in a one-to-one apparently sober talk during the interview.

In order to relax reluctant boys and get them talking, I had to adopt a very informal conversation style using some sort of admiration and playful remarks. For example: "Hi Danny, your hair style is fantastic. Who did this for you?" Similarly, I adopted the same informal method for timid girls who were scared during the interviews. Generally, by calling such boys and girls by their first names and appreciating their appearance made them feel good and triggers them to respond to my questions. Therefore this approach did work in terms of making reluctant boys and girls feel more at ease and thus get them talking. However, it raises issues of gender relations: the way in which a male interviewer presents himself to boys and girls and works in quite a gendered way to make them feel relaxed to talk, whereas the co-operation of many girls was often taken for granted. Generally, the ways that the boys and girls reacted to me during my interview with them actually cause me to deal with them softly. Possibly or it is likely these students saw me as a highly educated middle-aged male teacher with a very good job, having a lot of authority, and wearing a very smart suit and coming to ask them questions for reasons they may not have fully grasped really made them to be indifferent and/or hostile to my research or anxious to please and to tell me what they thought I would like to hear. Being conscious of such things, I had to use informal persuasive techniques to make them relax to discuss with me. During the interviews, there were times when I pretended to be laughing or nodding my head at the boys' fault-finding remarks about girls and women; and that made them feel I was colluding with them in a sexist construction. Approaching social relations of the research in the interviews with care is very important because they enhance the power relations between

researcher and respondents alongside the substantive research concerns, thus helping the researcher to elicit the necessary interview data with little problem.

#### **4.6.5 Documents**

Documentary information provides a rich and relevant source of data about the background and the historical context of any case study topic (Yin, 2003; Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Yin (2003) further states that the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. In this study, content analysis, which is a method for describing and interpreting the artefacts of a society or social group, was used to locate the following information in VBE curricular materials and other relevant documents. They include:

- Invisibility - Certain groups that have been under-represented or ignored in a VBE planned and received curriculum, textbooks, workbooks, journals etc.
- Stereotyping - Persons shown to be active, assertive and curious while others are seen as dependable, conforming and obedient.
- People shown in positions of authority such as an employer, decision-maker etc.
- Persons shown to be in subordinate positions e. g. secretary, office worker etc.
- Linguistic bias – exclusive use of masculine terms and pronouns.
- Other transactions involving gender bias in documents (Sadker and Silber, 2006:272).

The main documents which the study was concerned with were VBE commerce and economics syllabuses, commerce and economics' textbooks meant for senior secondary classes, the national policy on education (NPE, 2002), gender equity policy document, commerce and economics class attendance registers, teachers' lesson plans, the schools' scheme of work and examination papers. I collected these documents because they gave me insights into gender dimensions affecting the teaching and learning of VBE commerce and economics in the senior secondary schools. Indeed, the National Policy on Education, gender equity policy documents, syllabuses, commerce and economics textbooks and attendance registers unravelled whether men or women are over-represented and whether men tend to occupy both more powerful and a greater range of occupational roles than women or whether both men and women are seen performing stereotypical activities.



In addition, gender issues in those documents were analysed. I also asked for the lesson plans of VBE teachers and schemes of work because these showed the unspoken beliefs of the teachers about gender in their methods of teaching, curriculum contents taught, and in their assessment questions. The lesson plans also showed certain gender issues that were followed up during my interviews. Even though I hail from Akwa-Ibom State in the South-South Geo-political Zone, yet I have lived and worked as a business studies teacher in this community for over twenty years and I have established a good rapport with fellow VBE teachers in the community. Therefore when I asked them for the above-mentioned documents, they did not see me as an inspector visiting their schools but a fellow VBE teacher. Even then, I had to forget my position in that community and be open-minded so that I can obtain vital data for my study. Parts of the answers to research question three were obtained through documentary sources. As earlier mentioned, I intended to make use of content analysis to explore gender dimensions in these documents because the greatest strength of content analysis was that it is unobtrusive and nonreactive. Another strength was that the researcher determines where the emphasis lies after the data have been gathered. However, Yin (2003) shows the weaknesses of documentary information to include a retrievability problem which can be low; biased selectivity that occurs if collection is incomplete and the problem associated with reporting bias which reflects the unknown bias of the author. This means that access may be deliberately blocked. In order to minimise these problems, efforts will be made to fully retrieve documents, to analyse the complete collection while the information obtained from those documents will be cross-checked with interviewees' opinions. After analysing the documents, I intend to embark on participant observations in the commerce and economics classrooms of the case study schools.

#### **4.7 Data Analysis**

Qualitative case study analysis is a means of working with data generated from field work, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, searching for patterns, identifying what is important and deciding on what to tell others (Bodgen and Biklen, 1982). Therefore, it is not surprising that some qualitative case study researchers use inductive analysis of data, which means that critical themes emerge out of the data. Saying it another way, it is a process of orderly organisation of data into patterns, categories and descriptive units with the sole aim of identifying relationships between them (Askia, 2001). In order to achieve this objective, the constant comparative method of data analysis was used in the study. This method

was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and it “is a process whereby the data gradually evolve into a core of emerging theory” (Merriam, 1998:191). This is because the basic strategy of the constant comparative method is compatible with inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research. In this study, the data analysis was shaped by the research questions, theoretical framework or literature review and I adopted the constant comparative method when I was comparing a particular incident from an interview, field notes or document and compare it with another incident in the same set of data or another set. Such comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances (Merriam, 1998). Indeed, comparisons were constantly made within and between levels of conceptualisation until a theory was formulated.

Qualitative case study analysis requires some form of initiative, for the challenge is to place the raw data into logical, meaningful categories, to examine them in a holistic fashion, and to find a way to communicate this interpretation to others (Hoepfl, 1997). Miles and Huberman (1998) describe data analysis as involving three sub-processes, namely data reduction, followed by data display and then assembly of the information into some workable format. According to Merriam (1988:145), this can be done by ‘arranging transcripts, field notes and documents chronologically according to when they were collected or according to the logical chronology of the case.’ This author suggests that all the information related to the planning phase of a project can be arranged first, for example, followed by the implementation phase and so on. Merriam further suggests that data can be organised according to the persons interviewed, places visited and documents obtained. According to Merriam (1988), this body of material forms the case record or case study database. In this study, I used the manual method to arrange interview data according to the persons interviewed while field notes were used chronologically according to when they were written.

I now explain in brief how the data I generated were attended to and analysed. As earlier pointed out above that my interpretation was guided by ‘my values, interests, engagement with literature and theories, tacit fieldwork experiences and my systematic engagement with data’. The three theories (Gender Regime, Cultural Capital and Social Roles Theories) used in my study helped me to make sense of what I found. Indeed the gender regime theory helped me to explore pattern of practices in the case study schools that constructs masculinity and femininity among the teachers and students, orders them in terms of power and prestige and constructs gender division of labour. Similarly, Cultural Capital theory

helped me to explore the cultural context and of the girls' cultural capital derived from petty business trading with their mothers helped me to make sense of the data about the girls during classroom discussions in Commerce and Economics lessons in the schools. In the same way, Social role theory helped me to gain insights into the gender roles of boys and girls both at home and schools. These theories have dynamic relationships between them and they guided the analysis of the data for Chapters five to nine in this study.

Generally, a thematic analysis of the data was also undertaken following the principles of cross-sectional and categorical indexing delineated by Mason (2002). As proposed by many scholars like Mason (2002), Silverman (2005) and Merriam (1998), the analysis started at the time of the interview, and also during my transcription through underscoring main phrases, sentences and/or paragraphs that seemed to be relevant with my research question. Reading the transcripts at least five times as well as listening again and again to the interviewees' actual voices from the recorded tapes assisted me to identify the main emergent categories and themes. As Marshall and Rossman (2006: 158) point out "reading, reading and rereading through the data once more forces the researcher to become intimately familiar with those data". Therefore, constant comparative method was used to explore the categories and the themes as well as to look at the relationship between all of them (Robson, 1993). This process was extended to the whole transcriptions of the interviews and I explore common features to group the themes in broader categories. The initial attempts of this type of analysis were done manually. Indeed, I used this manual method of data analysis throughout the study. The above procedure revealed the following wide categories: (i) ideas about gender; (ii) informal and formal aspects of schooling; (iii) the gendered VBE classroom interactions and gendered views about business labour market. Regarding the first category, the analytical data showed that ideas about gender were from six sources. To illustrate, students described themselves using stereotypical ideas when I asked them about their gender identity. Apart from that, the other five sources of ideas about gender were (b) assigned tasks carried out by the VBE boys and girls at home and in school; (c) dressing; (d) first name of boys and girls according to the Nigerian culture; (e) social networks and (f) teachers' ideas of gender in terms of men as heads of households and women as wives and mothers. All these ideas impacted on the VBE classroom participation during commerce and economics lessons. Therefore, all comments that corresponded to the dimension were grouped within the sources that the VBE students and teachers got ideas about gender. In relation

to the second main category, the informal and formal curriculum tended to have some great influence on students' identities and classroom participation. The third broad category is related to the second category because teaching and learning are a part of formal curriculum and they show the extent to which teachers and students participate in curriculum. Lastly, the fourth broad category considers their views about business labour market as being highly gendered. These findings are discussed in chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the thesis and are supported by extracts from the students and teachers as well as from documents. However, in chapter 5, I present the accounts of gender regime as I observed in all the schools surveyed.

#### **4.7.1 Reflexivity**

From the beginning of data generation at the case study schools, I made my position known as a VBE teacher/researcher. This self identification enabled me to operate within an acceptable social context and thus making me to become more reflexive during the period of data generation. Indeed, I became more sensitive to issues that might impact on my research. Qualitative case study researchers very often utilise a reflexive position to tackle possible problems related to accounting for their preconceptions in a given study. Conventionally, when researchers have sought an understanding of human behaviour within the framework of naturalism, they are expected to minimise their effects on the research process (Lofland, 1971).

I am a VBE teacher with considerable experience and a teacher trainer, so that I inevitably bring to the study, knowledge of the field and some firm opinions on what constitutes good classroom interaction experiences, such as providing boys and girls with comfortable teaching-learning environment, making the students enjoy the lessons by explaining the lessons to them, prevailing upon them to do something, persuading them to say something, and evaluating their responses. Consequently, I was mindful of my position as a VBE teacher/ researcher. In addition, I recognize that researchers are part of the social world they study but on the other hand, that they must develop the ability to stand back and reflect upon themselves and the activities of that social world that they are studying. Ultimately, there would be a certain difficulty and anxiety with the prospect of developing the ability to treat the familiar (lived experiences) as something strange (Askia, 2001). This requires the researchers to understand how their presence and way of presenting themselves and their researches may have influenced how people responded to them and what such respondents did and/or did not tell them. In this study, I needed to understand what effects these practices might have on my research and to make sense of this new situation.

At first when the teachers and students saw me coming to their schools, they suspected that I was now employed as an inspector in the State Ministry of Education and that I was no longer in the Teacher's College that they used to know. As a result of such a thought, I think my presence may have influenced how these teachers and students responded to me and what they did tell me and/or what did not tell me. For example, their responses on gender issues about their schools which I asked them were given without any delay. This might explain why VBE teachers and students so readily accepted me to observe their class lessons because class observations by Education Inspectors are more common now than when I was a secondary school teacher in the 1980s or a supervisor of student teachers in the late 1990s. So I felt my presence might have affected my research data in one way or the other and particularly during my interviews with them because there were issues that they were ready to tell me. However because of their suspicion, maybe there were other issues they were not ready to tell me because they thought of me as an Education Inspector. It did not take too long before VBE teachers and their students gave little attention to me in their schools and classrooms and consequently the lessons went on smoothly and as usual.

During six of the Commerce and Economics classroom observations in some Case Study Schools, I observed that VBE Teachers dominated the lesson periods by using 30 minutes (75 percent) out of 40 minutes of their lesson periods for teaching. When the teachers did this, at first I was determined not to display any emotions that would cause a reaction on the part of the VBE teachers. This proved very difficult especially when VBE boys and girls were not left with at least 50 percent of the lesson times to interact. I felt that these teachers were influenced by my presence during their lessons. Consequently, they suspected that I was there to inspect how well they could teach their lessons. With such a suspicion or lack of information about my study, these six VBE teachers were often tensed up and used up the entire lesson time to talk to their students even to the point of forgetting to ask their students questions and/or giving the students opportunities to ask them questions. I felt my presence might have caused those VBE teachers to reflect on their teaching more than usual because they were really concerned that I was there to observe their lessons and the behaviour of their students. Indeed I think my presence caused these teachers to respond to the teaching of their lessons the ways they did. However, my stance as a VBE teacher/researcher was disclosed to them at the beginning of the fieldwork during the obtaining of the oral informed consent, which was tape-recorded. I therefore intervened cautiously, reminding the

teachers of the need to allow enough time for interactions during his lessons. At the end of every class observation, I often created time to discuss with the Commerce and Economics teachers in order to reduce my frustration and concerns. I embraced the idea of subjectivity throughout the field work and this position is in line with qualitative research perspective on how lived experiences are learned and produced in relation to Cultural Capital and Social Roles theories through socialisation in the homes and in schools. My role as a VBE teacher/researcher was to carefully generate, analyse and interpret data in an effort to understand the social world of the teachers and students in relation to Gender Regime Theory and in association with those two other theories. Therefore, being reflexive provided me with the opportunity to ask a series of questions and to judge how the answers impinged upon or helped me to situate and shape the data and their analysis and interpretation. In order to ensure the acceptability and credibility of the study, good faith on the part of the researcher must be assured when data manipulation begins and he/she must be self-disciplined in coding the data accurately into themes and patterns (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Credibility in qualitative case study research also involves a prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, coupled with good quality recording and documentation of data (e.g. by taking field notes) and its triangulation which is explained below.

Although I am an experienced VBE teacher and a teacher trainer, certain activities within VBE classroom observations were really strange to me, but I was able to remain calm, frequently reminding myself of my status as a researcher external to the context of Commerce and Economics classroom interactions. Furthermore, being familiar with VBE classroom observations during teaching practice supervision, what gave me difficulty and caused anxiety was my inability to treat VBE classroom observations as something strange. This was because I was so used to teaching practice supervision of VBE student teachers during which I evaluated and judged their teaching rather than try to understand what was happening in there in relation to gender. Consequently, I found out that I became anxious and had some difficulties sometimes when I was in VBE classroom observation because I easily derailed from observing gender issues going on in there to evaluating and judging the VBE teacher's teaching. This was my problem. However, this feeling and experience did not last long before I minimised it through making conscious efforts to stick to observing what was happening in the VBE classrooms in relation to gender. I embraced subjectivity throughout the fieldwork and this position was in line with the 'fuzzy' nature of qualitative, interpretative

research and knowing as opposed to the clear-cut certainty of positivist approaches. My role as a VBE teacher/researcher was to carefully collect, analyse and interpret data in an effort to understand the social world of gender issues affecting VBE teachers' and students' classroom participation, not to impose my own beliefs. Notably, after the VBE classroom observations, I had opportunities to talk to VBE teachers and students. I was able to answer questions on gender issues raised by them.

Indeed, often very little is known concerning the feelings and experience of the classroom observer when carrying out this kind of research. Even in classic studies of gendered interaction such as Spender's (1982) and Stanworth's (1981), the observer's own presence and experience is largely absent in the reports. In my own case, this was not the first time that I had been an observer in a secondary school VBE classroom, so I did not consider taking my place at the back or front of the classroom as an embarrassing and threatening experience because I was fairly conversant with secondary school VBE classrooms. I have been a classroom teacher in the secondary schools for over seven years and a lecturer in a Federal College of Education (Teacher's College) for over fifteen years. As a teacher trainer, I often go out for teaching practice supervision of my student teachers whom we send to secondary schools every year. During such supervision times, I have opportunities to observe the classroom teaching of a number of student teachers in secondary school classrooms for a period of three months. Whenever I go on such supervisions, I often take my place at the back or front of the classroom in order to assess the student teacher's lesson plan as well as the method of lesson delivery. In essence, I usually observe five aspects of the lesson, that is, lesson introduction, presentation, application, evaluation and the conclusion.

The introduction involves things such as the class taught, the lesson topic, its objectives and the teacher's entry behaviour. The presentation of the lesson includes the steps that the teacher used in lesson delivery, while lesson application is the aspect that allows the students to practice what is taught or that part of the lesson that permits classroom interaction between the teacher and the students. The conclusion of the lesson requires the student teacher to summarise the salient points of the lesson topic and to give the class some sort of assignment. The evaluation aspect of the lesson includes questions which the student teacher has set to test how much the students have learnt from the teaching. During the evaluation, if the student teacher realises that the set objectives of the lesson were not achieved because the students did not learn much from the teaching, the

supervisor who observed the teaching would ask the student teacher to repeat the same lesson using a different teaching approach. Therefore I have some sort of background experience in classroom observation. As pointed out earlier, the problem that I had during VBE classroom observations was a tendency to evaluate and judge student teachers rather than try to understand gender issues affecting the teaching and learning of VBE subjects which was the focus of my study. I had to struggle with this problem for some time until I was able to adapt myself to the purpose of my study. Even with the expertise that I felt I had in VBE classroom observations, I sometimes felt susceptible and quite anxious because gender interaction in a classroom is incredibly complex and I was not quite sure of how to go about it. Francis (2000), in her observation of secondary school classrooms in London, felt very vulnerable and consequently quite nervous, and this was my feeling during the observation, my previous experiences notwithstanding.

Having used the qualitative case-study approach, I have found that it is not without its limitations. In the first instance, the small number of cases involved in this study is a limitation. There were only four school case studies in this research. By no means can the findings reflect other schools and for that reason, the findings cannot be generalised. Moreover the study was specifically on two VBE subjects, therefore the findings cannot be generalised to cover other senior secondary school subjects.

Also, 'qualitative case study research is limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the researcher' (Merriam, 1998:42). Indeed, 'the investigator is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (ibid, p.42). This has its advantages but training in observation and interviewing, though necessary, is not readily available to aspiring qualitative case-study researchers. Moreover, there are no training or specific guidelines on how to write up the final report. It is only recently that there have been reviews about how to analyse the data collected (Merriam, 1998). Based on the foregoing, qualitative case-study researchers are often left to their own instincts and abilities throughout most of their research efforts (Merriam, 1998).

A further limitation is in the area of data generation using participant observation where my presence might have affected the class atmosphere for those being observed. This is because the classes were orderly and nicely behaved except for the boys in the back rows who often whispered to their friends or engaged in off-task behaviour. However, the initial problem of reactivity by the participants was minimised by my spending long hours in the case-study schools. In this way, they became accustomed to my presence and often carried on with their normal everyday activities without minding my presence.



The study was also limited by data collection method. Although I used class observation as one of the data generation method, I did not involve the use of video recordings. If I had to use the opportunity to collect class observation data again, I would not fail to use video recordings because they can capture both verbal and non-verbal aspects of the classroom talk which has gender-related issues.

#### **4.7.2 Triangulation**

According to Mason (2002: 190), 'triangulation refers to the use of a combination of methods to explore one set of research questions'. It is an approach to research which uses multiple sources of data with a single focus to provide a rich collection of data designed to reveal similarities and differences between different settings (Askia, 2001). Generally, there are four types of triangulation and these comprise data, the investigator and theoretical and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation involves the utilisation of multiple sources of data which all have similar focus (Mason, 2002) and which contributes to the rigour of case and qualitative study. It also serves to improve the study's trustworthiness and makes distinctive contributions to addressing the research questions (Morse, 1991). Investigator triangulation occurs when more than one investigator is involved in a single study while theoretical triangulation comprises the use of several hypotheses that are tested by applying the same body of data (Askia, 2001). Lastly, methodological triangulation is the most commonly-used type of triangulation and it involves the use of two or more methods of data generation within one study.

Each method supports the other; for example, the use of participant observation and semi-structured interviews to find out the gendered knowledge and experiences of masculinity and femininity that the VBE teachers and their students bring to Commerce and Economics classroom interactions in the Nigerian senior secondary schools. Indeed, the main strength of triangulation is to uncover intricacy and to identify different views of the phenomenon under study. In this study, methodological triangulation was used in data generation. This employed three methods: participant observation, a semi-structured interview and document reviews. This provided an in-depth understanding of the intricacies of gender issues that go on everyday in the schooling experiences of VBE boys and girls in Nigerian senior secondary schools.

#### **4.7.3 Ethical Consideration in Data Collection**

Ethical issues about research participants cover the following main areas of concern: issues of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and obtaining informed

consent. In a qualitative case study, ethical issues concern the protection of the schools as informant, as well as the teachers and students who participate in the research project. To ensure confidentiality in this study, I assigned fictitious names to all participating schools, teachers and the students which only I could link to them. In addition, the documentation and the recorded materials were kept in a safe place to which only I had access. Informed consent is a process which facilitates adequate understanding of a study in order for participants to decide whether they want to participate or not (Busher and James, 2005). Through informed consent, prospective research participants are made to understand that participation is voluntary and they may freely opt out at any given time in the study (British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004). This principle of informed consent may seem inhibiting and problematic, since researchers have to wait for the participants to agree before the research is carried out. However, it is also open to a wide range of interpretations.

There is some debate, for example, as to how fully research participants should be informed. Robson (2002) questions how realistic it is to ask in advance whether people are prepared to take part in research, as it may not be possible or practicable to do this. The author further notes that not telling them would mean that you have taken away their right not to participate. Finally, there are no easy answers because ethics is about trying as much as possible to ensure that one's research causes no pain or harm (Askia, 2001). The BERA guidelines (2004) further state that researchers have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research. In addition, as part of the procedure for obtaining informed consent, potential participants have to be aware of their right to decline to participate, understand the extent to which confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and be reminded of their right to renegotiate consent during the research process (Askia 2001). In view of this, researchers are required to be aware of the possible consequences of their work and should attempt to anticipate and guard against detrimental consequences for participants (Askia, 2001).

My own position is that researchers should be honest and do the best to protect the rights of the research participants. Similarly, it is commonly argued that research relationships should be made possible by establishing trust and integrity (Robson, 2002). Consequently, in this study, verbal and taped informed consent was obtained from the head teachers of all the teachers and students involved in the research project. Details of the study were explained to the participants before the

fieldwork started. Privacy and confidentiality were upheld before, during and after the fieldwork. Participants were assured that they could freely express their concerns without their identity being exposed to others and that they might freely withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, the participant information sheet was read to all participants. During the fieldwork, I explained my presence to other people that I encountered. That is, I was a vocational business education teacher who was interested in the gender issues affecting classroom participation of VBE teachers and students in commerce and economics lessons and in gaining an understanding of how VBE boys' and girls' ways of constructing gender impact on their participation during the lessons. In data presentation, the identity of the case study schools was protected. Throughout the data collection process, great care was exercised to ensure that the confidentiality and individual privacy of the participant were upheld where necessary. Even though great care was exercised, it was not possible to maintain complete confidentiality in real research situation. This was because the VBE teachers persistently asked me what I observed in their lessons. I could not fail to tell them this because I still needed to depend on them to have access to their classrooms or time for an interview and so did not want to alienate them. Consequently a part of the practical difficulties of acting ethically in real research situations is caused by teachers who also took part in the study alongside with their students.

#### **4.8 Summary**

Chapter 4 sets out the methodology and methods used in the study. Thus, it discusses the nature of the research that prompted the use of qualitative case study methodology and the approach adopted. The rationale for the adoption of qualitative case study and the philosophical underpinnings for the study are also discussed in this chapter. It further discusses sample selection, data generation methods, data analysis, as well as ethical issues. The chapter also explores reflexivity on the position of the researcher in conducting and analysing the research, including the potential impact on student interviewees and especially with regards to gender. Chapter 5 sets out to explore the schools' gender regime at the four case study schools, states their similarities and differences as well as discusses how the school and class environments impact on classroom participation of students especially that of girls. Lastly, it discusses the teaching profession at the case study schools.

## **Chapter 5 Gender Regimes at the Case Study Schools**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the background to, and provides brief summaries of life, in the case study schools which will later be explored, elaborated and expanded in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. This is important because each of the schools had an accepted set of gender arrangements (Connell, 2002) which were explored in order to enrich the study. The source of data for this chapter was school and classroom observations, documents reviews as well as semi-structured interviews conducted with VBE teachers and students and HODs and Principals at the case study schools. Here, I highlight school life as I observed in all the case study schools.

In describing and understanding each case-study school, I outline and discuss gendered experiences that emerged from the study findings using the following dimensions: school location, school catchment area occupations, number of students and teachers, physical conditions, and curriculum options as well as the four key dimensions of gender regime: power relations, gender divisions of labour, emotional relations and symbolisation (See also section 3.5 of this thesis). Next I explore the similarities and the differences in the gender regimes across the schools as well as school and class environment in all the case study schools.

### **5.2 Case Study School Contexts**

#### **5.2.1 Locations**

The four case study schools were two urban and two rural senior secondary schools. Timo high school was an urban senior secondary school established by a Christian Organisation in the early 1990s to offer both junior and senior secondary education to students and is located in Timo town, some 119 kilometres from Jos, the capital of Plateau State, Nigeria. The rural senior secondary school, Pascal was founded in 1972 by the local community and is located in Pascal village, some 117 kilometres from the capital. Mary Monk, another urban high school was established by the State government in late 1990s to provide a comprehensive senior secondary curriculum for students. It has a long history of involvement in vocational education of which vocational business education is a part. The school is a large urban senior secondary school located in a busy, densely populated but culturally mixed town known as Dadinkowa - Jos, some 5 kilometres from the capital. Lastly, Bingo, another rural school established in 1970 by the State Government and was located in Bingo village, approximately 130 kilometres from the capital.

### 5.2.2 School Catchment Areas' Occupations

In the rural school catchment areas such as those of Bingo and Pascal high schools, the students' families were predominately of low socio-economic status, with their parents depending mainly on raising livestock and farming field crops like maize, beans, potatoes as well as on casual self employed activities such as petty trading, grinding of maize and selling of locally brewed beer called 'kunu' and 'brukutu'. On the other hand, the students' families around urban high schools' catchment areas such as those of Timo and Mary Monk High Schools were engaged in a wide range of occupations across the socio-economic spectrum, from the casual self-employed activities as market traders and street vendors to professionals such as lawyers and medical doctors. Indeed, a majority of them were teachers, office workers, lecturers, business men and women and doctors while others were petty traders and housewives.

### 5.2.3 Number of Students and Teachers

The number of students in the four case study schools was as follows:

**Table: 5.1 Enrolments and Gender Profiles at the Case Study Schools**

Case Study Schools	Total Enrolments	Number of Boys	Number of Girls
Timo (Urban)	1,050	410 (39%)	640 (61%)
Pascal (Rural)	850	565 (66%)	285 (34%)
Mary Monk (Urban)	1,230	510 (41%)	720 (59%)
Bingo (Rural)	720	500 (69%)	220 (31%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,850</b>	<b>1,985</b>	<b>1,865</b>

**Source: Field Notes taken during field work**

The number of teachers in the case study schools was as follows:

**Table 5.2: Teachers and gender profile at the Case Study Schools**

Case Study Schools	Total number of Teachers	Number of Male Teachers	Number of Female Teachers
Timo	40	15	25
Pascal	30	18	12
Mary Monk	40	16	24
Bingo	28	15	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>74</b>

**Source: Field notes taken during field work**

From the two tables above, it could be seen that in rural senior secondary schools both male students and teachers are in the majority whereas it is the reverse in the urban senior secondary schools. Indeed, this may have implications for the degree of masculinisation/feminisation in the schools. The question is 'To what extent does this affect the teaching and learning of VBE commerce and economics in both rural and urban senior secondary schools in Nigeria? I will comment on this later on in the thesis.

#### **5.2.4 Physical Conditions in the Schools**

In terms of the school physical conditions, Timo High School compound was surrounded with a fence built with cement blocks and security guards control the entrance to the school. The school had four long buildings for its classrooms and offices. Generally, the school buildings were old and needed renovation and refurbishment. There were separate classrooms for the junior secondary school classes 1 to 3 and for senior secondary school classes 1 to 3. The school had a total of 21 classrooms which were all poorly furnished. There were also very poorly equipped science laboratories. There was an office each for the following school officers: principal, the vice principal (administration), the vice principal (academics) and the Director of Studies. There were also three large open offices for all other teachers. The school had some boarding facilities, so some students were accommodated in the school compound while others lived with their parents within Timo city. There was one main football field which was used mainly by boys. However, there were other small fields also. Water and electricity were available in the school which also had a separate toilet for girls and boys. Furthermore, the school had no school library but there was a small bookshop where both staff and students buy books and stationery. There were insufficient learning materials such as textbooks and equipment in this school. Thus, the Commerce and Economics textbooks for senior secondary class three titled "Comprehensive Commerce and Economics for senior secondary schools books 1, 2 and 3 were in short supply to students.

Similarly, Mary Monk High School was surrounded with high walls and security guards control the entrance to the school. It also had the active support of PTA and Board of Governors. Mary Monk high school had a total of six long buildings with 22 poorly furnished classrooms, two large staffrooms, and separate offices for the school principal, two vice principals and for the Director of Studies. The school buildings were in a fairly good condition. There were water and electricity available in the school which also had one main football field that was normally used

by mainly boys. Girls often used other smaller fields available in the compound for their play. There was a separate toilet for boys and girls and they were often kept clean by girls. There was a library in this school but it was not stocked with relevant textbooks. The students had their personal textbooks as well as their writing materials and exercise books. There were insufficient teaching and learning materials in the school. The school had boarding facilities, so all the students were accommodated in the school compound.

Pascal High school had no fence and security guards to control the entrance of visitors to the school but had five long buildings to contain 17 classrooms. All of them had insufficient desks and benches for the students. The buildings themselves were falling into disrepair with cracks in the walls and ceilings. There was an office for the principal, the two vice principals, and the director of studies. There were two large offices for teachers. The school had no pipe borne water and no electricity. Furthermore, there was no library in the school and the science laboratory was poorly equipped and poorly furnished. There was a football field in the school and it was used by boys. However during games, girls played in small groups behind classroom blocks and on smaller fields. In addition, the pit toilets for boys and girls were poorly built with zincs without roof and therefore tended to lack privacy. Consequently, most mature girls were unable to use them during menses. Furthermore, Pascal high school had no boarding facilities and as such some of the students lived with parents while others lived in rented accommodations within Pascal community near to the high school. There were also no teaching and learning materials such as textbooks. Consequently, few students owned copies of Commerce and Economics textbooks used in class during lessons.

Bingo High school had no fence around the school compound and therefore no security post to control the entrance of people into the school premises. There were five long buildings for a total of 15 classrooms and none of them had enough seats for boys and girls. The four walls of this high school contained all one could find in a traditional rural educational institution: out-dated school equipment, poorly equipped library, poorly furnished classrooms and poor recreational facilities. The buildings were old and dilapidated and most of the doors, windows and ceilings had fallen off. The school buildings actually needed some repairs and renovation. However, there were separate offices for the principal, the two vice principals and the director of studies. There were two open offices for all the teachers. The school had no boarding facilities and therefore the students were living with their parents within Bingo community while others lived in rented houses near to the school

compound. The school library was not well stocked with books and even the books available were out-dated texts written in 1960s and 1970s. The science and technical laboratories were also poorly equipped. Moreover, there was one main football field often used by boys. The other surrounding small fields were mainly used by girls. The door to the girls' toilet was not closing well. Thus, the female Commerce and Economics girls interviewed claimed that some matured girls were not able to use the toilets especially during their menstrual periods which tended to affect their attendance in schools during such periods. I will now discuss on curriculum options available in all the case study schools.

### **5.2.5 Curriculum Options**

The system of schooling consisted of six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, three years of senior secondary education and four years of tertiary education. All the case study schools operated a core curriculum involving the following subjects in their senior secondary schools (SSS): English Language, Mathematics, One Science Subject (Biology), One Social Science Subject, One Nigerian Language (Hausa) and a Vocational Subject (usually Agricultural Science). There were four curriculum options available in all the case study schools. These were physical sciences, social sciences, arts and vocational-technical courses. According to VBE students, they were given freedom to choose whatever option and/or subject they wanted to study. The school guidance counsellors only played the role of advising the students to study any of the curriculum options based on their future job aspirations and on their performances in the junior secondary certificate examinations (JSCE). For example, VBE students who studied, sat and passed science and vocational-technical courses such as chemistry, physics, biology, mathematics, electronics, woodwork and technical drawing in the JSCE were often advised by the school guidance counsellors to offer science and technology courses in their senior secondary school (SSS) level. Indeed for such students, their daily timetable at school did not allow most of them to study some arts and commercial courses, even though some of them were able to study economics in addition to their chosen subjects. For all other students who studied, sat and passed other courses at their JSCEs, the school timetable did not hinder their studying arts and commercial courses in addition. Moreover, they were often advised by their school guidance counsellors to study some of those courses at SSS level. According to the school principals of the case study schools, many boys who were good at mathematics, sciences and vocational-technical courses often enrolled for these courses in the schools. This is because such courses often



lead to prestigious jobs and high salaries in future. On the other hand, some other boys who were good at mathematics and some other courses in the arts, social sciences and VBE courses made up their minds to study them in the SSS. For this group of students, their school time-table did not allow them to study other science and technology courses. Furthermore, some girls who were good at mathematics, social sciences, arts and VBE courses were able to study any of them in their SSS. Their school timetables did not permit them to study science and technology courses but they could study any of those courses listed above in the SSS levels.

At this juncture, I would like to raise as a question “the extent to which different patterns of enrolment might influence VBE classroom participation of boys and girls during the Commerce and Economics lessons”. In an attempt to address this question, it might be incorrect to claim that any particular factor ‘explains’ the difference. This might be so because it is far more likely that there are multiple factors which influence that difference. It might be partly explained by enrolment and partly by VBE girls’ cultural capital as well as other unknown factors that this thesis will show later on. The next discussion is on the key elements of gender regime that I observed in the institutional life of the case study schools. To understand aspects of gender in the schools’ contexts, I used the theoretical perspective of the school’s gender regime theory, which argues that gender is entrenched in the institutional arrangements through which the case study schools function (Connell, 1996). It is therefore important to consider the structure of the Nigerian society in which VBE teachers and students played out their gender across all the case study schools in terms of power relations, division of labour, patterns of emotion and symbolisation as described by Connell (1996). There will be more on these in the informal and formal curriculum of chapter 7 of this thesis.

#### **5.2.6 Key Dimensions of Gender Regime**

Power Relations include supervision and authority among teachers and pattern of dominance, harassment and control over resources among students (Connell, 1996:9). In this study, there was dominance of male teachers in senior and management positions, although three of the case study schools were headed by female principals. There was also dominance of boys over playground space for informal football games in order to maintain the hegemony of an aggressive, physical masculinity in the case study schools. As a result, girls in all the schools played their games on smaller fields.

Gender Division of Labour includes work specialisation among teachers such as concentration of women in domestic science, language and literature teaching and men in science, mathematics and industrial arts (Connell, 1996:9). According Connell (ibid), it also includes informal specialisations among students. In my study, there was gendered work specialisation among teachers, even though Commerce teachers in the four case study schools were all males. They were observed teaching female-dominated Commerce classes in the schools. However in Economics, there was gender equality in the teaching of the subject as two male and two female teachers taught Economics in the four case study schools. The informal specialisation among the students in all the case study schools was practised through the involvement of students in gender specific duties in the schools. For example, boys were appointed as time-keeper and no girl was given this responsibility. Again, male prefects in all the case study schools had more power and took the lead in joint activities while female prefects were only there to assist them.

**Emotional Relationships:** These involve emotional attachment or commitment to same sex grouping or cross sex grouping (Connell, 2002). In the case study schools, the emotional attachment that I observed was practised more in the area of same sex groupings. I came to realise in all the case study schools that the students preferred same sex groupings to cross sex groupings. For example, within the VBE Commerce and Economics classrooms of all the case study schools, girls sat with girls and boys with boys. Again in the VBE classrooms, girls like to work in groups while boys like to work individually. Moreover, boys like to sit together at the back of the classrooms and by the sides of the classes whereas girls like to sit together at the front and middle rows of the classes. Outside the classrooms, boys played with boys and girls with girls. However, where emotional attachment with respect to boy-girl friendship was practised, it was done secretly; as such it was not easy to observe such during VBE lessons. As I was keen to know how the secret love relationship was practised, two student respondents confirmed that there was 'secret love affairs' going on between boys and girls. They said such practices went on in what was commonly referred to as 'magic love centres'. The student respondents said that the 'magic love centre' was given that name because boys and girls easily expressed their love for one another either through 'secret love letters' or through exchanging gifts first, then followed by verbal expressions of love. The students also said that such relationships were not carried out openly when teachers and other students were present but in secret. They added that whenever

boyfriends and girlfriends found opportunities to be alone in secluded areas of the schools especially in the night, they were tempted to embrace themselves and their girlfriends might allow their boyfriends to touch their breasts and buttocks.

Symbolization: According to Connell (1996:9) "Schools import much of the symbolization of gender from the wider culture, but they have their own symbol systems too: uniforms and dress codes, formal and informal language codes and so forth". Indeed, the school uniforms in all the case study schools helped to show who was a male and female student and they (uniforms) differed from one school to another. For example, the school uniform in Timo high school was a pair of ox-blood trousers and white shirts for boys and ox-blood skirts and white blouses for girls. In Pascal high school, boys and girls wear white shirts and blouses with light blue trousers and skirts as their school uniforms while in Mary Monk high school, navy blue trousers and skirts with white shirts and blouses were used by boys and girls as school uniforms. In Bingo high school, the school uniform was green trousers and skirts with white shirts and blouses for boys and girls respectively. Girls in these case study schools were required to plait their hairs while boys had low cut hair. The VBE teachers said that the school normally insisted on good appearance and when students failed to do so, some measures of punishment were often administered on the offenders. Furthermore, Connell (1996) also points out that "a particularly important symbolic structure in education is the gendering of knowledge, the defining of certain areas of the curriculum as masculine and others as feminine (p. 9)". In all the case study schools, commerce was perceived by many VBE boys as a feminine subject; as such has a greater number of girls studying it than boys while economics was perceived by VBE boys as a science subject, yet increasing number of girls than boys studied it particularly in urban senior secondary schools.

### **5.3 Similarities and Differences in gender regimes across the Case Study Schools**

Since I have presented the situations that I observed in all the case study schools, I will now look at the comparison between those schools surveyed in terms of gendered patterns of educational participation by VBE teachers and students. Firstly, I consider that the similarities were far greater than differences, even though there were differences and counter examples. For example, three quarters of the principals in the case study schools were females. Again, there were similarities in the enrolment of students in the case study schools because gender regimes reflect and reinforce dominant Nigerian conceptions of gender. For example, the urban high schools enrolled more girls than boys whereas the rural high schools enrolled

more boys than girls. The students said the reason why the case study schools in the rural areas had fewer girls was because some rural families often left their girls at home to do unpaid domestic tasks or to trade, farm and to care for younger siblings while the boys were sent to school. They pointed out that the parents' decision to send their boys first to school was because of poverty, son's preference and the values that such parents had for the education of their girls. On the other hand, girls in urban centres were sent to school because of the effect of urbanisation and globalisation and in this way, urban parents came to realise the importance of education and training, and thus sent their children to school. From the foregoing, it is important to ask why boys were in the minority in the two urban schools. Even though I do not have the data to address this effectively, yet given the emphasis on boys' education by Nigerian parents it is hard to understand why they were in the minority in the urban High Schools. Thus, it might be better to say that the lower enrolment of boys in the urban schools raises interesting questions that my research was not designed to investigate and as such there is a need for a separate research to study that.

