
THE ROLE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines women empowerment and implications for educational development. In doing so women empowerment is defined as giving women the power or more power to act or do things, which they could not do before now. This paper looks at the various needs for women empowerment, economic, social and the political empowerment they can achieve using education as a means. It also sees the implication of women empowerment for educational development in terms of more children being able to go to school as the women can now afford to finance their education; support educational programme and projects by providing manpower, giving moral and financial/material support. Finally, the paper recommends measures which can bring about the achievement of women empowerment and educational development.

Introduction

Women are greater inspiration to any country's development either in education, economy, social and others. To realize this aspiration, the national goals which are contained in the National Policy on Education 4th Edition, 2004 states:

- a. Free and democratic society;
- b. Just and egalitarian society;
- c. A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- d. A great and dynamic economy;
- e. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

For all the above to be achieved depends largely on the availability or equality of human resources in society, which the educational industry is expected to produce. Realizing this fact, Nigeria philosophy on education is based on "the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen" (FRN, 2004:7). The philosophy also sees it important that all citizens have equal access to educational opportunities in the country i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This is so because education has been adopted as an instrument for achieving national development.

On a more concrete term, in achieving high level quality human

resource, one of the national goals emphasizes the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical, moral and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

Going by the above philosophy of education and the national educational goal stated therein, it is explicit that there is no discrimination in the provision of education to the citizens of the country either on the basis of gender or any other factor. By implication to be able to follow the path of development successfully, women must be empowered so that they can participate actively in the management of the resources of the nation. Women empowerment can be achieved through education positively as they relate and are closer to the care of children.

Empowerment entails giving people power or increasing their power to be able to do what they could not do before. This empowerment has to do with the situation whereby an individual power to do certain things has been restricted in doing such things is granted to him/her to do those things he/she could not do before now. This is the knowledge, capacity, confidence, help and ideas to decide what is best for them,

thereby making them act accordingly to fulfilling their own potentials. It is important to note that psychological process of transformation can be achieved through constructive changes in a person's environment, circumstance and psyche. Not only must the enabling environment be present, it must be perceived such that the person characters will show the intelligence of such personalities. Such women cannot be what he intends to be because of the legal, social, educational, economic, information and even psychological obstacles that will abound to them. This tell us that there is a need to reverse the feelings of learned helplessness among women because such perception makes women to having little or no power and it militates against positive feelings of self confidence and reliance, which are associated with empowerment.

Women have always been regarded as chattel things that could be brought and sold, they could be treated anyhow. Alabi (2002) said that women enjoyed less right than men. Women are still not in any regard, when a girl child is born as the first child the parents usually are disappointed. To worsen some familiar predicament where all the children are female the father will outside for another wife for a male child to succeed him so that the family name might be propagated.

The amount of money spent on his education will not be seen as wasted, while that of the case of a girl is considered a waste to spend a lot of money on educating a girl child as she will eventually end in the kitchen.

Abdulazeez (2004) states that the two religion popular in Nigeria accorded superior roles to men. Nature also endowed men with superiority over women. They tend to always regard women as second fiddles and therefore push them to the background. For example in Nigeria today there are some roles whereby women are not allowed to play in whatever capacity. Like in the Igbo culture, it is forbidden for a woman to break kolanut not minding her status or prowess. In the Owe (Kabba) women cannot partake in masquerade ceremonies or look at it when it appears, otherwise such woman will be barren for life. This perception led the women to neglect education in the past. The belief that women are weaker sex and would do very little in the area of development in the society had impeded the development of their natural potentials. Women it goes to a time that agitations were made for them not to be heard and were generally seen as subordinate group. Thus it de-empowered them in very many areas of life. In the period before the coming of Islam, women were

considered by societies as if they were not human being but creatures that always bring calamity or disaster to the society. In Muslim dominated areas in the northern part of Nigeria, women education is not as a necessity as such 70 – 80% of their girls married at tender age instead of acquiring western education. The report of the Political Bureau of 1987 acknowledged that women constitute an oppressed, exploited and under privileged group in the third world countries, this has attracted the attention of international organization like the United Nation Organization (UNO) (FRN, 1987). These positions of women has made them to put up struggle to fight for the injustice melted against women inspired by the universal declaration of human rights by the United Nation Organization.

