

3rd International Conference for Women in Leadership Positions in Higher Education (WoLPHE)

***Theme: Women's Participation in Science Programmes in Africa
November 26 -29, 2019
Abuja, Nigeria
Host: African University of Science and Technology (AUST)***

Conference Background

World over, the issue of inclusiveness of women, especially in leadership remains a major challenge. To date, women continue to have unequal opportunities as their male counterparts. African higher education, for instance, continues to see fewer women occupying leadership positions in the universities, polytechnics and research institutions among others. Indeed, very few women have risen to positions such as Vice-chancellors, Heads of Departments, Deans and Registrars across the continent. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5 on Quality Education, and Women and Girl's Empowerment respectively recognise the importance of advancing gender parity in the process of striving to achieve the SDGs.

Similarly, the African Union Commission (AUC) established its Centre for Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU-CIEFFA) to, among others, provide guidance for Africa Member States to integrate gender perspectives in their programmes and in the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025).

Taking the lead to drive women and young girls' equal participation in the higher education sector has been prime on the agenda of the Association of African Universities (AAU). As the apex organization and forum for consultation, exchange of information and co-operation among institutions of Higher Education in Africa, AAU is cognisant of the gender imbalances in African higher education and has thus been leading the campaign on gender inclusiveness in its various initiatives and projects. The promotion of gender equality is firmly rooted in the AAU's Strategic Plan (2016 – 2020) where reference is made to expanding gender programmes to facilitate the attainment of objectives spelt out in the African Women's Decade (2010 -2020) Plan of Action.

In this Strategic Plan, the AAU set out to organise special events and create platforms for higher education institution (HEI) stakeholders to discuss topical issues which serve as catalysts for Africa's development, including Gender, Science, Technology and Innovation.

The International Conference for Women in Leadership Positions in Higher Education (WoLPHE) is one of such key platforms provided by AAU for the discussion of innovative and creative ways of empowering women, especially young

women in higher education to reach their full potential and aspire to the topmost leadership positions in their chosen fields. The WoLPHE maiden edition, which was held in Accra, Ghana was highly successful and brought women across national and international boundaries together to share knowledge, ideas and strategic management skills required for success in various leadership positions.

The WoLPHE second edition, held in Nairobi, Kenya attracted mostly women in academia, politics and business as well as few men who share the grand vision of women advancement in science-based careers. In attendance were various dignitaries including the Kenyan government representation through the Cabinet Secretary, Professor Margaret Kobia, the Head of Education Division at the Human Resources, Science and Technology (HRST) Department of the African Union Commission, Dr. Beatrice Njenga, and former Vice Chancellor of Kenyatta University and Director of the Centre for Innovative Leadership and Governance, Prof Olive Mugenda. The conference drew participants from higher education institutions in Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Uganda, South Africa, Mauritius, Sudan, Egypt among others. Key organisations such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and the Organisation for Women in science in the Developing World (OWSD) were also present.

Focus on Women in STEM

As reflected by the theme, the focus of this upcoming WoLPHE conference to be held in Abuja is on the theme *Women's Participation in Science Based Programmes in Africa*.

Africa's progress is challenged by a myriad of problems ranging from lack of employment for its youth, the existence of tropical diseases, weak entrepreneurial drive and low levels of university-industry linkages, among others. It is widely accepted, that Science and Technology do have a key role to play in overcoming the continent's developmental challenges.

However, studies have revealed that though the number of women in science and engineering is growing, men continue to outnumber women, especially at the upper levels of these professions (AAUW, 2010). With only 24% of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) occupations being filled by women, various barriers, ranging from culture, implicit bias and subtle stereotyping to willful ignorance and blatant discrimination have been identified as contributing factors (Pierce, Margo, 2013).

Africa needs to ensure that its human resource - both men and women, are fully engaged in the STEM fields in solving its developmental challenges, and thus should make significant investment into women in STEM to increase their contribution to solving the continent's challenges. The promotion of Women in Science to contribute massively and equally to a developed Africa must therefore form an integral part of

various plans and strategies aimed at achieving the African Union's vision of '*Africa We Want*' by the year 2063. This conference will therefore create the right platform for the analysis and discussion of women participation in science programmes in Africa- what the key challenges are; what institutions can do to ensure that more women are encouraged to take up STEM courses; how young Women faculty members can be motivated to move up the academic ladder among others.

Aim

The WoLPHE International Conference seeks to:

- Create the platform for the presentation of findings on a commissioned study on the key challenges faced by women in the science fields.
- Inspire and empower the next generation of African women in STEM to actively and effectively contribute to solving Africa's Challenges.
- Provide the platform for women in STEM to share their cutting-edge research as a way of inspiring others.
- Build the leadership capacity of women in STEM to drive change and innovation in the STEM field.
- Draw attention to the important role of mentorship, through the provision of the platform for young scientists to interact with accomplished women scientists.
- Create the platform for various actors - educators, policy-makers and partners - to debate on pertinent issues related to the promotion of Women in STEM.

Conference Theme and Subthemes

The Conference Theme is: *Women's Participation in Science Programs in Africa*.

Based on the Conference theme, the AAU is calling for papers under the following subthemes:

- a) Current Developments on Women Participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in Africa.
- b) Key Challenges Faced by Women in Science.
- c) Gender Mainstreaming in STEM programmes in Africa.
- c) Resource Mobilization Strategies to support STEM research
- d) Policies, Strategies and Mechanisms to support Women in STEM.

Activities

-Presentation of Commissioned Studies and Research Papers on the Conference subthemes

- Panel Discussions on Topical Issues
- Leadership Training Sessions
- Networking and Speed Mentoring Sessions

Expected Participants

- Accomplished women in various leadership positions in STEM fields from Africa and beyond.
- STEM women academics and researchers in African HEIs.
- Women in industry, government and partner institutions involved in promoting STEM.
- STEM men academics and researchers in African HEIs.

Sponsorship

Authors whose papers are accepted for presentation will be provided with a roundtrip economy ticket and accommodation to make their presentation at the conference.

Event Information

Date: November 26 -29, 2019

Venue: Abuja, Nigeria

Host: African University of Science and Technology

Registration Link: <https://event-mgt.aau.org/e/3WoLPHE>

NB: Though this is an all-female event, men who have high interest in developing and empowering women in STEM are also encouraged to attend.

Participation Fee

The Conference Registration fee is \$200 for women participants; \$50 for female students; and \$300 for other participants

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