All the case study schools followed the Nigerian's national curriculum for secondary schools. The country was operating a core curriculum across all subjects and some textbooks were recommended for the different subjects. The performances of the students were observed to vary according to the subjects chosen by boys and girls. Generally, boys tended to outperform girls in mathematics and sciences while girls often outperformed boys in languages, Christian Religious knowledge, and Home economics. In the area of VBE, girls outperformed boys in both commerce and economics.

On issues of school ethos, the principals and teachers of Timo, Mary Monk and Pascal High schools were serious in tackling issues of punctuality, attendance and school assignments among boys and girls. Generally teacher attendance and punctuality were good in those three schools. Similarly, student attendance was good. However on assignment and punctuality, some boys tended to be less likely than girls to submit their assignments in time, and to come early to school. In contrast, some staff and students of Bingo high schools formed the habits of coming and leaving the school before the closing time. Moreover, some boys of Bingo felt that studying was boring and as such, took little interest in classroom participation. The teachers were observed using corporal punishment on boys and girls in all the case study schools. Indeed the male teachers used sticks to beat boys on their buttocks while girls were beaten on the palm of their hands.

All the case study schools had Parents Teachers Association (PTA) committee which tended to support the schools in matters of local recruitment of teachers and developmental work. The PTA tended to employ more female teachers than their male counterparts in all the schools surveyed. In addition, the dominant religion across all the case study schools was Christianity with the many of the teachers and students being Christians.

Having provided some comparisons between the case study schools, I turn now to explore issues emerging from the presentation of the case study schools above. I approach this section in three ways: first, I discuss the school and class environments and how they impacted on gender and classroom participation in the schools; second, I examine the teaching profession at the schools surveyed as well as provide an outline of the main issues to be discussed in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. The discussion below is on school and class environments across all the case study senior secondary schools.

### **5.3.1 School and Class Environments**

In all the four schools, the VBE commerce and economics classrooms were built with blocks and cement. There were security problems in the two rural senior secondary schools observed because they have school compounds that had no fencing or clearly defined boundaries. For example, in Bingo high school, there was a local road that passed through the school and consequently, vehicles and unauthorised people pass freely through the school premises, even when classes and examinations are going on. This was likely to distract both teachers' and students' attention during the teaching-learning process. Consequently, this school compound tended to be unfavourable for effective teaching and learning of VBE commerce and economics for both boys and girls. It was even more distracting for girls because many of the male pedestrians and rich vehicle owners tend to harass the girls sexually through catcalls, suggestive advances, gift to lure, verbal abuse and flashing, and thus forcing them into sexual relations (NCCE, 2003). This resulted in early marriages and teenage pregnancies as well as school drop-outs. One of the teachers in Bingo High schools told me 'last year, we missed five of our brilliant girls in the final year due to this sort of pregnancy'. In the case of Pascal High School, there was unwanted noise from a local market which is located just by the school and VBE classrooms. The interference was so much that sometimes students could not hear what their teachers were saying in the teaching-learning process. For instance, the tape-recording that I did during the first observation was very poor because of such interference from outside the classroom.

Moreover, in the rural senior secondary schools, there was no electricity because National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) cables did not reach those rural areas. However, for electricity to be supplied to case study schools in the rural areas, their school management had to source for funds to purchase electric generating plants. They also have to install such electric plants and buy gas/petrol and engine oil for their operations. As the schools often complained of inadequate funds, the school principals said money for running such expenses was in short supply. Thus, rural schools' lesson activities were often affected by shortage of teaching materials because even one hard copy [print out] of commerce and economics exercises could not be obtained from the computers in the offices of the principals. Consequently, teachers' teaching materials in the rural high schools were mainly handwritten and were often left in the hands of male prefects who were often appointed to be in charge of commerce and economics. This was part of the gender regime in all the case study schools. According to the group of girls that I spoke with in those schools, such male prefects often gave the materials first to boys before giving them to some girls in the class. These tend to privilege the boys over the girls in the use of teachers' learning materials. Although the two surveyed urban senior secondary schools were visibly connected to National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) supply, yet electricity from this source was not constant and that tended to affect the production of most teaching materials. What this means is that learning materials for students could only be produced when electricity was supplied and when there is no supply, such materials had to wait until electric power is available. This tended to result in shortage of such materials and girls seemed to be the ones mostly affected by such shortages as the male prefects usually supply boys first before the girls. Thus, the gender regime practised in the Commerce and Economics lessons was likely to privilege male students over girls with respect to teaching and learning materials.

Another aspect of gender regime observed in some High Schools has to do with poor standard of hygiene and sanitation in the rural High Schools as compared to those in the urban High Schools. This poor hygiene situation was supposed to reduce girls' participation in their lessons. For instance, in Pascal high school, the two pit toilets lacked privacy and as such some matured girls were not able to use their toilet. Similarly, in Bingo high school, there was also no privacy. However, girls in these rural schools continued to participate more than boys in their Commerce and Economics lessons despite the poor standard of hygiene. The standard of hygiene in urban High Schools was better because in there, there were two

separate pit latrines; one for boys and the other for girls. For instance, in Mary Monk high school, girls' latrine was located near to the girls' hostels and boys' latrine was near to boys' hostel. Much more than that, they were kept neat and tidy at all times. The availability of these toilets indirectly tended to help the VBE girls to participate much more in their lessons than did boys. Additionally, there was portable drinking water in the urban schools whereas this was not available in the rural schools. The absence of water coupled with poor sanitation is important reasons for children, especially girls to drop out from those schools or even to refuse to go there for learning. It might be difficult for girls to remain in schools to learn where such harsh environments as those reported above are common. It has been argued that girls have special needs, especially during puberty, which if not provided for would result in girls' poor attendance in schools (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, ADE, 2006). In order to minimise such problems, girls need facilities such as toilets/latrines with enough privacy; also water and proper desks/benches that would help them to learn and have a comfortable stay in school. It has been argued that students' behaviours are a function of both person and environment (Pellegrini and Blatchford, 2000:91). This is because environment and people affect each other and behaviour and as such affect cognitive development.

The schools also had insufficient classroom spaces to accommodate all the students studying the subjects. The urban schools had basic facilities with toilet blocks and water supply but lacked sufficient seats and spaces for students. The two schools in the rural areas not only had insufficient classroom spaces, but the classrooms were old and dilapidated and all of them had no doors or window shutters. Moreover, the rooms were poorly furnished and students' desks were arranged in rows and columns with small teachers' tables at the front part of the classrooms placed between students' desks and the chalkboards. The physical arrangements in the rooms limited the movement of students around the commerce and economics classrooms; thus discouraging them from interacting with other students.

Generally, not having enough classroom spaces means that the rooms were overcrowded. For example, in all of the four Economics classrooms, a normal class situation witnessed over sixty students seated in one classroom. In large classes such as those of Economics, there was a lot of disruptive and less on-task behaviour exhibited by boys as well as reduction in the amount of individual attention that boys and girls receive from their teachers. Therefore the VBE Commerce and Economics teachers face some teaching problems such as

problems of indiscipline, shortage of learning materials for all, and how to involve all the students during the lessons as only a group of girls, that is, the more proficient and confident ones who could respond quickly to the teachers' questions dominated discussion while some boys showed no interest in whatever the teachers were teaching them. Thus, in the Economics classrooms of all the rural senior secondary schools, boys sat at the back, leaving the front and middle rows for girls. As a result of inadequate furniture in Economics classrooms, girls had to drag blocks or logs of wood from outside to the front areas of the classrooms to sit on for their lessons. This situation was particularly disadvantaging for the girls who supposed to enjoy equal opportunity in the use school facilities and equipment. In the case of urban senior secondary schools, parents were asked to provide desks and seats for their children. The girls whose parents were yet to buy them the desks and seats at the time of the study had to bring in stones or logs of wood from somewhere to the front of the classrooms to sit on. However, the boys whose parents were yet to buy those seats and desks decided to lean on the walls at the back of the classrooms. What this means is that such boys were not only reluctant to take part in discussions but were unenthusiastic to participate in class discussions during the lessons.

In terms of layout and physical nature, the Commerce classroom environment was similar to that of Economics. Nevertheless, it differs from the Economics classroom in terms of the number of students studying the subject. As noted in chapter 4, girls were the majority in the Commerce classrooms while boys were in the minority. Because the size of Commerce students was small compared to those studying Economics, they were able to concentrate more than those in the Economics classes. The next section describes teachers' gender, subject and pay as another aspect of gender regime observed across the case study schools.

### **5.3.2 Employment of Teachers by Gender, Subject, and Pay**

Generally teachers' gender, subject, promotion and pay are crucial aspects of gender regime acknowledged in this chapter. The data generated from the case study schools showed that teaching is a gendered profession. According to Gaskell and Mullen (2006) teaching, like all occupations, has been organised, changed and framed by gender. Gaskell and Mullen argue that teaching has been organised in a way that associates the one women do with low status and income, while the one men do garners more power and esteem. According to Gaskell and Mullen, women are more likely than men to teach younger children, to be in fields associated with women's work, and to have positions with little power or intellectual authority. Although changes have taken place in the number and kinds of teaching jobs which



are available, and the global expansion of formal teaching jobs has opened opportunities for many women, yet Gaskell and Mullen (2006) argue that teaching jobs have been continually reorganised and redefined so that women remain in low status positions relative to men. These authors further argue that this might be as a result of the discrimination in sex roles in some cultures that usually influenced the status accorded to male and female teachers. Generally, female dominance of teaching profession is a global issue. In many parts of the world, teaching is one of the most common occupations for women, making it critical for understanding women's status in any society (Anker, 1998; Gaskell and Mullen, 2006). In a study of forty one countries, teaching ranks as one of the top nine typically 'feminine' occupations (Anker, 1998; Gaskell and Mullen, 2006). In Canada, elementary teaching is the fifth leading occupation for women while in USA, it is the sixth for women (Padavic and Reskin, 2002; Seidlikoski, 2001). In addition, teaching around the world has become a more feminised occupation over the past two decades (Anker, 1998; Guppy and Davies, 1998).

In Nigeria, the national statistics revealed sharp differences between male and female teachers' employment profiles (National Bureau of Statistics, 2008). For example, between 2001 and 2006, the proportion of female teachers employed in Nigerian primary schools by the government and other private proprietors was about 52 percent while that of the male teachers was about 48 percent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2008). At the secondary school level, the proportion of female teachers recruited by government and other employers was 61 percent as against that of the male teachers which was about 39 percent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2008). In this study, there were more female teachers than their male counterparts in the schools studied. For example, there were more female teachers in the urban high schools than male teachers. However, the latter dominated the teaching of sciences, mathematics and technical subjects while the female teachers dominated the teaching of English Language, Home Economics, Christian Religious Knowledge and other arts courses.

There was also inequity in the salaries paid to male teachers and that of their female counterparts across the schools surveyed. In general, they were paid higher salaries than their female counterparts. This was so because many female teachers were employed by the individual school Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) organisation while many male teachers were employed by the government departments. Indeed, the government teachers were paid higher salaries than those paid by the PTA committees of the case study schools. However, I discovered that

the differences between female teachers' salaries and that of their male counterparts in the schools were in terms of allowances paid to government teachers but the basic pay was the same. Indeed, those allowances were big money and the PTA teachers and indeed the female teachers needed to be paid those allowances too. This implies that men more than women were in position of financial power in the schools surveyed. Moreover, some female teachers were working on part time basis whereas most male teachers were working on full time basis. According to the two female teachers involved in the study, part time appointment helped them to combine paid work with their unpaid domestic tasks even though such unpaid household labour tended to be socially and statistically invisible in Nigeria.

I also came to know that the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) played a role in the recruitment of more female teachers than male teachers in the case study schools. Generally, PTA was set up to serve as a link between the school and the community. It promotes teaching and learning in schools by recruiting PTA teachers and enrolment and attendance of students. The table in section 5.2.3 shows the number of male and female teachers employed by PTAs across the case study schools. From that table, it is clear that the PTA employed a total of 19 male teachers and 40 female teachers in the four case study schools. Indeed, the PTA helps to do everything within its powers for the support of the school. For example, it helps to raise funds for various projects in the schools by levying parents. The schools also depend so much on PTA's development levy for the funding of repairs, renovation and construction of new buildings. In fact it seems there is no way that the Nigerian school principals could survive without the support of the parent-teacher associations.

Culturally, since in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Nigerian women had been accorded a lower status than men in various occupations including teaching. This is because in the Nigerian dominant culture, not much priority was accorded women education although the place of maternity, usually full time, had often been treated with much respect. According to NCCE (2003) given this background, many Nigerian women have not been found in highly paid jobs but in low-paying teaching positions and primary and pre-primary education have a high number of female workers (NCCE, 2003). In fact as the level of education gets higher, the number of female teachers and consequently, it suggests to me that there is an inverse proportion of female teachers to the levels of education programme in Nigeria.

However, the female teachers at the case study schools said that they became teachers for various reasons; teaching provided them with a salary. Therefore, they joined the teaching profession so that they could support themselves or contribute to the support of others for a variety of reasons: They needed money, their families needed money, or they wanted financial remuneration in order to become independent. Another reason why they entered the teaching profession was reward of service as it could provide moral rewards as well as educational and intellectual motivation. Indeed, the teaching profession in the case study schools provided women with opportunities to work outside their domestic domain. Consequently, these teachers stand at the juncture of nurturing and sending out, preparing students to go from the private to the public world. According to Gimba (1996) female teachers serve as transmitters of dominant cultural norms rather than cultural transformers, while they find themselves caught in the contradiction of perpetuating their own oppression.

There was over-representation of female teachers in the case study schools with the exception of Pascal and Bingo High Schools and some of them were employed by the appropriate government agency while many others were recruited by the PTA Associations. Indeed, the male teachers received higher salaries than what were paid to female teachers doing the same job as the male teachers and having similar qualifications and experiences. In the four case study schools, the salaries of male teachers who were recruited by the appropriate government agencies whether at the state or at the federal level were much higher than those of the female teachers who were recruited by PTAs in the case study schools. Similarly, the teachers working with federal government owned schools and colleges received higher salaries than those working with state owned institutions, even though there were no federal schools in my study. For example, I and my wife graduated the same year from the University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria. Both of us served the nation for one year in the National Youth Service Scheme. At the end of that programme, we both picked up appointments; I in a federal government teacher's college while my wife in a private secondary school. The pay gap between what I am paid and what my wife is paid is in the ratio of 1:10. In support of this, NCCE (2003) points out that women teachers directly and indirectly have been victims of gender discrimination in matters such as remuneration, deployment and welfare benefits, like housing allowances. Generally, many female teachers earn less overall than men in Nigeria. In fact, teaching conditions are often poorer for some female teachers than male teachers, especially in rural areas, and such conditions often

worked more heavily against female teachers because of inequitable practices which inhibit effective teaching. Some of the VBE female teachers in the case study schools have similar experiences. For example, in an informal interview with one of the female PTA economics teacher in Mary Monk High School, she told me that the salaries of government teachers in that school differ sharply from what she was being paid. This is how she put it:

Researcher: As a PTA teacher, what's your pay like?

Mrs Disemi: Well, my pay is far lower than that of government teachers (MTF).

Researcher: Please can you tell me why that is so?

Mrs Disemi: It's because I am not paid certain allowances such as housing and transport that they are paid (MTF)

As earlier mentioned, one of the reasons for differences in salaries between the male and female teachers was part time employment. This was reported by another female VBE teacher in Bingo High School and this was how she reported it:

Researcher: I was told that by a teacher somewhere that your salaries differ. Is that applicable to you?

Mrs Raphael: Oh yes, it is (BTF).

Researcher: Please why?

Mrs Raphael: Because I work on part time basis. So I'm paid according to the hours I worked (BTF).

The government also limits female women teachers' access to administrative positions through policies that tended to favour male teachers only. Even though three quarters of the school principals were females in the case study schools, yet, overwhelmingly it is men who control the policy-making bodies that are put in charge to oversee what happens in the Nigerian senior secondary schools. Thus, women teachers lacked equal opportunity across all the case study schools to obtain senior teaching and management positions. However, the three female school principals in the case study schools were wives of 'big' time education administrators who control the Inspectorate Division in the Ministry of Education in the State. As for the school principal in the rural secondary schools, the situation was reversed as the only male principal had two deputies who were all females. By and large teachers in the Nigerian senior secondary schools are mostly females while administrators were predominately males (National Bureau of Statistics, 2008). In agreement with this, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2003) points out that

female teachers were generally under-represented in management and senior positions in schools and in the Ministry of Education.

I feel that the gender regime theory in conjunction with the other two theories will be used in describing, explaining and illuminating the chapters on the findings and discussions of the study in the following order. In chapter 6, the ideas about gender that the VBE teachers and students brought to their Commerce and Economics classroom interactions will be explored while in chapter 7, gender dimensions in the informal and formal curriculum will be highlighted. Chapter 8 discusses gendered VBE classroom interactions while the VBE teachers' and students' gendered perceptions about business labour market are explored in chapter 9.

#### **5.4 Summary**

This chapter discusses the schools' gender regime in the four coeducational senior secondary schools in Nigeria where the data for the study was generated. It highlights the case study school context describing school location, school catchment area occupations, number of students and teachers, physical conditions, and curriculum options. The chapter further explains the summary of the similarities and the differences in the gender regimes and class environment across all the case study schools. It also explores the employment of teachers by gender, subject and pay. The chapter headings to be elaborated, expanded and discussed in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 were listed.

## **Chapter 6: The VBE Teachers' and Students' Ideas about Gender**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In chapter 5, I discussed the schools' gender regime pointing out that there was similarity of gendered experiences in the case study schools. Again in that chapter, the analysis of data showed the following dimensions in the case study schools: school location, school catchment area occupations, number of students and teachers, physical conditions, and curriculum options. The present chapter discussed research question one which is ideas about gender and gender identity which the teachers and students brought to their VBE Commerce and Economics classrooms. In line with the above, the chapter's analysis of data suggests that the VBE teachers' and students' ideas about gender were that of segregating boys from girls on the basis of their sex, thus reflecting an understanding of the concept of gender as a biological difference. Thus the dominant gender regime remains one of segregation and differences between the sexes within the case study schools.

This chapter therefore highlighted socialisation processes and the ways they helped to construct gender identities in the VBE boys and girls of the case study schools. It explored the views that family activities and influences tended to support the development of gender identities which in turn affected gender relations in schools and in the VBE classrooms. The chapter therefore begins with the naming of boys and girls and their domestic tasks in the Nigerian society. It then moves inside the schools to show how they reinforced or challenged the gender identities which the students brought with them to their VBE classrooms. Section 6.2 discussed the naming of children, followed by their family activities and influences.

The sources of data for the chapter were school and class observations during which I took a keen interest on the VBE teachers' and students' views of gender in the schools and during their lessons, some of such views were explicit while others were naturalised and present in a more subtle fashion. Semi-structured interviews were also used to gather their perceptions of gender, domestic tasks and other aspects of family life. The data analysis involves all the 24 lessons observed and the transcripts of interviews were used to explore emerging themes using constant comparison method discussed early in chapter four.

### **6.2 The First Name of the VBE Students**

In the Nigerian cultures, the first name that parents give to boys usually differs from that given to girls because such names represent assumed masculine and feminine characteristics. Apart from those bearing foreign names, it is unlikely to

come across boys and girls in the Nigerian cultures bearing an identical first name because many Nigerian parents give their male children first names that culturally represent power, optimism, and self-actualisation while those of female children represent love, patience and beauty (Izugbara, 2004). This distinction in the first names of boys and girls was reviewed in the attendance registers of all the case study schools. As noted earlier, the students in the schools were from different ethnic groups; therefore their first names differed according to their ethnic origins. For example, among the *Ngas* people in Plateau State (north-central geopolitical zone) where the study was conducted, boys' first names in the daily attendance register included *Gokom* meaning 'strong man' and *Sengkak* which means 'a strong and determined man'. Again, some of the first names of *Mwaghavul* boys in the school attendance register were *Kokkaron* meaning 'now I have power to live on'; *Meershak* which means 'God has blessed my future generation' and *Lekneer* meaning 'I now live strong'. Furthermore, the first names of Hausa boys from the north-east and north-west geopolitical zones who were in the school attendance registers included *Babangida* meaning the 'the great man of the house'; *Takobi* which means 'I am a powerful man' and '*Maikarfi*' which means 'an extremely strong individual'. Also, some of the *Ibibio* boys' [in a the south-south geopolitical zone] first names found in the attendance register of the case study schools were *Otu-ekong* meaning 'a strong man in battle', and *Idorenyin* which means 'the man my hope is built on' while that of girls were *Imaobong* signifying 'the love of God' and *Ime* which means 'Patience'. Further, the first names of *Igbo* boys in the school attendance registers followed the same patriarchal beliefs as those of other ethnic groups. First names such as *Obiajulu* meaning 'my fear has calmed' and *Nwokedi* which means 'there is a man here' were contained in the school registers.

On the other hand, girls' first names in the school attendance registers represent the cultural impressions of the Nigerian people about femininity such as love, patience and beauty. The local *Hausa* first names given to girls found in the study school attendance registers included *Kauna* meaning 'love' and *Hankuri* which means 'patience'. There were also some *Igbo* girls in the registers and their first names included *Ndidi* also meaning 'patience', *Ogadinma* meaning 'it will soon be better' and *Anaelechi* which means 'I hope in God.' The implication of these names is that they boldly declare the nations' beliefs and the cultural expectations of the parents as well as indicate that boys and girls are separate people with different capabilities, potentials and constitutions. Thus, first names are used as an organising factor in the surveyed schools because the names of boys in the

attendance registers are written using blue or black biro pens whereas those of the girls are inscribed using red biros. What this means is that boys and girls are considered to be different people and this in turn promotes gender division in the education of boys and girls. The VBE students' perception of gender in terms of their first names indicates to the boys and girls that they are different from each other. The commerce and economics students tend to walk into their classrooms with the broadly similar notions about gender differences.

### 6.3 Early Socialisation Experiences

According to Lawson, Heaton and Brown (2007:141) "early socialisation may well account for the eventual choices and routes taken by girls and boys when they go to school." In the light of the above, the present study intends to find out whether or not home socialisation experiences may be one of the factors liable to affect classroom participation of VBE boys and girls in Commerce and Economics lessons.

In order to investigate this issue, the students were asked to talk about domestic tasks that parents usually assigned to them in their households. Their responses are summarized in the table below. Table 6.1 summarises all what the students said were their domestic tasks assigned to them.

**Table 6.1: Domestic tasks assigned to VBE boys and girls (Rural)**

<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
Finding fodders for domestic animals	Helping mothers to cook meals
Sweeping family compound	Helping mothers to serve meals
Cutting grass around family compound	Washing dishes and clothes
Helping to harvest palm fruits	Helping their mothers in petty trading
Tilling farmland for planting	Welcoming and entertaining guests
Producing bricks for constructing round huts	Taking care of young siblings
	Fetching water and firewood
	Cleaning rooms and making their beds
	Weeding grass on the farmland

**Source: Interview Notes taken down during field work**

In line with the responses of VBE boys and girls during my interviews with them, the under listed domestic tasks were assigned to those of them who lived in urban communities.



**Table 6.2: Domestic tasks assigned to VBE boys and girls (Urban Communities)**

Boys	Girls
Learning to operate computers	Helping mothers to cook and serve meals
Going out to play with friends	Helping to wash dishes and clothes
	Helping mothers to sell in kiosks/market stalls
	Welcoming and entertaining guests
	Helping to care for younger children
	Cleaning rooms and dressing beds
	Learning to become good wives and managers of the home front

**Source: Interview Notes taken down during field work**

From the analysis of data, it was found that the VBE students' gender identities were shaped by the domestic tasks assigned to them in their families. The VBE boys and girls said that duties were allocated according to gender lines. What this implies is that the allotted tasks have a series of role behaviours which generated a set of expectations for those carrying out the tasks. For example, parents and extended family members expected the VBE boys in this study to behave according to their roles as farmers, bricklayers and public workers. On the other hand, they expected the girls to behave as care-givers, petty business traders, entertainers and other forms of feminine roles. What the above implies is that girls were to learn how to become good wives and caring managers of the domestic activities while boys were to learn how to become managers of the public activities. This finding supports Eagly's (1987) understanding of social roles as an important concept in shaping children's social roles behaviour. Indeed, there is a difference between social role and gender identity. As could be deduced from the above discussion, social role refers to a set of activities or tasks assigned to people of a particular sex in line with the cultural practices of that particular society. For example, tables 6.1 and 6.2 above described domestic tasks assigned to boys and girls of the case study schools. Such tasks are the social roles of boys and girls in the Nigerian society. On the other hand, gender identity is one's concept of being a male or female, a fundamental part of the self-concept (Statt, 2003:68). This view was illustrated in the tables above through gender differentiated daily activities assigned to boys and girls involved in the study. As could be seen in my discussions so far, sex refers to male and female while gender refers to the sum total of lived experiences of people based on their social and cultural backgrounds and sexuality refers to what sex a person wishes to make love with. These three concepts are

interrelated but my discussion is mainly on gender in VBE classroom participation in SSS.

As could be deduced from the table 6.1 above, the Nigerian women and girls were not only expected to manage the domestic activities but also to engage in petty trading business in order to provide for their children, extended family members and their visitors. In this way, the roles of the Nigerian women are more onerous and complex than those of men. I argue that although girls had more domestic work assigned to them, such seemingly disadvantaged tasks tended to help to bring about radical changes in the ways VBE girls constructed their self-concept. For example, three VBE girls when asked to speculate on what they perceived to be the benefits of assigned duties at home stated as follows:

“Even though I’m ask to do many things at home like washing clothes, cooking and others, they make me know myself and how to work hard” (BSB)

“I like to do things like going out to sell for my mum because that makes me know business and my customers” (PSG).

“Though not easy at all, I know housework and trading help me learn biz and any other work” (TSG).

From the above interviews’ data, the VBE girls no longer fashioned their gender identity mainly in the domestic sphere but rather they now saw themselves as traders, workers and homemakers. Indeed petty trading business has long been a part of women’s roles in Nigeria. Therefore I argue that this tradition of petty trading business has given the Nigerian women a degree of independence and separation from the domestic work which historically, and to a degree contemporaneously, has not been available to some ‘Western’ women.

An examination of table 6.1 and 6.2 above also indicated that the assigned tasks in the family fitted VBE boys and girls to a particular gender identity. As noted above, the VBE girls said they were allotted duties of helping to cook and share meals, to welcome and entertain visitors as well as to buy and sell different items for their mothers. Consequently their gendered identities were shaped to such a degree that both their personal and social perspectives were affected by those duties and that in turn appears to affect their attitudes and behaviour towards classroom participation. I argue that because girls were socialised into their mothers’ petty business trading in many Nigerian families, that in itself provided them with the real-life experiences needed for the study of commerce and economics at the surveyed schools. In section 3.8 of my study, I explained the meaning of cultural capital pointing out that it refers to the dispositional knowledge and skills that parents instil

into their boys and girls through cultural participation in domestic work and how that helps them to take part effectively in class lessons and to attend to their school work with despatch. Indeed, as a result of the VBE girls' cultural capital derived from the petty business trading with their mothers, I felt that they were able to acquire educational capital with passion as they really liked to study commerce and economics and actually found them quite interesting. Such educational capital may ultimately feed into economic capital when they complete the senior secondary education with credit passes in their chosen subjects.

What is more, the VBE girls said their duties of welcoming, hosting and entertaining visitors, as well as making contacts with many customers during street vending, helped them to learn how best to communicate with people. What this means is that those activities gave the girls an edge in developing the ability to discuss more easily with teachers and other students during commerce and economics lessons than did the boys. This also implies that the VBE girls' assigned tasks were a relevant means of inculcating in them cultural capital (knowledge and skills) and discipline and a good attitude towards school work and classroom participation. Therefore, I maintain that the VBE girls learnt to become gendered during childhood socialisation and that in turn prepared them for effective classroom participation and other school work. I further argue that their early socialisation into their mothers' petty business trading provided them with opportunities to interact with the local business community during the selling of goods and this helped to instil in them an interest in and a love of business subjects. Normally, VBE girls interact with the business community as they move from one house to another meeting buyers and discussing with them about their commodity and their prices in an effort to sell to them. The girls said that such personal interactions with buyers and sellers in their immediate business community helped to sharpen their communication skills. This was brought to bear during classroom interactions in commerce and economics at the case study senior secondary schools.

#### **6.4 The VBE Students' Subjective Sense of Themselves**

The VBE students' subjective sense of themselves was also found to affect classroom participation of boys and girls in the Commerce and Economics lessons. In order to investigate this, I asked VBE boys and girls to describe how they see themselves and how they see the opposite sex. The responses of the students to this question across all the case study schools are summarized in the table below. Generally, all the boys and girls interviewed hold one or more of the same views strongly and none of them put forward any contrary opinions.

**Table 6.3: How VBE boys and girls see themselves and how they see the opposite sex**

How boys see themselves?	How boys see girls?	How girls see themselves?	How girls see boys?
Adventurous	Weaker vessel	Hardworking	Stubborn
Brave	Soft	Nice	Lazy
Tough	Not free	Attractive	Proud
Active	Submissive	Friendly	Good for play
Vigorous	Caring	Caring	Irresponsible
Free and independent	Humble	Intelligent	Easily influenced by friends
Strong	Not brave	Future mothers	Jokers
Risk-takers	Need protection	Submissive	Have a lot of time to loiter about
Outgoing	Dependent	Role Models for younger girls	Trouble makers
Hard	Future mothers	Fashionable	
Protectors of girls/women	Future wives	Disciplined	

**Source: Taken down during interviews during field work**

From table 6.3 above, I came to know that the VBE boys and girls had subjectively thought of themselves in terms of gendered stereotypes related to masculine or feminine tendencies. The students identified themselves with some qualities in their dominant cultures that were often associated with their own particular sex and thus fitted themselves into those identities. From the table above, there is a significant agreement within each gender on what constitutes the typical behaviours and qualities of VBE boys and girls. It was found that the VBE boys often associated being masculine with stereotypical attributes such as being adventurous, brave, tough, active, vigorous, strong, free and independent. They felt these were the ways they constructed their masculinity. In this study, the VBE boys displayed their masculinity through disobeying their teachers and being unwilling to join in the commerce and economics class discussions, even though not all them. Only a few of them usually took an active part in the lessons. The analysis of data showed that VBE boys who often participated in the lessons were those who sat by the walls near the front and middle rows and they were often abused by the boys at the back of the class, calling them names such as 'sissy' meaning boys who do not exhibit stereotypical masculine characteristics. They were called 'girls' because they were obedient to the teacher and took part in the lessons.

However, the VBE girls often constructed their gender through being compliant and this tended to enhance their participation in the lessons. From the

girls' standpoint, they saw themselves as hardworking, nice, attractive, friendly, careful, intelligent, disciplined, and role models for younger girls. By identifying themselves with these stereotypes, they subjectively thought of themselves in terms of becoming feminine. In agreement with the foregoing, Connell (2002:76) points out that being masculine or feminine is a matter of personal experience and it is something that involves the way we grow up, our family life experiences and sexual relationships as well as the way we present ourselves and see ourselves in everyday situations. Connell (ibid) further argues that becoming masculine or feminine 'is not a fixed state' but 'it is a becoming, a condition actively under construction' (Connell, 2002:4). Moreover, Simone de Beauvoir claims that "One is not born a woman, but rather, becomes one" (de Beauvoir, 1972:301). Therefore, becoming masculine or feminine involves socially constructing, producing, contesting and reproducing certain attributes that constitute everyday lived experiences. These lived experiences so constructed were brought to VBE classrooms and might help to facilitate or impede classroom participation of VBE boys and girls.

### **6.5 The VBE Students' Daily Schedules during Term and Holiday Times**

Having explained that the domestic tasks given to VBE boys and girls were one of the ways through which they learnt how to become gendered, such behaviours were brought to their commerce and economics classroom interactions. Now I consider the types of daily tasks allocated to VBE boys and girls during term-time and on holidays at the case study schools. According to those students, their average day usually began at 5 or 6 am and ended about 10 or 11 pm. Table 6.4 below provides an overview of VBE boys' and girls' time-tables during term time, while Table 6.5 shows their daily schedules during an average holiday time. The next Table 6.6 shows a gender analysis of the VBE classroom daily programme.

**Table 6.4 Gender Differentiated Daily Schedules during Term Time**

Time	Boys	Girls
5.00 – 6.30 am	Wake up and tidy up their room, sweep compound, clean toilet, and then have bath and put on school uniform	Wake up, tidy up their room and other rooms and assist mothers to prepare breakfast, then have bath and put on school uniform
6.30 – 7.00 am	Eat breakfast and leave for school	Help mothers serve meals, Eat breakfast and leave for school
7.00 – 7.15 am	Clean school toilets, sweep compound and pick up papers and leaves	Sweep classrooms, and dust desks, table and chalkboard; sweep offices and arrange things.
7.15 – 7.35 am	Queue up in boys' line; Head prefect leads students in School Assembly Hall in the absence of a teacher	Queue up in girls' line; Assistant head prefect stays close to girls to check how they behave in the Assembly hall
7.35 am – 1.40 pm	Time-keeper – a boy rings the school bell and students go to classes for roll-call and lessons	Girls go to classes for roll-call and lessons
1.40 – 5.00 pm	Return from School, eat lunch, and do a variety of things such as run errands for their fathers, play games, learn computing etc.	Return from school, eat lunch and do a variety of domestic tasks such as wash clothes and dishes, welcome and entertain guests, assist mothers in their petty trading businesses, etc.
5.00 – 7.00 pm	Back home to watch TV, Listen to Radio or Play music	Assist mothers to prepare supper, and serve meals
7.00 – 7.30 pm	Eat supper and rest	Eat supper and wash dishes
7.30 – 10.00 pm	Read Books and Do homework	Read Books and Do homework
10. 00 – 11.00 pm	Go to bed	Continue with homework

**Source: Interview Notes Taken during fieldwork**

**Table 6.5 Daily Schedules during Holidays**

Time	Boys	Girls
5 – 7 am	Wake up and sweep compound, clean toilet, brush mouth and then have bath	Wake up, assist mothers to prepare breakfast, attend to young ones, and then brush mouth and have bath
7 – 8 am	Eat breakfast and then dress up to face other day's activities	Help mothers to serve meal, eat breakfast, wash dishes and then put on dress
8 am – 1 pm	Urban: Play games or go to learn how to use computers; Rural: help fathers on farm, feed animals, or to run errands; but if free, play football	Wash clothes for parents and young ones, welcome and entertain visitors, help mothers in petty trading, and assist mothers to prepare lunch
1 pm – 5 pm	Eat lunch, rest, leave to carry out duties assigned by parents, but when free, go out to visit friends, play football	Eat lunch, wash dishes, care for younger ones, welcome and entertain guests, help mothers on the farm, and to trade
5 – 7 pm	Back home to watch videos, or TV, listen to music and to wait for supper	Help mothers to prepare for supper and serve meals
7 – 8 pm	Eat supper and rest or continue to watch TV/videos	Eat supper and then wash dishes
8 – 10 pm	Read books or continue with leisure	Read books or watch TV/videos
10 – 11 pm	Go to bed	Go to bed

**Source: Interview Notes - VBE Students' perceptions of domestic tasks**

A glance through the two tables above indicated that girls had more domestic work to do than boys. In the execution of those tasks, girls learned to work harder, collaborate and cooperate with their mothers or other extended family women. Indeed, the above-mentioned ways of learning are often associated with femininity. Moreover, such styles of learning are likely to enhance working efficiently in small groups and equip the girls with the skills of learning with others; listening to what others have to say and consequently adding positively to group discussions. Therefore, I acknowledged the effects that girls' activities of helping their mothers to trade, welcome, host and entertain visitors have on classroom interactions. Indeed girls' active participation in feminine roles in the family equipped them with cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1997) which in turn helped them to develop some of the people-oriented behaviours needed for classroom participation during VBE commerce and economics classroom discussions. I argue that the possession of such cultural capital further equips the girls with verbal skills which are defined by Bourdieu and Passeron (1997) as the mastering of and relation to language in the sense that it represents ways of speaking. This study intends to explore in later chapters whether or not the assigned domestic tasks help to equip girls with suitable collaborative styles of communication which tend to empower them to actively participate in commerce classroom discussions more than did the boys. The table below highlights the gender analysis of VBE classroom lessons for a day.

**Table 6.6 Gender Analysis of VBE Classroom Lessons for a Day**

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
Cleaning offices/classrooms	-	Girls
Sweeping/cleaning school compound	Boys	-
Lifting heavy furniture	Boys	-
Dusting the chalkboard	-	Girls
Time keeping between lessons	Boys	-
Leading morning assembly in the absence of teachers	Boys	-
Monitoring the class	Boys	
Welcoming/Entertaining visitors	-	Girls
Cleaning toilets	-	Girls
Fetching water	-	Girls

**Source: Field notes taken during class observations.**

A look at table 6.6 shows that socialisation at school was fashioned after the pattern of socialisation at home. Thus boys and girls were assigned duties similar to those of early socialisation. However, the girls had already acquired cultural capital which enabled them to support boys and other girls during VBE Commerce and Economics lessons. The girls said their possession of verbal skills came from their interactions with guests, customers and family members during meal sharing. For example, some girls said whenever a guest came to visit their parents; they would give such a guest a warm welcome and then made him/her sit comfortable in their seating room. They would then ask who in particular the guests would like to see by asking: Sir or Ma, please who do you want to see Mummy or Daddy? When the guest mentioned who he or she wanted to see, they would then go and inform such a person that a guest was waiting for him/her in the seating room. The VBE girls also said that they interacted with people at home during the preparation and sharing of meals to all the family members, extended family members and visitors. Again, they interacted with buyers during the selling of their mothers' petty business trading products. They concluded that that had constituted a great asset which they took on board during classroom interactions.

Having discussed on tasks assigned to boys and girls at home and in school which tended to shape their gender identities in ways which seemed to influence their school work, I will now highlight issues associated with other markers of gender such the school uniforms and social networks among the students which tended to affect their ideas about gender at the case study schools before taking up the discussion on ideas about gender that were held by VBE students and teachers.

## **6.6 Dressing at the Case Study Schools**

There was gender differentiation in clothing and hairstyles across all the case study schools. This was so because dressing in the Nigerian cultures is one marker that easily distinguishes men from women. Consequently, clothes are a cultural definition of sex since men and women in the Nigerian cultures are expected to put on the dress meant for their gender. In accord with this, Jackson and Scott (2002) said that "skirts and trousers are more than superficial dressing, Not only can they construct and sexualise girls, they can act as powerful signifiers of masculine and feminine ways of being" (p. 285). Furthermore, Wilson's (1987), cited in Connell (2002) said of the elegant study of fashion, 'Adorned in Dreams shows that women's and men's styles of dress not only symbolize gender difference, but are also a site of struggle over what men and women are allowed to do' (p. 66). Such a struggle is often so strong that when a man or a woman failed to put on the cultural clothes



meant for their genders they could be ridiculed or even regarded as abnormal. According to Adewole (1997:112), there is a variety of cultural clothing in Nigeria, depending on which ethnic group you come from. He (ibid) cited the following examples: the Fulani and Hausa men in the northern parts of the country like putting on the 'kaftan' which is a type of long loose shirt that go half-way down the thighs and are normally worn with a pair of trousers. Adewole (1997) went on to add that in the western part of Nigeria, Yoruba men like clothes such as the buba, fila, sokoto and agbada. He (ibid) described the following dressing styles as follows: "The buba is like the kaftan but the fila is a cap while the sokoto is a pair of trousers. The agbada is worn on special occasions by rich Nigerians because they are very expensive" (p. 120). For the Igbos and the Niger Delta people, men like to sport black velvet shirts with a lion's head design, or other fantastic designs which are often worn with trousers, together with hats and staffs (Adewole, 1997). However, cultural clothes for the Nigerian women include the buba, a lace blouse with wrappers, and the kaba. For example, the buba is a loose blouse that goes down half- way to the waist. The kaba is a kind of single piece dress and the gele is a head tie. These Nigerian cultural clothes were used by teachers and non-academic staff in all the case study schools. However, none of the schools used Nigerian cultural clothing as a school uniform for boys and girls. Instead they recommended shirts and trousers for boys while for girls, it was skirts and blouses. This type of school uniform came with the introduction of western education by the colonial masters and it has been in use since the inception of formal education in Nigeria. Because the school uniform tended to consist of shirts and trousers for boys and skirts and blouses for girls, for very many years, the Nigerian people felt that these clothes were meant for the school children in their cultures. It seems to me that the differentiation of the genders through school uniforms was less pronounced than is the case in relation to traditional dresses. This is because the main difference in schools was that boys wear trousers and girls wear skirts. I felt that this has something to do with marking the school off as a modern institution and thus suggests a complex relationship between gender, traditionalism and modernism.

