INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) AS IT RELATES TO WOMEN EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

The central goal of ICT education is Human Resource Development (HRD).HRD is aimed at increasing the knowledge, skills and capacities of people in the society in order to bring about economic growth and development. There is nothing in human life that is void of information and communication technology (ICT). Women occupy an important position in the development process .Sustainable human development requires the bringing of women to the main stream of national affairs. It is therefore stating the obvious when we say that women access to information and communication technology, is the best way of empowering women and promoting their welfare and that of the society in general. This paper recommended that appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that our women have access to basic ICT education to bring about the much needed social and economic growth of the individual and the nation at large.

The central goal of ICT education is Human Resources Development (HRD). HRD is aimed at increasing the knowledge, skills and capacities of people in the society in order to bring about economic growth and development. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, disseminate, store and manage information. It includes the prints, (magazines, newspapers, books, etc) and the electronics (radio, television, video tapes, internet, tape players and recorders, fax machines, telephones, satellites devices, computers etc). The world at present is knowledge based and ICT holds unlimited possibilities in promoting sustainable national development. Information is a very important tool for self-reliance. ICT has brought people of diverse backgrounds across the world closer to one another. This has given them the opportunity to network and exchange worthwhile information necessary for their well being and development. Computer literacy education is a must for everybody in this age. Not only the adults, but also the young ones from age 1 year need to get used to using the computer. A world without computer is a world in darkness (Oluwunmi, 2007).

Women Education

According to Lawrence (1995) a woman is an adult female human being. Education is instruction or training by which people (generally young) learn to develop and use their mental, moral and physical powers. Women education seeks to develop the total personality of women in any given society and ensure that they use the training so received or acquired to develop society. The objectives of women education in Nigeria (Babalola 1998 in Salome & Solomon 2004:339) are to:

1. Create in the women an awareness of the provisions of the Nigerian constitution.
2. Create adequate and functional political literacy among Nigerian women.
3. Foster in Nigerian women the spirit of self discipline, hard work, cooperation and respect for constituted authority.

4. Sensitize the Nigerian women to the functions and obligations of government.
5. Develop in the women a sense of national pride and loyalty to the nation.
6. Make Nigerian women fully aware of their rights and duties and to respect the rights of others.
7. Facilitate the evolution of responsible, well informed and self reliant Nigerian women.
8. Foster in the Nigerian women a more rational attitude necessary for the judicious utilization of their environmental resources.

Empowerment

The word "Empowerment" comes from the word "power". Thus to empower someone means to give authority to, to enable a person or group of persons gain power (Chaba in Victoria et al 2004) Empowerment means gaining the power to make ones voice heard, to contribute to plans and discussions that affect one, to use ones expertise at work and to improve ones performance. (Foy, 1997)

Bhasin (1984) (in Victoria, N. P, Margaret, N. J. & Yohanna, T. W. 2004) noted that empowerment cannot mean power over others, power to control more than our share; it should mean power to be, power to control one's own greed, avarice and violence; power to nurture, heal, care for others, power to fight for justice, ethics, morality, power to achieve inner growth leading to wisdom and compassion. He also noted that the process of empowerment is a political process, because it aims at changing existing power relationships. Empowerment of women has to be done at all levels and in all sectors for it to make a difference. Women empowerment could be regarded as a dynamic process which enhances women's ability to change these structured and ideologies which keep them subordinate.

Therefore, women empowerment means providing an enabling environment for women to develop their true potentials so that they can contribute to the development of the society by providing purposeful leadership.

For a genuine women empowerment, there is the need for clear legal provision that will address issues in favour of women. These rights need to be made more explicit by enshrining some of them in the constitution where necessary. Women's right to autonomy, life and equality should not be compromised by a claim to rights based on religion or culture.

One key instrument needed to empower women to break the traditional male hold is education. That is to say that the road to a successful career for women in any profession of their choice is through education and this is to the highest level. To increase status level and efficiency of women in industrial and other service organization like education, there is need for appropriate training in Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Roles of the Educated Women and Need For ICT Education

Women are difference from men because of their natural roles and physiology. According to Folashade in Abdulazeez (2004) the women possess less muscles and strength than the men and they are naturally designed or created to incubate the young ones. The education of women has succeeded in producing mothers who not only incubate the young ones but contribute in many areas of societal development. Women now venture into areas that were formerly seen as being reserved for men. Some modern day perceived roles of women include seeing her as a teacher, a counselor, and administrator, a researcher etc. Shonibare (2001) (in Abdulazeez 2004:15) stated that the perceived roles could make her to be seen as:

(i) A policy maker who is responsible for the overall determination of direction, budget planning and implementation.
(ii) An administrator involved in the daily routine of students, staff and visitors in schools and educational ministry.
(iii) A teacher who stimulates knowledge, awareness in the upcoming generation.
(iv) A counselor responding to the systematic sharpening of ideas and clarifying options and consequences.
(v) A researcher who investigates the depth, causes, consequences, trends and conclusions in a given educational phenomenon.
(vi) An employer of labour and school director
(vii) A citizen who is a member of a given community and a dynamic participant in the course of development.

From the list above, we can see that the average educated women have numerous roles to play in the society. We have women who have reached the highest levels of their career. Education has actually helped women to be recognized by the government and to occupy key positions in the scheme of national development. For instance, we have women ministers, women senators, women vice chancellors of universities, provosts of Colleges of Education, principals of secondary schools, headmistress of primary schools and others.

To continue to be relevant in the scheme of events in the world today, women have to keep abreast of the rapid changing nature of ICT. ICT and gender (Women) have become regular factors in global policy meetings and conferences because of their relevance to national development and sustainable growth. Giving greater attention to empowering the female population of any nation to access information, knowledge and skills relevant to immediate local issues prepares them for greater roles in the society. Since computer literacy is one of the basic skills needed to survive in today's high-tech world, women need an education in such knowledge and skill. In modern age, computers are used for typing, drawing, learning, playing games, calculation of simple and complex mathematical formulae, documentation, information processing and so on. Because of the benefits we get from using computer, the following organization use computers: Banks, offices and industries, churches, mosques, hospitals, supermarkets, hotels and other places. Since we already noted the important roles of women in almost all areas of life such as Bankers, administrators, teachers, nurses, pastors, and others, it is therefore necessary to give them access to ICT to equip them to play these role effectively.

Above all, the educated women that are privileged to acquire ICT education will ensure that their children/wards also acquire sound education. Well, educated children produce better families and better families produce better societies.

Conclusion

This paper briefly discussed the meaning of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). It also discussed the meaning of women education and empowerment. The roles of the educated women and the place of ICT as a means of equipping her with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and self confidence necessary for effective functioning in the society were highlighted.

Recommendation

In view of the importance of ICT in all area of our life it is strongly recommended that opportunities for ICT training be made available to our women in both the formed and non formed education system. In the formed system, material and personnel should be provided in the

schools for practicals. Only establishment with necessary materials and personnel should be allowed to conduct workshops and conferences for those outside the former school system.

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