

CREATIVITY AND INVENTIONS IN WOMEN: ROLE OF FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION.

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Abstract

Women generally are endowed with creativity and inventions in their daily lives as wives, mothers and as they pursue their economical lives. This paper examines the role of functional education for women, which was discussed in two parts –the home and the economic ventures among others. It has been observed that the literacy level for women in Nigeria is still low and so they would need a second chance education. The paper recommended that government, non-government organizations, and religious clerics need to establish more Adult and Non-Formal Education Centers in the country with the combination of vocational studies. This would make the women to be self confident and self reliant for a better national development.

Key Words: creativity, invention, functional education.

Women form a major part of human resource potentials for the development of a nation. It is therefore expected that they have to be developed to make the deserved impact in the society, especially a developing country like Nigeria. In most developing countries there is a high female illiteracy level in which they are not in a position to acquire information that can induce them to better their income economically (Alagoa, 2004).

Kelleher (2014) stated that the 774 million adults (15 years and older) who still can not read or write have two thirds of them (493 million) who are women. While in Nigeria the literacy rate of female adults of 15 years and above was put at 49.8 percent in 2009 which was the last statistics taken according to the World Bank (2015). Odo (2013) noted that the underdevelopment of women in any society is almost synonymous with the society's underdevelopment. That

through appropriate education and skills development, women would be empowered to utilize their great potentials for the economic progress of their family and the country.

The emancipation of Nigerian women has come a long way with the past administrations trying to improve the lots of women and to find out their immediate needs. This led to the setting up of different programmes to alleviate them and enhance their productivity in food and craft production where they are the major players. Some of these programmes are Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Better Life and Family Support Programme, National Directorate of Employment, Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure, National Poverty Eradication Programme and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and so on. Ogbigwe (1990) in Alagoa (2005) pointed out that for men to be able to satisfy their needs, they necessarily have to mobilize and harness resources provided by nature coupled with skills and industrialization to produce goods and services for the satisfaction of their needs. This is so because the women use natural items around them like clay, twinges, fibers, grasses and crushed stems with other flexible items in their craft operation.

A documentary on Laos by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1997) recommended that life and hope for these marginalized poverty stricken group of people (women) would

need functional education to face the challenges and realities of the modern world. It is usually not easy for women to make out time to continue their education because of responsibilities as wives and mothers along with their economic activities. Learning becomes effective if it is embedded in functional education where the women would become successful in their economic activities - trading, farming, fishing and so on in addition to rearing of healthy children.

Yossifov (2002) observed that by nature, man is torn between security where he seeks shelter and adventure as he takes risks. Furthermore, it is stated that invention is creating something new that did not exist before, new solutions to existing problems, result of human creativity and curiosity which turn successful and demand to be driven. The Role of Functional Education to the Nigerian Women should occupy important position in the development of the nation since their neglect and marginalization would be disastrous as the adage goes that if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.

Concept of Creativity

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (Hornby, 2006) defines creativity as involving the use of skill and the imagination to produce new items. It is also the thinking of problems or thinking of new ideas. Accordingly, Cox (2011) stated that constraints are good which probably forces one to be challenged to try new things and to

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experiment more, leading to creativity. So creativity is born out of necessity and constraints are just needed. Okoye and Eze (2010) also stated that creativity is the ability to generate novel response to problems and challenges as well as the ability to generate and implement new ideas.

Creativity was identified by Guilford (1962) in Bayode (2005) as quoted by Alese (2011) as traits that are fluent, flexible, original ability to form meanings and ability to elaborate. Also Aribisala (2000) in Alese submitted that Nigerian women are creative judging by their activities in food processing, shoe and hat making, textile, tailoring and weaving are some of the creative and innovative skills. The women bring out their skills in various meals as finished products from agricultural products like yam flour, cassava flour, plantain flour, palm oil, smoked fish, tie and dye (adire) from textile, bead making, weaving, pottery from clay and so on.

Alonge, Ige and Osagiobare (2014) highlighted the creativity of women that they are involved in cultural development and entertainment industry by performing in cultural shows and displays in dancing, singing and acting. And that they also produce oriental objects like beads, bangles and pottery work which are of tremendous socio-cultural values in the society. It has been acknowledged by Eze and Okoye (2007) in Okoye and Eze (2010) that traditional ideas and primitive techniques that had served well for decades are currently

relegated and downgraded by foreigners and some indigenous people and tagged inferior goods.

Concept of Invention

Mougeot (1994) stated that there is a common saying that necessity is the mother of invention. This is shown when people with little or no land space produce food, fuel and other raw materials. Garden on roof tops, plants inside old tyres, breeding of rabbits in abandoned garages and fish hatchery in the home.

Invention is a tedious journey of tough terrain littered with many ideas which might be good but did not survive to be inventions according to the United States Department of Energy Invention and Innovation (2000) as quoted by Hassan (2014). For a technology to have pulled through to be an invention, it must be unique or a novel device, a method, composition or product development process that would be ideal for marketing to make profit. Yossifov (2002) remarked that invention is making a breakthrough by pioneering in new industries, new businesses and new markets. That most inventions are added development to technology, improved quality, better performance, higher productivity, more customers satisfaction and reduced cost.

Invented items better the life of people according to Chandler (1998). People like Thomas Edison (History, 2015) who invented the transmitter, automatic telegraph, the earliest motion picture cameras and many others. In

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Nigeria, late Architect Frank Nwobuora Mbanefo who just passed on the 23rd of April 2015 was the one that designed the famous "Ojukwu Bunker" and built it with locally available materials with a team of engineers. He also invented and built some advanced weapon systems to support the Biafran troops during the Nigerian / Biafran war period and in the process lost three fingers on his left hand (Ugwu, 2015).