On entering the VBE classrooms of the case study schools, it was noticeable that boys dressed in trousers and shirts while girls wore skirts and blouses and this was a clear evidence of gender typing, that is, treating boys and girls in accordance with the society's expectation of them because of their sex. Additionally, the girls in Mary Monk High School all had their hairs plaited using an identical style called the "police cap" while the boys' hair was all cut short. In the

same way, the boys' hair in Pascal High School was completely cut leaving little or no hair on their heads while the girls all had their hair plaited using the style known as the 'shuku' which involved parting the plaited hair from the front to the back of the head. Similarly, the girls' hair style in Bingo High School was known as 'all back' while the boys used similar haircut to those listed above. When I asked the General Prefect [male] of Timo High School to tell me why the boys had to shave their heads, this is what he told me: 'it makes us look manly and we don't waste time combing before coming to school'. The boys in the other schools, who cut their hair short, when asked to speculate on why they did so, explained that that style of haircut made them look smart in their school uniforms. Furthermore, when I asked the girls why they used such hair styles in their schools, the Assistant General Prefects who happened to be girls in all the case study schools told me that they changed their hair styles on weekly basis and all the girls had to comply with plaiting their hair using hairdressers or friends. They suggested that those different styles tended to make them look pretty in their school uniforms. The meaning attached to a uniform hair style is that it tended to be the key to some aspect of the Nigerian cultural beliefs about masculine boys and feminine girls, and this upholds the idea that short hair makes a boy while long hair makes a girl.

Consequently, hair worn in a distinguishing manner serves to indicate maleness and femaleness in the Nigerian culture. Although the senior prefects and the assistant senior prefect drew on the schools' gender regime earlier discussed in sections 3.6.4 and 5.3.4 to tell their students how to dress, the hair-style of boys and girls had two effects and these included time and social consequences. As for time, the boys who shaved their hair very short tended to use considerably less time, than the girls who spent a lot of time in plaiting and they were inclined to do this every week while the boys shaved once a month. The other outcome was the social aspect of hairdressing. Boys normally shaved themselves individually using an electric hair cut machine or safety razor while the girls required the company of one or more friends to assist them plait. During such social occasions, they normally helped to make their friends look attractive and become ideal girls.

## **6.7 The Students' Social Networks**

Social networks comprised friendships that the VBE boys and girls formed at the case study schools. On entry into the schools surveyed, gender was easily noticeable in the social relations of students during break times and during the time for games. The observation data showed that the social network of students largely reflected same-sex groupings. For example, during the interview, the VBE boys and

girls were asked to say whom they played with the most in their schools. Their responses showed that boys preferred to play with boys and girls with girls. For a greater understanding of their responses, I asked them why they liked to play with the same-sex rather than the other sex. The students claimed that they felt 'freer' with same-sex relationship than with cross-sex ones. Others said that the reason why they played with same-sex friends was because they liked to do similar things. The above responses have a number of implications. Firstly, the group that talked of being freer probably meant that with same-sex friends they could be more intimate than with the opposite sex. Secondly, those that were of the view that they did the same things appeared to say that they were friends because they could play or work together. In line with this, Eyre (1991:204) who carried out a study in grade 8 home economics classroom in USA on "Gender Relations in the Classroom: A Fresh Look at Coeducation" found that 'girls and boys segregated themselves into same-sex groups. Both of them gave the following reasons for this segregation: they said they were "more comfortable", "more confident" and "less embarrassed" with people of same-sex, and most of all, they wanted to be with their friends. A friend was someone they could talk to and relate to, and was also of the same-sex' (p. 204). This was one of the ways VBE boys and girls played out their gender identity in the case study schools.

I have been discussing that the perception and experience of masculinity and femininity that the VBE students brought into their commerce and economics class lessons were affected by a number of factors such as those discussed above. The next discussion now concerns ideas about gender held by the VBE students and teachers.

### **6.8 The VBE Students' Ideas about gender**

The VBE students did not understand the meaning of gender as they said that gender was not in any way related to any of the business subjects taught to them in school. Below is how most VBE students articulated this fact:

'Here I'm taught business studies; I don't think that is related to gender' (PSG, 21)

Another VBE boy from the same school noted that as follows:

'Of all the topics we've learnt in commerce and economics, I can't remember being taught about gender. So to me, that's not a problem' (PSB, 46).

Even without that understanding, the students claimed that gender was not a problem in their schools and in their VBE commerce and economics lessons

because they said as students, they were of equal worth in their classes. However, during my first and second school and class observations at the case study schools, I came to know that in practice there was a noticeable degree of gender difference in the ways students' constructed their gender identity at the case study schools and in the ways that they participated in the commerce and economics lessons but such differences were all taken for granted. This exemplified the ways in which gender, like other ideologies, works by naturalising itself as things are just the way they are and explained with reference to nature, custom, tradition, etc. Social role theory defamiliarises these processes and understandings of and within everyday life. Consequently, people often act in gendered ways while believing that gender is not relevant to them or not an issue for them. In this research project, I was keenly interested in how these processes and beliefs present themselves in the perceptions and actions of my research participants. In order to generate data on their gender identity, I conducted interviews with 32 students (made up of 16 boys and 16 girls) in the case study schools in order to gain an understanding of their notions of gender identity that they brought to the commerce and economics classroom interactions. According to Browne (2008) "Gender identity refers to how people see themselves, and others see them, in terms of their gender roles and biological sex – the meaning that being a man or a woman has to people" (p. 61). Giddens (1991) cited in Dunne (2009:8) said "identities are produced through the constant interplay of agency with social structure". In addition, Statt (2003:68) refers to it as 'one's concept of being a male or female, a fundamental concept of the self-concept'. As noted above, the section below explores the VBE students' gender identity formation and discusses the sub-theme below.

### **6.8.1 Whether being a boy or girl meant anything special to VBE Students**

During the interviews, I asked VBE boys and girls to tell me whether being a boy or a girl meant anything to them. The reply to the above question was as follows: Twelve (12) girls said that being a girl did make any difference while four girls said they did not know whether or not it made a difference. Similarly, fourteen out of the sixteen boys agreed that being a boy did make a difference while two boys said they did not know whether or not it made any difference. When I asked one economics boys from Bingo High School why he thought it meant something to him, he said:

'Em...to me, I think being a boy does make a difference because that is my God-given position' (BSB: 89).

In addition, one economics girls from the same school said,

'I think it does because I'm happy to be a pretty girl'. (BSG: 101).

When asked the same question, two economics students from Timo High School said:

'I think it does because the way I play is not the same as that of girls' (TSB: 147).

'I think being a girl makes a difference because the way I do my things' differs from the way boys do their things' (TSG: 139).

The extracts above suggest that the gender identities of the VBE boy and girl had been influenced by a strong positive sense of socialisation which seemed to have inculcated a positive self image into them. This is so because when a child is born, parents first ascertained the sex of the new born child whether it is a male or female. After the sex typing, parents' attitudes and interactions with the child tended to shape their gender identities towards culturally appropriate sexual behaviours, thus identifying the child to be in a particular gender category. In this study, the VBE boys and girls said they were indeed contented to be in their particular gender categories. This finding agrees with that of Okooboh (2000:69) who in his study of 'Gender Representation and performance in science and technology education in a Federal College of Education in Pankshin, Nigeria discovered that both boys and girls have a positive self-concept of themselves and were quite unwilling to exchange their sex. Similarly, I felt the VBE boys and girls in this study were quite satisfied with their self-image and this positively affected their social interactions in the classrooms. On the contrary, the finding of this study challenges the finding of Kamwendo (2010:436) who in her study of "Constructions of Malawian boys and girls on gender and achievement" found that "girls were encouraged to have a negative image of themselves by parents, teachers and peers". Even though her study was carried out in Malawi which is another African country different from my own country in terms of context and culture, yet perhaps one could query how realistic it is for parents in particular to encourage their girls to have a negative image of themselves. Notwithstanding the dominant cultures in her study context, I think that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, positive socialisation by parents and extended family members and wider society cultures appear to promote girls' self-image being constructed positively. For example, in my research project, boys felt their positions were God-given social positions while girls were happy to be who they were. Therefore, both girls and boys seem to demonstrate their gender identities in a positive way. In the comments above, one of the girls perceived herself as a pretty girl while the other said her ways of doing things differed from that of boys, meaning that they also brought the idea of gender differences to their classroom interactions.

Even though the data presented above seem to show homogeneous gender identities among VBE boys and girls, yet they differ from one person to another and from one contingency context to another. From the analysis of data also came evidence of gender-segregated and stereotypical-related knowledge of gender identity. The analysis of data revealed that such socio-culturally constructed gendered identities were often brought to the classroom interactions by VBE boys and girls. In accord with this, Millard (1997), cited in Kamwendo (2010: 431), said that 'boys and girls acquired conceptions of gender as well as a desire to exhibit differences very early in life and they brought these to school where they were confirmed or contested through contacts with others'. In this study, the VBE boys and girls experienced some combination of the two because they acquired ideas about gender from early socialisation at home and later in school. This was so because these ideas about gender were embedded in their everyday lived experiences. In agreement with this, Parr (2000: 32) argues that 'influences on people's identities in their early years are often more deeply embedded and central to their thinking than those experienced later in life'. Therefore, the VBE boys and girls usually acquired gender identity during early social interactions with parents and extended family members at home and also in the wider society but as they brought these to school classrooms, they were either confirmed or contested or some combination of the two.

The concept of gender identity was also used in this study to explore how VBE boys and girls became gendered. Indeed, I examine how gender identity formation impacted on VBE students' classroom participation in the lessons in terms of their relationship to VBE commerce and economics teachers and other VBE students, VBE boy-girl relationship at school, and the VBE students' subjective sense of themselves as well as home influences during socialisation experiences. The students' comments above showed that they brought to their commerce and economics classroom interactions, different types of gendered identities.

### **6.8.2 The Students' Relationship to Other People**

This is a link between students' gendered identities and the social aspect of classroom participation. The extracts presented in section 6.3 indicated that gender identity involves self-awareness, even though it sometimes flows from lack of self-awareness in that it is seen as natural and taken-for-granted. It has been argued that one of the ways that students acquire gender identity is through the process of interpellation (Althusser, 1971, cited in Woodward, 2000: 19). Interpellation refers to 'a process whereby boys and girls look at themselves and recognize that they

belong to a particular identity and think ‘that’s me’ (p. 19). Parr (2000) considers identity as the characteristics by which individuals and groups recognise themselves and are recognised by others; it is a sense of who they are and where they belong in society (p. 26). Social role practices help boys and girls become aware of themselves through the types of domestic tasks that they are assigned at home. Girls are often assigned many domestic tasks while boys are left to engage themselves in public activities. In this way, domestic tasks are associated with femininity while masculinity is associated with taking care of public places like keeping the surrounding of local streams neat and tidy, as well as keeping the town halls clean. Therefore, the ways that the VBE students constructed their gender identities impacted on their relationship to other people at school.

### **6.8.3 Emotional Relationship**

Another way that gender identity affected classroom participation of students in the VBE Commerce and Economics lessons was in the issue of boy – girl relationships. According to an economics girl in Pascal High School

‘Most boys don’t answer questions during lessons because they don’t want to make mistakes in front of their girl-friends’ (PSG).

When discussing the same issue, another Economics boy at Timo High School said:

‘I know some boys who fear asking or answering questions in class because they are afraid of giving wrong answers in the presence of their girl-friends’ (TSB)

This often happened in the case of a boy and a girl who become friends within the same subject class. Such a relationship tended to have certain implications for classroom participation because VBE girls who identified with VBE boys that do not often participate in class discussions would decline answering questions in the class to avoid making mistakes in the presence of their boyfriends and vice versa. This tended to reduce their chances to participate in the Commerce and Economics lessons. On the other hand, where VBE girls are in friendship with VBE boys who always participate in class discussions, that may tend to trigger their girl-friends to try to participate in class discussions. This is because friends tended to be supportive of one another. In the study, it was found that if the boys and girls who identified themselves as friends were brilliant and often participated in the lessons, they would continue to influence each other’s work positively, thus encouraging one another to participate in the lessons. On the other hand, if they were not brilliant and quick to join other students during class discussions, the implication would be that the two friends would become reluctant to participate in the lessons. These peer patterns appeared to apply to same gender friendships also

because the Nigerian people often say “Show me your friend and I will tell you whom you are”. This implies that two friends are somehow similar in some aspects of their character.

### **6.9 The VBE Teachers’ Perception of Gender**

The VBE teachers’ views on gender were more diverse than and not as clear-cut as those of the students. Three quarters of the teachers (75 per cent) interviewed felt that men were the heads of the households, whose responsibility it was to direct the running of the families and provide protection to their members. Such teachers also felt that women’s duty was to help by doing housework and be good wives to them. The remaining quarter (25 per cent) felt that the society was fast changing and men were no longer seen as the heads of the households as some families were governed by women. Thus, these teachers further said that domestic tasks were shared equally in their homes. What this implies is that men and women were expected to go out and work so that they could jointly provide the necessities of life for their households while domestic tasks would be shared by all in the family. As noted above, the majority of the VBE teachers said that women were expected to cook and feed their families, nurture and care for them when they are unwell and take the position of loving and humble wives. In other words, women were expected to construct their femininity through being ‘concerned with the welfare of all the people’ in their households and in that way perform their communal roles whereas men were to be concerned with the public sphere and thus perform agentic roles (Eagly, 1987:16). Based on the foregoing, I then asked the VBE teachers about their perceptions of assigned domestic tasks when they were students. In response, Miss Olu (not her real name) – a female Economics teacher in Bingo High School said this:

Well, as a girl my mother taught me to cook, and how to do other things such as welcoming and entertaining visitors, washing clothes, fetching water and firewood, selling of foodstuff to people, and to care for my juniors. In fact my mother taught me how to do a lot of domestic work because she wanted me to learn how to take care of my home in future.  
(BTF)

Another male Commerce teacher at Pascal high school had this to say,

As a boy, before I started secondary school I remembered my father taught me at home basic things such as sweeping our court yard, bush clearing, taking cattle out to field to feed them and how to farm. My father taught me these activities because he believed that as a boy; I should learn skills to support myself and them during their old age (PTM).



Furthermore, the male Economics teacher in Timo high school said something about what he used to do outside school and this was how he put it:

I remember that when I returned from school, I ate my food  
and went out to play football with my friends; although at times  
I played pool or computer games (TTM).

Reflecting on their personal lives, the VBE teachers thought that domestic tasks were shared among children based on gender lines. Therefore the VBE Commerce and Economics teachers held stereotyped views about gender division of labour which I intend to explore in chapters 7 and 8 whether or not such stereotyped views were transferred to their students during classroom teaching and learning. The observation data showed that the VBE teachers tended to reinforce the production of gendered identities during class lessons because they accepted the stereotypical roles of boys and girls. For example, boys were frequently appointed head prefects and girls as assistant head prefects. The teachers also consented to voluntary seating arrangements in their classrooms whereby girls sat with girls and boys with boys. They did not challenge it. Moreover, they accepted boys sitting at the back rows of the classrooms and girls occupying the front and middle rows without mixing them up for their educational and social development.

However, these teachers felt that gender was not an issue in their schools because their students were given equal treatment even though gender issues were rarely discussed at teacher's meetings. When asked about the assigned domestic tasks given to their students, the VBE teachers said that outside school, girls were assigned household tasks such as cooking, welcoming visitors, washing, petty trading, childcare, etc, whereas boys in villages were given domestic jobs such as sweeping the family compound and farming but boys in big towns were often left by parents to enjoy their leisure time. The implication of those assigned domestic chores was that girls socially interacted with their mothers and/or domestic assistants and that tended to help them to complete their assigned domestic work successfully. Normally, such interactions often reinforced girls' construction of femininity through the carrying out their assigned domestic work under conditions of physical proximity and where joint activities had to be more or less closely coordinated by adults. Indeed, it was through informal methods at home that girls interacted with their mothers verbally to carry out their types of domestic tasks. Therefore, I argue that during family socialisation in the Nigerian cultures, girls socially reinforced femininity when they interacted with their parents and/or domestic assistants. Such gendered experiences were often brought to the commerce and

economics classroom interactions and tended to help the girls to communicate with their teachers and their classmates.

As noted above, the VBE teachers said that parents who live in urban areas usually left their boys to go and play football or learn to play computer games. When further asked about their views concerning assigned domestic tasks to their students, this was what the female Economics teacher from Bingo High School said:

I know when they returned from school, their mothers ask the girls to help them wash the dishes people ate with when they were at school. That takes them a few minutes if plates are not many. When they finish that one, they will ask to do another one. When the girls complete some work in the house, their mothers will then ask them to go and help do street vending (BTF).

In addition, the male teacher who taught commerce in the same High School said that kitchen work was not for boys but for girls. This is because boys were expected to go out and play football and other games while their sisters carried out domestic tasks. This was how the teacher put it:

I know that when they came from school their work was to look for fodders for their father's sheep and goats. Once they finished doing that, they go out to play football with their friends; although some time I play volley ball, table tennis and pool. It is their sisters who do all other housework (BTM).

Thus both boys and girls brought into the Commerce and Economics classroom interactions, ideas about gender which appeared to enhance or impede their participation in the class lessons. The analysis of data showed that gender ideas which were brought by VBE boys and girls to their classroom interactions were conditioned by their own lived experiences, biological knowledge of gender and cultural limitations. This finding supports the work of Lawson (2007:153) who in his article on "Gender and Social Change" said that "identities, if and where established, will be conditioned by our experiences, fallible knowledge of situations, perceived possibilities, normative ideals, plans and constraints" (p. 153). In fact, such knowledge and experiences of gender tended to affect classroom participation during the lessons.

## **6.10 Summary**

This chapter discussed ideas about gender at the case study schools surveyed in terms of the segregation knowledge and experiences of gender that the teachers and their students brought to their VBE classrooms. In this way, gender segregation was visible in the schools in several forms: daily activities, uniforms, first

names and social networks, all of which reinforce the production of gendered identities in the students. The students also brought to the VBE classrooms, lived experiences from their differentiated domestic activities and from the wider societal culture. I argue that the VBE girls' cultural capital, derived from petty business trading with their mothers was brought to their VBE classrooms and exchanged for educational capital which in turn fed into economic capital. The next chapter discusses gender in the formal and informal curriculum of the case study schools and further indicates how gender was played out in the daily lives of VBE teachers and students.

## **Chapter 7: Gender Dimensions in the Curriculum of the Case Study Schools**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In chapter 6, I discussed the knowledge and experiences of gender that the VBE teachers and students brought to their Commerce which is learnt and produced through socialisation in the family, in the school and in the wider society. I also argued that through cultural participation in their mothers' petty and Economics classroom interactions and I argued that becoming gendered is a lived experience business trading, the VBE girls brought to their commerce and economics classes, cultural capital which they exchanged for educational capital and which latter on potentially fed into economic capital through the educational certificates they obtained at the completion of their studies. In this chapter, I outline and discuss gender dimensions in the informal and formal curriculum at the case study schools which is research question three. This discussion is based on data collected during class observations, document reviews and semi-structured interviews conducted in schools surveyed. The data analysis used constant comparison method to explore the emerging themes. Thus the emerging themes for the informal curriculum consisted of gendered school management processes and practices, gendered appointment and allocation of school duties, gendered utilisation of school space and gender violence. Here, I argue that there is a relationship between hidden curriculum and gender regime earlier explored in chapter five because the first is a vehicle that carries and supports the second. On the other hand, the emerging themes for the formal curriculum comprised gendered educational outcomes, gendered stereotyped curriculum contents and gender bias in commerce and economics textbooks. In section 7.2, I outline and discuss informal curriculum and in section 7.3, I discussed the formal curriculum.

### **7.2 Informal Curriculum**

The informal curriculum here refers to those aspects of the curriculum which are not official but implied. It is hidden because it is not official but implied within the daily school procedures and curriculum materials. It tends to exert a powerful influence on boys and girls through the communication of the values of teachers and of the school (Pollard, 2005: 175). According to Ryan and Cooper (2010: 126), 'schools teach a hidden or informal curriculum through which the classroom and school, as learning environments, socialise children to the values that are acceptable to the institution and society at large. The messages of the informal curriculum are normally conveyed indirectly and deal with attitudes, values, beliefs

and behaviours'. In line with the above, Dunne (2007:27) defines informal curriculum as "the traditions of practice of school life that structure the everyday." She points out that "these are the taken for granted, or the invisible/hidden aspects of schooling, that although not usually recorded in official documents, they are astonishingly uniform and have a deep influence on student identities" (p. 27). This definition helped me to make sense of my data because it sheds further light on informal curriculum and as a result help me to explore gender dimensions adequately on it in my study. Moreover, the analytical finding indicated that the hidden curriculum was found to perpetuate gender inequality between men and boys and women and girls across the schools surveyed. I present first gender issues in school management and school duties.

### 7.2.1 Gendered School Management Processes and Practices

The power relations in all the case-study schools were in favour of men who were in supervisory and management positions. For example, the management teams in all the schools surveyed consisted of one principal, two deputy principals: one for administration and the other for academic issues, and the director of studies. There were more males than females in the management teams in all the case-study schools, even though 3 out of 4 cases were headed by females. Table 7.1 below shows the gender profile of the school management teams.

**Table 7.1: School Management Teams by gender**

Management Staff	Timo High School		Mary Monk High School		Pascal High School		Bingo High School	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Principal		1		1		1	1	
Deputy Principal Administration	1		1		1			1
Deputy Principal Academics	1			1	1			1
Director of Studies	1		1		1		1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

Source: Field Notes taken during fieldwork

From the table above, the management teams in all the case-study schools consist of 10 males and 6 females and thus there was a strong male presence in the schools. This finding was consistent with other research studies that found that there was a dominance of male teachers in senior and management positions in schools (Dunne, 2006; Bakari, 2009). Generally, both the male and female teachers of Bingo

high school said they were happier to work under a male principal. When I asked them to explain why they thought so, the female economics teacher said:

“I don’t know but I think I prefer to work under a man” (BTF).

In the other three schools headed by female principals, some teachers felt they were happy to work under female principals but that they would be happier to work under a male principal. I then asked them to tell me the reason. In response, the female economics teacher in Mary Monk high school said:

“I’m afraid to say it but I like to work under a man” (MTF).

On the other hand, the male teacher in the same school said that he was happier and indeed would prefer to work under a female principal. Two female VBE teachers both said that they had a preference for male principals over the female principals whereas their male counterparts said they preferred to work under female principals. When I tried to dig deeper in order to gain more insight into their preference for male principals, they declined, saying that it was their personal view. Generally, the issue of female teachers preferring to work under a male principal and male teachers under female principals could derive from one of the following reasons: Firstly, for the female teachers, it is argued that it is a reflection of their domestic gender relations (Dunne, 2007). This is because in Nigerian cultures women tend to accept men as the ‘head’ whereas they perceive themselves as the ‘neck’ that carries the head (Tahir, 2004). What this implies is that the supportive role tended to be accepted by some Nigerian women as something ‘natural’ as they see their men as leaders. However, this traditional gender belief seems to be changing today because 3 out of 4 principals were women; although men still outnumbered women in the senior and management positions in the schools. Secondly, for the male teachers, it has been argued that the female principals lobby the support of male teachers in order to gain legitimacy (Dunne, 2007: 504). There was no evidence either for or against this in my study since the teachers declined to discuss the issue.

During my interviews with the principals, I asked them whether or not they preferred to work more with male than female deputies. Their response was gendered. This is because all the female principals said that they preferred to work with male than female deputies. Nevertheless, only the male principal in Bingo High school said he preferred to work more with female deputies. Indeed, the three female principals all had male deputies (administration) while the male principal had two female deputies (administration and academics). This leaves me in doubt on

whether or not gender identities were being reproduced in school management duties as six out sixteen jobs including three of the four top jobs were occupied by women. Moreover, some teachers prefer male to female principals but there were also some male teachers who for whatever reason prefer females. Generally, there was some evidence that some male teachers resisted the authority of female principals simply on the basis of gender. For example, in Mary Monk High school, the Commerce teacher told me that there were five male teachers there who did not submit their student examination scores to their principal. When the principal called them to submit their exams records, they declined to do so, thinking as men, 'there is nothing a woman can do to make them submit the scores to her'. After a prolonged period of persuasion, the principal had to report them to the Local Education Authority for disciplinary action to be taken against them. The commerce teacher said it was at that point that those teachers came and reluctantly submitted their examination scores to the principal.

Another example of teachers resisting the authority of the female principal was that of Timo High School. The economics teacher also told me that many teachers in their school did not prepare lesson plans before going to class to teach the students. When the principal discovered this, she cautioned every teacher to make sure that they prepared their lesson plans before going to teach. The teacher reported that more than half of the teachers resisted the authority of the principal and refused to plan their lessons before going to teach their students. As a result, the principal brought their professional misconduct to the attention of the Local Education Authority for disciplinary measures to be taken against them. It was then that such teachers started writing their lesson plans. When I asked them why male and female teachers often resisted the authority of female principals, they felt that cultural expectations and stereotypes influenced them to see men as leaders and women as subordinates. This finding was consistent with findings from Dunne (2007:504) and Bakari (2009: 250) who discovered that female heads of schools were often resisted by both male and female teachers who felt it was natural for men to lead, which they argued was a mirror of their domestic gender relations.

It was also observed that one of the key ways that the majority of the boys in all the case-study schools tended to demonstrate their masculinity was through resisting the authority of all their teachers but more especially that of the female teachers. For example, in Bingo High School, the female economics teacher said that during her duty week, she apportioned some forms of punishment to many boys and girls who violated different school rules. She observed that the girls obediently

accepted and carried out the punishment allocated to them and thus playing out their femininity. On the other hand, the boys blatantly refused to accept or carry out their punishment. The female economics teacher in Mary Monk High School also reported that a group of boys thought they could show that they are boys through their refusal to accept punishment from her. The two female teachers said that they had to report those stubborn boys to the male teachers in charge of the disciplinary committees in their schools. When they were asked why they had refused to accept the punishment assigned to them by their female teachers, they all said that they preferred to be punished by men like themselves and not by women. The female teachers told me that when they learnt about that, they felt that their boys did not give them the same respect that they gave to their male counterparts. Consequently, they felt they were working in volatile environments that demonstrated that even their lessons were not being taken seriously by some of the boys in their classes. Yet, the school authorities did not take any action to challenge and rectify the sexist behaviour of the male teachers and students. Therefore the female teachers were not supported by the school authorities concerned. This finding supports that of Dunne (2007) who found that female teachers in some schools in Ghana and Botswana were not accorded the same authority or respect as male teachers by their boys. Even though, this study was not carried out in Nigeria, the current study shows that similar situations appear to prevail in my country.

There were more female than male teachers and students in urban Timo and Mary Monk High Schools. When I asked the Principals about this, almost all attributed it to factors external to the schools such as the husbands of the female teachers being workers in government organisations within the cities. Because of the need to keep husbands and wives closer, wives of male workers who were teachers were recruited by government as junior teachers at very low salaries and posted to some urban schools. Therefore, there were pay gaps in the recruitment of male and female teachers with most male teachers being paid twice as high as their female counterparts even though they had similar educational qualifications and years of experience. Although increasing numbers of women were serving as school principals in the case-study schools, particularly in the two urban schools and one in the rural schools, it was overwhelmingly men who controlled the policy-making bodies responsible for overseeing what happened in the Nigerian senior secondary schools. Thus, many female teachers lacked equal opportunities to obtain senior



management positions, and this resulted in gender inequities among women and men.

As I discussed in chapter five of this thesis, the school management tended to perpetuate the gender division of labour through work specialisation among teachers and through the types of roles assigned to male and female teachers (Connell, 1996). For example, the male commerce and economics teachers in all the case-study schools said their principals often give them duties that involved the exertion of physical energy, such as those of sporting activities, managing of school land, and disciplinary matters. In contrast, the female economics teachers in the schools surveyed said their principals were inclined to assign them to roles such as the supervision of girls' cleaning and making arrangements for entertainment during school festivities as well as welcoming and entertaining guests who paid visits to their schools. Moreover, there was a concentration of female teachers in home economics, English language, literature, Christian religious knowledge, and other arts subjects while male teachers dominated the teaching of mathematics, sciences and vocational-technical subjects. I argue here that this gendered subject teaching is likely to be at least in part a product of the subjects taken in senior secondary school. However, in a few of the case-study schools, men taught some arts courses while women taught mathematics and some science subjects. The table below shows the distribution of teachers by subject area and gender at all the case-study schools.

**7.2: The Distribution of Teachers by Subject Area and Gender**

Subjects	Timo		Mary Monk		Pascal		Bingo	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Mathematics	4	0	5	0	2	2	4	0
English Lang.	1	4	1	3	2	3	0	3
Nigerian Lang.	0	3	0	2	0	2	0	2
H/Economics	0	4	0	4	0	2	0	2
Chemistry	0	1	2	0	2	0	2	0
Physics	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	0
Biology	0	3	0	2	1	0	2	0
Literature	0	3	0	4	1	1	0	1
Music	0	2	1	2	2	0	0	1
Government	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
Commerce	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Economics	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Woodwork	2	0	2	0	1	0	1	0
Electronics	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0
Agriculture	1	3	0	2	1	1	0	2
CRK	0	2	0	3	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>

**Source: Obtained From the Principals during fieldwork**

With respect to the VBE teachers, all the Commerce teachers were men while in economics, there were two male and two female teachers. Given the fact that Commerce was predominantly taken by girls in the case study schools, it is quite surprising that all the Commerce teachers were male teachers because the data above showed that there was gendered work specialisation among VBE teachers, yet with respect to Commerce teachers, this was different. In all the case-study schools, male teachers were over-represented in the mathematics, sciences and technical subjects whereas female teachers outnumbered men in subjects such as English language, home economics, and other arts subjects. This finding agrees with that of Dunne (2007: 27) who discovered that 'male teachers were over-represented in the sciences and females in languages'. These roles tend to reinforce the traditional gender roles in Nigerian cultures with respect to men and

women. At this juncture, I will now turn to the appointment of school prefects and the allocation of duties to them in order to see whether or not this was likely to reinforce the gender division of labour.

### **7.2.2 Gender in the Appointment of School Prefects and Allocation of School duties**

The allocation of general school duties was found to be gender-specific in all the case-study schools. According to the VBE teachers that I interviewed, these schools often appointed school prefects to ensure the full participation of all their students in school duties. In order to have new school prefects to replace those graduating, the VBE teachers said that the outgoing senior prefect was usually asked to liaise with other school prefects to nominate well-behaved students to replace them when they left. The list of such nominated students was often submitted to the Academic Vice-Principal who then set up a staff committee to interview and screen the nominees following the criteria set by the schools. In all four schools, equal numbers of boys and girls were appointed yearly to oversee certain school duties.

In all the case-study schools, the posts of senior prefect were for boys while that of the assistant senior prefect were for girls. Similarly, the posts of the labour, games and health prefects were occupied by boys whereas their assistants were all girls. Again, boys were appointed as time-keepers, that is, to ring the school bell at important moments such as between lessons, in all the case-study schools. Moreover, the assistant time-keepers were boys. Indeed, girls were not appointed to perform such duties in any of the schools. In terms of authority, male prefects had more than the female prefects in all the schools surveyed. Further, male prefects were appointed to perform high-status school duties and usually took the lead in joint duties where the senior prefect and the assistant are expected to work hand-in-hand. Generally, in all the case-study schools, male prefects had authority over both boys and girls whereas female prefects had authority over and responsibility for girls only. The commerce and economics teachers that I interviewed said the reason for this curb on the authority of female prefects was that they often encountered problems when they tried to control boys, especially older ones.

During the supervision of school duties, female prefects were mainly to ensure that girls performed them well while male prefects were to make sure that boys, and sometimes girls too, carried them out satisfactorily. The duties normally given to boys usually differed from those given to girls in all of the case-study schools. For example, boys were responsible for heavier jobs such as cutting grass,

pruning tree branches, cutting down trees, weeding school paths, picking up paper around the school premises as well as cleaning windows. On the other hand, girls were responsible for indoor tasks such as sweeping offices and classrooms, cleaning desks and benches, office tables and seats, teachers' seats and tables, cleaning the chalkboards and the arrangement of things in both the offices and classrooms. In addition, the girls had the responsibility for cleaning the school toilets and for fetching water. These gendered duties allocated to girls in some respects mirrored the domestic duties described in chapter 6. The finding above is consistent with that of (Dunne, 2007:505) which revealed that schools tended to involve students in gender-specific duties such as those discussed above. Indeed, the performance of those duties by boys and girls tended to be vital to the active reproduction of their own gendered identities.

In addition to school prefects, the VBE Commerce teacher in Timo High School told me that form-masters normally appointed the class prefect and the assistant for different subjects. Here good class prefects were those who helped to maintain class discipline in the absence of the subject teacher, and who made sure that assignments meant for their class students were given to them. Such class prefects often made sure that the homework exercise books were collected at due dates and put on the tables of the teachers in the staff room and they would also ensure that the cleaning of the classroom was performed on a daily basis. The data collected from the VBE classrooms of the four case-study schools showed that the commerce class prefects and their assistants were all girls; while the economics class prefects were boys and their assistants were girls. At VBE subject level, the class prefects indicated a clear gender bias in favour of girls and an under-representation of boys. The total number of class prefects was 16. 12 of them were girls while only 4 were boys. The reason for the predominance of girls here was because the commerce students were overwhelmingly girls with only very few boys studying the subject. This explained why 8 girls were appointed class prefects and their assistants for the commerce classes. On the other hand, the economics students comprised both boys and girls. This explained why 4 boys were appointed as class prefects and 4 girls their assistants. The class prefects worked hand-in-hand with the school prefects while they both worked under the supervision of the teachers to satisfy both the students and the teachers.

### **7.2.3 Gendered Utilisation of School Space**

The utilization of formal and informal school spaces in all the case-study schools was observed to be affected by gender segregation. For example, when the

students queued up in the morning in school assembly halls, boys and girls were required to line up separately. Again during break time, I observed that boys tended to play with other boys using the larger central football fields whereas the girls played with other girls in small groups on school footpaths and on other smaller fields. Similarly in the classrooms, boys and girls sat separately and therefore there was persistent gender segregation in all the case-study schools. As a matter of fact, the girls tended to sit together in the front and middle rows while the boys often sat at the back of the classes.



**Source: Picture Taken during Classroom Observation in Timo High School**

This pattern was observed in all the case-study schools and in both the Commerce and Economics lessons. However, the results (girls front, boys back) were the same regardless of the dominant group. I argue that one interpretation of this might be that rather than a dominant group imposing space utilisation on a subordinate group, there was an implicit 'agreement', perhaps arising from gender identities that girls sit at the front and boys at the back of the class just as could be seen in the picture above. Nevertheless, the teachers seemed to do nothing about these voluntary seating arrangements in all the schools surveyed. Indeed, the students chose where to sit and used this to establish largely gender exclusive groups. The case study data given here relates specifically to my findings and analysis in relation to my theoretical frameworks of both gender regime and cultural capital theories which helped me to understand the advantages which VBE girls

gained from cultural participation in their mothers' petty trading businesses and how that tended to affect their classroom seating arrangement and their participation in the lessons.

This was also the case in all the commerce classes of the case-study schools because they (girls) greatly outnumbered the boys who studied the subject. Indeed, all the commerce and economics students were actively involved in segregating themselves from each other by gender and if their teachers appeared to intervene to make changes to the seating arrangements during a lesson, immediately after that lesson, all the students returned to their former places. This finding agrees with that of Dillon (1982) who in his studies of "male and female similarities in class participation" discovered that there was explicit gender segregation among students in the use of formal and informal spaces at schools. Thus, the seating arrangements were consistent in all the VBE commerce and economics classrooms. In all of the rural secondary schools, boys sat with boys and girls with girls. When questioned why they did so, one economics boy from Timo High school that I spoke with told me 'I do well in class when I sit close to my friends'. Even in the urban high schools, girls sat with girls and boys with boys. When I asked why they sat like that, the female economics teacher from Mary Monk High School said 'Because some boys seize that chance to misbehave'. This means that boys take pleasure in sitting at the back so that they can engage in off-task behaviour as well as escape from joining in the class discussions. When I asked about the girls opting to sit in the front and middle rows, the teacher said that girls chose to sit there because they were obedient and cooperative and were usually keen on participating in discussions. As a result of these seating arrangements, during my interviews, I encouraged them to describe how their sitting with friends helped them cope with class and school work. In response to this question, one boy and one girl from Timo High School had this to say,

'I play with them all the time and that's makes me happy here' (TSB).

I discuss with my friends any time. When there is a problem, we solve it together' (TSG)

One male economics students from Mary Monk High School, when asked to suggest what helps them to remain friends at school, had this to say:

'Because they like to do the same thing I like to do' (MSB).

Indeed, in the VBE commerce and economics classrooms, the girls sat in front and middle rows, which were closest to the teacher, while the boys sat at the

back, far from the teacher. As noted above, the seats in these classrooms were arranged in rows and columns, typifying a traditional classroom setting. In an effort to gain understanding of why girls were inclined to sit in the front and middle rows and boys at the back, I asked the girls to explain that preference. In response, an economics girl from Bingo high school had this to say:

'I like the front because it is closer to the teacher so I can see well and take part in what goes on there' (BSG).

On the other hand, this is how an economics boy from Pascal High School answered the question.

I don't know, but I like sitting at the back because I don't want to get into trouble with any girls. Neither do I want to be affected by girl things (PSB).

The VBE boys advanced some reasons for sitting in the back rows. They included the following: they said they did not want to quarrel with any girls. Again, they did not want other people to accuse them of befriending the girls. Moreover, the third reason for sitting separated from the girls was because they would not like their trousers to be stained with blood during menstruation period. The fourth reason was that of their height. For example, boys from other high schools said that their heights would block girls from seeing the chalkboard if they sat in the front rows.

However, when I asked girls why they preferred sitting with other girls, they said that they were more comfortable, more relaxed, and more confident with the same sex and more importantly they like sitting with their friends. This finding was in agreement with that of Eyre (1991:204) who conducted a study on gender relations in the classroom and found out that boys and girls segregated themselves into same-sex groups but when asked why, they said that they were more comfortable, more confident and less embarrassed with people of the same sex, and that most of all, they wanted to be with their friends. Indeed, my observation revealed that the few boys who usually joined in the class lessons tended to sit at the side of the class and were often called terrible names by the boys in the back row. According to Pellegrini and Blatchford (2000), 'there is a connection between students' choice of seat and feeling about school, studying and their capacity for success' (p. 93). This was clearly visible in the case-study schools because girls liked the front rows while boys preferred the back rows. The achievement data discussed later in this chapter indicated that girls obtained a better result in both Commerce and Economics in their final exams than boys.