This paper therefore advice the Nigerian government to develop its human resources not neglecting any aspect for the others because in the absent of this country human development can only be achieved through education this makes' the special attention for all women education imperative. National Population Census (1991) proved that the population of women is little higher than that of men so their development should not be neglected. Women are believed to be homemakers, center of the family

also custodians of social, cultural and fundamental values of a society, and permanent change is often best achieved through them. The development of the society is not possible without women understanding on their effective participation. With good education women empowerment can be achieved through education, their roles as mothers in the house is very important, taking good care of their children, also to take decision regarding the children's education, feeding, clothing and other needs of the family. They are regarded as the 'possessions' of their fathers. When women are educated along with their male counterparts, the women tend to do better than the male in any position assigned them. Women are denied holistic health when they suffer deprivation in any form and are allowed to function as the "total woman" or total human being. The deprivation of women in terms of empowerment makes it clear that they cannot be said to enjoy the full health facilities which the World Health Organization defined as a state of complete physical, mental, emotional and social well being of an individual. Aburate (2001) states that genital mutilation will be a thing of the past for women who are educated. The woman is seen as agent of cultural transmission and a major role player in children character formation. This is why it is

believed that when you educate a woman you educate the nation.

Politically and economic wise women have been relegated to the background but with the UNO treaty for human right and the universal declaration women who are educated have stood the ground to compete with their male counterpart in every sphere of life and are doing better than the male sex.

According to Alabi (2002) men control the wealth of the land while the women do all the work to produce the money, only for the women to be left with petty jobs while their husbands take decision on how monies realize are spent. This women face humiliation at the expense of their husband for any misused money. Therefore for them to be empowered economically they must be educated. As Alabi (2002) opined that for women to be economically empowered they must be educated through relevant educational strategies. Alabi (2002) asserted that a nation gross national product (UNP) per capital depends to a large extent on the level of development of its human resources that is on the level of education of its citizens. Women are agents of informal and formal education. The foundation of formal education is usually established at home through what the mother provides at home.

The woman teaches the child cooking, care of the home, care of her husband/wife/children and friends while she is growing to be a matured adult in overall home affairs and environmental situations. The personality such child takes to school depends on the upbringing and the womanhood is regarded as a teacher at home due to the role she plays at home. Education at childhood level is essentially character modeling into an upright, honest, hopeful person in future. Informal education given by woman at home assist in achieving the purpose of formal education, this is because many children have developed self discipline, good relationship, moral, mental, physical and social behavior already acquired from home. In recognition of women's contribution to the nation, during General Ibrahim Babangida's regime women's participation in politics was recognized and few of them were elected in the cabinet. He also directed that State government must include women in their cabinet and so there were few of them as deputy governors – States like Lagos, Kaduna, Ogun, Anambra and others. Prominent among these women are the first Lady Maryam Babangida, Professor Bolanle Awe, Mrs Laita Dogonyaro, Mrs. Hilda Adefarasin, Zainab Maina to mention but few who through education rose up to the challenges of womanhood in Nigeria.

Notable also in the world conference on women held in Beijing, China were a world declaration was made concerning womanhood. The decision of the conference gave inspiration to nations of the world on the need to give attention to female education and empowerment. Various women non-governmental organization has fought the wars of discrimination among women. Generally women empowerment will give women the opportunity to exercise their God given and constitutional rights. Women empowerment will go along way to enhance educational development for the entire nation.

Measures to achieving women empowerment for education development and growth in Nigeria amongst others are:

Women should not be discriminated to own any property such as farmlands, loan from the bank, being able to take up jobs qualified for economically, social otherwise. This act needs a constitutional backing necessary for the achievement of aspects of life.

Reasonable percentage of political positions should be reserved for women in the country to motivate women empowerment.

Women should not be relegated to the background in all spheres of life, their human rights position should be declared to assist uplift the status in the society.

The "Act" of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme of government should be made free and compulsory to all children of school going age in the country.

When these measure are put in place, women will be empowered socially, politically and economically which will enhance their contribution to educational development of the country.

Conclusion

This paper examines the role of education in women empowerment. Women empowerment is seen as giving women the power or more power to do things which they could not do before. It involves giving them adequate knowledge and capacity, confidence, help and ideas to take decisions thereby fulfilling their potentials. This paper acknowledges the fact that women suffer deprivation in so many areas of life, that has relegated them to the background. A woman that is educated will be enhanced and empowered socially, politically and

economically. Such women can lead to enhancing the nation's educational development. This include adequate developments if violated women should be punished i.e. disallowing their children from going to school.

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