There are however many Nigerian inventors whose inventions hardly touched the life's of the rural people especially women. The Nigerian Intellectual Property Watch (2013) in honor of World Intellectual Property Day listed sixteen Nigerian inventors. On the 26th of April every year, innovators, inventors, visionaries, scholars and countries from around the world celebrate World Intellectual Day. One of the sixteen inventors is a rural man, Mohammed Bah Abbah who invented the "pot- in-pot refrigerator" or "zeer " , which does not use electricity. This invention allows perishable food to extend their spoilage period. For example, meat can be stored for two weeks instead of few hours.

Concept of Functional Education

Functional literacy as stated by McArthur (1998, updated 2015) is the acquisition of appropriate verbal, cognitive and computational skills to accomplish practical ends in culturally specific settings. This emphasizes on minimal levels of competency and preparation of workers for jobs.

Olamukoro (2012) in Okemakinde (2014) explained that literacy is not just the ability to read and write but to use printed information to function in the society. This was complimented by Olaleye and Adeyemo (2012) that the concept of purposeful or functional literacy was conceived as working or work oriented literacy. In other words, functionality of literacy undertaking is an extent to which it is able to empower the beneficiary.

Accordingly, Asaju and Adagba (2014) expressed that functional education is a level of opportunities that would bring about high quality manpower that would turn around the available resources into wealth for the nation. In a similar vein, Odum and Ezekwe (2015) explained that functionality in education simply meant teaching in a manner that ensures holistic development of the students in life with the societal existential needs, they also stated that skills and enterprising potentials to produce meaningful understanding which would effectively culminate to self –reliance and satisfactory social integration of the individual. From the concept of functional education, it would stimulate indigenous entrepreneurship to create effective alleviation of women in generating income and better homes.

The Role of Functional Education

1. The Home

Functional education would help the women to be good wives and mothers to their families since according

to Ojobo (2008), they are to use whatever knowledge and skills acquired to cook, clean and rear the children, it would enable them see that their children are immunized with vaccines against the six killer diseases - diphtheria (D), tetanus (T), pertussis (whooping cough), polio (IPV), haemophilus influenza type B (Hib) and hepatitis B (Hep B) from birth with help from health workers or pediatricians.

The women would be creative in decorating their homes and making use of modern household appliances like the Ezystove which has won awards for the contribution towards sustainable development and climate change adaptation (Hashange, 2013). Ezekiel-Hart in Asodike (2005) as quoted by Okoye and Eze (2010) stated that women that have acquired education and also have skills through which they generate fund feel satisfied because largely they do not depend on others for most of their needs, having acquired relevant education or employable skills, and are subsequently employed or self-employed. There is a sense of self-actualization, higher order need according to Abraham Maslow that gives the person a fulfilment. It is significant for women to get a second chance education as functional education which is really their rights as human beings. This would make the women to be confident and self-reliant.

2. **Economic Ventures**

The African women are hard working in income generating activities as stated by Amucheazi (1991) in Ezegbe and Akubue (2012), and that they do various ventures like processing of palm oil, garri, soap making, weaving, sewing and pottery, then food crop production, animal husbandry, food processing and distribution. They combine all these with their role in procreation and home management.

Creativity and innovations would increase productivity and reduce the cost of food or items. When cost of operations in labour, productivity, processing, preservation and distribution improves the items would be cheaper for more gain. There have been a lot of improvement in the agricultural sector on post harvest losses. Vark (2014) stated that 50 percent is estimated of crops loss from food supply in developing countries. There are the Purdue Improved Cowpea Storage (Pics) bags that grains are stored in, sealed so that oxygen is closed out and so kills the weevil inside. There are also the dryers that are used by farmers instead of sun drying with contaminates, cassava farmers can reduce losses by using the grater and press-in method in processing the raw cassava roots into wet cakes so that they have larger shelf line. Also the threshing machines for grains are very helpful but women still use wind assistance in hulling the grain from the chaff since most farmers cannot afford them.

Mud silos have been in use in Ghana for hundreds of years but are still not wide spread. It is also used in the Northern part of Nigeria in storing grains. They are constructed with mud and grasses and if the grains are well treated and dried before storage they can last for years. There are also fish dryers where little fuel wood is used in lesser time than the open drying system and then coolers that can be installed to fishing boats so that the fish are fresh when the boats are back to shore. Livestock farming has also improved with modern drugs for birds, animals and fish farming. Layers (birds) are just fed with their feeds and they lay eggs when they are mature. One does not blame some elders including the researcher's grandmother-in-law who refused to take these eggs but only took the native birds eggs till her demise. One wants to wonder about inventions as magical, where birds lay eggs without mating with cocks. Women need basic literacy and numeracy to effectively adapt to new agricultural methods, and also gain entitlement to their land, apply for credit facilities from lending institutions to enhance their living. There are some locally made fabrications that have been of help to women in processing their economic ventures.

Conclusion

Functional education empowers women which would remove the obstacles of ignorance, marginalization and discrimination. It is important that

about half of the country should also be educated and given a second chance in Adult and vocational education. This would enhance the impact to the sustainable development of the nation.

Recommendations

These are some proffered recommendations that were made for functional education for women to have an impact in the development of the nation.

1. The government should try to establish more Adult and Non- Formal Education Centers in the country with the addition of vocational training with qualified teachers and equipment.
2. The government and non-governmental organizations should also establish more Women Development Centers and Craft Centers in the country to compliment the Adult Education Centers.
3. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development should send out their Extension Workers to the farmers especially the women in the rural areas to educate them on improved varieties of items for healthy productivity. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry should also educate the women on how to expand their economic ventures and how to access loans.
4. Religious leaders of both Christianity and Muslims should advocate on how women could be

empowered economically and not just spiritually.

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