This seating position affected their attitudes and behaviours towards classroom participation. The girls in the VBE classrooms said that they chose the front and middle rows in order to enable them to participate more during class discussions while the boys stated that they chose to sit at the back in order to be able to concentrate and work independently. However, it has been argued that the students who sat closest to the teacher, in what might be called the “action zone” (Arends, 1994:81), usually participated much more in the learning activity than those seated at the back of the classroom or outside the action zone. Working in the context of classroom activities and how that affected participation rates of students in the USA, Arends (1994:81) pointed out that students who were seated in the front and middle of the class were the ones the ‘teachers talked to and questioned; they responded and also asked questions and contributed to discussions while the other students were less likely to be actively engaged in the learning’. Arend’s views were quite relevant to the current study because of my interest in class seating position and students’ participation in commerce and economics lessons. According to (Streitmatter, 1994) the significant issue about seating arrangements is how mobile the teacher is and how stationary the students are. Regardless of where the students are seated, if the teacher interacts equally from all points in the classroom, then the negative effect of the action zone could be removed (Streitmatter, 1994:100). In this study, the VBE teachers were mainly static and remained at the front of the room as they did not interact equally with boys and girls from all points in the classrooms during their lessons.

In addition, ‘if the students use their seats for activities that do not require interaction with the teacher and are mobile throughout the classroom for their learning interactions, the action zone is dismantled’ (Arends, 1994, in Streitmatter, 1994:100). Indeed, I observed that the students were also mainly static. The point is then that with little or no movement from VBE teachers and students, the action zone remained intact throughout the lessons that I observed. However, there are significant implications for gender equity within the context of the seating of students because it has been argued that students who were seated outside the action zone tended to be passive and were less likely to participate in classroom interactions like the rest of the students who occupied the action zone, (Streitmatter, 1994:101). Additionally, it has further been suggested that boys who are more comfortable as quiet observers rather than active participants may seat themselves, when given the chance, outside of the action zone (Streitmatter, 1994:101). Although the students perhaps do not articulate the term *action zone* or think through the issues attendant



to it, they certainly can and do easily determine where the teacher is likely to look for answers and activity (ibid). They quickly learn where to sit to avoid this, if they are so inclined (Streitmatter, 1994:101). In a classroom setting where the content is associated with one gender or where the teacher has established a pattern of interacting with one gender more often than the other, students may consciously or unconsciously seat themselves such that they participate more or less (Streitmatter, 1994: 101).

In addition, during preparatory class observations when unsystematically I observed students' activities after their lessons, I came to realise that when students deemed it necessary to meet after the lessons in order to complete any learning tasks such as assignments and homework; girls were seen collaborating together and supporting one another while the boys were found working independently. The implication of this is that girls display their femininity through cooperation with other girls and in this way to communicate better and participate in class discussion than the boys who are inclined to display their masculinity through working independently and individually.

By referring to the Commerce and Economics results of the WASSCE 2007 national examinations in which girls outperformed the boys, the VBE teachers associated the former with better academic performance and thus claimed that their seating positions in class helped them to participate more in class discussions. As noted earlier, the teachers felt that the main reason why some boys were prone to sit at the back of the class was that they had greater opportunities for misbehaviour, as pointed out by Okooboh (2000:50). It appeared the VBE teachers did little or nothing about the seating positions and during the interviews when I asked them about it, they said that whenever they intervened and mixed up the boys and girls during their lessons, the students usually returned to sit with their friends after such lessons.

The implication of the above seating arrangements for boys and girls in all four case-study schools was that they preferred same-sex friendship to cross-sex ones in their voluntary seating arrangements. Consequently, I argue that girls who sat together with other girls in the front rows were apt to demonstrate and construct their femininity during class discussions by being obedient and loyal to their teachers and the school. I further argue that girls by gathering together in the front and middle rows actually demonstrated their dominance of the commerce and economics classes. They achieved this through a caring connection among themselves which helped them to work together to solve their problems. However,

most boys' same-sex classroom relationships appeared to be different from those of girls because they tended to rebel against the teachers and school rules and regulations in an attempt to redefine their masculinity through disruptive and less on-task behaviours. This implies that boys' same-sex classroom network seemed to deflect other boys' attention from the teachers and their lessons. This tended to affect boys' classroom participation negatively as well as reduce their chances of contributing verbally to the class discussion. Moreover, boys' same-sex groups were inclined to promote violence against girls and academic boys through ridiculing them and through verbal abuse. The next section examines gender violence as observed in the case-study schools.

#### **7.2.4 Gender Violence**

Both inside and outside the VBE classrooms of all the case-study schools, violence plays a part in how gender is produced daily as a relation to others. Bullying and verbal abuse by students as well as corporal punishments by teachers were observed in the four schools surveyed. For example, the male economics teacher in Pascal High school beat boys who reported to his lessons late while the female economics teacher in Bingo High School applied verbal abuse as her punishment for late-comers to her class. Furthermore, in Timo and Mary Monk High Schools, male teachers were seen using sticks to cane boys on their buttocks while they beat girls on the palms of their hands. Boys said they preferred beating to verbal abuse from the female teacher as they claimed that censure was more painful to them than beating. Moreover, a group of boys in the commerce and economics classrooms persecuted the girls by name-calling and other forms of verbal abuse. In the interviews, I came across one girl, Idongesit, who complained that some boys in her commerce and economics classes were bullying her, by continually calling her ugly names because she used to seek help from her commerce teacher during lessons. When I suggested that she should complain to her commerce teacher and to her head of department, she told me that she had already complained on a number of occasions, and that the boys had been disciplined but in spite this, the bullying continued. Therefore, I had to report Idongesit's complaint of on-going bullying to her head of department. Even though I felt a bit uneasy raising 'problems' and apparently prying into the affairs of the school that had done me a favour by giving me permission to carry out my study, I felt obliged to report Idongesit's grievance to her head of department. His response reveals the complexity of these issues, as he pointed out that contrary to Idongesit's claim about bullying; he had not received any previous complaints from her.

Nevertheless, he said he was happy I had told him, and said that he would make additional investigations.

### **7.3 Formal Curriculum**

According to Ryan and Cooper, (2010: 125) the formal curriculum refers to 'the planned content and objectives of language arts, mathematics, science, and all other subject areas available to students'. Therefore, for Nigerian senior secondary schools it consists of the following core subjects:

1. English Language,
2. One Nigerian Language: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba
3. Mathematics,
4. One of the following alternative subjects: Physics, Chemistry, Biology,
5. One of Literature in English, History or Geography,
6. Agricultural Science or a Vocational Subject (FGN, 2002 Revised, See chapter 2).

In addition to the core subjects, all the students were expected to choose other courses commonly referred to as 'electives' from those listed below. These included Commerce, Economics, Book-keeping, Typewriting, Shorthand, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Additional Mathematics, History, English Literature, Geography, Agricultural Science, Home Economics, Bible Knowledge, Islamic Studies, Metal-work, Electronics, Technical Drawing, Woodwork, Auto-mechanics, Music, Art, French, Physical Education, Health Science, Government, etc (FGN, 2002 revised). Generally, all of these courses are not offered in every school. Concerning these electives, the Education policy document defines them as 'non-compulsory subjects' and therefore it gives senior secondary students freedom to select any three, depending on the choice of career, up to the end of senior secondary class two when they can drop one of the elective subjects out of the nine in the last year of the senior secondary school course (FGN, 2002 revised).

#### **7.3.1 Educational Outcomes**

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2002 revised) states that the core subjects are the basic subjects that enable students to offer science or arts in their University Education. The implication of this is that the six core courses constitute the academic subjects which all boys and girls were given the opportunity to study, in addition to the electives or other career courses that they are allowed to choose. Generally, one of the key areas of emphasis in formal curriculum research is the issue of the educational outcome. For example, Tables 7.3 and 7.4 below show the

number of boys and girls who enrolled for commerce and economics between 2005 and 2010 in Nigeria.

**Table 7.3: The number of boys and girls who took Commerce Exams between 2005 – 2010**

<b>VBE Commerce</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Total Entries</b>	<b>No. of Boys</b>	<b>Boys %</b>	<b>No. of Girls</b>	<b>Girls %</b>
Commerce	2005	268,430	62,735	23.4	205,695	76.6
Commerce	2006	457,538	147,121	32.2	310,414	67.8
Commerce	2007	465,110	130,063	27.9	335,019	72.1
Commerce	2008	467,500	149,201	31.9	318,299	68.1
Commerce	2009	476,945	111,704	23.4	365,241	76.6
Commerce	2010	480,900	125,366	26.1	355,534	73.9

**WASSCE Statistics of Entries for VBE Commerce 2005 – 2010**

**Table 7.4: The number of boys and girls who took Economics Exams between 2005 - 2010**

<b>VBE Economics</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Entries</b>	<b>No. of Boys</b>	<b>Boys %</b>	<b>No. of Girls</b>	<b>Girls %</b>
Economics	2005	639,310	324,900	50.8	314,410	49.2
Economics	2006	992,800	508,131	51.2	487,669	48.8
Economics	2007	908,706	469,205	51.6	439,501	48.4
Economics	2008	996,254	504,200	50.6	492,054	49.4
Economics	2009	997,390	545,291	54.7	452,099	45.3
Economics	2010	1,100,156	560,104	50.9	540,052	49.1

**WASSCE Statistics of Entries for VBE Economics 2005 - 2010**

The tables above show the number of boys and girls who were recruited for VBE commerce and economics in the international Examinations between the years 2005 and 2010. From the table, it can be seen that more girls than boys were enlisted for commerce while slightly more boys than girls were enrolled for economics in the examinations. Indeed, far more students take Economics than Commerce. In addition, considerably more girls take Economics than take Commerce. The same situation was reflected in the WASSCE 2007 examination entries in the four case-study schools, which will be dealt with shortly. Moreover, in other subjects like Biology and Physics, gender stereotyped differences were also observed at the national level. For example, in 2007, 187,986 boys entered Physics

in the senior secondary international examinations compared with 23,701 girls. However, the situation was different in relation to Biology where almost equal numbers of boys and girls studied the subject.

The VBE curriculum contents appeared to offer gendered academic knowledge and employable vocational-technical skills to the VBE students. In order to find out how these boys and girls actually performed in their examinations, I asked the VBE commerce and economics teachers in the four case-study schools to show me the past WASSCE National examination results of the above-mentioned subjects. As a response to my request, the latest examination results of 2007 in the two subjects were produced. A closer look at the results showed that girls outperformed boys in the VBE commerce and economics examinations. The results are given in the tables below:

**Table 7.5: VBE Commerce Result of WASSCE 2007 in the Four Case-Study Schools**

Schools	No. of Entries	No. Of Boys	No. of Girls	Credits M%	Credits F%	Passes M%	Passes F%	Fail M%	Fail F%	Absent M%	Absent F%
<i>Timo</i>	15	2	13	7	60	7	20	0	6	0	0
<i>Mary M.</i>	35	10	25	9	40	14	29	3	3	2	0
<i>Pascal</i>	14	3	11	0	43	14	36	7	0	0	0
<i>Bingo</i>	18	7	11	6	28	28	33	0	0	5	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: 2007 WASSCE Exam Scores copied and submitted to me by the Vice Principal (Academic) of these schools.

**Table 7.6: VBE Economics Result of WASSCE 2007 in the Four Case-Study Schools**

Schools	No. of Entries	No. of Males	No. of Females	Credits M%	Credits F%	Passes M%	Passes F%	Failed M%	Failed F%	Absents M%	Absent F%
<i>Timo</i>	60	27	33	17	28	18	23	9	3	2	0
<i>Mary M.</i>	65	26	39	12	22	20	30	5	5	3	3
<i>Pascal</i>	58	38	20	17	19	36	16	10	0	0	2
<i>Bingo</i>	61	40	21	13	16	43	13	5	5	5	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

Source: 2007 WASSCE Economics Exams Scores copied and submitted to me by the Vice-Principal (Academic) of these schools.

From the above exam results, the total number of boys and girls who took the 2007 Commerce examination was 82 in all the schools surveyed. Out of these; 73 percent were girls while boys were 27 percent. From the table, it is clear that girls obtained credits in Commerce between 28 and 60 percent while that of boys were between 6 and 9 percent. Consequently, more girls than boys obtained credit in Commerce Exams 2007. Again, the number of passes obtained by girls was more than that of boys. For example, the percentage passes for girls range between 20 and 36 percent while that of boys range between 7 and 28 percent. Furthermore, slightly more boys than girls failed Commerce Exams and more boys than girls were absent during the Exams. Moreover, a careful look at the performance in the Economics Exams (Table 7.6) showed that girls obtained more credits than boys. For example, their credit percentage range between 16 and 28 percent while that of boys range between 12 and 17 percent. However, boys obtained more passes than girls in Pascal and Bingo High Schools while girls had more passes than boys in Timo and Mary Monk High Schools in the 2007 Economics Exams. From the table, it was clear that more boys than girls failed the Economics Exams too. The finding here was that girls outperformed boys in both Commerce and Economics in the WASSCE International examinations.

Gender stereotyped differences were observed in the choice of Commerce and Economics by boys and girls. For example, the data on the gender demographic showed that girls far outnumbered boys in Commerce classes. This appeared to suggest that boys were inclined to associate Commerce with femininity and thus felt that the subject was more suitable for girls than for them. However, girls felt that the Commerce contents areas were appropriate for both genders. What this means is that both boys and girls could benefit from preparation for commercial occupations because both men and women are needed in the world of commercial activities and not just women. In addition, as partly reflected in the demography of the schools in chapter 5, girls outnumbered boys in the Economics classes of the urban Timo and Mary Monk High Schools whereas there were more boys than girls in the rural Pascal and Bingo high schools. The implication was that parental influences affected the education of their children and, in turn, the number of boys and girls sent to school. For instance, urban parents normally sent both boys and girls to school but the reason why there were more girls than boys in urban schools was because some boys decided to take up menial jobs while others hanged around the streets with their friends and thus refused to go to school. However, rural parents in Nigeria seem to favour boys over girls because of son preference.

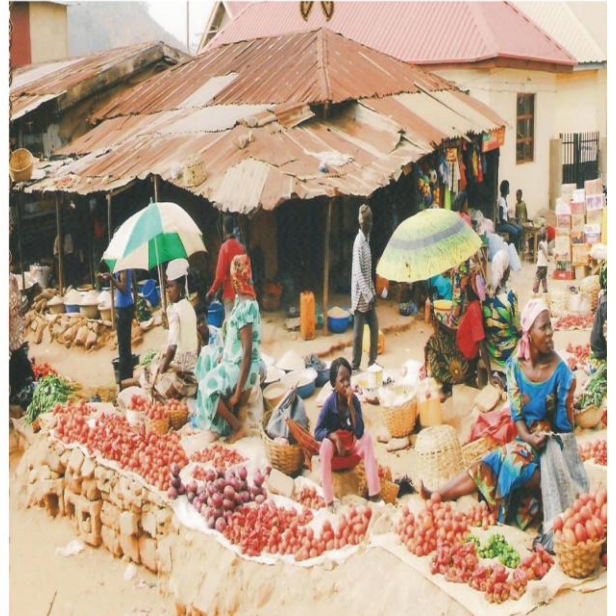
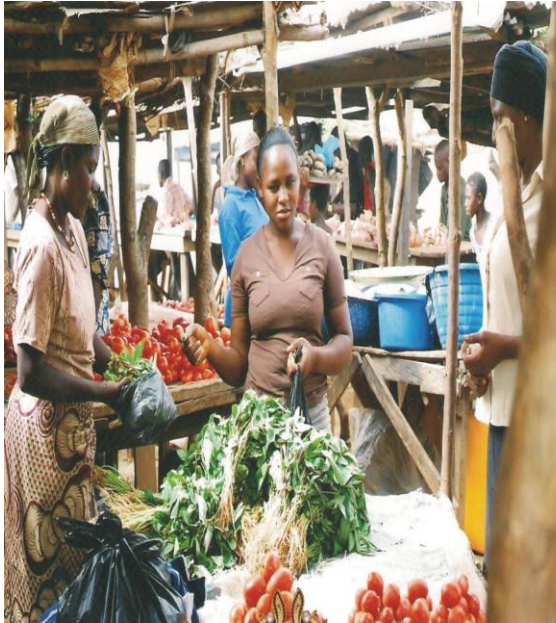
Commonly, girls were needed at home to free their mother to engage in petty trading businesses. Consequently, there were more boys than girls in the two rural high schools surveyed. On the other hand, the contrary was the case in the two urban schools studied.

### **7.3.2 Gender in Curriculum Contents**

Both the objectives and the curriculum contents of Commerce and Economics are presented here: firstly, the Commerce curriculum objectives state that Commerce was designed to give students an overview of the world of business and to enable them to develop a better understanding of the individual's relationship with business and the place of business in a developing economy (CESAC, 1984). The general objectives of education in Commerce at the senior secondary school level are to:

- Enable the student to have a broader understandings of the importance of commercial activities,
- Enable the student to cultivate the right attitude to commercial activities,
- Provide useful general notions and commercial skills necessary for those who will immediately enter into the world of work,
- Provide commercial knowledge for personal use and for further education,
- Develop the habit of the wise use of the services offered by commercial institutions (CESAC, 1984).

The above objectives lay emphasis on commercial activities, skills and knowledge. Therefore Commerce was designed to equip the students with the marketable knowledge and skills inherent in commercial education and in the context of this study, commercial activities are more likely to be seen as performed by women rather than men. For example, the pictures below show that more women than men are engaged in the daily marketing of foodstuff in Bingo Village Market.



**Source: Pictures Taken during Observation in Bingo High School Vicinity**

In these pictures, there were two girls helping their mothers to sell items such as onions, tomatoes and vegetables. This data relates to my findings and analysis in relation to my theoretical framework on the cultural capital theory which explores on the skills and experiences that girls gained while helping their mothers to buy and sell. The cultural capital theory in relation to gender is the central argument of this study. The subject choice of VBE students by gender was displayed by the data below:



**Table 7.7 Subject Choice by Gender in the Case Study Schools (2007)**

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Commerce</b>	<b>Economics</b>
<b>Timo</b>	Female	13	33
	Female %	87%	55%
	Male	2	27
	Male %	13%	45%
	<b>Total</b>	15	60
<b>Mary Monk</b>	Female	25	39
	Female %	71%	60%
	Male	10	26
	Male %	29%	40%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Pascal</b>	Female	11	20
	Female %	79%	33%
	Male	3	38
	Male %	21%	67%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Bingo</b>	Female	11	21
	Female %	61%	34%
	Male	7	40
	Male %	39%	66%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>61</b>

Source: Case Study Schools' WASSCE Exams Data

Subject choices in Commerce and Economics were also clearly gendered. Table 7.7 shows the senior secondary three students subject choice with girls dominating in Commerce with over 60 percent of the students in both rural and urban High Schools. Girls also dominated in Economics with over 55 percents of the students in the two urban High Schools. On the other hand, boys dominated in Economics with over 65 percent of the students in the two rural High Schools, but

not in urban schools. This was so because of the smaller number of girls in the rural high schools even though among the girls that did go to those rural schools there was no retreat from Economics. It has been argued by Gaskell (1981: 54) that commercial courses separate boys and girls, teach them different things, reinforce stereotypes, and channel girls into low-paying, white-collar, quintessentially female jobs'. This helps to explain the predominance of girls in choosing to study Commerce at school. This is also one of the ways that VBE courses were liable to produce gender identities in the programme. This is because what the girls learn in commerce tended to equip them for sales, clerical and secretarial services in public and private organisations.

Secondly, the Economics curriculum objectives aim:

- To equip students with the basic principles of economic literacy necessary for useful living and for higher education;
- To prepare and encourage students to be prudent and effective in the management of scarce resources;
- To raise students' respect for the dignity of labour and their appreciation of the economic, cultural and social values of Nigerian society and
- To enable students to acquire knowledge for the practical solution of the economic problems of society; Nigeria, developing countries and the world at large (CESAC, 1984: 210).

In brief, the Economics curriculum objectives emphasize economic literacy, prudent management of resources, respect for the dignity of labour and acquisition of economic knowledge for solving the economic problems of the society. Consequently, the Economics students were equipped with all the above knowledge and economic understandings. The implication of this was that roughly equal numbers of boys than girls chose to study economics. It also raised interesting questions about the aspirations of girls in electing to study this subject, as it equipped them with general life skills which in turn prepared them for the university and for professional and managerial jobs. The curriculum contents for both Commerce and Economics are as follows.

**Table 7.8: The VBE Commerce and Economics Curricula Contents**

Commerce	Economics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction: meaning, scope and functions of commerce; History of commerce in Nigeria</li> <li>• Occupation – Classification of occupation: industry, commerce, direct and indirect services</li> <li>• Production – definition, factors of production, division of labour and specialisation, interrelationship between production and exchange</li> <li>• Trade – Purpose and branches of trade: Home trade and foreign trade. Home trade divided into retail and wholesale trade; International or foreign trade: Import and Export</li> <li>• Business organisations: Sole proprietorship, Partnership, Public and Private Limited liability Companies, Cooperative Societies and Public Enterprises</li> <li>• Money: Trade by barter, the evolution of money, types and qualities of money, functions of money, value of money, demand for money, etc.</li> <li>• Trade Association and Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Business capital and profits; buying and selling of goods</li> <li>• Finance and financial Institutions: Banks, Stock Exchange, Second Tier Security Market and Insurance</li> <li>• Transport and communications</li> <li>• Public relations and customer services</li> <li>• Computer and data processing: Types of computers, forms of computers, functions of computer, elements of computer, data processing, activities in data processing, ICT and qualities of good information.</li> <li>• Introduction to Marketing: Marketing, Advertising, Public Relations and Customer Services, Sales Promotion and Personal Selling</li> <li>• Introduction to Business management: Business, Management of Business, Structure of Business, and Legal Aspect of Business</li> <li>• Consumer protection and Regulatory Agencies</li> <li>• Nationalisation, indigenization and economic grouping in West Africa (CESAC, 1984).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economics – Meaning and basic concepts</li> <li>• Basic tools for economic analysis</li> <li>• Basic economic problems of society</li> <li>• Production, division of labour and specialisation</li> <li>• Theory of costs</li> <li>• Business organisations</li> <li>• Economic systems</li> <li>• Economic institutions</li> <li>• Distributive trade, exchange and consumption</li> <li>• Money, banking and financial institutions</li> <li>• Markets and prices</li> <li>• Demand and supply and price determination</li> <li>• Theory of consumer behaviour</li> <li>• Market structures and competitions</li> <li>• Income distributions and determinations</li> <li>• Agriculture and industrialization</li> <li>• Market failures</li> <li>• The role of government</li> <li>• National income accounting</li> <li>• Aggregate demand and supply</li> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Inflation and deflation</li> <li>• Unemployment and rural urban migration</li> <li>• Public finance</li> <li>• Economic development and Planning</li> <li>• Petroleum and the Nigerian economy</li> <li>• International trade</li> <li>• Comparative trade and barriers to trade</li> <li>• Balance of payments and exchange rates</li> <li>• International economic organisations</li> <li>• Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS) (CESAC, 1984).</li> </ul>

**Source: CESAC (1984) Business Studies for Senior Secondary Schools**

Gender differences were further observed in the definitions of Economic and Commerce. For example, Lionel Robbins (1932) defined Economics as ‘a science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses’. Anyaele (1987: 21) opined that ‘this definition is more embracing because it embodies the basic concept of Economics and the main fundamental problem of man: wants, scarcity, choice, exchange and opportunity cost’. Indeed, this definition is the generally accepted definition of Economics – ‘the study of how individuals choose among different resources to pursue given ends’ (Lionel Robbins, 1932 in Dijkstra and Plantenga, 1997). Based on the foregoing, Professor Lionel Robbins, Dijkstra and Plantenga as well as Anyaele agreed that Economics is a science subject and thus a masculine subject. According to them, Economics is based on rationality and objectivity and thus associated with masculinity. However, the analysis of data shows a contradiction of this claim because it is not always the case that boys dominate in Economics especially in urban senior secondary schools in Nigeria. Indeed, Economics is more popular among girls than Commerce. Moreover, Economics has high status, being recognized as a long-established discipline, taught to students from senior secondary schools and leading to highly-paid and prestigious jobs; although many Economics teachers and lecturers would refute the idea that it is a vocational subject, yet in Nigerian senior secondary schools, Economics is taught as a part of vocational business subjects.

On the other hand, Commerce is that part of Economics which deals with production, trade and aids to trade as well as with different forms of business organisations and how to establish and manage them. Commerce therefore focuses on commercial activities and how to satisfy the needs and wants of customers. This is evidenced in the curriculum documents, in the Commerce textbooks used by the case study schools and in the Commerce lessons. As shown in table 7.8 above, the curriculum documents contained topics that help to equip the VBE Commerce students with knowledge and skills on how to care for customers with the sole aim of satisfying their needs and wants. For example, when discussing the topic “trade”, the Commerce scheme of work states that commerce teachers have to make it clear that the commodities should be exchanged for money at a profit and such commodities should satisfy the buyers, thus providing care for the need and wants. Again, when discussing the functions of a sole trader, the scheme further states that the teachers need to point out to Commerce students that when sole traders provide

a variety of regularly demanded household goods that can satisfy the consumers' needs and wants, by so doing they are caring for them, and as such they end up establishing good relationships with such consumers. In the same way, the Commerce textbooks are written with the aim of imparting care skills to Commerce students and Commerce teachers during their lessons often lay emphasis on the importance of satisfactorily caring for customers as means of meeting their needs and wants and thus maintaining a good rapport with them. For example, when marketing concepts are treated during lessons, Commerce scheme of work point out that teachers should stress that customers' satisfaction at profit is the sole reason why people are in business. It further emphasises that the Commerce students should be taught that taking care to satisfy their customers at profits might lead to success in their businesses. Consequently, Commerce is often associated with caring and thus with femininity and therefore more suitable for women than men. Indeed, all the provision shops in the case study schools were both owned and managed by women. In addition, the VBE boys and girls pointed out that women were more than men in petty trading businesses which gathered for the well-being in their immediate society. But the reality seems to be that people need the knowledge and skills that both commerce and economics give to them because there is a need for effectiveness and efficiency in handling global economic and commercial activities and a pool of experiences is required to make it a success.

The notions that students have about the Commerce and Economics topics taught to them had the effect of reinforcing gender identities in the students. The data analysis taken from some of the topics in Commerce textbooks portrayed men and women in their traditional roles. A case in point happened in Bingo High School when the Commerce teacher was teaching about the meaning and factors of production. During the teaching, the teacher told the class that land as a factor is usually owned by men but that women often farmed for the men. He further opined that labourers in production companies were usually men and not women. He went on to state that men have large amount of capital for businesses while women own small amount of capital. In his explanation, he said that men are usually top managers in organisation while women work under them as secretaries and cleaners. Indeed, these examples were given within the Commerce textbooks in use at the case study school. These examples tend to reinforce gender identities in the students.

As can be seen from the curriculum contents in Table 7.8 above, Commerce and Economics are closely related disciplines. This is because several similar topics

were taught to students in commerce and economics, such as production, division of labour and specialisation, home trade, international trade, business organisations, business capital, profit and turnover, money, banking and finance, the stock exchange market, chain of distribution and economic groupings in West Africa. On the other hand, some aspects of the commerce curriculum contents differ from those of economics. Such content areas included meaning, functions and branches of commerce, occupations, transportation, customs and excise and sea and airport authorities, career opportunities, credits, consumer protection, means of payment, communication, insurance, computer and ICT, indigenisation and nationalisation, commercialisation and privatisation, structure of business, business law, marketing, advertising, public relations and customer services. Similarly, some economics curriculum contents also differ from those of commerce with respect to meaning and basic concepts of economics, basic tools for economic analysis, basic economic problems of society, labour market, agriculture, economic systems, cost of production, theory of consumer, demand and supply, unemployment and rural urbanisation, public finance, inflation and deflation, industrialisation, market structure, national income, economic development and petroleum in the Nigerian economy. However, some VBE teachers and their students when interviewed about the commerce and economics concepts listed above felt that they were suitable for both boys and girls. The VBE students when asked to state how they felt about the concepts taught to them in the two subjects claimed that there were differences between those in commerce and those in economics. However, they said such differences did not matter much because they were taught them from junior to senior secondary school. In this process, they claimed a number of similar topics were often taught in the two subjects which appeared to give those who studying both some kind of advantage, yet the students still felt that their ideas about the curriculum contents being taught to them differed. Such gendered stereotyped ideas seemed to differ in the following way.

The curriculum contents of both Commerce and Economics gave the impression of being connected to the power relations of gender in the larger society. This is because the curricula of the two subjects were constructed on the principle of authority: that is, what is taught in the senior secondary schools is guaranteed by the authority of the university disciplines. The Economics topics were calculated to prepare students for university education and after that, for professional and managerial jobs. The authority that governs this aspect of the curriculum is overwhelmingly in the hands of men, thus the Economics curriculum is based on

economic literacy which reflects practices and institutions controlled by men (Dijkstra and Plantenga, 1997). The Economics curriculum also depends on clear-cut distinctions between right and wrong and between what is relevant and irrelevant (Kessler et al, 1985). It has little room for ambiguity, for multiple layering of truth and meaning and for open-ended explorations (ibid). This is also applicable to the Nigerian Economics curriculum for senior secondary schools. For example, the data analysis of topics in the Economics curriculum undertaken in this study revealed that it equips students with basic scientific tools for statistical research and to acquire knowledge for the practical solution of the economic problems of their country. Some feminist research suggests that such a perspective on knowledge and such forms of expression are features of masculine thinking (Kessler et al, 1985). Moreover, the academic curriculum is divided into subjects that reflect the priorities of the dominant group (Kessler et al, 1985). Such organisation of knowledge does not correspond to the needs of subordinate groups (Kessler et al, 1985). However, in this study, Economics was gaining popularity with the girls because they said they liked to study it as it was grounded in real life experiences that they derived from cultural capital instilled in them through petty trading business of their mothers.

The science aspect of the core curriculum in the Nigerian senior secondary was made up of mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. It is important to keep in mind that mathematics and science allowed boys to enter technological fields while girls who formed the majority in biology and the arts were more likely to enter teaching, nursing and other service occupations. Commercial subjects comprised accounting, commerce, economics, typewriting and shorthand and these prepared girls to enter the book-keeping, clerical, secretarial or sales jobs. Similarly, home economics courses qualified girls for domestic tasks. Vocational-technical subjects such as auto mechanics, metal work, carpentry, fine and applied arts and agriculture equipped boys to enter technical professions. It was discovered that Commerce was studied much more by girls than boys and this was reflected in the observation data.

Some of those gender differences would no doubt have been structured by timetabling arrangements which influenced traditional gender divisions. For example in the science course, any student could choose economics, accounting, metal work, woodwork or technical drawing. The economics teacher from Timo high school reported that the boys in the technical and science subjects studying economics were just doing it in order to complete the required number of subjects to enrol for the WASSCE exams. He said that he thought they chose them as an easy alternative because it did not require experimentation in laboratory or additional

spending of time in the technical workshops. He added that the boys in other fields who happened to take VBE subjects were doing well at commerce and economics and that he would like more of them to explore other areas of vocational business subjects. He regretted that more boys were not doing commerce even though men who were engaged in commercial activities were big-time business tycoons who owned and controlled a large amount of business capital and profits whereas women usually held just a small amount of these assets. As with other feminine areas of commercial occupations, men who enter rapidly rise and there is evidence here that they are expected to do so. Indeed, commerce prepares girls for trading activities while Economics enables students to be effective managers of the scarce resources at their disposal. The students also said that girls were often more careful than boys in commercial activity because of the experience they gained when they were working hand-in-hand with their mothers to operate petty business trading. In addition to trading activities, Commerce equips girls for jobs as secretaries and clerical workers. Thus it can be said that VBE Commerce has turned out to be an overwhelmingly feminine and vocationally-oriented arena. For example, the classroom situations during Commerce lessons in all the case study schools showed that more girls than boys studied the subject in both the urban and rural High Schools. What is more, Commerce teachers' practical teaching illustrations during lessons usually involved more girls than boys. Another evidence about the Commerce curriculum was the composition of the Commerce textbooks and other learning materials which tended to present stereotypical images that reinforce gender division of labour as portrayed in the Nigerian market. For example, more women than men carried out commercial activities like selling of shops, door-to-door sales of goods, and more women than men were found in market places transacting their businesses in the vicinity of the case study schools (See the pictures of women in a market scene in page 172). Indeed, the material for this section was obtained mainly from the observations, interviews and analysis of VBE Commerce curriculum and syllabus documents as well as from the Commerce textbooks currently in use in all the case study schools.

The major divisions of economic activities in Nigeria have the effect of producing gendered identities among men and women. As noted earlier, Commerce and Economics cover the same ground in some aspects because the topics are sometimes similar. For example, Commerce and Economics are largely concerned with the study of production, distribution, trade and ancillary to trade, as well as consumption. Production is defined as the creation of utility as well as the provisions



of services that satisfy man's needs while distribution refers to those hands and agencies through which goods pass from the producers to the final consumers. Trade involves the buying and selling of goods and services while the expression 'ancillary to trade' refers to those services such as transport and communication, banking, insurance, advertising and warehousing that help trade to take place. According to Ehiamezor (1990) the rationale for teaching Commerce in the Nigerian senior secondary school is based on the idea that many girls, who are likely to terminate their education at the senior secondary school level, should understand the nature of industry and of the distribution of goods and services to the final consumer. For the majority of boys who are likely to continue their education beyond the senior secondary level, commerce provides the requisite business knowledge for studying business management, marketing, secretarial administration and insurance at the tertiary education level. The curriculum contents of Commerce begin with the meaning, scope and functions of commerce and also trace the historical development of the subject in Nigeria. Commerce as a part of Economics is made up of two main branches: trade and ancillary to trade. This area of content is also similar to what obtains in the economics curriculum. In my interview, I asked the students why more girls than boys studied Commerce and this was what a male Commerce student from Pascal High school replied:

Actually, according to my own understanding, if you take a good look at our society, a lot of girls do carry goods from one door to another. I think girls go into commerce because they have done it practically at home. So I think girls go into commerce because they understand it. Commerce also enlightens them about how to transact their mothers' business (PSB).

In Nigeria, some aspects of economic activities are generally dominated by one gender more than the other. For example, women can be seen to predominate in the local trading and distributing system. For example, the sale of farm products and other locally-produced goods is often carried out by women (Ekechi, 2005). Therefore trading is of great importance to women and thus, marketing is the central feature in the life of every Nigerian woman (Ekechi, 2005). The quotation above seemed to reflect the involvement of Nigerian girls and women in small-scale trading. Through participation in commercial activities, girls and women acquire complex verbal skills, entrepreneurial skills, and customer satisfaction skills, a penchant for hard work, motivational and innovative skills.

Besides, in the process of trading, women and girls engage in social interactions with various customers and for them to persuade these people to buy their products, they have to supply adequate information on the goods being sold.

However, through women's talk to customers about the products that they sell during their door-to-door commercial activities; they sharpen their understanding of cultural life, their relationships with their customers and of themselves as women. Therefore, social interaction is the basic process that sharpens, supports and alters gender. This is because social views of men and women could change as a result of social interaction. Thus in trading activities, women use the cultural capital experientially acquired in the course of their commercial activities to change the views of their customers to buy their products. Much of the formal VBE commerce curriculum addresses the sorts of skills girls have developed through petty business trading and they (girls) automatically exploit the cultural capital that they possess during the VBE Commerce classroom interactions by making use of their strong verbal skills to dominate commerce classroom spaces in the senior secondary schools. For example, during Commerce classroom observations in all the case study schools, whenever the teachers asked any questions, girls were the first to put up their hands to answer such questions. Again, the Commerce teachers usually spent more time interacting with the girls and such interactions often extend beyond one exchange during their lessons.

The Commerce and Economics curriculum reflects the type of business units undertaken by men and women. For example, the curriculum content areas often undertaken by women consist of sole proprietorship, partnership, private and public limited liability companies, and cooperative societies. They are also very important components of the VBE Economics curriculum. Sole proprietorship is a business unit which is established, owned, financed and controlled by one person with the aim of maximizing profits. Therefore, a sole trader is an individual who establishes, owns and operates his or her own business with a view to making profits. Within the case- study schools, all the sole trading businesses operating there were owned by women. Moreover, more women than men were inclined to establish, finance, manage and control the sole proprietorship businesses existing within the communities where the research was carried out. The next form of business organisation is partnership, which according to the Partnership Act of 1890, is defined as the 'relation which subsists between persons carrying on business with common view to profit'. Because women are concerned about how their household is provisioned, they formed business relations which normally functioned as self-help organisations. Such organisations have helped women much more than men to achieve economic and social benefits for themselves through their combined efforts and economic activities. However, men tend to dominate public companies, public

corporations, construction companies, manufacturing and extractive industries. For example, behind Bingo High School, men were engaged in mining tin on the mountains there. Apart from that, men in Bingo village were engaged in large scale farming of potatoes and maize for sale.

In the same way, women much more than men have formed trade associations such as small gatherings of women who are interested in a common trade, craft or services. Examples are the “etibe”, meaning a co-operative society or other forms of trade group, such as market women’s cooperatives or housewives’ associations, which provide mutual aid during ceremonies or on religious occasions like the thanksgiving service organised by one of their members. It is interesting to note that these topics seem to have been taught to women when they were school girls. This was because the function of trade associations and chambers of commerce was often explained to students of commerce in schools, and in such classes, female students usually outnumbered male students and as they graduated from the school at the end of their studies, they began to apply what they had learned from their commerce lessons in school to improve their economic positions in the society. For example, the Commerce curriculum contents in Table 7.7 contained topics such as trade associations and Chambers of Commerce; others include business organisations such as sole proprietorship, partnership, cooperative societies etc. These topics were taught to Commerce students before graduation from High School. Indeed during my second classroom observation in Bingo High School, the Commerce Teacher’s topic was on the merits and demerits of partnership business. In the process of the lesson, he gave one illustration about Bingo Women Partnership Firm, as organisation local women formed for the sake of maximizing profits through buying and selling of farm produce such as tomatoes, potatoes and yams in Bingo Village. What is more, the Commerce syllabus for senior secondary specifically encourages Commerce Teachers to cite local examples of business and trade associations when they teach such topics. I felt it was in an attempt to do so that the Commerce teacher in Bingo named the above women partnership firm as an example.

The content of computer and ICT courses in the Commerce curriculum has traditionally been associated more with boys than girls, even though girls outnumber them in Commerce classes. It is interesting to note that at a time when technology is bringing about widespread changes in commercial activities that there are some topics dealing with computers and with data-processing in the VBE Commerce curriculum. This section is designed to equip commerce students with the basic

knowledge and skills in computing and data-processing suitable for the pursuit of a clerical course. Unfortunately, the students were taught these content areas in theory in the four case- study schools because neither computer nor data-processing equipment was available. This prompted higher SES parents to send their boys to private computer centres to learn how to operate them whereas girls' cultural capital was a by-product of their involvement in petty business trading of lower SES mothers. Moreover, women who were already in employment as secretaries and clerical workers found it useful to train themselves in private computer outfits which were mainly located in urban centres.

The economic laws and basic tools for economic analysis inherent in the economic curriculum contents led to the forming of gendered identities in students. Much of the tools for economic analysis involve models that are expressed in mathematical and statistical form. This expression of economic models tended to make the study of economics masculine in nature. However, in all the case-study senior secondary schools, I discovered that more and more girls studied economics in their final class. So in my individual interviews with VBE economics students at Timo High School, I posed the following question:

Researcher: Why did you come to offer economics as one of the subjects in your senior secondary schools?

