

CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN TOWARDS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A FOCUS ON NIGERIA

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Abstract

Education is an important yardstick for measuring the success in life of an individual in any given society. The importance of women education to national development cannot be over emphasized. This paper discusses the concept of women education, concept of national development, objectives of women education and factors inhibiting women education in Nigeria. It posits the role of women education in national development vis-à-vis the above concepts. The paper recommends that government should improve investment on women education.

Introduction

Since the time of immemorial women hood is associated with reproduction and home keeping. That is, the traditional society engaged them in essential task such as children bearing, rearing and growing of crops among others. Women also play the role of emotional and social support to the members of the family. The relegation of the women to house work has caused them their life or left them incapacitated. This might be due to the fact, in the holy books which said, Eve was created from one of the rib-bones of the first creation "Adam" as his help-mate.

Women education has a great role to play in national development of a nation, in both developed and developing. Women education is perhaps the most fundamental instrument for national development of a nation. Education gives women the necessary skills to participate fully in the job market and access to decision making and widen their opportunities in all facets of national development. It is because of its important, most international institution as well as national governments worldwide have embarked on campaigns to improve women enrollment in formal education. Since 1987 Nigerian Government initiated campaign on women education due to its important to national development.

The importance of education to any nation cannot be overemphasized as education is a tool for a national development of a nation. In the same view education for women is a Development priority due to the dynamic potential of educated women (Adamu 1996).

Concept of Women Education

According to Alele (1994) women education is type of education received by women; which would make them become aware of themselves and their capacity to exploit the environment and this would promote national development. Women education is therefore seen as a process whereby women are given equal access to knowledge, skills, jobs in and participation in the wider society which would help in national development

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of a nation. This type of education involves training in literacy and vocational skills, to enable them become function in the society, especially in their homes.

Muhammad (2018) believed that education is a potential ingredient for changing women's life. Education is an instrument for national development. Women require education to be able to participate effectively in the, national development of a nation. Women education is recognized as one of the critical path-ways to promote national development. If there is better educated women population, there would be national development in that nation.

Concept of National Development

Development is multidimensional concept as stated by new encyclopedia (1994). He viewed development in wider sense, which includes: economic, social, cultural and political as basic aspect. Hyden (1994) also defined development as the product of human effort. Graham-Brown (1993) stated from experiences of planning in Botswana stated that most serious constraints to economic development is shortage of skilled manpower.

Objectives of education as stated in the national policy on education are;

- a. 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 kind for bright and full of opportunities for all citizens. Muhammad (2018).

Objectives of Women Education

Women have place in national development of a nation. In order then to prepare them for full participation in the national development, they are to be equipped with the great tool of education. United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1995) outlined the objectives for women education as follows:

- a. To enable women to improve their family's health and diet
- b. To increase women's productive ability, thus raising their family's standard of living
- c. To give women access to appropriate technologies, management of cooperatives
- d. To improve women's social and cultural states.
- e. To enable women, discharge their responsibilities more effectively.
- f. Helping women fight their own fears and feelings of inadequacy or inferiority.
- g. Educating women in all round development that is mentally, socially, physically, psychologically, religiously and economically.
- h. To make women participate fully in all the affairs of their nation and to be at the center of sustainable development.
- i. To make women to acquire their own basic needs of the society like food, shelter, fuel, cloths and nourishing.
- j. To enhance national development and human development.

Factors Militating Against Women Education

Enumerated below are certain factors that militate against women education in Nigeria.

Low socio-economic status: Majority of the women folk in Nigeria are poor compared with their male counterparts. This factor inhibits their ability to develop themselves educationally some of the ways of combating these factors are contained in the recommendation.

Parental attitudes: In most Nigerian communities women are not seen as equal with men. Most percent do not see the importance of girl's education and even among those who set high premium on education, priority is given to boys.

Nature of demands on women: The demand on women rubs them of time to participate in educational activities. Time spent on household chores reduce study time for young girls. On the other hand, adult women being saddled with house work and childcare find little time or feel too exhausted to attend adult literacy or other educational programmes.

Religious beliefs: In Nigeria particularly in northern Nigeria, the practice of wife seclusion makes it difficult for women to take advantage of available literacy programmes. In some urban centers where special schools are established for this group, the enrolments in such schools are low compared to the population of such women.

