



FUTA NEWS

MATHEMATICS PERMEATES ALL HUMAN ENDEAVOURS

The duo of Dr. Nkechi Agwu, Mathematics don at the City University of New York, United States of America and Dr Mojisola Edema, Director, Centre for Gender Issues in Science and Technology [CEGIST] of the Federal University of Technology, Akure has reechoed the importance of Mathematics to all human endeavors. They stated this at a workshop held on capacity building in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related fields held at the T. I. Francis hall of the University on Tuesday August 26, 2014. Dr. Agwu who had earlier visited FUTA few months ago to jump start the collaboration with FUTA's CEGIST under the aegis of the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship designed to strengthen the teaching and understanding of Mathematics in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Institutions in Ondo State. During her last visit, she lamented the dearth of women in the field of Mathematics in Africa and took it upon herself to build the interest of the young folks in the subject by seeking innovative ways to teach the subject and make it more inclusive and interesting.

Declaring the Workshop open, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adebisi Daramola, represented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic, Professor Adedayo Fasakin expressed his delight in Dr. Agwu's painstaking interest in the project and expressed FUTA's readiness to partner with her. Fasakin said "Mathematics has its rudiment in tradition because many decades ago, there were traditional ways of counting. This also shows in some tradition games that African play. This culture is gradually fading away and we are happy somebody like you is striving to revive the culture. We need to improve on the way we teach the subject to make it more interesting to students. Those days, topics like Pythagoras Theorem, Algebra and the rest always scared students. If we can embed the traditional method in teaching the subject, it will simplify it and make it more interesting and appealing to encourage the younger generation to study it. We at

FUTA key into the project and promise our support. Please, try to extend it to the Secondary and Primary Schools so as to stimulate their interest in the subject”.

Speaking further, Fasakin encouraged women to be more interested in science-based courses because gender is never a barrier to success.

While taking participants through the workshop, Dr. Agwu called for a gender sensitive and culturally based curriculum that will make Mathematics meaningful through connections to everyday lives and the use of resources in the local communities. Dr. Agwu who spoke on the topic ‘Culture and Women’s Stories: A Framework for Capacity Building in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Related Field said Nigerian women are severely under-represented in STEM field. She also said children’s performance in Mathematics is dismal because they are losing their cultural identity due to curriculum and globalization. She, however, called for a review of the Curriculum so as to prepare the children to be creative thinkers and innovators.

While displaying the use of some cultural items to teach Mathematics, Dr. Agwu said cultural artifacts at palaces of traditional rulers have mathematical components. Some of them, according to her, have Vertex-Edge graphs, while some have geometric images. Speaking earlier, the Director, CEGIST, Dr. (Mrs.) Mojisola Edema emphasized the importance of Mathematics to other fields of study and that informed the collaboration of the Centre with Dr. (Mrs.) Agwu to strengthen the teaching and understanding of the subject in primary and post primary institutions in Ondo State. She said the goal of the project was to develop culturally-based, gender-sensitive and inclusive Mathematics curricular materials to foster innovation and creativity that will link science and technology to culture. Dr. Edema commended Dr. Agwu’s passion for the subject. “With a Ph.D. in Mathematics education, minor in gender studies and multicultural education, Dr. Agwu’s passion is to make Mathematics more relevant and fun” she said.

In a goodwill message the Director, National Mathematical Centre, Abuja, Professor A. R. T. Solarin said “As part of our mandate to encourage and support activities leading to the improvement of teaching and learning of Mathematical Sciences at all levels, I embrace this project which will focus among others on the development and publication of innovative curriculum materials for used in teaching mathematics in formal and informal educational settings at the Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels, based on the Nigerian Socio-Cultural milieu and issues relevant to nurturing girls to consider Science, Technology-Engineering and Mathematics [STEM] career”.