Comfort: I like economics very much and I want to study business courses in my higher education (TSG).

Another female economics student named *Ritmwa* from Pascal High School when I asked the same question replied as follows:

"Because I like it very well and I value it too. Apart from that, economics teaches me how to be economical with my scarce resources" (PSG).

Furthermore, a male economics student named *Patrick* from Mary Monk High School when asked the same question gave the following reason(s) for studying the subject.

"I take economics as one of my subjects because it is something I like so much and it is a science I can't do without" (MSB).

Lastly, one female economics student at Bingo High School gave the following as her reason why she studied the subject in her final year.

'I like studying Econs because I've done practically in my mum's business' (BSG)

In my effort to gain more insight into what prompted more girls to take economics as one of their senior secondary school subjects despite its statistical and mathematical models, I interviewed the principals, the heads of departments of business studies and economics teachers from the case-study schools. The excerpt below was taken from one of such individual interviews with Mrs Paul, the Principal of Mary Monk High School.

Researcher: Can you please tell me about your economics curriculum in this school?

Principal (Mrs Paul): The economics curriculum has been planned in such a way that it prepares children to fit into our society, I am talking of the business aspect of life whereby after their training, they'll be able to live on their own, they'll be able to fit into the business activities so that they could meet the demands of society (MTF).

Researcher: Please what is the focus of this subject in your school?

Principal (Mrs Paul): We are focusing on raising individuals who will be self-reliant after completion; they will be able to live on their own, without necessarily waiting for the government to employ them (MTF).

In addition to the above, the economics teacher (Mrs Curie) from the same high school explained:

"The economics curriculum contents and materials are okay, I say so because they help to prepare boys and girls for useful living within the society and for further studies" (MTF).

With respect to the nature of the subjects, Commerce and Economics deal with economic activities that are going on daily around VBE boys and girls which support ways of knowing that are grounded in life experiences. Indeed, the VBE girls much more than boys had been socialised into those commercial activities in such a way that they acquired cultural capital from them. Moreover, some of the students had come to like studying the two subjects because their past experiences support ways of learning that were linked to lived experiences. For example, in my interviews with two female Economics students in Bingo High School, they said they came to like studying the subjects because of the cultural capital they acquired from their mothers' petty trading businesses. This confirms an earlier finding by Streitmatter (1994) who conducted a study on school curriculum in the USA and discovered reasons why there was a difference in the participation of boys and girls in a particular curriculum area such as socialisation, attitudinal factors, affective factors, and others. The findings of this study revealed similar reasons for the different involvement of boys and girls in the commerce and economics curriculum.

### 7.3.3 Gender Bias in Commerce and Economics Textbooks

According to Lawson et al (2010:150) 'a traditional feminist view of the school books is that they reinforce a view of females as passive and dependent on men'. This is why school textbooks often contained tacit messages about gender roles in their imagery and language. Such messages often reflected the dominant and sexist values of the society in which they were developed (Bottigheimer, 1987, cited in Lawson et al, 2010). In terms of textbooks, Kelly (1987), cited in Lawson et al (2010), argues that there is a masculine bias in science texts, in which women are either passive or invisible (p. 150). Therefore the examples used in these texts tended to utilise male images and ignore famous female scientists (Lawson et al, 2010). In this study, the Commerce and Economics textbooks portrayed men in positions of authority such as textbook authors, employers and decision-makers whereas women were shown to be in subordinate positions such as those of secretaries, clerical workers and petty traders. For examples, Ahukannah, L. I Ndinaechi, G. I., and Arukwe, O. N, the authors of Commerce Textbook used by the schools surveyed were all men. Again, the authors of the Economics textbook in use in the case study schools were all males. Inside the Economics textbook, men were portrayed as entrepreneurs who were in position to employ while women were portrayed as typists, receptionists and clerks. Even in all the case study schools, women worked as office clerks, receptionists and typists. Generally, these representations in the Commerce and Economics textbooks appeared to reinforce my earlier claims in the thesis. Indeed, these situations have gone unchallenged and therefore there is need to portray women in decision making position as well. In this chapter, I will first discuss gender bias in Commerce textbooks before tackling the Economics ones.

For senior secondary Commerce, three textbooks were recommended by CESAC (1984). These were observed to reinforce gendered identities in the students. The following are the names of the texts:

- (i) 'Commerce for Senior Secondary Schools Books' 1, 2 and 3 written by Odedokun et al (1987) and published by Longman Nigerian Publications.
- (ii) 'Commerce for Senior Secondary' written by Ahukannah, L. I., Ndinaehi, G. I., and Arukwe, O. N. (1989) and published by Africa First Publishers Limited.

- (iii) 'Comprehensive Commerce for Senior Secondary Schools' (Sure Bet for WASSCE, NECO, GCE and JAMB, SS1, 2 and 3), written by Anyaele (1991) and published by A. Johnson Publishers Limited.

These textbooks were actually used by teachers and students in the case-study schools and they were representative of those in common use in senior secondary schools all over the country because the recommendations were included in the Commerce National Curriculum. Both the VBE teachers and students agreed that they helped them prepare for the Commerce National and International Examinations. However, many of the books recommended were revised editions of those first published in the 1980s. In order to examine the extent of gender bias in these textbooks, a contents analysis was carried out. This revealed that the contents were quite out-dated and therefore did not reflect changes in the roles of Nigerian women since in the 1980s. The textbooks too were in short supply and some of the students in the senior secondary three classes did not have the book. Nevertheless, those girls who had copies willingly shared them with other girls who were without them, especially during lessons and class assignments. On the other hand the boys who had textbooks invariably used them individually.

There were unequal number of men and women as key characters in all the recommended commerce textbooks. The authors and the publishers of all the recommended textbooks were males. In the preface of the textbook, titled "Comprehensive Commerce for Senior Secondary Schools", written by Johnson Anyaele, the names of men were mentioned more frequently than those of women. For example, there were 17 (81 per cent) male characters as contributors, but only 4 (19 per cent) female. In this way, the illustrations in the text that portrayed action and responsibility were represented by men, even though the sex of the authors does not automatically translate into the nature of the illustrations.

The Commerce textbook, entitled "Commerce for Senior Secondary", written by Ahukannah, Ndinaechi and Arukwe portrayed men and women in their traditional roles. For example, in the text, men performed the following jobs: insurance brokers, bank managers, bank clerks, bank customers, pilots, transporters, van drivers, warehouse managers, industrial workers, labourers, itinerant traders, estate managers and entrepreneurs. On other hand, the female characters in the same textbook included market traders, shop assistant, petty traders, mothers, teachers, secretaries, receptionists, clerks, cleaners, bank cashiers, sales girls, customer service advisors, farmers, commercial and service workers. Thus I argue that in the

text, women are shown performing their traditional feminine roles while men are seen in their traditional masculine parts.

The Comprehensive Commerce for Senior Secondary schools was written using sexist language such as gendered pronouns like 'he' and 'his', especially when the author was enumerating the functions of an entrepreneur and why he was set apart from labour. For example, "He takes decisions and he maintains good communication". Another example of sexist language in the same topic included "He is distinguished from labour because of his special role in the productive processes". Similarly, the authors of the textbook titled "Commerce for Senior Secondary" when describing the factors of production such as land, labour, capital and entrepreneur, indicated that men were the owners of land but also portrayed them as labourers. The authors illustrated these by drawing a picture of a piece of land with a man standing in the attitude of an owner. For labour, the faces of four men with helmets on their heads were drawn, thus sending out an outspoken message that they were labourers. Similarly, capital was illustrated by drawing some houses and showing a picture of a man with a bunch of keys in his hand as the owner. Another illustration for capital was an industrial site with a man in charge of it. To depict the entrepreneur there was a picture of a man dressed in a jacket and tie at the head of a table holding a meeting with 5 male and 2 female workers. These sorts of illustrations were the most persuasive aspects of the textbook which exemplified the students' perceptions of the subjects.

An examination of other illustrations, such as the one on occupations in the same textbooks tended to associate women with commercial and service occupations such as running of retail shops, street vending, hawking, door-to-door sales girls, office clerks and secretaries whereas men were identified with manufacturing and constructive occupations. However, women were portrayed as farmers controlling primary production. What this amounted to was that more women than men were portrayed as working in service occupations while a greater number of men than women operated in constructive and manufacturing occupations and this consequently linked masculinity with the production of goods. As noted earlier, the photographs in the textbooks show more women than men in market places as petty traders and in this way associate femininity with this activity. Also, more women than men are shown as clerical workers and as sales ladies and women secretaries and therefore link femininity with low-paid jobs and with subordinate positions. On the other hand, masculinity was associated with the marketing of goods and services in large quantities. The contents of commerce



textbooks transmit sexist values both explicitly and implicitly. These were not challenged and all the textbooks exhibited gender blindness. The later was so because the authors of such textbooks thought it wise to portray the gendered division of labour as it was (or is) in Nigeria. With that in view, this has a degree of plausibility and could raise further questions as to whether or not there was any discussion in the textbooks themselves or in the classrooms concerning how such gendering came about and whether it could be justified or challenged. Indeed, an examination of the textbooks revealed that there was no discussion in them concerning the evolution of gendered division of labour. Moreover, there was no discussion in the classrooms about gender during my observations because in the view of the teachers and the students subject is purely business education which had no direct bearing with gender. It could be seen here that both the VBE teachers and their students were ignorant about the concept of gender and thus were suffering from gender blindness as they tend to naturalise gender differences.

Concerning Economics textbooks, three of them were recommended by CESAC (1984) but only one was in use in all the case-study schools. It was titled 'Comprehensive Economics for Senior Secondary Schools' (Sure Bet for WASSCE, NECO, GCE and JAMB, SS1, 2 and 3), written by Johnson Anyaele and published by A. Johnson Publishers Limited. The second one, which was absent from the case-study schools was titled 'Economics for Senior Secondary' written by Ahukannah, L. I., Ndinaehi, G. I., and Arukwe, O. N. (1989) and published by Africa First Publishers Limited. A content analysis was carried out on Comprehensive Economics for Senior Secondary Schools with a view to gaining an understanding of the extent of gender bias in the text. This revealed that men were predominant in the illustrations. For example, the names of 15 men were mentioned as contributors in the preface of the book whereas only 2 women were acknowledged there for helping to typeset the manuscript. Consequently, the latter were seen as fulfilling the traditional feminine roles of typists, secretary and clerical worker. Moreover, the nature of economic problems in the textbook was presented in the form of laws and models which were ideas often expressed in mathematical form. Generally, this placed emphasis on technique and abstract analysis and thus left little or no room for social distinctions like gender (Dijkstra and Plantenga, 1997: 1). Again, the Economics textbook at the time of the study presented a masculine image of the subject. This emanated from the fact that there were more male characters than female. Thus men appeared more frequently than women and they were shown in more leading and active roles such as managers, decision-makers, etc.. In addition,

the nature of the economic model and laws was based on ideas about what is good science (Dijkstra and Plantenga, 1997). According to these authors, good science was usually identified with values that were considered masculine: rationality, abstraction and objectivity. They further pointed out that there was little room for values which were traditionally considered feminine such as irrationality, concreteness and subjectivity (Nelson, 1993b, in Dijkstra and Plantenga, 1997:1). In this study, VBE girls were seen outperforming their boys in Economics as well as had more interactions with their Economics teachers during the lessons. Based on this, I challenge the views of Dijkstra and Plantenga (*ibid*) for propagating highly essentialised views of gender on Economics.

#### **7.4 Summary**

The chapter explored both informal and formal curriculum at the case study schools and found that the school life perpetuated gender inequities across all the case study schools by giving more power and authority to men and boys while women and girls were appointed their subordinates. A key factor in this is the hidden curriculum, specifically representations of gender in textbooks and the learning environment generally which tended to limit career aspiration of girls by portraying the majority of the female workers in stereotypical roles such as clerks, secretaries, cafeteria workers, and matrons while at the same time showing male workers as authority figures. Besides, Commerce and Economics textbooks represent men as standard by over-representing them and under-representing women. The curriculum contents was also found to misrepresent human experiences by making women invisible in the study of Economics while making them active in the study of Commerce. The next chapter highlights the third dimension of the hidden curriculum which is how VBE teachers contributed to gendered education by giving one gender greater attention than the other during teacher-student and student-student interactions.

## **Chapter 8: Gendered VBE Classroom Interactions at the Case Study Schools**

### **8.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 7, I discussed the informal and formal curriculum which perpetuated gender inequities across all the case study schools by giving more power and authority to men and boys while women and girls were put in subservient positions. In this chapter, I investigate how gender affects VBE classroom interactions with specific reference to teacher-student and student-student interactions during commerce and economics lessons. I draw on data collected during the VBE class observations and semi-structured interviews conducted in four coeducational senior secondary schools in Plateau State, Nigeria. I observed 24 lessons comprising whole class interactions during which I took a keen interest in two things: student talk and teacher talk. The semi-structured interviews were also conducted with VBE teachers and students observed in the Commerce and Economics classes in order to discuss further gender issues observed during the lessons.

Inside the VBE classrooms, I was simply observing the behaviour of the teachers and their students during the VBE classroom interactions. Indeed, what I looked out for was how the teachers and students interacted in their commerce and economics lessons. My interest during such interactions was in “who was being selected to speak: was it a boy or a girl?” I also took keen interest in whether or not the teaching style allowed for classroom interactions to occur. Therefore, my aim in this chapter is to explore two dimensions of the VBE classroom interactions across all the case study schools. As I already noted above, these dimensions included (i) teacher-student interactions and (ii) student-student interactions with respect to gender issues in these two areas. The emerging themes that resulted from the analysis of the classroom observations and semi-structured interviews under teacher-student interactions included the following subheadings: the VBE classroom participation structures, unequal attention to boys and girls, the teachers not taking VBE boys and girls seriously, biases in classroom communication and method of teaching. Similarly the emergent themes in student-student interactions included sharing in the VBE classrooms and discussions, preparatory class activities as well as interactions during playground activities.

In the chapter, I present extracts from the observed lessons and from the individual interviews to explore the themes. Here section 8.2; I first present the findings on the VBE classroom participation structures. Next to it is the teachers’

unequal attention to VBE boys and girls and VBE teachers not taking their boys and girls seriously. Furthermore, I discuss the biases in the VBE classroom communication and the method of teaching. Lastly, I present student-student interactions under two sub-themes namely, preparatory class and playground activities. The discussion below is on the VBE participation structures of the teacher-student interactions.

## **8.2 The VBE Participation Structures and Teacher-Student Interactions**

I broke down the class observation of the VBE commerce and economics classrooms into the following sections: initial entry and exchange of greetings; settling down or preparation; the lesson itself; discussion time; summary and conclusion of the lesson; and exit. Generally, the Nigerian VBE classrooms are traditional classrooms and the methods of teaching are quite traditional. As a part of class norm, all the VBE students normally stand up and greet their teachers as they enter their classrooms. The teachers respond by returning the greeting. Then they put their lesson plans and other teaching materials on their tables, clean the chalkboards and write the topics of the lessons on them. After that, the teachers stand in front of the class and teach using their lesson plans which are not shared with the students. Where the teacher uses discussion method, usually such teaching takes about 10 to 15 minutes and during that time, the teachers give detailed explanations of the lesson topics. Before giving their explanations, the teachers refer to commerce and economics textbooks and more than three quarters of their students did not have copies of the books. Because these textbooks were not given out to students by the teachers, the latter asked the students who had the textbooks to share with those who did not have. At this juncture, girls shared their textbooks with other girls but some boys did not share theirs with other boys. Instead, they used them by themselves. Consequently, some boys did not have access to the textbooks they needed for the lessons. Moreover, the teachers neither checked nor put things right before starting their lessons. In this way, they allowed the boys to opt out of the lessons. These constituted unequal treatment in those lessons. When I came to know that there was unequal treatment during the lessons, I asked the VBE teachers why they did not make sure boys all have access to the needed texts for the lessons. In response to my question, one male Commerce teacher in Pascal High School told me that parents were asked to buy the books for their children, so there was no way he could make sure boys all had access to the needed texts if their parents did not buy them the textbooks. Another female Economics teacher in

Mary Monk High School felt that her school should have enough copies of the needed texts in the library for use by the students. As this was not the case, she said that there was no way of checking to make sure all students in her class had access to the needed texts. I felt the teachers were using their understanding of their peculiar class situations, academic knowledge and professional training to be fully in control of the academic teaching and direction of the lessons. When the VBE teachers had finished their explanations, they turned to the discussion time. This was the normal pattern of VBE classroom participation structures which was used in 18 of the 24 lessons observed across all the case study schools. Those 18 lessons were particularly very useful to my study because opportunities were created for gender interactions in the lessons. The remaining 6 lessons employed recitation or lecture method and that method limited gender interactions during the lessons.

Interactions between the teachers and students in VBE classrooms involved using three quarters of the discussion time following interaction pattern such as initiation-response-evaluation (I-R-E). From this kind of patterns of interactions, the initiation was done by the teachers, the response by the students and evaluation by the teachers. In this pattern of interaction, it was discovered that the teacher gained the floor and controlled the flow of the interactions by posing some questions and selecting some individual students to answer while the teacher evaluated their answer (responses). Thus, I came to know that turn-taking was a key feature of the discussion time and it followed the pattern of initiation, response, and evaluation (judgment, feedback and follow-up). This finding supports Mehan's (1979) work on the dominant classroom turn-taking structure.

Having briefly discussed the VBE participation structures in terms of their patterns, my motive now is to explore further teacher-student interactions by presenting two illustrative extracts of commerce and economics lessons observed in Bingo and Timo High Schools respectively. My aim here is to present and analyze some data from the classroom observations in order to show how the teacher's style of teaching affects teacher-student interactions at the case study schools.

### **8.2.1 A typical Commerce Classroom Lesson at Bingo High School**

In the following section, I describe some characteristics of Commerce lessons that I observed at two Case study Schools.

On 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2008, I observed the following commerce lesson at Bingo High School which started by 11.30 am and ended by 12.10 pm. This lesson was shown in full because it was a 'typical' or 'a recurring common characteristic' in

Commerce lessons that I observed across all the case study schools. Indeed, in terms of enrolment, the differences were rather more significant because girls far out-numbered the boys in all Commerce lessons of the case study schools. For example in Timo High School, there were 13 girls and 2 boys offering Commerce in Senior Secondary class 3. Similar trends also occurred in the commerce lessons of the other three case study schools. For example: 25 girls and 10 boys in Mary Monk High School and in Pascal, there were 11 girls and 3 boys; in Bingo High School, there were 11 girls and 7 boys. Although the number of each sex group present during VBE classroom discussions was significant, yet that did not determine who would join or fail to join in the class discussions. With this in view, I was interested in observing whether or not the VBE girls and boys were more vocal and ready to join Commerce class discussions. It was time for me to note the sort of classroom gender interactions that often happened in the Bingo High School Commerce classroom interactions. In the following section, I describe gender interactions that I observed in that classroom.

The teacher and I entered the Commerce class and all the students stood up and greeted: "Good morning Sirs". "Good morning", we responded. Then the teacher introduced me to the class and then took me to the back row and gave me a seat there. He returned to the front of the class and wiped the chalkboard and wrote the lesson topic for the class time: "The meaning and factors of production".

Teacher: This morning our topic is (Pointing his right hand to the topic on the chalkboard)

Class: (The class responded as a group by reading from the board) The meaning and factors of production.

Teacher: That's right, that's what we are looking at this morning.

Class: Thank you Sir (The class thundered)

Teacher: I want you to turn to your textbook now and open to page 65 where we have the topic we are treating this morning.

Class: (The students with the text open while those who had no texts drew near those who had the text to see the page on production).

Teacher: When we talk about production, we mean the transformation of raw materials into finished goods and the distribution and provision of goods and services in order to satisfy human wants. It can be said that production is the creation of utility; while utility is the ability of any commodity or service to satisfy human wants. Production is said to be complete when the goods and services reach the final consumers or users. This is what we mean by production. Is that clear?

Class: (Responded as a group) Yes Sir.

Teacher: Now let's look at factors of production; please can you call them out for me.

Class: Land, labour, capital and entrepreneur

Teacher: The first factor of production is land. Land is a free gift of nature and is fixed. It is the oldest factor of production in the sense that it had been on earth before man started working on it. Land in commerce includes all other free gifts of nature such as water, forest and minerals. It has the following features: it is fixed in supply; Land is immobile; it is a free gift of nature and the quality and value of land vary from place to place. The reward for land is rent. The second factor of production is labour and what is it? It is both physical and mental efforts of man directed towards production. Labour as a factor of production involves human beings who work on other factors of production like land and capital in order to produce goods. The features of labour include the following: It is man-made; it is mobile; it is variable in supply; labour can be improved through education and training. The reward for labour is salaries and wages. The types of labour include skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour. The third factor of production is capital. Capital is wealth set aside for the production of more wealth. It includes physical cash, building, machinery, stock, etc. Capital has the following features: it is man-made; it can change form, it constitutes wealth, and it is highly durable. The reward for capital is interest. The last factor of production is entrepreneur. As a factor of production, entrepreneur co-ordinates other factors of production for productive purposes. For production to take place, organisation is considered a sine-qua-non. The entrepreneur is usually the person who risks his capital in establishing a business which its profitability can never be determined at that time. The reward for entrepreneur is profits.

Teacher: These are all you need to know about production and its factors. Now I have some questions for you. What is production Mary?

Mary: Production is the making of goods and services which satisfies human wants.

Teacher: Mary, that's very good of you, you got it right. My next question is: Define utility, Thomas.

Thomas: It is going to see something like in the market.

Teacher: That's wrong; you didn't pay attention to my explanation. Think, I will come back to you later. Now let me ask Comfort that same question.

Comfort: Sir, utility is the power a commodity has to satisfy human want.

Teacher: Good, Comfort, you got that right; that's fantastic. Now I am going to ask other questions, if you know their answers, please raise your hands up to answer them. The first question is: When is production said to be complete? (Here many girls and a few boys quickly raise their hands up. The teacher selected a girl to answer).

Caroline: It is said to be complete when it reach the final consumer.

Teacher: Good, You are right, when it reaches the final consumers and who are the final consumers? (Again, many girls and few boys raise their hands. Here, the teacher also selected another girl to answer).

Magdalene: Users such as all of us.

Teacher: Correct Magdalene, the final consumers include all of us. Now, another question is what are factors of production? (Like before,

many students put their hands up and he selected a boy to answer the question.

Dakye: Factors of production are things that help production to take place.

Teacher: And what are they?

Dakye: They are land, labour, capital and entrepreneur.

Teacher: Dakye, that's correct. The next question is: What is Land?

Patience: It is a free gift of nature.

Teacher: That's fine Patience. The next question is mention what and what make up land in commerce.

Mercy: Land includes all the free gift of nature such as mineral, forest and water.

Teacher: Good, Mercy, you got it right. Another question is: Who can mention two features of land.

Rose: Land is fixed in supply and it is immobile.

Teacher: Excellent, Rose. Another two features of land.

Martha: Land is a free gift of nature and its quality and value varies from one place to another.

Teacher: Good, Martha; but who can tell me the reward for land?

Kempia (a girl): Rent Sir.

Teacher: Fantastic, Kempia. I want another person to define labour.

Ritmwa (a girl): Labour involves both physical and mental efforts directed at production.

Teacher: Excellent, Rita. Someone else should tell me two features of labour.

Anthony: Labour is man-made and it is mobile.

Teacher: Tony, that correct, I want another person to tell me two other features of labour.

Rahila (a girl): Labour is variable in supply and the quality of labour can be improved through education and training.

Teacher: Rahila, well done. My time is running out. I want another person to state the reward for labour.

Magdalene: It is wages and salaries.

Teacher: Magda, good, you got that right too. Someone else should tell me the meaning of capital for me.

Mary: Capital is wealth set aside for the production of further wealth.

Teacher: Excellent Mary, my next question is: what constitute capital in commerce?

Martha: Physical cash, building, motor van, equipment, machinery

Teacher: That is good, you got them right. Please who can tell me two features of capital?

Kempia: Capital is man-made and constitutes wealth.



Teacher: Very good, Kempia. Another student should tell me another two features.

Mercy: Capital can change form and is durable.

Teacher: That's fine Mercy. Someone else should tell me the reward for capital.

Rose: It is rent.

Teacher: That's fantastic; please who can tell me what is entrepreneur?

Comfort: It is the factor of production that co-ordinates all other factors for productive purposes.

Teacher: Well done, Comfort. I want another person to tell me another name for entrepreneur.

Rahila: It is organisation.

Teacher: Correct, Rahila, Please who can tell me the reward of entrepreneur.

Ritmwa: It is profits.

Teacher: Very good, Rita, you are correct.

During the summary and conclusion of the lesson, the teacher went through the salient points of the lesson. Before leaving the class, the teacher asked the class to read about division of labour and specialisation for their next lesson.

As could be seen from the above classroom exchanges (turns) between the Commerce teacher and the students, classroom discussion followed the pattern of initiation, response and evaluation, or feedback or follow-up. At the beginning of the discussion time, the teacher nominated students who put hands up by calling their name to answer his questions. During that practice, he called on girls more than he did the boys because girls lifted up their hands more than did the boys. As he continued in the lesson, the teacher encouraged the students who were not participating to try to volunteer to say something. In order to encourage students' participation, the teacher then asked the class members who did not say anything during the lesson to do if they knew the answers to his questions. Even during the practice of looking for volunteers, the teacher still selected more girls than boys to make verbal contribution towards the lesson. Apart from the illustration of the commerce lesson above, I present another extracts of Economics classroom observation which was based on lecture method and it took place as follows:

### 8.2.2 A typical Economics Classroom Lesson at Timo High School

On the 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2008, I was at the above-named school by 9.00 – 9.40 am to observe economics classroom interaction which took place as follows:

As we entered the economics class, the students stood up and greeted us: “Good morning Sirs”. We responded “good morning class”. At this juncture, the teacher introduced me as a researcher who has come to observe their interactions during the lessons. After that, he took me down and gave me a seat at the back of class. He went back to the chalkboard, dusted it and wrote the topic for the class time. It was on “factors that bring about changes in demand”. Then he listed the following sub-themes on the chalkboard and asked the class to read them out. He then asked the students to open their Economics textbook to page 123 where the lesson topic was found. Indeed, more than two-thirds of the students in the class did not have the text. The teacher asked those who did not have the text to join those who had in order to see the explanations of the lesson material he was about to teach. At this point, the teacher explained to the students the 15 sub-themes listed above using 30 minutes of the 40 minutes class time

Teacher: (wrote on the chalkboard) Read for me the topic of our lesson:-

Factors that bring changes in demand:

- Price
- The price of other commodities
- Income of the consumer
- Changes in taste
- Population
- The invention of new commodities
- The age of distribution
- The extent of the credit facilities allowed
- Weather
- Advertisement
- Taxation
- Period of festival
- Expectation of changes in prices and
- Changes in the distribution of income

Teacher: I want you to tell me the topic of our lesson for today.

Class: (Read from the chalkboard) “Factors that bring changes in demand”

Teacher: Open to page 123 of this book (Lifting up the text with his right hand).

Class: (Students who have the texts opened): We are there Sir.

Teacher: You can read after, but pay attention to me and say those factors

Class: (Students read the factors already listed on the chalkboard).

Teacher: Now I am going to explain them, one after the other. Price: Demand moves in reverse direction with price; the higher the price, the lower the quantity demanded and vice versa. The price of other goods: This applies to goods that have close substitutes; if the price of such commodity is high, consumers may go for the close substitutes if their prices are low. Income of the Consumer: The more income a person earns, the more commodities that individual will demand for and vice versa. Changes in fashion: The demand of people changes according to the latest fashion of the day. Changes in taste: People's demand changes in line with their taste. Do you understand all these?

Class: (With one voice answered) Yes Sir.

Teacher: Alright, let's continue. Population: The population of a particular place determines the amount of goods and services that will be demanded. The invention of new commodities: New commodities replace old ones and thus the demand for new commodities is higher than old ones because people believe the new one is better than the old. Age distribution: The demand for a product is age distribution. For example, if school children are more in any place, the demand for school products will be higher. The extent of credit facilities allowed: The more credit facilities that sellers give buyers the higher the demand and vice versa. Weather: This affects agricultural products mainly; if the weather is favourable, more agricultural products will be produced and their prices will fall which lead to high demand and vice versa. I see some of you not paying attention to me. I want you to pay attention and get what I am saying. Is that clear to you?

Class: Yes Sir.

Teacher: Okay, let me explain the next few points, and then we come to the end. Advertisement: A successful advertisement campaign will lead to increase in demand while an unsuccessful one will not increase the demand. Taxation: An increase in taxes means reduction in the purchasing power of income earners which often result in decrease in demand. Period of festival: People demand for more goods during festivals like Christmas, Easter, Eid-El-Kabir and other similar ones. Expectation of changes in price: If people expect that the price of a given product is going to increase in the near future, its demand will increase and vice versa. Changes in the distribution of income: The demand of the income group which the income distribution changes favour will be high at the expense of the group the distribution does not favour. Now I come to the end of my lecture. I want somebody to explain how price affects the demand for a product.

Joy: The demand for a product moves in opposite direction with price, the higher the price, the lower the quantity demanded and vice versa.

Teacher: Very good Joy, you said it correctly, the higher the price the lower the quantity demanded. Now I want another person to state how the price of other goods affects the demand for a product?

Rachael: This only applies to goods that have close substitutes; if the price of such goods goes up, consumers may demand for the close substitutes.

Teacher: That's correct, well done Rachael. Who can tell me how the income of the consumer affects the demand for a given product?

Okon (a boy): The income affects demand because the more income somebody earns, the more commodities that that person will demand for.

Teacher: Good Okon. That's alright. Now I want someone to say how changes in fashion affect the demand for a product?

Comfort: The demand of consumers changes line with the latest product of the day because people don't like to buy outdated goods.

Teacher: Fantastic Comfort, I want another person to explain how changes in taste affect demand?

Ito (a girl): Sir, people's demand changes according to their taste for a given product.

Teacher: Excellent Ito, please I want somebody to tell me how population can affect the demand for a product.

Lengji (a boy): Sir where there are many people living at where the goods are sold, that determines how much the goods will be sold.

Teacher: Good Lengji, you answered correctly. Another person to explain to describe advertisement can affect the demand for a product?

Margaret: A successful advertisement will lead to increase in the demand for a product while an unsuccessful one will not bring about any increase in demand.

In the end, only 10 minutes was left for questioning, conclusion and summary of the lesson. During this time, the teacher specifically called on volunteers to answer his questions. In order to maintain orderliness, he told the students to raise their hands if they wanted to answer or ask questions. He then selected one student at a time from those who had quickly put their hands up in response to his invitation. Indeed, teacher and student interactions were carried out within 8 minutes of 10 minutes left at the end of the teaching. Consequently, only very few students were able to participate in the Economics classroom interactions. Even though those lessons were sort of comprehensive exercises where the students regurgitate what their teachers had just told them or what they read from their textbooks, yet the teachers drew upon the VBE girls' cultural capital by always asking them more questions than they asked the boys. However, I argue that it was hard to see how any special cultural capital held by the VBE girls might pay off because of the ways the teachers handled classroom interactions in the two lessons.

Having presented these two dimensions of teacher's teaching styles which were popular across the case study schools; my motive now is to use the two

lessons to explore gender issues that emerge from those teaching styles. The first one is unequal attention to boys and girls.

### **8.3 Unequal Attention to VBE Boys and Girls**

There was inequality in the VBE classroom participation in VBE Commerce classroom interactions of Bingo High School. The evidence to support this assertion of VBE teachers selecting students to respond in their lessons could be seen in the typical lessons above and in the subsequent quantitative turn-taking data below in this chapter. Generally, this pattern of inequality was also observed in other case study schools. As an aspect of teacher-student interaction, the analysis of data showed that differences existed in the rates of classroom participation of VBE boys and girls during the question and answer time. By the term 'rates of classroom participation', I mean the number of times the VBE teacher enabled, assisted and selected boys and girls to make verbal contributions to class discussions. Indeed, the data analysis of the Commerce classroom interactions shown above clearly indicated that the VBE teacher frequently called more on girls than boys to answer questions. In addition, the teacher selected those students who were the first to raise their hands and rarely chose those who did not. While VBE girls had access to the needed textbooks during classroom interactions, many VBE boys did not have access to the needed textbooks in use in their classes and their teachers did not appear to make any effort to help them have access to the texts because they felt that their parents failed to procure them such texts. As such there was unequal attention given to the boys. The Commerce class observations data showed that more girls than boys had access to the needed textbooks and were often the first to raise their hands up whenever their teachers asked questions. The VBE girls were able to do this because they had access to needed texts coupled with their lived experience from home socialisation experiences which were discovered to be one of the factors liable to affect classroom participation of VBE boys and girls in Commerce and Economics lessons. I argue that the possession of such learning materials and cultural capital further equip the girls with verbal skills for classroom participation more than did the boys. Again, when talking to the class, the teachers consistently looked directly at the girls rather than the boys, as they sat in the front and middle rows of the classes. Again, when formulating questions, the VBE teachers easily made eye-contact with the girls who sat closer to them. As a result, they often selected the girls to answer in preference to the boys. The analysis of data taken from the two lessons in Commerce and Economics given above in sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2 provided evidence to the unequal attention paid by VBE

teachers to their students. The analysis of data showed that the Commerce teacher selected over 15 girls to answer questions during his lessons whereas he selected 3 boys to answer questions during that same lesson. From the two lessons, it was quite clear that the VBE teachers selected and interacted more with girls than boys in the two lessons.

As could be seen from the participation structure in section 8.2 above, the VBE girls attracted more of their teachers' attention all through the lessons. Moreover, the girls often gave answers to the questions whenever their teachers did pick on them. In this way, the girls talked much more than the boys in the Commerce lessons in terms of the number of questions answered, number of turns that they took and the exchanges that they had with the teachers. Perhaps, this situations in the Nigerian Commerce and Economics classrooms appeared to be different from what happened in the Western classrooms as Paechter (1998: 25) in her study observed that "boys talked more than girls in terms of the number of words uttered, the number of speaking turns they took and the number of interchanges they had with the teacher." However, the VBE girls' lived experiences in their mothers' petty trading businesses of the Nigerian society socially constructed gender differences in VBE classroom participation whereby they (VBE girls) tended to dominant in the Commerce and Economics lessons. As normal, the VBE teachers made attempt to draw upon their lived experience or cultural capital by asking them more questions than they did the boys. This is so because they were aware that many of the concepts which were explored in the two lessons above had something to do with petty trading businesses and which the girls might have experienced when helping their mothers.

There were limited exchanges during lecture method as it was the teachers that largely controlled the conversation. The small time left for questions and answers during this type of teacher-student interaction was inevitably competitive as only those who quickly raised their hands were given the opportunity to speak. It has been argued that this type of talk favours men and boys who are by nature more competitive than women and girls who like to be cooperative (Paechter, 1998). However, in the Commerce and Economics lessons of the schools surveyed, the girls were more acquainted with commercial languages because they had experienced that through petty trading, as such were more fluent and active during class discussions than the boys because of their cultural participation in their mothers' businesses. Consequently, they were the ones who often quickly responded to the teachers' questions as they often volunteered to answer questions

at all times. Therefore, the approach of calling on volunteers provided the opportunity for the VBE girls - who had better communication skills and thus more eloquent, more confident and far better at cooperative learning than did the boys - to dominate classroom discussions in the two subjects. From the data analysis, it was found that the image presented by the VBE girls, the quality of their contributions and their interactions with the teachers and other students in the Commerce and Economics classrooms, it could be concluded that the volunteer technique worked well with girls who already had a cooperative attitude towards their school work and who often spent more time on home-work with their friends, thinking and speaking in the context of activity. In contrast, this method appeared not to work for VBE boys, who often lacked the needed textbooks and were allowed to opt out of the lessons by their teachers. Based on this background, the Commerce and Economics teachers often gave girls greater attention, more positive feedback and praise for correct responses in the VBE classroom interactions.

Inside the Economics classrooms, the boys were often more reserved and quite unwilling to talk. When they did speak, they struggled to find the right commercial language to explain their answers. Even though many boys encountered this problem, a handful or so were good at the two subjects and they often joined the others in class discussions or answering questions. However, the difference in the Nigerian VBE Commerce and Economics classrooms was that the girls became more active and more comfortable in the classes and participated much more than the boys. This happened in the two urban case-study schools where girls were in the majority. However, the boys tended to resist the girls' dominance of most commerce and economics lessons only when the lesson topics involved some business mathematics and statistical calculations. During such lessons, the VBE teachers had lower expectations for the girls' participation in the lessons involving business calculations. In this way, they directed more question to just a few boys in the class. However, a group of girls who were good at business calculations still participated in such lessons. For example, in Mary Monk High School, the Economics topic taught during my first classroom observation on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2008 was meaning and calculation of elasticity of demand and supply. In the lesson, the economics teacher asked the class questions such as:

Teacher: Define elasticity of demand and supply

Mary: Sir, it is the degree of responsiveness of change in quantity demanded and supplied to a change in the price of a commodity.

Teacher: That's good. But how is it calculated?

Roseline: It is calculated by dividing percent change in quantity demanded by the percent change in price.

Teacher: Who can volunteer to work one example for us on the chalkboard? Nobody. Well, I call on Henry to come to the board and work one example for us (MMT 12).

There was inequality in the use of classroom spaces and times in the case-study schools. In this study, the Commerce and Economics classroom spaces were dominated by girls because they outnumbered boys especially in the urban high schools surveyed. Indeed, girls were able to take up more of their teachers' time and attention in the subjects. This is so because by their socialisation into their mothers' petty trade in the Nigerian cultures, girls enjoyed increased freedom of movement when their mothers allowed them to do street vending, and to move from door to door in order to sell goods after school hours. This did not mean that boys' freedom of movement was limited because the girls enjoyed increased freedom of movement as a result street vending. Generally, boys were often allowed to go out to play football, go to computer clubs as well as hang around with their friends. Yet, the VBE girls felt that their increased freedom of movement helped them to discuss with many customers and thus boost their ability to control and take up more space in the VBE classroom interactions. Perhaps, this was not the situation in the Western setting. A leading gender researcher, Becky Francis points out that girls normally abandoned the domination of space and time to the boys because they were, in her words 'selfless and sensible' (2000). My study found that where girls far outnumbered boys, such as in VBE commerce and economics classrooms of urban senior secondary schools, they often dominated their VBE teachers' time and attention.

The subject-matter (VBE commerce and economics classroom space domination) appears to be affected by both the sex group that far outnumbered the other in the class and the sex that might be particularly interested in joining classroom discussions. However, if the dominant sex class does not participate in class discussions, then their numbers might not make any difference. In this study, girls were more than boys and they were particularly interested in interacting with their teachers far more than the boys. Consequently, they dominated the verbal classroom spaces. Therefore I argue that it is not that one sex group (boys) tended to determine how classroom space was organised in all cases. This is because as



discovered in this study, where girls were the majority in VBE classrooms and did join class discussions quickly; they ultimately dominated both the physical classroom space as well as the verbal space of the Commerce and Economics classrooms. Indeed the different educational histories of the VBE girls further explain their subject choice and class participation in Commerce and Economics. Generally home socialisation experiences inculcated in the girls, - cultural capital which tended to boost them with real life experiences in the teaching and learning of those subjects. Such home socialisation experiences were discovered to be one of the factors that affect classroom participation of VBE girls during commerce and economics lessons. Consequently, I argue that possession of such cultural capital further equips the VBE girls with verbal skills which are defined as the mastering of and relation to language in the sense that it represents ways of speaking. What this implies is that the assigned domestic tasks discussed in chapter 6 of this thesis were found to equip VBE girls with suitable collaborative styles of communication which empowered them to participate in VBE classroom discussions more than did the boys. For example, the data analysis found that the girls acquired gender identity during social interactions with parents and extended family members at home and also in the wider society during petty business trading with their mothers and all those experiences were brought to their VBE commerce and economics classroom interactions.