Early marriage: In Africa, particularly in Nigeria, a woman's level of dignity and acceptability is a function of her marital status. Parents are therefore very anxious to get their daughters married as early as possible. In doing this they deny them education. A date from Nigeria by UNICEF cited in Alele Williams (1992) shows that early marriage accounts for over fifty percent of female drop out in primary and post primary schools (Saleh, 2019).

The Role of Women Education in National Development

Women are very vital segment of human society. They rock the cradle of life and determine the future of civilization. This is supported by Jibowu (1992), WHO asserted that, "women constitute half of the population. They are home makers and centers of family. They are also the main custodians of social, cultural and fundamental values of a society and permanent change often best achieved through them.

"Women are so important to national development that if development is to be real instead of oratorical, they have to be developed side by side with the men and be provided with educational opportunities to prepare them for gainful employment as well as participation in governance."

In fact, women hood is a great treasure which if well utilized contributes immensely to moral, cultural, socio-economic and educational development of any nation. No society can develop faster than its women folk. Development itself has to be participatory and sustainable as rightly opined by Abacha (1997) progress is only feasible if we create a Nigeria made up of a united purpose — our nation needs men and women who are bold and imaginative, dedicated and committed, people who put honour, service and patriotism above everything else. This men and women are not only needed in politics, they are also needed in business, in our traditional institution, youth organization, in academics and the profession.

The burden of nation building toward actualization of our dreams for the next millennium rests on the women folk as it does on the men. Women are needed to create

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a blissful home, have well educated and well-behaved children and contented husband. All these are desirable ideals which higher education can bring about.

In recent times, women education appears to have become the critical index of both the quality and quantity of meaningful contribution to nation's development. Nigeria in her quest to catch up with the developed world cannot afford to ignore the strength of women education. According to Asu (1988). "Women account for 50% of the Nigeria population; Education has a powerful and more direct bearing on the social status of women. Indeed, education of women will enable them comprehend and appreciate their immediate environment, turn their creative potentials into productive use, learn to be tolerant of others, respect rules, imbibe leadership qualities and endurance and contribute effectively to redevelopment of the society. Because of women's multi-faceted contribution to be family, community and professional life, they have emerged as vital factors in the search for sustainable human and social development. Majority of them understand the importance of transmitting spiritual values and the link between these and social harmony human development is to play this central role in the achievement of social and economic, equity. It must have its roots in the powerful values of freedom, democracy, respect for human right and tolerance.

The fundamental changes, which are occurring worldwide in the areas of democratization, globalization and technology, are together transforming societies. To steer societies through the course of events and to emerge from the transformation towards achieving peace, democracy and sustainable development is a formidable challenge. This task requires all trim available talents, experience and expertise in the society and must include the effective utilization of the abundant talent, experience and expertise women at all levels of decision making, women can help create a society where discord and unrest are replaced by harmony and peace.

Challenges of decision-making attest to need for the empowerment of the various actors involved. Presently, for too few women possess this valuable attribute. Education facilitates women empowerment. This is essential for the participation of women in all aspects of development process. Furthermore, higher education provides the expertise usually required for the key posts which shape policy in all fields, hence its obvious importance for women. In spite of increase in feminist studies, content analysis of text and other materials used in instructions of higher learning have not been more expensively analyzed from the perspective of female gender (Saleh, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the following recommendations are made as ways of enhancing the roles of women education for national development.

- a. Government should get women involved in planning in all phases of development.
- b. Government should improve investment in education of girls both at the family and national levels.
- c. Early marriage for girls should be discouraged by the society in the states where such steps have not been taken. Girls should be allowed to pursue whatever career they wish and to choose the husbands they would want to marry.
- d. Women groups such as the national council for women societies (N C W S) should encourage and assist women with political ambition by giving them full moral and financial support.

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- e. More educational institutions should be established exclusively for women particularly those in purdah in northern part of Nigeria.
- f. The ministry of education at both federal, state level and other organs responsible for education should provide adequate career counseling steer to women in choosing professions which can take them to the top.
- g. Further enlightenment campaigns should be mounted by the government and nongovernmental organizations on the importance of women education.

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