#### **8.4 Not Taking VBE Boys and Girls Seriously**

This is another aspect of teacher-student interaction. Inside the VBE Commerce and Economics classrooms of the case-study schools, there were some boys at the back rows who never put their hands up to say anything during the lessons and their teachers seemed not to communicate with them from their static positions in front of the classrooms during the lessons. Consequently, those boys appeared not to be taken seriously by their teachers as they unconsciously allowed to be engaged in off-task activities. The analysis of data showed that the girls together with a few boys who often made the quickest response to the teachers' invitations were often treated as serious students. However, those boys who sat at the back of the class; who lacked access to the needed textbooks and who were often very reserved and reluctant to speak appeared not taken seriously by their teachers. As noted earlier, the VBE girls usually sat in the front and middle rows of the class together with a group of boys who sat on the sides near the girls. These were often the ones that the teachers considered serious students because of how they contributed to the classroom interactions. Even though it was not all the girls

that sat at this zone who contributed to the lessons, yet it was some boys who sat at the back of the class who were not responding at all to the class discussions that their teachers did not take them as serious students and often did nothing to get them involved in the class discussions. In the study, the VBE girls were frequently praised for their appearance, personalities and caring attitudes as well as their willingness to participate in the lessons, although some of them contributed little or nothing during class discussions. When the VBE teachers showed an interest in the girls' ideas and that seemed to help them to work harder but did not extend this attention to the boys who sat in the back row, the tacit message was that the girls were more academically serious and worthwhile. However, when I asked the economics teacher at Timo High School why he only chose students who raised their hands to answer questions, he defended his practice by saying, "I didn't want to embarrass the students who didn't want to raise their hands to answer my questions". Even though this statement appeared to be born out of concern for such students, yet it had implications for the students' participation in the lessons. After the girls had answered some of the teachers' questions, the boys in the class became particularly reluctant to join the discussion. The analysis of the data showed that there was dichotomy between the girls who participated and the boys who did not. What this means is that those who often participated felt freer to join the class discussion but those who rarely participated felt more unwilling to do so. Although a handful of boys were participating in the lessons, yet the girls received the lion's share of the teacher's attention. The outcome was that the VBE boys who were excluded from classroom participation tended to engage in disruptive behaviour during the lessons, and many of them often attended class merely to listen without enthusiasm. In this way, they lost the motivation to participate in the lessons and this became yet another factor affecting classroom participation. However, some of the VBE boys who failed to become involved in the lessons might have been shy but it seemed unlikely that most of them were. This finding further confirms the finding of Krupnick (1985) who in her study on "Men and Women in the Classroom: Inequality and its Remedies" discovered that inequality in classroom participation was as a result of teachers selecting mainly students who had the quickest response to their questions. The finding of this study agrees with that finding. The next section discusses biases in classroom communication with specific reference to the lessons and their activities.

### **8.5 Biases in Classroom Communication during Teacher-Student Interactions**

Biases in communication are a part of the VBE teacher and student(s) interaction. The VBE teachers in the schools surveyed were found to exclude their boys in classroom participation in the Commerce and Economics lessons through communication practices that seemed to favour girls more than boys. In chapter 3, section 3.2 of this study, I discussed Arends' (1994) model of classroom structures which comprised task, goal, reward and participation structures (p. 106). This was highlighted with the intention of utilising it in the analysis to describe, explain and illuminate the data. I draw upon Arends (1994) class lesson and its activities to explore biases in classroom communication in terms of the four structures mentioned above. This was used because the model helped me to understand complex communication issues in the classroom participation of teachers and students in the Nigerian context.

The task structures communicated academic and social tasks and activities that teachers had planned for their students to carry out. In the present study, task structures refer to classroom activities that the students were observed doing during the lessons. These activities comprised participation in the lessons; listening to the teacher's teaching, engaging in what the teachers asked the students to do, putting hands up before talking, and avoiding disruptive behaviour. With regard to student participation, it was noted earlier that the girls participated more in the commerce and economics lessons than boys because of their cultural capital obtained from petty business trading of their mothers. Indeed, in the learning practices and preferences of the VBE boys and girls, the analysis of data showed that the girls enjoyed group work while the boys liked working independently. Moreover, the girls were more obedient and attentive to the teachers' instructions than the boys while the latter often rebelled against their orders. Another thing: the goal structures speak of the ways in which the students relate to the teachers and other students while working towards instructional goals. In the present study, the analysis of data showed that VBE girls like to cooperate with other girls that they sit together in carrying out their school work but the boys like to compete and to work individually even if they sit together with other boys.

The reward structures communicate the types of teacher attention to students and/or patterns of teacher feedback to the students. These comprised praise or encouragement, reprimand and criticism or hostility. In the current study, the data analysis showed that the commerce and economics teachers praised the

girls much more than the boys on the quality of their contributions during class discussions. For example, one of the teachers said to the girls: “Good, you got that right; that’s fantastic”. On the other hand, the same teachers openly rebuked boys who supplied wrong answers to a question by shouting at them: “That’s wrong; you didn’t pay attention to my explanation”. What this means is that boys were blamed for being inattentive while girls were praised for paying attention to the teachers and for their participation in the lessons. However, not all the boys were reprimanded like that because a few of them answered their questions correctly. The commerce and economics teachers also praised the girls for their good behaviours during the class discussions. Indeed, one of the teachers remarked: “I like the way you girls are behaving nicely and maturely in this class”.

On the other hand, the Commerce teacher in Bingo High School told the boys off for their disruptive behaviour during the commerce and economics lessons by giving them a stern warning: “Be quiet, pay attention to me and be ready to contribute when I call on you”. However, the boys’ behaviour towards the teacher was that of opposing his orders whereas the girls were submissive and obedient to their teacher. Indeed, the Commerce boys in this rural school often defied their teacher’s authority and sought the backing of other boys near them to support their disobedience. Rebellion seemed to be one of the ways that those boys played out their masculinity in the VBE classrooms and this seemed to affect their interaction with their teachers. On the other hand, the girls were more loyal to their teacher, and usually encouraged other girls to act likewise. Another way in which the boys demonstrated their masculinity was by being reluctant to discuss things with the commerce and economics teachers and fellow students in the classes. They also refused to seek instructional help from the teacher. However, the girls were open to joining in class discussions with their teachers and other students and even obtained instructional assistance during the teaching and learning of the two subjects. This indicates the ways girls validated their femininity and these in turn enhanced their interactions with their teachers in all the case-study schools. The section that follows discusses how the VBE students took turns during class discussions.

Taking turns during the class interactions involve the way that boys and girls respond to the teachers’ queries and ask questions (Arends, 1994). The data from the study showed that the turn-taking in commerce and economics classes depended to some extent on the teaching styles adopted by the teachers. For example, in a recitation or lecture method, the students’ turn-taking was limited, thus

they were to listen to the teachers teach and perhaps individually take down notes. However, in the VBE Commerce and Economics classrooms, the lecture or recitation method was used mainly for teaching and the VBE teachers often used 75 percent of the class time to teach and leaving only 20 percent of the lesson time for discussions with their students while the other 5 percent was used for conclusion and summary of the lessons. As noted above, in the lecture or recitation method, the students' participation was limited to those who quickly responded to the teacher's invitation as noted above in section 8.3 of this thesis. This confirms what Paechter (1998: 25) says in her study on gender differences in schools as she points out that "this form of classroom talk is often seen as competitive, in the rapid to and fro of teacher-student interaction it is usually the first to offer to respond who gets to speak". This also occurred in the VBE classrooms of the case-study schools.

Similarly, the discussion method was used when the teacher asked the students questions and they responded by giving the answers which the teachers evaluated. Generally during discussion method, the VBE teachers interacted with their students on a one-to-one basis, especially when a particular student needed instructional assistance (See section 8.2.1 of this thesis). The teacher's turns were calculated according to his instructional presentation throughout the lesson. However, each time there was an interchange between the teacher and any boy or girl; it was written down as one turn and in this way, all the exchanges during any lesson was compiled to form the total number of turns taken by the teacher, boys and girls. Therefore, the teacher's turns comprised all the turns taken by the teacher when giving explanations, asking questions, evaluating responses and when responding to students' questions or giving both instructional help to students.

Likewise, boys' turns comprised the total exchanges that they had with the teacher during a given lesson while girls' turns consist of the total number of exchanges all the girls had with their VBE teachers. Average turns per male were calculated by dividing boys' total turns by the number of boys in the class during the lesson. In the same way, average turns per girl was calculated by dividing girls' total turns by the number of girls in the class during the lesson. My aim for finding average turn per person was to see whether all the boys and girls in class had a fair chance of speaking at least once during the lesson or whether the lesson was dominated by a group of boys and girls. In addition, the expected percentage of turns was calculated by dividing the number of boys or girls in class by the total number of the students times 100 while actual percentage of turns taken was calculated by dividing actual number of turns taken by boys or girls by the total

number of students' turns for that particular lesson times 100. The aim of calculating this was to determine whether it was boys or girls who talked most during a given lesson.

Generally, the turn-taking data for the study showed that boys took less turns than the girls. This is so because some of the boys lacked the needed texts and were often reluctant to contribute verbally to the lessons, while the girls had access to the needed texts and were often eager to contribute verbally during the lessons. The tables below show turns taken by the teacher, boys and girls during the 3 class observations held in each of the 4 case-study schools. In the tables, all the turns taken by the teachers, boys and girls are indicated. Because the teachers were fully in control of the direction of the classroom interactions, they took more turns than the students. My aim was not to focus on turns taken by the VBE teachers but on turns taken by VBE boys and girls because their involvement in the lessons was very important to me. Indeed, I was interested to find out how gender impacted on the classroom participation of boys and girls in the VBE lessons. In the following section, I present first the commerce classroom observations' turn-taking, followed by those of economics.

**Table 8.1 Timo High School (Urban): Commerce Class Observation Turn-Taking**

<b>Items</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Observation</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Observation</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Observation</b>
No. Of Students	15 (2M:13F)	12 (2M:10F)	14 (2M:12F)
Teacher's Turns	30	35	40
Boys' Turns (Total exchanges between boys and teacher)	2	1	2
Girls' Turns (Total exchanges between girls and teacher)	26	28	24
Average Turns per Male (Boys' turns over no. of boys)	1	0.5	1
Average Turns per Female (Girls' turns over no. of girls)	2	2.8	2
<b>Expected Percentage of Turns</b> (No. of male or female over total no. of students in class times 100)	<b>13M:87F</b>	<b>17M:83F</b>	<b>14M:86F</b>
<b>Actual Percentage of Turns</b> (Boys' or Girls Turns over total number of students' turns times 100).	<b>7M:93F</b>	<b>3M:97F</b>	<b>8M:92F</b>

**Source:** Field work notes taken during class observations

As explained above, the expected percentage of turns was calculated by dividing the number of boys or girls in class by the total number of the students times 100 while actual percentage of turns taken was calculated by dividing actual turns taken by boys or girls over the total number of students' turns for that particular lesson times 100. During my first Commerce classroom observation in Timo High School, the expected percentage of turns for boys was 13 percent of class discussion period. However, the actual turns taken by boys in that class discussion was 7 percent. The difference between expected and actual percentages of boys' turns was 6 percent. The girls' expected percentage was turns were 87 percent but they took more turns than expected, so their actual percentage of turns was 93 percent. The difference between their expected percentage of turns and the actual percentage of turns was 6 percent which the VBE boys were reluctant to join in the class discussion. What this implies is that during this first class observation of commerce lesson in the above named school, girls dominated class discussions much more than the boys. Similar trends occurred during the other commerce classroom observations.

**Table 8.2: Mary Monk High School (Urban): Commerce Class Observation Turn-Taking**

Items	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation
No. Of Students	35 (10M:25F)	30 (8M:22F)	33 (10M:23F)
Teacher's Turns	50	46	48
Boys' Turns (Total exchanges between boys and teacher)	8	4	7
Girls' Turns (Total exchanges between girls and teachers)	22	20	21
Average Turns per Male (Boys' turn over No. of boys in class)	0.8	0.5	0.7
Average Turns per Female (Girls' turns over the no. of girls in class)	0.92	0.90	0.91
<b>Expected Percentage of Turns</b> (No of boys or girls in class over the total no. of students times 100)	<b>29M:71F</b>	<b>27M:73F</b>	<b>30M:70F</b>
<b>Actual Percentage of Turns</b> (Boys or Girls' turns over total number of students' turns times 100)	<b>27M:73F</b>	<b>17M:83F</b>	<b>25M:75F</b>

**Source:** Field notes taken during fieldwork

In this school during the first classroom observation, the expected percentage of turns for boys was 29 percent and girls 71 percent. Nevertheless, the actual percentage of turns for boys was 27 percent while that of girls was 73 percent. The percentage difference between boys' and girls' expected and actual percentages was 2. The situation did not change during the other two classroom observations. The implication of this is that girls dominated the classroom discussions in the lessons by 2 percent of what was supposed to be boys' turns. However, there was an improvement in the number of boys studying commerce in this school as compared to that of Timo High School.

**Table 8.3 Pascal High School (Rural): Commerce Class Observation Turn-taking**

<b>Items</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Observation</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Observation</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Observation</b>
No. Of Students	14 (3M:11F)	12 (2M:10F)	14(3M:11F)
Teacher's Turns	35	30	40
Boys' Turns (Total exchanges between boys and teacher)	2	1	3
Girls' Turns (Total exchanges between girls and teacher)	22	20	21
Average Turns per Male (Boys' turns over no. of boys)	0.66	0.5	1.0
Average Turns per Female (Girls' turns over no. of girls)	2.0	2.0	1.9
<b>Expected Percentage of Turns</b> (No. of male or female over total no. of students in class times 100)	<b>21M:79F</b>	<b>17M:83F</b>	<b>21M:79F</b>
<b>Actual Percentage of Turns</b> (Boys or Girls' turns over total number of students' turns times 100)	<b>8M:92F</b>	<b>5M:95F</b>	<b>13M:87F</b>

**Source:** Field notes taken during fieldwork

In this school during the first classroom observation, the expected percentage of turns for boys was 21 percent while that of girls was 79 percent. The actual percentage of turns for boys was 8 percent, leaving a gap of 13 percent. On the other hand, girls' actual percentage of turns was 92 percent. This means that



girls used more than their expected ratio of turns by 13 percent which was left by the boys. In terms of enrolment, girls were more than the boys and consequently, Commerce is associated more with femininity than with masculinity. With respect to the distribution of classroom resources, girls dominated classroom discussions as well as attracted more of teachers' attention than boys.

**Table 8.4 Bingo High School (Rural): Commerce Class Observation Turn-taking**

<b>Items</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Observation</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Observation</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Observation</b>
No. Of Students	<b>18 (7M:11F)</b>	<b>15 (5M:10F)</b>	<b>17 (6M:11F)</b>
Teacher's Turns	36	30	35
Boys' Turns (Total exchanges between boys and teacher)	4	3	3
Girls' Turns (Total exchanges between girls and teacher)	20	15	14
Average Turns per Male (Boys' turns over no. of boys)	0.57	0.6	0.5
Average Turns per Female (Girls' turns over no. of girls)	1.81	1.5	1.27
<b>Expected Percentage of Turns</b> (No. of male or female over total no. of students in class times 100)	<b>39M:61F</b>	<b>33M:67F</b>	<b>35M:65F</b>
<b>Actual Percentage of Turns</b> (Boys or Girls' turns over total number of students' turns times 100)	<b>17M:83F</b>	<b>17M:83F</b>	<b>18M:82F</b>

**Source: Field Notes taken during Fieldwork**

In Bingo high school during the first classroom observation, the difference between the expected and actual percentages of boys' and girls' turns 22 percent. As I explained above, this percentage indicates the extent of class dominance by girls. However, the gap between the number of boys and girls studying commerce was reducing and hence more encouraging than those of Timo and Pascal. This

implies that the gender stereotype was softening as there was a slight increase in the number of boys in commerce classes.

**Table 8.5 Timo High School (Urban): Economics Class Observation Turn-taking**

<b>Items</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Observation</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Observation</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Observation</b>
No. Of Students	60 (27M:33F)	55 (22M:32F)	56 (25M:31F)
Teacher's Turns	50	48	42
Boys' Turns	2	4	5
Girls' Turns	5	8	11
Average Turns per Male (Boys' turns over the no. of boys)	0.07	0.18	0.20
Average Turns per Female (Girls' turns over the no. of girls)	0.16	0.25	0.35
<b>Expected Percentage of Turns</b> (No. of boys or girls over the total number of students times 100)	<b>45M:55F</b>	<b>40M:60F</b>	<b>45M:55F</b>
<b>Actual Percentage of Turns</b> (Boys or Girls' turns over total number of students' turns times 100)	<b>29M:71F</b>	<b>33M:67F</b>	<b>31M:69F</b>

**Source:** Field notes taken during fieldwork

In this school during the first classroom observation, the difference between the expected and actual ratio of turns taken by both boys and girls was 16 percent. This difference indicated the percentage of additional class discussion time dominated by the girls. Furthermore, Economics tended to recruit slightly more girls than boys. What this implies is that more girls tended to offer Economics than Commerce in the Case study Schools.

**Table 8.6 Mary Monk High School (Urban): Economics Class Observation Turn-taking**

<b>Items</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Observation</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Observation</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Observation</b>
No. Of Students	65 (26M:39F)	60 (22M:38F)	61 (23M:38F)
Teacher's Turns	40	45	48
Boys' Turns	12	10	11
Girls' Turns	24	26	25
Average Turns per Male (Boys' turns over the no of boys)	0.46	0.45	0.47
Average Turns per Female (Girls' turns over the no. of girls)	0.62	0.68	0.65
<b>Expected Percentage of Turns</b> (No. of boys or girls in class over the total no. of students times 100)	<b>40M:60F</b>	<b>37M:63</b>	<b>38M:62F</b>
<b>Actual Percentage of Turns</b> (Boys or Girls' Actual turns over total number of students' turns times 100)	<b>33M:67F</b>	<b>28M:72F</b>	<b>31M:69F</b>

**Source: Field notes taken during fieldwork**

In Mary Monk high school, girls took more turns than boys and this stood at 67 percent during the first classroom observations.

**Table 8.7 Pascal High School (Rural): Economics Class Observation Turn-taking**

<b>Items</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Observation</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Observation</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Observation</b>
No. Of Students	58 (38M:20F)	55 (35M:20F)	57 (37M:20F)
Teacher's Turns	30	35	32
Boys' Turns (Total exchanges between boys and teacher)	10	8	9
Girls' Turns (Total exchanges between girls and teacher)	8	9	7
Average Turns per Male (Boys' turns over no. of boys)	0.26	0.23	0.24
Average Turns per Female (Girls' turns over no. of girls)	0.4	0.45	0.35
<b>Expected Percentage of Turns</b> (No. of male or female over total no. of students in class times 100)	<b>66M:34F</b>	<b>64M:36F</b>	<b>65M:35F</b>
<b>Actual Percentage of Turns</b> (Boys or Girls' turns over total number of students' turns times 100)	<b>56M:44F</b>	<b>47M:53F</b>	<b>56M:44F</b>

**Source:** Field notes taken during fieldwork

In Pascal High School, there were more boys than girls but the latter (girls) took more turns than the boys. The percentage of the dominance was 10 percent and this occurred during the first classroom observation in Economics at this High School.

**Table 8.8 Bingo High School (Rural): Economics Class Observation Turn-taking**

<b>Items</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Observation</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Observation</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Observation</b>
No. Of Students	61 (40M:21F)	57 (36M:21F)	58 (37M:21F)
Teacher's Turns	45	48	50
Boys' Turns (Total exchanges between boys and teacher)	20	18	19
Girls' Turns (Total exchanges between girls and teacher)	17	20	18
Average Turns per Male (Boys' turns over no. of boys)	0.5	0.5	0.49
Average Turns per Female (Girls' turns over no. of girls)	0.81	0.95	0.86
<b>Expected percentage of Turns</b> (No. of male or female over total no. of students in class times 100)	<b>66M:34F</b>	<b>63M:37F</b>	<b>64M:36F</b>
<b>Actual Percentage of Turns</b> (Boys or Girls' turns over total number of students' turns times 100)	<b>54M:46F</b>	<b>43M:57F</b>	<b>51M:49F</b>

**Source:** Field notes taken during fieldwork

Here, there was a similar trend just like those of other case study schools. A glance through the table during the first classroom observation reveals that girls dominated that class discussion by 12 percent. This shows that the VBE boys did not dominate commerce and economics class discussions across all the case study schools. Indeed, girls participated in VBE classroom discussions and achieved more in them because of the cultural capital which they brought with them to the classroom participation. This is one of the main findings of this study. In order to support this finding with personal explanations of the research participants, the following questions were asked during the semi-structured interviews with the VBE students and their teachers across the case study schools.

Researcher: During your classroom talk in commerce or economics, do you think you are given some time to ask and answer questions?

Daniel: Yes Sir (MSB).

Researcher: In your experience, who do you think ask and answer questions more questions during the teaching and learning of commerce and economics?

Daniel: I think girls sir because they're asking to get out of confusion (MSB).

Researcher: Oh is it?

Daniel: Yes Sir (MSB).

Researcher: In your thinking then, does it seem to you that girls often talk more the boys in your during your commerce and economics classroom discussions?

Daniel: Yes sir because they are talkative (MSB).

However, I feel that I should comment upon the way in which Daniel interpreted the VBE girls' greater participation in class discussions in a negative way. It could be inferred that Daniel felt that girls participated because they were confused and because they were talkative. The implicit favourable comparison with VBE boys is that boys understand the lesson and are not talkative. Indeed, Daniel's accusation of the girls was not a compliment. From the data collected during the lessons, girls' dominance of classroom interactions in VBE Commerce and Economics was a reflection of what actually took place during the lessons and as such; it should not be portrayed in a negative way. Across all the four mixed sex high schools, the VBE boys from Bingo High School were the only ones who felt that girls were dominating in Economics class discussions. The analysis of the data during the third Economics classroom observation indicated this and such dominance percentage stood at 12 percent in favour of girls. Similarly, when VBE teachers were asked whether they thought that boys or girls in their classes talk more or in general dominate the classes. They responded that the majority of the VBE girls maintained a positive relationship with them and that they are usually very zealous and compliant during the lessons. The teachers said that girls were often the first to put their hands up to answer questions. They added that such often resulted in the girls being selected to answer or ask questions during the lessons. The teachers claimed that the girls talked more than the boys in their commerce and economics classes but some felt it was not all the girls that were zealous and obedient as some of them often remained silent in class. The teachers said that such girls when they were asked questions in class; their usual answer was "I don't know". In the same way, some VBE teachers explained that a majority of the boys

maintained a negative relationship with them through misbehaviour and failure to join in the class discussions, even though not all the boys were misbehaving.

Pollard (2005:270) said that the general characteristics of classroom communication deal with three basic issues: 'who speaks and by how much, where is the talk directed and what is the talk about'. A close examination of the turn-taking data presented above reveals that the VBE girls dominated all the classroom talk during the VBE commerce and economics class lessons in all the four case-study schools. What this means is that the girls displayed their femininity by zealously and obediently participating in the lessons and their activities while most boys revealed their masculinity by withdrawing from the lessons. The talks in both commerce and economics were directed towards meaning-sharing in the VBE curricular contents and thus boosting the knowledge, skills and experiences of the VBE boys and girls in the particular lesson topics handled by the teachers. The talks were all about equipping them with meaningful learning experiences for useful living in a global economy as well as for further studies. Indeed, the VBE boys' and girls' attitude and behaviour towards participating in their lessons tended to be affected positively or negatively by their perceived gender identity during such lessons and their activities. The four classroom structures discussed above tended to interact and shape each other during the lessons in commerce and economics. At such times, the teachers' method of teaching also played a crucial role and affected the number of boys and girls who verbally contributed to the lessons. Therefore, the section below discusses the teaching styles used by the VBE teachers in the teaching of commerce and economics.

### **8.6 Methods of Teaching**

As noted above, it was observed that the Commerce and Economics teachers of the case-study senior secondary schools used the traditional teaching style. The finding from the data analysis showed that classroom teaching was teacher-centred. In such teaching method, I realised that the VBE Commerce and Economics teachers in all the four case-study schools stood in front of the class and explained to their students what they wanted them to know about the lesson topic first before asking them few questions. The data obtained during class observation showed that the duration of the lessons was forty minutes and the popular teacher-centred styles of teaching in use comprised the recitation and discussion methods. The data analysis showed that six of the observed lessons used either the lecture or the recitation method while eighteen of the lessons used discussion methods.

As pointed out above, the lecture method of teaching was used by six of the VBE teachers to interact with their students. I came to know that in this method, the teachers totally controlled the lessons and directed the classroom talk. They only just asked their students few questions and evaluated their answers. The data obtained during observations revealed that the basic element of this method was that the teachers gave out few invitations which a handful of students responded to and the teachers gave feedback on such responses. As I observed during the VBE teachers' teaching, the disadvantage of this method was that it created little opportunities for the boys and girls to make verbal contributions to the lessons and in this way limited teacher-student interaction. Consequently the method rather limited students' verbal contribution during the lesson. The lesson in section 8.2.2 of this thesis could be categorised as lecture method. As could be deduced from it, students' verbal contribution to the lesson was limited by the teachers' teaching method.

However, I observed that the discussion method was the dominant teaching style in use during 18 classroom observations. The VBE teachers used this style of teaching to interact with their students. I came to find out that this method of teaching Commerce and economics ensures students' participation in the lessons. By using this method, I felt that the VBE teachers combine elements of whole class interaction with asking questions, selecting individual students to answer as well as evaluates their answers. I found out that the teachers conducted successful class discussions by first explaining the lesson topic to the students. Then the teachers stimulated their exchanges and contributed helpful questions and comments and by so doing supply them with needed facts. By the end of the lessons, they analysed and summarised the topic so discussed. From the class observations data obtained, I found that the VBE teachers appeared to view their students as actively vibrant people and their teaching-learning processes as cooperatively, shared social experiences. The data further showed that the teachers usually used the first five to ten minutes to explain the main points of their lessons while the remaining thirty to thirty five minutes were used for class discussions. I came to realise that these usually take the form of a classroom interaction often called 'initiation-response-feedback' described by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) where the teacher initiates an exchange, usually in the form of a question and many students respond by raising their hands. Then the teacher selects one of them to answer, and she/he provides feedback on the student's answer. After that, the teacher initiates the next question and so on. However, I found out that this pattern was not always in the hands of the



teacher because during most of the discussion time, it was between the students and their teacher and/or between one student and the other students. For example, the Commerce and Economics teacher in Timo, Mary Monk and Pascal High Schools used this teaching style to involve their boys and girls during whole-class discussions. This method helps to promote students' participation in the lessons. The data analysis showed that eighteen out of twenty-four lessons were delivered using discussion methods of teaching. These eighteen VBE teachers were quite open towards their students and their ideas. Indeed, their engagement with individual boys and girl involved making them work in pairs during class discussions. In the interviews, I asked the students which style of teaching they enjoyed most. The simple response was that they all liked the discussion method because it was very efficient in creating a participatory climate for them during their lessons. Thus, such class activities created opportunities for boys' and girls' participation in the Commerce and Economics class discussions. The discussion style of interacting with VBE students gives room for classroom interactions among the students during the lessons. The lesson in section 8.2.1 of this thesis could be categorised under discussion method of teaching as it made possible for classroom interactions to take place.

However, it is also important to point out that not all the boys and girls were able to engage in discussions more than once during the eighteen lessons that used discussion method. However, those groups of girls who dominated the classroom talk during the lessons interacted with the teachers and other students often more than once. On most occasions, these groups of girls called out the answers without the teachers selecting them to do so. In the Commerce and Economics classrooms of Timo, Mary Monk and Pascal High Schools, the teachers gave more instructional contacts to the girls than the boys because the former asked the teachers more questions than the boys. However the VBE teachers gave interactional contacts to most boys who were dozing in the back rows and to others who were talking to their friends. By instructional contact, I mean the teacher giving assistance to students who sought help during teaching-learning process, while interactional contact deals with class management and the disciplinary measures used to bring the class under control for productive teaching-learning. Similarly, the commerce teachers gave more interactional contacts to the few boys who offered commerce because they were unwilling to participate during class discussions. Indeed, such boys were very few in all the commerce classrooms, and as a result they were not able to compete against the girls who outnumbered them and dominated the classroom space.

### 8.7 Student-student Interaction

The student-student interaction within the VBE Commerce and Economics classrooms was limited to sharing learning materials like textbooks, notebooks, pens, pencil and eraser. It also involved some girls discussing with their friends the answers to questions asked by the teachers. Moreover, it embraced girls sitting together to find solutions to the assignments given by the teachers during unofficial hours at school. In all the case-study schools, the VBE boys and girls preferred same-sex contacts to cross-sex contacts. For example, whenever the commerce and economics students in the surveyed schools had an opportunity to share with one another, they often chose to share with their own gender. This was observed in their choice of study group partners, playmates and in voluntary seating arrangements.

Generally, interactions between the VBE students themselves during the Commerce and Economics lessons were not common. This was because classroom interactions were teacher-led and consequently, there were limited opportunities for interaction between the students themselves in the VBE classrooms. However, during 'preparatory sessions' that I observed, which was a period from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. (after the official teaching hours of the school), two or three Commerce and Economics girls who were friends and who normally sat together on the same desk often discussed the assignments given to them by their teachers. Such a preparatory session was usually organised by the case-study schools from Monday to Friday so that all their students could sit in their classrooms after the official teaching hours to do assignments or some other readings in preparation for the following day's classes. The VBE teachers told me that two or more teachers were often appointed by the principals of the school every week to be in charge of the 'preparatory class' organisation. Their duty was to make sure that all the students remained in their classes to do some academic work. In order to achieve their aims, such teachers often worked hand in hand with school and class prefects. In the preparatory sessions that I observed, the VBE Commerce and Economics boys often used a part of such periods to carry out their assignments independently while a part of it was used to disturb other students, especially when they discovered the prep masters were not close-by. In this way, they affected the learning of the other students. For example, during one prep session in Timo High School, one Economics boy after he had completed his assignments went around the class singing the song "Send down the Rain" and thereby disturbed other students who were bending down to complete their assignments too. Still during the prep

sessions, I came to realise that girls who sat on the same desk usually collaborated with other girls in order to discuss and find the solutions to their complex academic problems. Consequently, they relied on their femininity during student-student interaction by working with other girls in order to enhance their knowledge while the boys' resort to their masculinity during student-student interaction resulted in a disruption of the concentration of other students during such sessions.

The students' interactions continued in the playground when the prep classes were over across all the case-study schools. The observation data showed that at that time, everyone was free to go out for games and other outdoor activities, while some left for home. I observed that in the case-study schools, boys and girls had different games and activities to engage in and they seldom played together. The data obtained during observation showed that the games available to the boys and girls in the schools included football, volleyball, badminton, table tennis and lawn tennis. The boys typically played football, badminton and basketball while the girls preferred volley, skipping or jumping the rope. During this period, a group of boys wearing football jerseys often went out to the fields to play football while the girls in small groups went to different areas of the school premises to jump ropes or play 'pintul' or 'dindin'. Pintul and dindin are typical games for girls. Pintul involves a group of girls throwing a soft ball-like object at another member of the group and once she has been hit, she picks up the soft object and throws it at the others. This goes on and on in a similar manner. Dindin involves drawing boxes on the ground and each girl takes a turn to jump the boxes while entering some with one leg and others with both legs. Many girls stood around the edge of the pitch watching the other girls playing. Similarly, many boys and girls stood at the side of the football field watching boys playing football. However, there were many other students who did not play any games. The great majority of such students left for home. The observation of those students who were left at school showed segregated clusters of boys and girls, and most of them were walking, talking and playing in pairs or in small groups of three to five. It was very rare to see boys and girls interacting.

I further observed that girls played football with other girls in Timo high school and they even had a standing girls' football team there. For example, the girls' team was very strong and had won a trophy for the school. I realised that there was only one football field for both boys and girls and one games master. I talked informally with the games master about the organisation of the two teams. He told me 'I drew up a weekly time-table for both teams on the days to use the football field'.

## **8.8 Summary**

This chapter explored how gender affected the VBE classroom participation of the boys and girls in the four case-study schools in terms of teacher-student and student-student interactions. The main finding of this chapter was that boys rarely dominated classroom talk in Commerce and Economics across all the case-study schools. However, it was discovered that classroom talk in those two subjects were dominated by girls. Again, it was discovered that in all the VBE classes regardless of whether there were more girls or more boys, many boys sat at the back or sides while girls sat at the front in all the schools surveyed. The study also showed that a number of other factors affected the interaction of teachers and students, some of which included unequal attention given to boys and girls, not taking boys seriously. In addition there were primary socialisation and home influences. The chapter further highlighted student-student interaction during playground activities. The next chapter will explore the VBE teachers' and students' gendered perceptions about getting jobs when they have graduated from high school.

## **Chapter 9: Gendered Views about Business Labour Market**

### **9.1 Introduction**

In chapter 8, I discussed how the ways VBE teachers and their students played out their gender affected classroom participation of boys and girls during VBE lessons. In that chapter, issues such as unequal attention to boys and girls during lessons; classroom participation structures, teacher-student and student-student interactions were also discussed. The main finding for the chapter was that boys rarely dominated classroom interactions in the Commerce and Economics lessons across all the case study schools. The purpose of this chapter is to explore gendered perceptions of the business labour market as held by VBE teachers and students in the case study schools. By investigating this, I hope the teachers' and students' gendered perceptions about the business labour market might provide me with information with which to reflect on their VBE classroom participation and on their attitude and behaviour to the teaching and learning of Commerce and Economics. Using empirical data from 48 research participants generated in 4 mixed sex high schools in Nigeria, this chapter focuses on the perceptions of the VBE teachers and students concerning their future work in the business labour market. The chapter started with some historical background to gender in the vocational preparation of the VBE students and explored gender differences in their subject choice. Following this, it focused on how the students tried to understand parental expectations about getting employment after graduation from the high school. Lastly the chapter discusses the aspirations of the students who study Commerce or Economics or both subjects across all the case study schools and concludes by highlighting the reasons for the large number of the VBE girls studying Economics in the schools surveyed.

In essence, this chapter addresses what the VBE boys and girls and their teachers think the opportunities might be in the business labour market for the students studying Commerce and Economics at the case study schools when they will ultimately graduate from the high schools. In order to set the ball rolling, the meanings of labour market, business labour market and business occupations are explained below.

### **9.2 Definitions of Concepts**

Labour market refers to a place where the services of people are being traded (Cramp, 2006: 1). It is another name for job market where high school

graduates and others usually look for employment after completion. Therefore business labour market refers to the job market where the services of vocational business graduates are being traded. Similarly, business occupation is used here to refer to any form of work that is engaged in by men and women with the aim of making a living (Anyaele, 1991). Thus, Commerce and Economics belong to the family of business occupations. Specifically, Commerce is a branch of business occupations which deals with the distribution of goods and services and includes trade and aids to trade such as transport and communication, banking and finance, insurance, warehousing and advertising. These aids to trade are all types of business occupations involved in rendering services to people. There are also other aspects of jobs linked with Commerce such as secretarial and clerical jobs, petty trading and micro small enterprises. These are often parts and parcel of business labour market. More often than not, business jobs of the service categories globally are dominated by women. In this study, Commerce although studied by both boys and girls, was dominated by girls in all the case study schools. On the other hand, Economics is a social science subject which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses (Lionel Robinson, 1932). As a social science subject, Economics deals with the management and control of scarce economic resources. Therefore, the knowledge of Economics tended to aid rational decision making in the utilisation of limited economic resources. However, Economics as a discipline appeared to be dominated by men. In the study, Economics was studied by both boys and girls. Surprisingly, the observation data showed that there were more girls than boys in the Economics classes of the urban high schools. Conversely, there were more boys than girls in the Economics classes of the case study schools located in the rural villages. For the next discussion in this chapter, I draw upon the data on documents reviews generated from the four case study schools to explore the perceptions of the VBE teachers and students on gender in the vocational preparation of the VBE students.

### **9.3 Gender in Vocational Preparation of VBE Students**

The Nigeria's National Policy on Education (NPE, 2002, revised) was one of the schools' documents which I reviewed using content analysis. As noted in section 2.5.4 of this thesis, the senior secondary education in Nigeria has two broad aims within the overall national objectives and these included preparation for useful living within the society and preparation for higher education (NPE, 2002 Revised). The preparation for useful living within the society is education for meeting the needs of

the labour market and for preparing young people for work while the second broad aim – the preparation for further education was purely academic. Indeed, all efforts at the senior secondary school level are usually geared toward achieving those two broad aims. The aim of the first broad aim has been to develop the talents of young people to improve the knowledge and skills of the labour force so that Nigeria could maintain a successful labour force in the global economy as well as to produce a more flexible labour force, fitting education more to the needs of employers (Okoro, 2003). Vocational education is education for and about vocation and the main concern of vocational business education (VBE) in Nigeria is to prepare the recipients for the world of work. Generally, the VBE department is often referred to as a vocational department and the teachers made it clear that training of students for clerical jobs and for micro small enterprises (MSE) were a large part of what they were out to achieve. For example, when the principals were asked about the focus of VBE in their schools, two of them said as follows:

“In my school, VBE prepares students mainly for clerical work in offices” (TTF).

“In these days that work is hard to get, VBE in my school prepares students for self-reliance” (PTF).

Consequently, as clerical jobs and micro small enterprises largely employ more women than men, the VBE curriculum’s emphasis on vocational preparation often ensured that it overwhelmingly enrolled more young women than men.

The VBE has been one of the most stable vocational programmes taught in the Nigerian senior secondary schools for many years. Indeed, business subjects had been introduced into the public secondary school curriculum since 1930, when the first government owned clerical training centre was established at Oshogbo in the former Western Region of Nigeria, now known as Oyo State, Nigeria (Ehiamekalor, 1990: 33). The purpose of the centre was to train secretaries, book-keepers, clerical workers and junior administrative workers (ibid: p. 33). By 1955, several government training centres and privately owned evening and day business schools were established in various parts of the country (Ehiamekalor, 1990: 33). In the early days of VBE programme, the emphasis was on the acquisition of saleable skills in typewriting, shorthand, office practice, secretarial duties, book-keeping and store-keeping. However, the curricula of these various training schools were not structured to adequately meet the needs of the Nigerian offices (Ehiamekalor, 1990: 33). For example, the privately owned business schools were established by

individuals who were themselves secretaries and clerical workers in public and private organisations and they also employed untrained and poorly qualified teachers to teach those students who came to their business schools essentially to learn typewriting, shorthand and book-keeping (Ehiamekalor, 1990).

Indeed, the vocational business education (VBE) programmes in Nigeria had remained without much changes to the present day, except that a few new subjects such as commerce and economics had been added to the VBE curriculum of the Nigerian senior secondary school to make school leavers to be aware of the peculiar conditions of the Nigerian economy (Ehiamekalor, 1990). For example, commerce had been introduced into the curricula of both junior and senior secondary schools while economics was being offered in the senior secondary schools only. At present, the VBE programme in the junior secondary level involves the study of book-keeping, commerce, office practice, shorthand and typewriting and these subjects are grouped together as one course and given the name "Business Studies" (Ekpenyong, 1995: 108 - 109). At the senior secondary school level, however, the VBE programme comprises the study of book-keeping, commerce, economics, typewriting and shorthand and all of them are allowed to stand on their own as separate subjects (Ekpenyong, 1995). These subjects are taught to impart specific marketable skills and competencies to the recipients. Indeed, learning the skills inherent in the VBE subjects is central to acquiring the knowledge and skills needed in the business labour market. This is because it is the acquisition of those skills that differentiate one student from another and it is what employers normally wanted. According to Gaskell and McLaren (1991: 372) "constructions of skill play an important part in the reproduction or transformation of social relations in the workplace". Therefore people are distinguished in the business labour market by the quality and quantity of the skills acquired.

Generally, some skills in women's jobs are often taken for granted and are lowly paid for while those of domestic labour are not paid for (Gimba, 1996). On the other hand, skills in men's jobs are usually recognized and paid for highly (Gaskell and McLaren, 1991). Thus, skill training permeates some business subjects much more than it does other school subjects, and the number of boys and girls in the subjects reveal the relative emphasis on the need for skill training. Men tended to dominate economics because it prepares people for managerial and professional positions while women dominate those that prepare secretaries and clerks in Nigeria (book-keeping, commerce, shorthand and typewriting) most clearly teach specific business and job-related skills. In line with this, Gaskell (1992) said that such



females after graduation are often employed in offices as subordinates in order to play the role of office 'wives' – such as smiling, typically cooperative, and decorative women who are helpmates in whatever tasks need to be done – answering the phone, receiving the public, making the coffee, anticipating the needs of the boss, calming furious visitors, pleasing everyone in the office, remembering birthdays, and listening to personal stories. Therefore they have to be trained on how to service their male bosses in offices. What this means is that VBE preparation at the high school level tended to act as a vehicle for reproducing more young women than men who are often employed in subservient positions in the business labour market. Indeed, the VBE preparation is aimed at producing female clerks and secretaries who are usually being dominated by their male bosses.

In support of this, the principals of the case study schools said that VBE courses usually provide vocational training to young women and men who want to go into micro small enterprises (MSE). The latter is an informal petty business that is established, financed and run by self-employed persons with limited autonomy and often in exploitative relations with large businesses often operated by men. The VBE Commerce and Economics curricula contents teach the VBE students a wide variety of topics that are likely to deal with MSE such as definition of Commerce and its branches, demand and supply, management of business resources, occupations, production, trade, business units, business organisations, structure of business, business law and on marketing (See section 7.7 of this thesis). The knowledge and skills acquired through those training tended to prepare the VBE boys and girls for many business jobs in the business labour market as well as for micro small enterprises (MSE).

One of the implications of the vocational training given to VBE students at the high school level is that what a vast majority of women and girls who study VBE courses learn is obviously tied to lowly paid job skills which have much to do with servicing the needs of the male bosses in the business world. I acknowledge there is a possible tension here because the principals earlier said that VBE provides training to young people who want to go into MSEs. As could be deduced from their comments above, some emphasise the role of VBE in preparing students for employment, others for self-employment. I argue that a training course could and probably should do both and I feel that a curriculum that emphasises employment in business occupations could also be geared towards emphasising entrepreneurialism. Indeed, the training for employment in office skills might in turn groom the VBE students to have access to low status jobs while entrepreneurial

skills might equip women and/or girls to engage in petty trading businesses that do not threaten men's power but rather replicate, improve and legitimate it. These types of job skills normally placed women and girls in a subservient position with restricted bargaining power in the business labour market. Consequently, the power relations in MSE and office jobs do not make room for women to have economic, social and political empowerment because they are still being dominated by male suppliers who control large businesses or by male bosses in paid employment.

The National Curriculum for Senior Secondary School Commerce states that 'Commerce has been designed to give students an overview of the world of business and to enable them develop a better understanding of the individual's relationship with business and the place of business in a developing economy' (CESAC, 1985: 34). The teacher's scheme of work for senior secondary class three points out that the course 'provides useful general notions and commercial skills for students who would immediately enter the world of work' (CESAC, 1985: 56). During my interview with the commerce teacher at Timo High School; he indeed stressed the need for vocational business skills as he reported thus:

I'm trying to equip them with self-reliant and employability skills as the inthing – good business skills, good entrepreneurial skills, good typing and shorthand skills, good book-keeping skills and I tell them personal interest is of great value in business' (TTM)

In agreement with the above, the Economics course is based on a similar foundation, emphasizing the acquisition of knowledge of the structure and functioning of economic institutions – commercial, industrial and financial (NPE, 2002 revised). The data analysed showed that Economics was gaining popularity among VBE girls, although many young men who are planning to start their own entrepreneurial businesses see it as relevant to their vocational needs. The National Curriculum for Senior Secondary School Economics states that the course 'provides students with an understanding of economic principles and methods so that they may function more effectively as decision-makers in economic questions and more responsible as adult citizens' (CESAC, 1985: 65). The teacher's scheme of work for senior secondary class three gives the Economics objectives course to include among others: (a) 'To prepare and encourage students to be prudent and effective in the management of scarce resources and (b) To raise students' respect for the dignity of labour and their appreciation of economic, cultural and social values of the Nigerian society' (CESAC, 1985: 45). In my interview with the Economics teacher at Bingo High School, she said:

In these days that school leavers find it hard to get white collar jobs and they end up establishing and managing their petty businesses, so I give them some stuff in that direction – to equip them with some sort of practical issues in it (BTF).

When asked to speculate whether there is a relationship between what Economics students learn and what it takes to manage personal business, she said:

Erm...I think the relationship is quite close but I don't have material to duplicate a successful entrepreneur's job, which in the real world varies according to the types of business done. So I only try to gist them on key things about successful small scale business management (BTF).

She further added that economics will help students to get a job as an employee:

I had some discussions with some employers of labour, and their suggestion always put down the fact that you have taken economics, even if it is not for office work. It is a proof that you have had some experience in business occupation (BTF).

The assurance of vocational preparation in business subjects gives a reason for students especially girls, to offer those subjects. The fact that students who study business subjects in school could take up appointment as clerks or secretarial workers or be self-employed give business teachers the confidence to motivate their students once they are in their classes. In line with this, the commerce teacher at Mary Monk High School told his class this during the lesson:

As graduates of vocational business education, there are many opportunities awaiting you out there. All you need is to acquire adequate commercial skills and you'll be selling (MTM).

When asked by a female student from the same school to tell what opportunities await girls who study commerce, this is how he responded to it,

You mean opportunities for girls, aha; the list is very long, beginning from secretaries, clerks, stenographers, receptionist, sales girls, etc. (MTM).

The assurance of vocational preparation also set the foundation for the segregation of the girls from the boys for secretarial jobs, both numerically and in the way they are understood by teachers and students. The segregation of women and girls in secretarial and clerical jobs serve to reproduce them as second class citizens in the workplace. In this type of work relations, men tend to benefit at the expense of women from relatively better job opportunities, working conditions and promotion prospects even though in most of the business subjects in the senior

secondary schools, girls far outnumbered boys. The experience and perception of one Timo commerce boy goes like this.

Researcher: I was in your class last week to observe how you interacted with your teacher and other students and I discovered that there were more girls in commerce class than boys. Please what do you think was the cause of that?

Daniel: Actually, according to my own understanding, if you take a good look at our society today, a lot of girls do carry goods from one door to another. I think girls go into commerce because they have done it practically at home. So I think girls go into commerce because they understand it. Commerce also enlightens them about how to transact their business (TSB).

The assurance of vocational preparation is also founded on the fact that there are specific commercial skills that have to be taught in the senior secondary schools, which if mastered, could equip boys and girls with marketable skills that, in turn enhance their productivity as employees or self-employed. The VBE teachers' understanding of preparing their students for future work means making them to practise activities which they will be carrying out at work, and thus reproducing the work-place in the classroom. For example, the SSS 3 students offering Commerce in Timo High School were given assignments to type letters using manual typewriters. In order to complete that assignments, I came to realise that girls collaborated with other girls to get the typewriters and other materials as well as cooperate with other girls to complete their assignments while the boys in commerce class normally sit alone to do such work. In order to find out how those boys felt in female-dominated classroom setting, the perception of boys about their feeling is obvious in the following exchange with two students at Timo High School:

Researcher: Well, what's your feeling like in female dominated classes?

Male Student: At first it was really hard, only few of us in class, sometimes two or three of us in the class, in fact, we felt lonely and it was not easy at all (TSB).

Female Student: I think it's difficult 'cos they got to act like us, while other boys too called them sissy...; that sort of names, you see (TSG).

The gender relations of VBE boys and girls in the female dominated class lessons are often affected by feminine virtues of care, concern, connectedness and nurturance. For example, during commerce class lessons at the case study schools, the VBE girls dominated the physical space of the classrooms whereas boys occupied just few seats at the back of the class. I observed that these girls

liked their teachers to give opportunities to the few boys in their classes to participate in the lessons. This was in direct opposite to gender relations in male-dominated class lessons which are usually affected by masculine values of competition, power and domination. For example, in the economics class lessons of the rural case study schools, a group of boys dominated class spaces and were observed throwing every weight to compete with the girls during the lessons.

The VBE teachers felt that during lessons in VBE Commerce and Economics, their students acquired vocational business skills which in turn increase their opportunities in the business labour market. Actually, as a result of unemployment problems among VBE school leavers, VBE curricula of the Nigerian senior secondary schools have also tended recently to lay much emphasis on how to establish and maintain micro and small enterprises. For example, the principal of Mary Monk High School when asked to comment on the VBE commerce and economics curricula of her school had this to say:

Researcher: Can you please tell me about your commerce and economics curricula in this school?

The Principal: The commerce and economics curricula have been planned in such a way that they prepare children to fit into our society, I'm talking of the business aspect of life whereby after their training, they will be able to live on their own, they will be able to fit into the business activities so that they could meet up with the demands of the society (MTF)

Researcher: Alright, so what are the focuses of these courses?

The Principal: We are focusing on raising people that will be self-reliant after completion; they will be able to live on their own, without necessarily waiting for the government to employ them' (MTF).

Moreover, when the female economics teacher in Mary Monk High School was asked to say something about her experiences with the students in her subject during class lessons, she had this to say:

In my own course, the girls take active part with keen interest because they have been engaged in businesses at home after school hours, so they participate more as well as put into practice what they learn (MTF).

There is, however, some evidence that small enterprises did exist in and around all the case study schools. For example, the shops where students usually buy their provisions, pens, pencils, exercise books as such items were not supplied free by the schools to students, were established, owned and managed by women. Furthermore, women also dominated canteen and restaurant businesses locally nicknamed "Mama Put" where staff and students normally buy drinks and food

during break times. The observation data which I have informally discussed with the VBE teachers and their students as well as the managers of those small enterprises around and within the case study school compounds revealed that those enterprises have the following important features: they operate as one-person undertakings with their female children rendering unpaid services. They are concentrated much more in the rural areas than in urban areas. They are primarily vendors and petty traders while a great majority of them are engaged in buying and selling of goods and services. The National Bureau of Statistics (2012) pointed out that the number of such small enterprises in Nigeria is nearly twice the level of employment in registered, large-scale enterprises and in the public sector. They also said that the majority of the small enterprises were owned and operated by women and that they were usually home-based. The small enterprises tend to achieve economic efficiency by enterprise size. By implication, there is high female participation in micro small enterprises and more girls than boys are usually used to help their mothers in the operation of the business. As a result, many girls tended to study commerce as one of their school subjects and to own small businesses in future. The students' perception of this is obvious in the following exchange with students at Pascal High School:

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Researcher:     | Please tell me what made you to choose to study commerce as one of your senior secondary class three subjects.  |
| Female Student: | The reason is because I want to engage myself in business activities and to have time to care for my husband and children when I marry (PSG)                                |
| Researcher:     | What do you think engaging in business activities can do for you?   |
| Female Student: | I think it will help me to assist my husband financially. May be if my husband can't take care of the family well, I can go into petty trading to support the family (PSG). |

According to Mead and Liedholm (1998) micro small enterprises have been recognised as a major source of employment and income in many countries of the Third World. In a study which they (Ibid) conducted to find out the dynamics of micro small enterprises in developing countries, they discovered that as many as a quarter of all people of working age are engaged in micro and small enterprises activities. Thus, small enterprises are likely to provide employment for many school leavers in Nigeria especially women and/or girls who chose to study VBE subjects.

In summary, the key points raised in this section (9.3) included the following:

Gender in Vocational preparation; Vocational preparation and the historical development of VBE subjects in Nigeria; vocational preparation and Commerce and Economics National Curricula. Others included: vocational preparation as the basis for segregating men's and women's skills; the assurance of vocational preparation as the foundation for teaching specific commercial skills, and as the foundation for teaching self-reliant skills as well as the reason why students choose to study different VBE subjects. The next section deals on gendered VBE subject choice in the Nigerian senior secondary schools.

#### **9.4 Gender differences in VBE Subject Choice**

In the interviews with Commerce girls in all the schools surveyed, they said that they saw their choice of Commerce as an opportunity to equip themselves with clerical and commercial skills that employers often wanted. What this means is that girls chose Commerce for reasons other than academic because they wanted to prepare themselves for the business labour market by equipping themselves with the types of commercial skills that would assist them to be gainfully employed either in public or private organisations and/or to self-reliant. On the other hand, the reason why many boys study Economics in the Nigerian senior secondary schools is because the subject is designed more for life skills, basic skills or decision-making skills than for working for an employer in a secretarial or clerical capacity; while at the tertiary level, Economics prepares students for professional and managerial jobs. Consequently, boys' choices of Economics are considerably less job-oriented as it is one of those that emphasize general life skills while at further education level; it provides boys with managerial skills rather specific job skills. For example, when VBE boys and girls were asked to state why they came to study Economics as one of their subjects at High School, some of them responded were as follows:

Researcher: Please tell me why you come to offer Economics as one of your High School subjects?

Mary: I take Economics because it gives me the kind of knowledge I need for my day-to-day decision making (BSF).

Another VBE boy said as follows:

Thomas: Because Economics teaches me what goes on around me daily, that's why I study it (BSM).

In addition, a lot of boys study Economics and other academic subjects which allow them access to university education whereas girls chose Commerce

because it prepares them for sales, clerical and secretarial jobs, and thus they receive job training skills for some specific jobs. The latter are linked to the extent to which the girls had learnt the skills during their training because employers usually wanted the best of the skilled workers. Consequently, the VBE girls see their senior secondary schooling as a time to acquire specific job training especially those that might not have the opportunity to further their education where they would acquire additional job skills. From the foregoing, it is clear that for many years in the Nigerian senior secondary education, boys and girls have continued to make differential choices of VBE subjects to study, and that VBE programmes tended to train girls for clerical and secretarial jobs while boys were being trained for managerial jobs. This clearly has direct implications for job opportunities in the business labour market and for further education. Gaskell (1995) points out that VBE courses divide boys and girls in the secondary schools, teach them different things, reinforce stereotypes, and channel girls into low-paying, female jobs while boys are trained for managerial positions. In other words, this constitutes the ways that high schools teach girls about traditional feminine roles and boys masculine roles. The finding of this study agrees with that of Gaskell of 1976 – 1977 who carried out a study on why business education was so closely connected to preparation for work for young women in one Vancouver high school and discovered that the programme trained girls for low-paying jobs while boys were trained for prestigious jobs (Gaskell, 1992).

In order to gain in-depth understanding into why so many girls study VBE Commerce, I asked one Commerce girl in Timo High School as follows:

Researcher: Please tell me why you decided to study commerce in your school?

Alice: It is because I like to participate in business activities and commerce deals with the exchange of goods and services. That's why I am interested in it (MSG)

The other VBE girls from Bingo, Mary Monk and Pascal High Schools gave similar responses when they were asked to speculate their reasons for choosing to study Commerce. Again when I asked boys and girls why they decided to study both Commerce and Economics in their schools, their responses were as follows:

Researcher: Why study Economics?



Ala: Because I want to study business management in my higher education and I like that course very well. That's why I combine commerce too to enable me knowing it (BSB)

Researcher: Why study commerce?

Kempia: Because I want to work in any office as clerk or secretary (BSG).

Researcher: Why study economics as one of your senior secondary school subjects?

Arit: Because my school counsellor advised me to take it since I was getting fine scores in it, I can study in my university (MSG).

Researcher: What made you choose to study commerce and economics in this school?

Daniel: Because they'll help me to know how to manage my scarce resources and how to trade and make profits. It will also teach me to take good decision (MSB).

Researcher: Please why do you think they will help you to trade and make profit?

Daniel: Because the knowledge of it plus that of economics can help me start my own business and manage it well to make profits (MSB)

Researcher: Please tell me why you offer economics as one of your subjects in your class?

Mary: Because I want to go university to study economics and come back to be manager (PSG)

Researcher: But who influenced you to study both Commerce and Economics in your school?

Mary: My parents advise me to study them so that I can do well in my university education (PSG).

According to VBE boys and girls, the first reason why they decided to study Commerce and Economics was the opportunity that those subjects might give them to establish and own their small businesses, manage their own scarce resources well and to take good decisions. The students said the reason why more girls than boys decided to study these two subjects included: acquiring the skills to manage scarce economic resources, having good decision making skills as well as obtaining the skills to establish micro small enterprises. To start with, the data showed that more VBE girls than boys thought that Commerce and Economics might equip them with the skills to become entrepreneurs of petty trading businesses. They also

thought that obtaining credits in those subjects could give them opportunities for further education in tertiary institution such as the universities. Indeed, the data showed that both girls and boys aspired to study Economics and Management courses in their university education so that they could become accountants, managers, marketers and economists. This new perception for VBE girls appeared to be contrary to their earlier perception which indicated that they aspired to be petty traders and clerical workers. In this new aspiration, the girls said that they needed to move out of their gender stereotyped perception about getting low paying jobs to getting best paying jobs. When I enquired how they came to embrace this new viewpoint, they said that after seeing good role models like their principals and vice principals in senior management positions in their schools, they felt they could emulate their examples. Furthermore, when I asked them if any person(s) had encouraged them to study Economics and other Management courses in the university, I was given two different responses. One said it was their school guidance counsellor while the other said her parents. Consequently, I asked the principals of the case study schools to give me previous data on the proportion of VBE boys and girls in SSS3 who had progressed to higher education. Regrettably, they were not able to supply such data. On my own, I tried to obtain data on this from the National Bureau of Statistics specifically on national, regional, state and school data, but at the time of this thesis, there was none. I therefore acknowledge that there is a need for a separate research to study how VBE boys and girls were influenced to undertake to study of Economics and Management courses in their university education level and about the proportion of them that had progressed to higher education.

Another reason for choosing to study Commerce and Economics was because the VBE girls said they could work in any business offices which mean that these courses are directly relevant to finding a paid job in any public or private organisations. In the Commerce course materials widely used by VBE teachers and all their students, it is clearly shown that 'officers in the secretarial class are normally attached to members of the administrative class as administrative assistants and they are expected to undertake responsibility for the daily secretarial and clerical functions of their offices' (CESAC, 1985). The course outline also indicates the general duties of those involved in clerical and secretarial work to include typing from manuscripts, taking down dictations and typing from cool notes, handwriting of business records, managing information in the offices, operating business machines such as computers, photocopiers and data-processing machines, handling and

processing mails, applying business languages and other duties as assigned. These are the duties that are most attractive to girls.

On the other hand, the Economics students said that the subject has a more general course material and as such it attracted a greater mixture of boys and girls. This finding agrees with that of Williams and Yeomans (1994) who carried out a similar study on Business Studies in the UK and found out that Economics attracted a greater mixture of boys and girls in the surveyed schools. Indeed, Economics course materials encourage and prepare VBE students to be 'prudent and effective in the management of scarce resources' (CESAC, 1985). Consequently, the course itself focuses on the establishment and resource management of micro small enterprises and this in turn trigger the interest of both male and female students to study the subject. Moreover, the study of Economics like those of the core subjects of science and arts courses tended to prepare students for best paying jobs after university education. This is because they are designed to fulfil the requirements for admission to university education or to another college education. It has been argued by Kelly (1981, 1985, and 1987) that 'science' is one vehicle through which masculinity is reproduced. Conversely, 'arts' is another means through which femininity is reproduced and girls as a group outperformed boys in all English classes, earning more credits than boys (Kosmerl, 2003); even then there are some exceptions to these as some boys are good at the arts and some girls are good at sciences. In this study, more VBE girls than boys who were good at Economics and were able to obtain credits in it in their Exams hoped they would gain admission to any universities where they might prepare themselves for best paying jobs after their graduation from such institutions.

As noted earlier, when the VBE boys and girls were asked who influenced their decision to study Commerce and Economics in their schools; some said their parents while others said their school counsellor. In agreement with this, Francis (2004) pointed out that the people who often influenced students' subject choice comprised firstly, Parents/family – the different attitudes and expectations of the social roles of men and women are played out in the households through perceived behaviour in relation to work and domestic tasks; secondly, peer groups – emphasize and define what they have learnt as acceptable and traditional gender behaviour and identities for the sexes; thirdly teachers can further gender divide in everyday class management particularly where there is no agenda to challenge gendered choices; and lastly, guidance counsellors can unconsciously strengthen gender stereotyping by not taking a proactive approach to widening choice, and by

only providing gendered work placements, although Arit had a different experience in her comment above. Francis (2004) carried out a similar study on gender and subject choice in the UK and obtained similar influences on subject choice. My findings confirmed her finding.

### **9.5 How VBE Students Understand Parental Expectations about getting a job**

The VBE boys and girls said that their parents wanted them to study hard and succeed in life. With regards to discipline, they said that their parents expected them to be obedient and of good behaviour at home, in school and at all places. They also said that their parents liked it when they carried out their assigned domestic tasks. However, the students said that the biggest concern that their parents have was about their finding jobs in their field of study after graduation from the high schools. Consequently, about their future occupational roles, they said that the parents expected them to acquire education that would enable them to take up paid employment or further their education. What this implies is that their parents expected them to acquire vocational knowledge and skills that would enable them to get different kinds of jobs in the different sectors of the business labour market. Indeed, some VBE girls said that their parents encouraged them to study and acquire both economic and commercial skills at school so that they could either take up any paid jobs in offices or be able to establish their own business organisations.

On the other hand, boys said that their parents advised them to study Economics so that they could manage scarce resources prudently as well as take up prestigious managerial jobs in future. It could be inferred from what the students said that the reason why the parents expected the boys and girls to acquire different skills is that 'the notion of skills is central to relations of power in the workplace' (Gaskell, 1991: 371). Gaskell (Ibid) further said that "“Skilled” is a category that gives status and importance to work in common parlance and in wage negotiation' (p. 371). In this study, the data obtained showed that parents who lived in rural villages expected more boys than girls to study Economics because they thought that would give them more power and status at work place. However, it was deduced from the data that parents in urban centres expected more girls than boys to study both Commerce and Economics because that would help them to get paid jobs after graduation from the high schools. Indeed, parents who lived in the urban centres encouraged both girls and boys to study both subjects so that they could acquire the skills inherent in them for a productive lifestyle in the global economy. Nevertheless, parents in the rural areas encouraged more VBE boys than girls in the study of

Economics. In agreement with the foregoing, one male Economics teacher in Pascal High School and two male Economics students in Bingo High Schools said as boys, their parents expected them to study Economics so that they could get jobs that would earn them enough money to meet the financial needs of their future families. This is how the male Economics teacher told his story to me:

I know my parents wanted me to study economics so that I can get a job which will fetch me plenty money. So I got to put in all my effort into learning so, so and so topics though it was quite tough at that moment and my friends were discouraging me. I made up my mind to face it (PTB).

The two male Economics students from Bingo High School had this to say:

You see my elder sister go for commerce because my mother say so, as for me she say I must study econs (BSB).

My father is an economist while my mum is a trader, so they say I must study economics so as to be like him (BSB).

When asked to speculate why their parents wanted them to study economics and not commerce, they further said:

'It is because they know the many places I can get some managerial jobs quickly if I study economics' (PTB).

'Because my father think economics help boys get big post, so he say I must study it' (BSB).

'I know it is because they know econs can help me economise things, so I'll not be wasteful' (BSB).

Another male commerce teacher claimed that his parents expected him to study Commerce so that he could come and manage their retail businesses well to raise sufficient money to support their family. In support of this, two female commerce students at Pascal High School had this to say concerning their future occupational roles.

My parents demanded that I should have nice character, and to work hard whether at home or in school. They stressed that I must learn commerce so that I can do business with it (PSG).

My father said I must study commerce so that if I don't get office job, I can get money and start my shop business (PSG).

As could be seen from the foregoing, parents usually have a stronger expectation on both boys and girls to study and acquire all aspects of commercial and economics skills because they are the courses that lead to getting paid jobs in the business labour market. Apart from securing paid jobs in the business labour market, parents expected their boys to study the two subjects so that they could come and manage their MSEs for them. There was evidence of mothers' and parents' relations did encourage girls to study VBE Commerce and Economics in

the senior secondary schools, sometimes because they had done so themselves. The data obtained showed that boys tended to perceive that VBE Commerce was more suitable to girls than to them and some quoted their parents saying “that would help girls in their petty trade or in their jobs in office”. Many students actually referred to the ‘secretarial course’ when indeed they were talking about commercial education, although both the teachers and the schools surveyed did not use these terms. However, some parents expected the girls to study only Commerce so that they could work as clerks and secretaries in both private and public organisations or to establish and run petty trading businesses or micro small enterprises (MSEs) while at the same time carrying out their unpaid domestic tasks. A careful examination of the evidence presented above shows that parental expectations for both boys and girls in getting jobs in the business labour market appeared to be similar as they all felt their children should get employment or be self-reliant after graduation from the high school. The next section is on gender in VBE students’ aspirations.

### **9.6 Gender in VBE Students’ Aspirations**

In all the semi-structured interviews with the VBE boys and girls at the case study schools, I gathered that they had two main types of aspirations: educational and occupational aspirations. Beginning with educational aspirations, they showed high interest and ambition to study harder and obtain good results at the WASSCE International Examinations so that they could further their studies. For example, in Timo High School, some VBE students said that even though Commerce and Economics might offer them immediate employment when they had left high school, yet, they said that they would like to study for a degree in one of the following: Accountancy, Business Management, Marketing, Secretarial Administration, Banking and Finance. My interviews with the Commerce and Economics boys and girls concerning why they studied those two subjects showed that they offered them because they thought the subjects might give them immediate employment when they had graduated from the High School. Surprisingly among those interviewed, just a few girls gave office work as their desired occupation at the time of subject choice but many said they wished to further their education to study one of those courses listed above. When inquired why they wanted to further their education, this is what one of the economics girl at Mary Monk High School said:

‘Education, I think will give me the best of all I need in life’ (MSG).

The students seemed to understand the value of education and schooling and were therefore very ambitious to get more of it. In agreement with the above, Bellamy and Guppy (1991) said that “in the pursuit of a fair and just society, education is something that should be open to all, restricted to none” (p. 186). Even though the comment was referring to the importance of education in Canada, yet I find it useful to link it with the comment of the economics student at the above-mentioned school to explain the educational aspirations of the VBE students at the schools surveyed. In the current study, the VBE students thought that education would give them the good things of life because it tended to open the door to almost every life goal. In line with the above, Leach (2003: 385) said that ‘alongside the teaching of appropriate academic and employable skills, education instils in the students a sense of social responsibility, democracy, tolerance and justice, self-discipline and respect for others and that the students are expected to emerge from their long years of schooling as conscientious and responsible citizens who would be able to interact constructively with others and contribute to the well being of their communities’. Consequently, the VBE boys and girls being aware of the values of education to their personal lives said that they would like to continue their education up to first degree, master’s degree and even up to PhD levels. When asked how they would be funded, the same economics girls showed confidence in her parents’ support. This was what another economics girl from Bingo high school said concerning parental support.

My parents like it when I get good results. They assured me of their support and always encourage me to study hard to become somebody they can be proud of (BSG).

Therefore the VBE girls seemed to believe that the parents would be able to sponsor them to the level of university education. The reason for this is because schooling, it has been argued, “does play the most important role in determining a person’s occupational destiny and income, access to education is fundamentally important” (Creese et al. 1991, as cited in Gaskel and McLaren, 1991). The students thus hoped that at some point in their schooling, they would be able to get well-paid jobs, even though this might not always be the result of schooling.

In addition, another Commerce girl in Timo High School told me ‘my parents want me to study to become a Company Secretary, Marketing Manager or a Business Studies Teacher’. When asked why the preference for becoming one of those, instead of becoming an Accountant, the response was: ‘I would like to be an Accountant, but I am not good at Mathematics’. The girl further said ‘I know I can become a Business Studies Teacher or a Secretary’, then I can marry an

Accountant'. One other Economics girls from Bingo High School regretted that poor family belief and negative values attached to girls' education appeared to serve as a hindrance to her self-actualisation. Contrary to this, some VBE boys and girls who schooled in urban High Schools said their parents encouraged them to study to become General Managers, Company Directors, Chartered Accountants, and Business Tycoons. This is what one male Economics student in Mary Monk High School said on this.

My parents want me to study to become that great Accountant, Bank Manager or Marketing Manager that I could become' (MSB).

However, some rural parents appeared to have stronger ambitions for VBE boys than girls to attain great professional heights. For example, VBE boys who schooled in rural High Schools like Pascal and Bingo told me that their parents often encouraged them to study Economics to the university level so that they could get good paying jobs in future. On the other hand, the girls who schooled in those rural High Schools said their parents did not encourage them in the same way that they did the boys. Nevertheless, I came to realise that more girls than boys at the case study schools were confident and ambitious to study any courses that their parents might perceive to be difficult and 'no go areas' for them and that they were capable of doing better in such school subjects. Nevertheless, their societies and parents' aspirations were likely to keep them from studying those subjects that will help them to realise their dreams. Moreover, the school procedures and practices as translated in VBE teachers' and students' behaviour and attitudes did more to point boys and girls to take business subjects based on gender, as well as enforcing cultural beliefs, than any other factor. For example, one commerce girl in Bingo High School said she was afraid of having anything to do with school subjects involving any forms of calculations because her Commerce Teacher once told her that as a girl, she would not be good at calculations. Similarly, one boy said he was good at shorthand and typewriting and really wanted to study those two subjects so as to enable him to become a secretary but could not do so because of prejudice by other boys and even teachers against boys taking those subjects. The VBE boys claimed that, even if they were interested in studying those subjects, they would not be able to do so because of poor parental and societal attitudes towards atypical subject choices.

What is more, the neighbouring communities surrounding the four senior coeducational senior secondary schools where the research was conducted were reported to have people in different occupations and professions such as petty



traders, shop-keepers, restaurant businesses popularly known as “Mama Put”, clerical workers, secretaries, teachers, politician, soldiers, policemen, engineers, bankers, and transporters and these people serving as role models were not unlikely affect the mind-set of the students about future occupational roles. Indeed, as the research communities were made up of urban and rural communities, as such there were some professional people living in the urban communities. Therefore, the VBE boys and girls seemed to perceive these economic activities about the labour market in their own ways. Thus the students thought that the set-up of the labour force as well as images in textbooks and in the mass media on occupational roles had important influences on their thinking about their future careers. The students thought that there were women role models in business areas such as business statistics and accountancy and this was likely to encourage girls to move into the male dominated fields, instead of opting to study female dominated field such commerce, shorthand and word-processing where clerical workers are trained. However, in the study, boys were reluctant to move into and study female-dominated subjects because the reasons mentioned earlier. On the other hand, girls were prepared to move into male-dominated disciplines and to make a career in them. However, when the VBE girls were asked about issues of discrimination in male dominated fields, one female student in Timo high school studying both Commerce and Economics said,

I'm afraid to study other subjects outside commercial for fear of discrimination in future work places. I know with these two subjects, I can start and manage my own business (TSG)

Generally, some VBE girls asked their Commerce Teacher in the above-mentioned school about employers discriminating according to gender with respect to certain types of jobs they (employer) often say they are meant for boys and men. These girls felt that the attitude and behaviours of such employers who are likely to prefer men to women in the business labour market might hinder them from getting their dream jobs. Thus, the VBE girls felt that some employers of labour often hold sexist preconceptions that some jobs are suitable to men because the women do not have the physical or psychological capabilities to do such jobs. As a response to their question, the teacher said that women and girls form the majority in some business jobs. As a result, the girls felt happy that by studying Economics and Commerce, they were within the business jobs arena usually dominated by women and in this way would be able to avoid discrimination at future work places. On the other hand, the data showed that a large number of girls were studying Economics

alongside Commerce. At this juncture, I will turn to highlight the reasons for the large number of girls studying Economics in the case study schools.

### **9.7 Reasons for the Large Number of Girls Studying Economics**

The large number of girls studying Economics in Nigeria in general and across all the case study schools in particular raises some questions that needed me to explore the reasons why this was happening in the teaching and learning of VBE. There appears to be some complex reasons why so many girls are studying Economics presently. One of the reasons is the VBE girls' primary socialisation into petty trading businesses of their mothers. Generally, the act of buying and selling is very important to understanding the Nigerian economy and has a long history of women's involvement in it. Petty trading in Nigeria has been dominated by women for many years and has been viewed as female dominated arena. The girls, having acquired cultural capital from petty trading, come to be taught Economics in the formal school classroom. Such Economics classroom experiences tended to influence girls' attitude and interest towards their latent and endowed business potentials. Indeed, the lessons in Economics appear to make girls more confident in themselves and such confidence has tended to influence their classroom participation during Economics lessons at school. For example, one Economics girl in Bingo High School when asked to speculate on what assisted her during the Economics classroom interactions responded as follows:

'You know sir, I help my mum to buy and sell and that make me know Economics' (BSG).

Another Economics girl in Pascal High School when asked the same question said as follows:

'What assists me is the idea I get from my mother business' (PSG).

Moreover, girls' study of Economics has influenced them to organise their personal affairs better, thus enhancing to some extent, a certain level of personal development. For example, two Economics girls in Timo High School when asked to speculate what the study of Economics has done for them responded as follows:

'You see sir Economics does me well because I know how to manage my money' (TSG).

'What Economics has done for me is to help me manage my time well' (TSG).

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that girls who studied Economics at school might use their time and resources better. The VBE girls said that when they

come to their Economics classroom interactions, they are better disposed to listen to other economics students' views and thereby make better contributions. All these have tended to make VBE girls like the study of Economics and in this way increase the number of them studying the subject across all the case study schools.

In order to capture the other set of possible reasons, I find Browne's (2008) perspective on "why females now do better than males" and on "changing gender identities" to be useful. Here, I will adopt his four possible reasons which appeared to correspond to my findings on what brought about the large number of girls in the Economics classes of the case study schools.

The first possible reason for the large number of girls studying Economics at the case study schools was parents' attitudes to their education. This finding confirmed his finding. According to Browne (2008) it has been argued that one of the single most important factor explaining girls' educational success and failure was the degree of parental interest and encouragement in their school career. During my interviews, I asked two Economics girls the question below:

Researcher: But who influenced you to study both Commerce and Economics in your school?

Mary: 'My parents advise me to study them so that I can do well in my university education (PSG).

Arit: 'My mum ask me to study it' (MSG).

From this response, I came to know that the parents of Mary, like those of other VBE girls, became interested in her education and thus encouraged her to choose Economics as one of her subjects in the senior secondary schools. The parents therefore advised her to study Economics as well as Commerce in order to boost her knowledge of the two subjects for a better understanding of Economics and Management courses during her university education. Consequently, one reason for the large number of girls studying economics in the case study was parental advice and encouragement.

According to VBE girls, a further reason for the large number of girls studying Economics in the schools studied was cultural capital acquired by girls during assigned domestic tasks. The VBE girls said they brought some knowledge and skills from petty trading businesses of their mothers to the Economics classrooms which helped them to participate in the lessons. According to Browne (2008:498) cultural capital comprised the knowledge, language, attitudes and values as well as lifestyle which give students who possess them an in-built advantage in the

education system. As noted above, the VBE girls had knowledge of the Nigerian economy through petty trading. They acquired to some extent, the language of business and they also developed business attitudes, values and the lifestyles necessary for success in daily conduct of the trade.

Another reason for the large number of girls in the Economics classes included global awareness about girls' education created by caused by women's movement and feminism. According to Browne (2008:384) "the women's movement and feminism have achieved considerable success in improving the rights and raising the expectations and self-esteem of women. They have challenged the traditional stereotype of women's roles as housewives and mothers. This implies that the VBE girls now look beyond being a housewife and mother to taking up some prestigious and professional jobs in future. This was reflected in the interview excerpts already pointed out above.

The next possible reason why there are a large number of VBE girls studying Economics in the case study schools is because the girls' ambition is growing, and there are more positive role models and more employment opportunities for women (Browne, 2008: 384). For example, three out of four school principals involved in the study were females. In addition, in one of the rural high schools, the two deputy principals were females. Furthermore, the economics teacher in Mary Monk high school was a female. As a result of these role models, girls have tended to be more ambitious. In addition, many of the girls growing up today have mothers working in paid employment who provide positive role models for them. Moreover, many girls have come to know that the future involves paid employment, often combined with family responsibilities (Browne, 2008:385). I acknowledge that this is speculative. However, it might be reasonable to expect a sort of cumulative effect because as more girls come to choose Economics and do well in it, so other girls coming up from junior secondary schools (JSS) see it as a subject they can choose and do well in. This is one of the ways in gender profiles of subjects change.

The fact that girls work harder and are better motivated during lessons constitutes a reason why so many of them decided to study Economics in school. Browne (2008: 385) points out that "girls work harder, are more conscientious and are better motivated than boys." In addition, "girls put more effort into their schoolwork; spend more time on doing their homework properly; take more care with the way their work is present and they concentrate more in class" (p. 385). In this study, a large number of VBE girls who tended to play out their femininity in ways listed above decided to study Economics as one of their school subjects.

Lastly, the female identities appear to be changing in many parts of countries of the world. It is argued that girls are now doing better than boys in education and women too are becoming more successful than men in many areas of the labour market (Browne, 2008: 71). Browne (Ibid) further opines that girls and women often have better communication skills than men and that these are the skills which are required for success in the service economy for dealing with customers, orders, clients and complaints. The view that the place of women is in the kitchen is being replaced by role models of successful women in all spheres of life. Both men and women now engaged in paid employment to generate money with which to support the family, thus undermining that the traditional concept of male breadwinner.

### **9.8 Summary**

The chapter provides data on the gendered perceptions of VBE teachers and students about the business labour market. The chapter starts with some historical background to gender in the vocational preparation of the VBE students and explores gender differences in their subject choice. Following this, it focuses on how the students understand parental expectations about getting work after graduation from the high school. Lastly the chapter discusses the aspirations of the VBE students who study Commerce or Economics or both subjects across all the case study schools and concludes by highlighting the reasons for the large number of the VBE girls studying economics in the schools surveyed. The next chapter deals on summary of key findings, implications and limitations of the study.

## **Chapter 10: Summary of Key Findings, Implications and Limitations**

### **10.1 Introduction**

I began this study anxious to learn about gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of Vocational Business Education (VBE) in Nigerian senior secondary schools. The major purpose of the study therefore was to explore the interrelationship between gender and VBE classroom participation in Commerce and Economics lessons in order to show how the schooling processes of VBE boys and girls were gendered. My interest in this study was triggered by gender imbalance in VBE classroom participation specifically in the two subjects which I observed first as a business student in the late 1970s and then as a VBE teacher in secondary school in the 1980s. At my tertiary education level, the women who were my classmates were highly vocal; thus there was equal participation of both male and female students in our lessons. However, at the secondary school level, I observed as a VBE teacher and a student, that the level of participation of boys during Commerce and Economics lessons was significantly higher than that of girls. For example, in all the classes that I was a part of, I noted that the girls only listened while the boys did the talking. Puzzled about that imbalance, I decided to investigate the interrelationship between gender and classroom participation in the two subjects during this PhD programme. Consequently, I wrote my research proposal about that problem, defended it and left for field work in my country.

Out there as a field researcher, I was personally shocked to note that during the observed lessons, boys were reluctant to speak while the girls dominated the classroom talk during the lessons. In fact, it was the opposite of what I had presented in my research proposal as well as the opposite of what I had observed some years ago. Indeed, the VBE girls dominated classroom talk in Commerce and Economics classrooms. This challenged my first views about boys' dominance of classroom talk of VBE class discussions. The gender issues addressed by this study were complex and the findings reflected those complexities. The complexities were compounded by the fact that some of the analytical findings were not in agreement with past research studies of classroom interactions in the Western settings and those of other places. The reason for this may be that things had started to change in favour of girls' education globally. Therefore in making sense of the gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of VBE in Nigerian senior secondary schools, I identified four significant aspects. These were: (i) ideas about gender (see chapter 6); (ii) gender in informal and formal aspects of schooling (see chapter 7); (iii) gendered VBE classroom interactions in Commerce and Economics classes

(see chapter 8); and (iv) the gendered perceptions about the business labour market (see chapter 9). Below, my motive is to discuss these main analytical findings in brief.

## **10.2 Ideas about Gender**

I was interested in exploring ideas about gender and gender identity that the VBE teachers and students brought to Commerce and Economics classroom interactions because such understanding influences how they think about themselves, how they define themselves, how they behave towards one another, how others see them, the expectations that others have of them and the way they treat them (Browne, 2008:38). According to Browne, J., (2007) "Such identities, if established will be conditioned by their experiences, fallible knowledge of situations, perceived possibilities, normative ideals, plans and constraints": (p.153). Thus having a gender identity impacts the ways the VBE teacher and their students tended to interact with one another during the lessons. Such a gender identity also plays a crucial role in determining the nature of social connection with other people like themselves. The analytical findings of this study showed that when VBE students were asked to state whether being a boy or a girl meant anything special to them, they often acknowledged and repeated stereotypical ideas, pointing out that it did because it was their God-given right. Again, when the students were asked to declare the attributes of boys and girls, they also acknowledged and identified gender stereotypes. Moreover, when they were invited to describe how they saw themselves in relation to the opposite sex and that definition is weighed with each gender giving themselves positive values and the other negative ones. The VBE boys mentioned that they were adventurous, brave, tough, active and strong but saw girls as weaker vessels, soft, always submissive, timid and in need of protection. On the other hand, the girls described themselves as hardworking, nice, attractive, intelligent, friendly and caring. They described the boys as being stubborn, lazy, proud and irresponsible. Indeed, the girls acknowledged some of the attributes and qualities ascribed to them but rejected those associated with weakness, dependency and secondary status. Therefore, the study found that the gender identities of VBE boys and girls were conditioned by their own experiences of their gendered selves. Indeed, it has been argued by Dunne (2009:8) that gender identity is something "in a constant process of becoming."

In addition, the tasks assigned to boys and girls at home, in school and in the wider society help to strengthen gender stereotypes. Social Role theory helps me to think about how individuals are socialised into the context. Gender Regime helps me

to think about the structural and contextual issues raised by the study; while the theory of Cultural Capital helps me to think about how individuals operate within the context. Indeed, Social roles theory (Eagly, 1987) enables me to understand how tasks assigned in families tended to shape gender identity of boys toward agentic roles and girls' identity toward communal roles (Eagly, 1987). In the study, the social roles theory (Eagly, 1987) further illuminates my understanding of early socialisation experiences of VBE boys and girls which divided socialisation into different but complementary roles for boys and girls. The girls complained that they were given more domestic tasks than the boys. In addition, the VBE girls said they were socialised into their mothers' petty business trading where they assisted to sell things to people. They said that they made extensive contacts with many customers and that that in turn helped them to develop better communication skills as well as learned to discuss with other people.

The cultural capital that girls acquired from such interactions with the local business community was brought to the VBE classrooms and this in turn facilitated their interactions with the teachers and other students during lessons in commerce and economics. This finding was quite complex because many scholars like Bakari (2009) said that excess domestic tasks assigned to girls left them with little for study. Although the girls were given too much domestic tasks together with petty business trading of their mothers, yet the girls said that such assigned tasks turned out to be a learning process which inculcated into them the spirit of hard work and the ability to work with other people and communicate intelligently. The girls further said that the skills and knowledge acquired from those tasks and from petty business trading had facilitated their success at school by providing them with real-life experiences necessary for success in the study of commerce and economics. Thus, the cultural capital that the girls acquired from interactions with parents during the execution of domestic tasks and from the local business community was brought to commerce and economics classrooms and this in turn facilitated their participation in class discussions much more than did their male counterparts. Moreover, I came to learn that social markers such as school uniform, first names of boys and girls and social networks were highly gendered because they helped boys and girls to conform to the schools' gender regime (Connell, 1996).

From the foregoing, it was clear that the ideas about gender that the VBE teachers and students brought to their commerce and economics classroom interactions resulted from the different gendered experiences that shaped their everyday lives. Based on the analytical findings generated from the VBE teachers



and students in the study, it was necessary to support Bradley (2007) conceptualisation of gender as a lived experience that is learned, produced, and reproduced by VBE boys and girls through socialisation in the family, school and wider society. These lived experiences were often brought into their VBE classroom interactions.

The analytical findings of this study revealed a range of typology of gender ideas that both the VBE teachers and students brought into their Commerce and Economics classroom interactions. Such typologies of gender ideas included same-sex-related knowledge of gender which involves boys and girls separating themselves into same sex groups. For example, VBE boys sat at the back and girls in front and middle rows of the classrooms during lessons. Another typology of gender ideas was socio-culturally-related knowledge of gender which shows that VBE boys and girls are different as well as religious-related understanding of gender which upholds that being a boy or a girl is a God-given social position. Furthermore, there is behaviourally-related idea of gender which describes gender from the perspective of traits, behaviours and attitudes of the researched. Moreover, there is stereotypically-related idea of gender which involves the assumption made that all men share similar characteristics and that all women have the same features. Lastly, there is gender role-related idea of gender which describes the roles assigned to boys and girls at home and in school in terms of their masculinity and femininity. These issues were elaborated in more details in chapter 6. The social roles theory (Eagly, 1987) helps me to explore the students' household-related idea of gender that deals with the gender divisions of labour within the family. All these various understandings contributed to shaping the students' gender identities which they brought to the VBE classroom interactions. Such understandings also help to move people away from associating gender with the concept of sex as pointed out by Dunne (2009:8). However, I found that the VBE teachers did not understand the meaning of gender and therefore equated it with sex. In the interviews, I came to know that none of the VBE teachers was taught about gender during their teacher education programmes and there was no gender policy in all the schools surveyed. The data analysis showed that the VBE teachers' ideas about gender were based on the notion of men as the heads of families and women as wives and mothers. Generally, the VBE classrooms were also under the powerful forces of the informal and formal curriculum which are the next analytical findings of this study which I discussed below.

### 10.3 Gender in Informal and Formal Curriculum

In this section, my motive is to explore two interrelated aspects of school lives. The first was the informal aspects (which according to Dunne (2007) is the often the taken-for-granted aspect of curriculum) while the second is formal aspect of schooling. The analytical findings of this study showed that both the informal and formal curriculum was highly gendered across all the four case-study schools (see chapter 7). The gender regime theory used in this study helps me to understand the view that masculinity is often associated with authority and the concentration of men in senior and management positions (Connell, 1996, 2002). Although the analysis of the study data showed that there were more female teachers than their male counterparts in the schools surveyed yet the male teachers were paid higher salaries than their female counterparts. Moreover, the male teachers were found teaching conventional male subjects like mathematics, sciences and technical subjects while female teachers taught the conventional female subjects such as home economics, Christian religious knowledge, literature and English language. In addition, it was discovered that although many male teachers occupied the senior and management posts, three of such senior positions (Principal's position) in the case study schools were occupied by women. Generally, other low paying positions were occupied by the female workers who served as junior teachers, clerks, secretaries, cafeteria workers, and matrons. Another finding revealed that the male teachers were appointed heads of the labour, games and disciplinary committees while their female counterparts were appointed as heads of the entertainment committees. Some of the female teachers were appointed assistant heads to work hand in hand with their male peers. Women in such positions provided services to men and they do not threaten male authority. The male teachers also used sticks to beat the boys on their buttocks and the girls on the palms of their hands. In some cases, the female teachers often asked the male teachers to punish their students for them. At other times they used verbal censure in lieu of corporal punishment and boys felt that this was more humiliating than beating them with sticks.

It was discovered that there was a gender disparity in the total enrolments of students across all the case-study schools because there were more boys than girls. However, there were more girls than boys in the urban senior secondary schools. Similarly, in the rural senior secondary schools, there were more boys than girls. I also found that the VBE girls far outnumbered the boys in the Commerce lessons in all the case-study schools. On the other hand, more girls than boys were found studying Economics in the urban senior secondary schools surveyed while more

boys than girls studied Economics in the rural high schools. Nevertheless, the physical Economics class space was the same across all the lessons because the VBE girls often sat in the front and middle while their boys sat at the sides and back of the classrooms. It was also discovered that girls controlled verbal space in both Commerce and Economics classrooms. It was found that the distribution of school duties to students was gender specific because the boys were given heavier duties like making ridges on the school farms, digging up roots of trees and cutting grass while the girls were responsible for sweeping the classrooms and offices and decorating the offices.

The country operated a core curriculum which was based on the reproduction of knowledge. There were six core subjects that all students had to study and those six core subjects formed the academic curriculum that prepared all students for further education while the elective subjects equipped them for specific careers. However, the electives from which to select any two or three with respect to VBE subjects comprised book-keeping and accounting, commerce, economics, shorthand and typewriting. All the schools studied offered an almost equal number of subjects to their students and there were teachers to teach those subjects. However, the students associated certain school subjects with boys and others with girls. There was an inadequate supply of textbooks across all the subjects offered. Moreover, these were gender-biased with illustrations portraying men and women in traditional roles. There were also gender stereotypes in the curriculum contents of Commerce and Economics as boys associated the Commerce curriculum contents with girls and femininity while they related Economics to science, a masculine subject. It was discovered that the teaching and learning materials for the commerce and economics lessons, such as books and charts, were not adequate and sometimes were not available at all in the case-study schools. There was gender bias in the Commerce and Economics textbooks. All were published in the 1980s and thus their contents were far from gender-friendly. Thus, it was discovered that the Commerce and Economics textbooks presented men as the model by over-representing them and under-representing women.

The study found that the school environments were highly gendered and they tended to constrain the learning opportunities of girls in particular as well as encourage gender segregation and stereotypical gender behaviour. The physical school environments of the schools located in urban centres were in better physical condition than those located in the rural villages. It was noticeable that the rural case- study schools had more dilapidated buildings and inadequate furniture than

the ones in the urban centres. These physical school environments were found to influence the VBE boys' and girls' classroom participation in the commerce and economics lessons. Indeed, poor environmental factors affected both boys and girls but more especially the VBE girls who experienced menstruation during puberty. At such times, the girls needed facilities such as toilets with adequate privacy. The VBE girls also needed water and proper desks/benches for a comfortable stay in school and to help them learn better. The study discovered that the rural schools surveyed lacked these facilities and the urban schools too had insufficient furniture. Apart from that, the girls were not safe within the rural school environments because there were no fences around the school compounds and no security post at the schools' main entrance to control people visiting the schools. This resulted in men entering the school compound to sexually harass the school girls, and this often ended in teenage pregnancies and drop-out. Moreover, the school sports and games grounds were usually monopolised by the boys who played football in large groups. However, in one of the schools, the girls shared the football field with the boys on a rotational basis. In all the other schools, the girls were left to play in small groups around the edges of the football fields and on the school foot paths. In this study, it was found that most schools had no library at all. Those that had did not stock them with relevant and current textbooks. These tended to affect the VBE boys' and girls' classroom participation as they lacked relevant books for use in school.

#### **10.4 Gendered VBE Classroom Interactions**

I was also interested in exploring how the teachers' and students' construction of gender affected the VBE classroom participation in Commerce and Economics. This was important because such construct could facilitate or impede classroom participation of VBE boys and girls. Then I found that the VBE boys rarely dominated the classroom talk during the Commerce and Economics lessons across all the case-study schools, irrespective of their location. Instead, they were reserved and quite reluctant to speak during the lessons. The girls dominated classroom talk by being the first to lift their hands, asking and answering more questions and by attracting the lion's share of the teachers' time. The study also found that the Commerce and economics teachers did not take the groups of boys who usually sat at the back of the class seriously; rather they paid most attention to the girls and a handful of boys who sat at the front, middle and sides of the class. The girls were praised for their participation in the lessons while the boys were reprimanded for being reluctant to speak. Moreover, the girls were given more instructional contacts

while boys had more interactional contacts. In addition, the teaching styles were teacher-centred and the main methods of instruction included lecture and discussion. The teachers who used lecture methods limited gender interactions during their lessons while those who adopted discussion method helped students to participate in the lessons. The study discovered that teacher-student contact was influenced by many factors, among them were the following: attitudes and behaviours of teachers and students, social class, demographic elements, home influences, and the academic topics handled by the teachers. The students favoured same sex to cross-sex interactions both within and outside the classrooms.

### **10.5 Gendered Perceptions about Business Labour Market**

The study further showed that the perceptions of the VBE teachers and students about the business labour market were highly gendered. The teachers said that the study of commerce equipped the students with the commercial knowledge and skills needed for careers in secretarial, clerical, and petty trading jobs as well as for managing small enterprises. The students tended to associate commerce with women and girls. On the other hand, the teachers stated that the study of economics provided the students with professional and managerial skills and they were inclined to associate economics with men and boys. However, the study revealed that this line of thinking was changing, as many girls are nowadays studying both commerce and economics and aspiring to become future managers and professionals. These girls had higher educational and occupational aspirations for their future lives and were encouraged by some parents and school counsellors. They all wanted to study harder and achieve the highest level that they could.

I also came to realise that the VBE teachers and students linked femininity with MSEs or subservient employment because of the dominance of women in such positions within and outside the school. On the other hand, they identified masculinity with positions of authority, power and prestige as the majority of the male teachers occupied senior and management posts in the schools. The boys from rural villages said that their parents expected them to study hard so that they could become business tycoons, company directors, marketing managers and indeed great men of the future. The boys themselves said their ambition was to study up to degree level so as to be able to secure senior positions in future. However, the girls from the urban centres said that their parents wanted them to study Economics up to degree level so that they could find jobs as managers, accountants, marketers and chief executives of business organisations.

## **10.6 Implications of the key findings**

There are a number of issues of concern that have emerged from the key findings of this study which have implications for practice, policy and research. I address first the implications of the study for practice.

### **10.6.1 Raising Gender Awareness among the VBE teachers and students**

It is evident that the VBE teachers and students participating in this study, including the principals and heads of departments, had limited exposure to information on gender and education, resulting in ignorance of gender equality practices obtainable in most advanced countries of the world. For example, a majority of the VBE teachers and students did not understand the meaning of gender and were not aware of how it shaped their everyday lives as well as their teaching and learning. Such an understanding of gender issues was taken for granted. Therefore, I consider raising gender awareness among VBE teachers and students as well as among other stakeholders in the schools and in the Nigerian education sector because of the possible negative effects that poor gender identity formation might have on teaching and learning processes in general and on students' classroom participation in particular.

It is important for teachers and student to be aware that gender identity refers to how people see and define themselves and how others see them, in terms of their gender roles and biological sex – the meaning of being a boy or a girl has for people (Browne, 2008: 61). Indeed, the teachers' and students' gender represents an area of potential choice for them because they are able to change it more easily than their sex (Wood, 2003). This is so because sex is a label based on biology whereas gender is experienced as a part of personal identity, a pervasive aspect of cultural life, a principle of social life and a relational concept (Wood, 1996:8 – 10). Sex is innate or natural but gender is learned and is a lived experience. It varies from one culture to another and can change over time. Gender is informed by social class, ethnicity, race, and age. Nigerian teachers and students need to be furnished with this information about gender so that they are aware of the consequences of poor self-image formation. I therefore suggest that grassroots awareness campaign should be embarked upon to eliminate ignorance about gender issues which affect teaching and learning in the Nigerian senior secondary schools.

### **10.6.2 Reducing Gender Inequalities in Students' Learning Experiences**

There was gender inequality in the learning experiences of boys compared to girls. In this study, the daily life of the school was full of inequitable practices. Indeed, the hidden curriculum sent out strong messages that men were in a position of authority while women occupied a subservient place. Male teachers and prefects had more power than their female counterparts. My advice is that these unequal practices should be abolished and those that promote equality should be put in their place. I strongly urge that all these stereotypes should be erased from the commerce and economics textbooks. The revised texts should stress the interdependency existing between men and women; and both should be shown engaging in enterprising activities and in a wider assortment of careers.

Unequal attention to VBE boys who sat at the back of the classrooms during the Commerce and Economics lessons was another way in which gender inequality was perpetuated. The VBE teachers devoted more time to the girls in the two subjects and as a result, they did not treat boys who sat at the back of the class seriously. This created inequality in the learning experiences of the VBE girls compared with the boys, thus displaying gender bias in the classroom communication between the teachers and the students. In addition, the seating arrangement where boys sat with boys and girls with girls also reinforced unevenness in the use of class space. I recommend that such inequalities in the learning experiences of the VBE boys and girls should be reduced to the barest minimum through holding workshops and conferences with teachers and students in which the inequalities created by school organisations and by the hidden curriculum should be discussed and solutions found.

### **10.6.3 Breaking down Socialisation Stereotypes of the VBE boys and girls**

In the study, it was found that families had a great influence on gender identity formation. According to Holmes (2009:3), 'socialisation is the process of teaching children how to behave'. She adds that early socialisation of children within the family was very important in teaching them to act in ways thought appropriate for their gender (2009:46). Early socialisation shapes the VBE students' gender identities in particular ways and creates different roles and life expectations. In the study, the VBE boys and girls were conditioned to accept their gender roles both at home and in school. As noted earlier, these roles were assigned according to gender in families containing both boys and girls, thus re-emphasizing a gender-role dichotomy. However, where there were only boys or girls, they were assigned to

domestic tasks irrespective of their sex. This implies that the gender-role boundary was breached in such families irrespective of the dictates of culture. This is because they recognised the need to make personal choices in defining their children's gender identities. It has been argued that socialisation is not as relentless and deterministic a force as it might sometimes seem (Wood, 2003). People need to contribute to social understanding of gender by enlarging their capacity to think critically about the desirability of cultural views in general and their appropriateness for every one of them in particular (Wood, 2003). It has been recommended that all socialisation inequalities should be eliminated by breaking down the stereotypes: for example, by giving girls better training and more varied role models and by introducing equal opportunity programmes and anti-discrimination legislation or by freeing the labour market (Allard et al, 1995).

#### **10.6.4 Creating and Sustaining Conducive Teaching-Learning Environments**

I also discovered that physical school environments affected the VBE classroom participation of boys and girls in commerce and economics lessons. According to Page and Jha (2009:26), 'the physical school environments are not an obviously, immediately apparent gendered issues and certainly not one that could be linked with the success of either girls, or of boys, but they are baseline issues'. Such facilities are needed to help promote teachers' and students' participation in teaching and learning in schools. It has been suggested that efforts should be made to create and maintain a favourable teaching and learning environment for both staff and students by ensuring that buildings and furniture should be kept clean and in good repair, that toilet facilities are adequate and sufficient textbooks and other resources are kept and utilised (Dunne et al, 2005).

#### **10.7 Implications for Policy and Teaching**

The observations during the course of the study of gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of VBE, the gender identity that the teachers and students brought to their Commerce and Economics classroom interactions, the unequal attention to boys and girls during classroom talk, the perpetuation of gender inequalities in the informal and formal curriculum as well as the gendered perceptions about the business labour market, suggest the need for a change in gender issues affecting the teaching and learning of Vocational Business Education (VBE) in Nigerian senior secondary schools.

In the light of the foregoing, I put forward the following recommendations:



### **10.7.1: For Policy Makers**

- The Ministry of Education in-service training needs to create awareness among the principals and teachers about gender issues affecting teaching and learning in their schools together with strategies to address gender inequality problems as they crop up in the formal and informal curriculum.
- The curriculum developers should include strong elements of gender awareness which should cut across the teacher education programme and should put in place strategies to effectively address gender imbalances in the informal and formal curriculum.
- The VBE course content should be reviewed in order to make it gender-friendly and to eliminate all forms of negative gender images. Gender representations in commerce and economics textbooks should focus on different social positions for men and women, boys and girls.
- The Ministry of Education should attend to providing gender training for secondary-school principals' school-based gender policies and to monitor such policies to make sure gender equality is achieved and sustained.
- The Ministry of Education should devise a policy to ensure that all teachers with similar qualifications and years of experience are paid comparable salaries. A situation where male teachers are paid much more than female teachers should be discouraged.
- The Ministry of Education needs to provide and maintain the classrooms, toilets and furniture, drinking water and libraries.

### **10.7.2: For School Principals and Teachers**

- The school principals should initiate a whole-school gender-awareness campaign in order to educate teachers and students on gender issues affecting teaching and learning in their schools. They should also address all gender inequality issues and deal with all cases of bullying and sexual harassment.
- The school principals should ensure that the allocation of school duties to teachers and students should not be gender-specific but more mixed-group activities should be encouraged. Boys should be told that male and female teachers have the same authority and power over them. The male and female prefects should have equal power, authority and identical roles. Girls too should be appointed as time-keepers in the schools.

- A review of school organisation, procedures and practices should be carried out in order to examine their gendered nature and reorganise the school routines in a more equitable manner. This should include inside and outside class behaviour, and issues of sports and school uniforms.
- The principals should organise monthly orientations for teachers on gender and on equitable ways of engaging with boys and girls during the lessons. Such an arrangement should lay emphasis on how to help the students experience classroom talk in a positive way. Teachers should be trained in how to engage in the student's interests, their learning practices and preferences and those things they consider important. They should also be trained in how to become involved in the students' home experiences.
- The principal should set high expectations concerning teacher attendance, punctuality, use of corporal punishment, verbal abuse and gross professional misconduct towards the students.
- The teachers should be trained to know the role of the school in developing gendered lived experiences among the students.

#### **10.7.3: For Students**

- A student-led campaign committee needs to be put in place to raise awareness of gender differentiation among the students together with strategies to monitor and sustain gender-equitable practices.
- Grassroots-awareness workshops and conferences should be organised for students so that they come to understand the impact of poor gender construction on their studies.
- Students should be helped to form gender-awareness forums where they can discuss and air their views on gender-equality issues so that they have a collective voice through which to communicate their concerns to the school authorities.
- The students should be informed of their rights to complain about incidents of violence to the appropriate authority in their schools.
- Girls should continue to support one another in reporting and opposing all forms of gender inequality during lessons to the appropriate authorities.
- Students' seating arrangements should be organised in such a manner that boys and girls sit together on the same seats to learn in their classes.

### **10.8 Methodological Reflections on the Study**

The process of designing and carrying out this study was also an intense learning period for me. Not only were my ideas and assumptions about gender challenged, but also my understanding of research itself changed and deepened. Consequently, I learnt three things which would inform any future qualitative research I carried out. These are 1) I have become more comfortable with the nature of qualitative research as against that of the quantitative research; 2) As regards reflexivity, I have learnt the potential impact that my gender, age and perceived status could have on my student and teacher interviewees; and 3) I have learnt to use informal approaches to elicit responses from such interviewees who come to my interview but are reluctant to talk. With these in view, I was able to exercise greater reflexivity in my position as the researcher. For example, I reflected on the ways in which my gender, age and perceived status impacted on my interviewees, which led me to adopt a more informal style to establish trust and confidence with the participants and by so doing, I was able to generate the data that I needed for my study.

### **10.9 Strengths of the Study and Contributions to the Field**

The research impulse for the exploration of gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of VBE in Nigerian senior secondary schools was stimulated by a desire to increase understanding of the VBE girls' participation experience and to enhance insights into those classroom encounters which render such a process different from that of boys, with associated implications for their immediate socio-educational learning and school career as a whole.

The study also paid particular attention to the literature on the classroom participation of boys and girls in the Western setting which indicated that boys usually dominate classroom talk and space while girls remain silent, sensible and selfless (Paechter, 1998 and Francis, 2000). Indeed, my motive was to see whether such a finding was universal or limited to a particular place and in particular, I wanted to see whether a study of boys' and girls' classroom involvement in the Nigerian VBE Commerce and Economics lessons would produce a similar finding. As noted earlier in this thesis, the study found that the VBE boys rarely monopolised Commerce and Economics class discussions in any of the case-study schools, especially in urban high schools where there were more girls than boys. Indeed, the study revealed that girls dominated VBE classroom talk across all the case-study schools through answering and asking questions, thus establishing their control of

the class space verbally through taking more turns than boys during the lessons. Therefore the findings of this study run counter to most established findings in Western and African settings. These differences might exist due to VBE effect where commercial activities in Nigeria are predominantly carried out by women and girls; as such this appeared to have a sort of cumulative effect on girls who when they are in SSS classes choose to study Commerce and Economics and do well in them because of their real-life experience in petty trading businesses. Again, there appeared to be other dominant cultural practices such as different types of primary socialisation for boys and girls in the Nigerian society. My concern is whether or not this also happens in other school subjects in Nigeria or is it limited to VBE Commerce and Economics only. This calls for further research in the area.

Again, as noted in the introduction (Section 1.5), the study aimed to contribute to national and international literature on gender with specific reference to the classroom participation of boys and girls in vocational business education (VBE). VBE has been a neglected area of study in terms of research on gender just as research on gender has neglected VBE programmes. Indeed, studies on gender and education in the Nigerian schools and colleges have generally focused more on gender and science education and within this area, issues related to gender and access to education are researched. In addition, there are also a few investigations on gender and the achievement of students in science subjects such as mathematics, physics, and chemistry. In Nigeria and even beyond, there is a dearth of research on gender and the classroom involvement of VBE boys and girls in the teaching and learning processes in senior secondary schools. This study therefore seeks to make such a contribution. Page and Jha (2009) point out that “gender analysis of classroom and other schooling processes is an under-researched area” (p. xvii). Therefore this thesis sought to address this deficiency. The above authors (ibid) add that even though “all stages of schooling are important for the formation of gender-related ideas and norms, yet the senior secondary level of education is much more significant because it focuses on an age group that is at a critical stage of identity formation and the development of decision-making skills” (p. xvii). The findings of my study confirms this statement because the research study discovered that the VBE students in the Nigerian senior secondary schools, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, are at a critical stage of identity formation and the development of their decision-making skills.

The research work also identified Nigerian teachers’ professional development and training as an area in need of further attention. There would be a

benefit from including gender awareness in the teacher education curriculum in Nigeria. Generally, this course of teacher training has been in existence for many years and many teachers have been taught and have graduated from it but it still does not include programmes that directly address gender issues. Thus Nigerian teachers are prone to ignore everything about gender at all levels of the education systems. Because of gender blindness, gender inequality is perpetuated in the classroom and becomes considered as normal. It is to be hoped that in future policy-makers will include training on gender in the professional development of teachers in Nigeria.

#### **10.10 Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited to eliciting lived experiences of thirty-two VBE students and teachers including four Principals and four Heads of Departments of VBE in four mixed sex High Schools in Plateau State, Nigeria with respect to gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of VBE Commerce and Economics in those schools. Therefore the experiences of other teachers and students in other subjects were not elicited. Thus there is a need for extrapolation to other subjects, to other schools and regions. Here I argue that I am not presenting some overarching model of how gender works in schools but rather complementing existing work through a more nuanced account showing the importance of context and in this way supporting the notion of gender as being forged through specific lived experience.

#### **10.11 Suggestions for further Research**

I recommend that further research should be carried out in the following areas:

- The significance of gender in the schooling careers of boys and girls in Nigerian vocational business education (VBE).
- Gender in the classroom interactions of vocational business education (VBE) students in accountancy lessons in the Nigerian senior secondary schools.
- The interrelationship between gender and the VBE students' classroom experiences during economics lessons in Nigerian senior secondary schools.
- The role of the hidden curriculum in the creating and sustaining of gender inequality among VBE teachers and students in Nigerian secondary schools.
- Gender dimensions in the teaching and learning of business studies in Nigerian senior secondary schools.

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## **Appendix**

### **Appendices: Issues to be explored during fieldwork in Nigeria**

#### **Appendix A: Gender Issues to be explored in VBE Classroom Observations**

- What did I notice about the VBE commerce and economic lesson, content, or curriculum by gender?
- Whose work (by gender) is noticeable in the class?
- What topic was taught?
- Who was in the class by gender?

#### **Teacher-student interactions**

- When the VBE teacher asks a question in the class, who puts up their hand up to answer the question?
- Who does the VBE teacher select to answer that question?
- In VBE classroom interactions, how many times does the VBE teacher interact with a particular child (ren)?
- During classroom interactions, how much time is spent by the VBE teacher with boys, with girls?
- How many of these interactions extend beyond one exchange?
- Who does VBE teacher give interactional contact most – boys or girls?
- Who does VBE teacher give instructional contact most – boys or girls?
- Who does the VBE teacher discipline and how?
- Who does the VBE teacher praise and how?

#### **Student-student Interactions**

- Who talks most during classroom interactions in the teaching and learning of commerce and economics - boys or girls?
- How is the seating arrangement in the VBE classroom organized?
- What do VBE students talk about?
- Who does not talk at all during the VBE classroom interactions?
- Who are the leaders and what makes me think this?

### **Methods**

- What instructional methods does the VBE teacher use?
- What is the organization of the classroom? Does this seem to promote masculine and feminine behaviours and characteristics?
- What words does the VBE teacher use during instruction or other interaction? Are the words gender-neutral or biased?
- Who does the VBE teacher monitor and how?
- In what ways are masculinity and femininity reflected in VBE commerce and economics curriculum contents?
- In what ways are masculinity and femininity reflected in the received curricular activities?

### **Appendix B – Gender Issues to be explored during the analysis of documents**

- Availability of gender policy in the senior secondary schools.
- Does the school have copies of the Nigeria's national policy on education?
- What is the focus of the national policy on education about gender?
- Do VBE teachers and students know about the Nigerian governments' policy on gender equality?
- Are men or women missing from the pictures or displays in commerce and economics textbooks?
- Who is shown in a position of authority?
- Are women and girls shown in non-traditional roles?
- Are men and boys shown in secretarial and clerical roles?
- What roles are associated with women in VBE?
- What roles are associated with men in VBE?
- How is the gender discourse pattern in VBE commerce and economics textbooks?
- Is there any exclusive use of masculine or feminine term or pronoun?
- Do the curriculum contents of commerce and economics reflect issues of masculinity and femininity?
- Do the VBE teachers' lesson plans reveal some aspects of being masculine or feminine?
- Do the recommended teaching methods favour cooperation or competition?
- Other relevant issues of gender in the documents.

**Appendix C: Gender Issues to be explored during Semi-Structured Interview with Principals, Heads of VBE, VBE teachers and Students of Commerce and Economics.**

Gender Issues to be explored during Semi-structured interviews with Principals and Departmental Heads of VBE:

- Gender Issues discovered from analysis of documents and from participant observations (Conversational types of questions are to be framed on such gender issues).
- The names of their management staff/ teachers?
- How many of them are males and females?
- Do you enjoy working with male or female teachers and why?
- Can you please tell me about your VBE commerce and economics in your senior secondary school or department?
- What is the focus of these subjects? Are VBE commerce and economics more appropriate for one sex than the other? If so, please explain why?
- What does VBE being more appropriate for one sex more than the other mean for the quality of VBE classroom interactions?
- What does this mean for the reproduction of class and gender categories through schooling?
- Do you think there are the possibilities and directions of change in VBE curriculum of your school/department?
- In what ways is business practice changing in Nigeria?
- To what extent are any changes reflected in the planned and received VBE curriculum of the senior secondary school commerce and economics?
- What are the implications of these changes for gender dimensions of teaching and learning VBE commerce and economics in your school?
- Do you have any gender policy document in your school or department?
- Other emerging issues of masculinity and femininity in the school culture.

Gender Issues to be explored during Semi-structured Interview with VBE commerce and economics teachers:

- Gender Issues discovered from analysis of documents and from participant observations (Conversational types of questions are to be framed on such gender issues).
- Remembering your own senior secondary school experiences, what do you recall about how boys and girls used to talk in your class?



- Do you think any of those experiences shaped the way you teach today?
- In your own teacher preparation, did you have any training in gender? If so, please tell me about it.
- Do you think you work with one gender of student in your class more often than the other? If so, why do you think you do that?
- In thinking about the students in your class(es), can you identify the leaders?
- Are they likely to be boys or girls? Why do you think those students are leaders?
- Does it seem to you that boys or girls in your class(es) talk more, or in general dominate the class?
- Is there any gender policy document in your school? If yes, Please tell me about it.
- Do you think that some teaching methods of teaching commerce and economics might be more effective for boys than for girls? If yes, Please tell me about that.
- Do you intentionally seat or otherwise group your boys one side and the girls the other side or you mix them up in the classroom?
- Describe how your students react to any material/activities you use that deal with one gender.
- In relation to boys and girls, please describe how you perceive VBE commerce and economics curriculum contents and materials.
- Please can you tell me if VBE courses seem to be more appropriate for one sex more than the other and why?
- Please can you think of the ways that business practice changing in Nigeria? Please me more about such ways.
- To what extent are any changes reflected in the planned and received VBE curriculum of the senior secondary school commerce and economics?
- What are the implications of these changes for gender dimensions of teaching and learning VBE commerce and economics in your school?
- Do you have any gender policy document in your school or department?
- Other emerging issues of masculinity and femininity in the school culture.

Gender Issues to be explored during Semi-structured Interview with VBE students:

- Gender Issues discovered from analysis of documents and from participant observations (Conversational types of questions are to be framed on such gender issues).

- Remembering your last commerce or economics class experiences, are there particular things that made you to like that class?
- During classroom talk in your commerce and economics, do you think you are given some time to ask and answer questions?
- In your experience, who do you think ask and answer more questions during the teaching and learning of your commerce and economics?
- In your thinking about the commerce or economics classes, does it seem to you that one sex talk more than the other?
- Do you think VBE courses are more appropriate to girls than for boys? If yes, please tell me why?
- Please tell why you come to offer VBE commerce and economics as your subjects and what you like about these courses?
- Any other gender issues in VBE classroom interactions.

## **Appendix D- Example of Observation Field Notes**

**Date: 28.1.2008 Time: 10.50 – 11.30 Topic: Sole Proprietorship.**

**Lesson Duration: 40 minutes**

### **First Commerce Classroom Observation in Timo High School**

There were 17 girls and 4 boys in the Commerce classroom. There is male teacher. The male teacher is an older man. The room is in the Senior Secondary School Block. The school is a brick building approximately 18 to 22 years old. The room is about 30 feet by 20 feet. The room is floored with cement. The walls of the classroom are not plastered and not painted. The windows are without shutters and the rooms had no ceilings. There is no teacher's table in the class. There are desks and benches arranged in rows and columns. The girls sit in the front and middle rows with other girls while the boys sat at the back with other boys. The boys were white long sleeves shirts and red trousers. The girls wear white blouse and red skirts. Boys all wear low cut hairs. Girls all plaited their hairs. The teacher comes to the class and greets his students 'Good morning class'. The students responded 'Good morning sir. Teacher erases the chalkboard and writes the lesson topic on it. He discusses the topic for about 10 minutes. During the class time, teacher defines sole proprietorship as a one man business, states the features of it and discusses the merits and demerits of sole proprietorship. The teacher's teaching method is discussion method. Students pay attention to what the teacher is saying. After the discussion, teacher asks the class questions based on what he has just taught them and waited for responses from the students. A group of girls 12 out of 17 put up their hands to answer the question while only 2 boys joined those girls putting up their hands to answer the questions. The teacher selects 10 girls to answer the questions. On the other hand, he selects two boys to answer questions. Therefore 10 girls and 2 boys answer all the questions the teacher asks the class. Teacher praises the 10 girls and 2 boys for supplying good answers to the questions. Teacher encourages other 2 boys and 2 girls in the class to answer questions by calling on them though not with their first name. The teacher rebukes more girls than boys for calling out answers when he does not call on them to do so and yet he calls on more girls to answer questions.

**Date: 31.1.2008 Time: 11.30 – 12.10**

**Topic: Meaning and Factors of Production**

**Lesson Duration: 40 minutes**

**First Commerce Classroom Observation in Bingo High School**

The Principal of the school is a male, the Head of Business Studies department is a male and the commerce teacher is a male. There are 11 girls and 7 boys. The girls wear white blouses and green pinafore while the boys wear white shirts and green trousers. Girls sit with girls and boys with boys. Girls occupy the front and middle rows. Boys sit at the back. Boys cut their hair low while girls all plaited their hairs. The room is at the end of SSS block. The school is a brick building approximately 50 to 70 years old. The room is about 30 feet by 25 feet. The room is floored with cement. The walls too are plastered but not painted. The doors and windows are dilapidated and are without shutters. There are insufficient desks and benches in the room. The teacher's table leg is broken and there is no chair. As the teacher enters the class, students take their seats and everywhere is calm. The teacher breaks that silence by saying "Good morning Class" and the students respond by saying good morning Sirs. The teacher then introduces me to the class and gives me a seat at the back of the class. The teacher then writes the new topic "The meaning and factors of production" on the chalkboard and begins the day's lesson by discussing the key points of the lesson. At the end of his discussion, he asks the class questions based on that lesson. Here girls take up more turns than the boys. The teaching method is discussion method.

**An example of Field notes taken during the first Economics classroom Observation in Mary Monk High School**

**Date: 30/1/2008**

**Time: 1.00 – 1.40 pm**

**Topic: Demand and Supply Elasticity Calculations**

The Principal of MMHS is a female; HOD Business Studies is a male and the Economics teacher a female. There are 39 girls and 26 boys. The duration of the lesson was 40 minutes. Seating arrangement is girls occupy desks in front and middle rows and the boys at the back of the class, all facing the teacher and the chalkboard. Girls sit other girls and boys with other boys. Girls all plaited their hairs while boys all cut their hairs low. The classroom is small measuring about 30 feet by 20 feet. The room is in one of the SSS blocks in the school. The buildings in the school are built using cement bricks. The doors and windows are good but there are insufficient desks and benches for the economics students. There is a teacher's table in the class but no chair. On entering the class, the commerce teacher greets his students, the class responds by saying "Good morning Sirs". Then he introduces me as a researcher who has come to carry out a study in the school and asks them to cooperate with me. The students answer "Yes Sir". Girls in this class wear white blouses, navy blue skirts and navy blue suites while the boys wear white long sleeves shirts, navy blue trousers and navy blue suites. At a glance, I notice that the students are from well-to-do parents and from high socio-economic backgrounds. The teacher first dusts the chalkboard, and writes the topic for the day's lesson on it. The teacher begins his lesson by reminding the class the key points of the previous lesson on meaning and factors influencing demand and supply. He then links that with the new lesson. In about 10 minutes, he discusses the salient points of the new lesson. He also takes of an example of a question each on calculation of demand and supply elasticity. In the end, he asks the class to ask him questions on any aspects of the calculations which they think are not quite clear to them. As a response, 5 girls put up their hands to ask him questions while the teachers answer their questions. After this, the teacher asks the class some questions too based on what he has taught them. He then selects many girls to answer those questions. Here the girls interacts more with the teacher than boys in class. Girls actually talk significantly more than boys in the class. The teacher also reprimands girls more than the boys for calling out answers without him permitting them to do that. The method of teaching was discussion method.