

# VIABLE WOMEN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY: IMPLICATION FOR THE RELIGION TEACHER

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## **Abstract**

*The paper focuses on viable women education for sustainable democracy in Nigeria and its implication for the religion teacher. In the pursuance of National goals and objectives of any nation, education continue to be the bedrock for sustainable development of all nations. In this process, concept of education, concept of women empowerment, threat to women education in Nigeria, challenges facing women education in Nigeria and roles of the religion education were also discussed. The paper recommended among other things that: education of female child should be made accessible at all levels; awareness programmes should be fostered to redeem the image of the girl-child; environment should be conducive for girl child learning. The paper concluded that: Women should not be denied access to education since they form a large population to enable them contribute to sustainable democracy.*

**Keywords:** Education, Women Education, Sustainable democracy, Religious Education.

The term “Women” is reserved for adult females while a young female is a girl. A woman can simply be referred to as any female who is mature enough to handle matters that pertain to livelihood. For a person to be referred to as a woman, she needs to be a female who can handle the challenges of life and take appropriate decisions. They may not however be married since a female who is advanced in age would not be addressed as a girl but as woman. Education has a strong effect in the change in a woman’s life. In the course of history, Planned Parenthood, improved sanitation, health and eating habits have been spread through education with women as the target or main group (Whyte, 2013).

Education is central to development and improvement of the nations’ welfare. It empowers people and strengthens nations. It is a powerful equaliser, opening doors to all to lift themselves out of poverty. Education also promotes economic growth, national productivity and innovation and values of democracy and social cohesion (Ajayi, 2011).

Women's education is a significant variable affecting children education attainment and opportunities. A mother with a few years of formal education is considerable more likely to send her children to school. Although education is very important for every child whether boy or girl but an African proverb says "If we educate a boy, we educate one person, if we educate a girl, we educate a family and a whole nation and this is because any woman educated always ensure she sends her children to school" (Mangvwat, 2010).

Education is the process of facilitating learning. Knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits of a group of people are transferred to other people, through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, or research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators. Any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational. -.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has clearly outlined those fundamental human rights to which we are entitled. Chapter IV (Fundamental Rights) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for instance, recognises the following fundamental human rights for Nigerians; even though the economic and educational rights are not recognized. They are only listed as Directive principles of State Policy. The rights recognized are as follow:

- a) Right to life;
- b) Right to dignity of human person;
- c) Right to personal liberty;
- d) Right to fair hearing;
- e) Right to private and family life;
- f) Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- g) Right to freedom of expression and the press;
- h) Right to freedom of assembly and association;
- i) Right to freedom of movement; and
- j) Right to freedom from discrimination.

The ten rights listed can only be enjoyed maximally by the educated and informed citizens. For instance educated mind is a prerequisite to right to life, dignity of human person, personal liberty and rights to freedom from discrimination. The paper critically examined the following: Concept of Education; Concept of Women Empowerment; Role of Empowerment; Threat to Women Education in Nigeria; Challenges Facing Women Education in Nigeria and Role of Religious Education.

**(i) Concept of Education**

Education may be described as a process of teaching and instruction received, a process of training and improving one's test and life standard (Chaga and Audu, 2015). In other words, it is a process through which learning is facilitated or knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits are acquired. Education often takes place under the guidance of educators but learners may also educate themselves.

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The word education is been derive from the Latin terms “educatum” which means the act of teaching or training. Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and or research. Education may also include informal transmission of such information from one human being to another. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of others, but learners may also educate themselves (autodidactic learning). Any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational.

Education on the other hand is a designed process for training an individual by which knowledge is acquired. Eya, (2010) opined that it is a vital developmental process which is directly related to the effectiveness of trained manpower. Sule (2017) defined education as an activity or endeavour in which the more matured of society deal with, the less mature in order to achieve a greater maturity in them and contribute to improvement of human life.

**(ii) Concept of Women Education**

Women education is the process of sensitizing the girls-child (women) on the need to possess basic skills, knowledge, ability, values and attitudes to make her fit positively, comfortably and productively into the society (Enaibe and lmonivwerha 2016). It is the process which creates opportunities for all round development of the Nigerian women. It is aimed at providing opportunities for women to be partners with men in the overall development of the nation. Women education has been geared towards developing the ability, skill, knowledge and other forms of behaviours of the girl-child that have both positive and meaningful values to the society in which they live. Also it makes women to be aware of themselves, and the education is to explore the environment.

In Nigeria, the position or status of women has been no less-than anywhere else in the world. The Nigerian society is essentially male dominated, in many cases women are marginalized and generally excluded from playing any traditional leadership roles. Their awareness for self-expression and self-realization is drastically limited by tradition and cultural practices. In every aspect of life there is generally a good deal of social distance between men and women including the relationship of spouses. This separation is symbolized as well as reinforced by the sexual division of labour (Akor, 2011).

Barry (2013) stated women education dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century in America where women were being taught how to handle household chores. Women education during this period was therefore fashioned towards assisting the girl child become a wife material and manage her home properly after marriage. Today, the education of women has gone beyond the task of being home managers to that of managing small and large business organizations. Women now acquire formal education in order to assist them to contribute effectively to the management of various sectors of the society. Since women are now exposed to the same learning environment available to their male counterparts, they have been empowered to contribute equally to the advancement of the society.

Baba (2012) stated that women education is an instrument for providing change in the Nigerian economy. This is an avenue for providing formal education to women in the society by equipping them with the skills and abilities needed to contribute meaningfully to the growth and development to improve change in the Nigerian economy. Women education is therefore provided at all levels of the educational sector in order to equip women with the knowledge to become empowered and contribute to self and societal development.

**(iii) Concept of Empowerment**

The concept of empowerment implies developing an individual to be self reliant. It is a way of giving moral support to enable an individual progress gradually in the world of politics, science and technology. It is to engage an individual in a well meaningful activity for further development. It is a way of motivating and encouraging someone to develop himself/herself. The following areas can be used to empower women in a fast developing world.

(a) **Women literacy classes:** Tarrow (2011) is of the view that literacy classes can be organized for those who have not got the opportunity of formal education, where they can be taught vocational skills such as knitting, sewing, cooking, health care services and so on. According to Tarrow, (2011) such programmes raise the socio-economic status of women who lacked formal education and can empower them for national economic development.

(b) **Self-help groups (associations) women groups/association can be formed in rural and urban communities whose purpose should be aimed at archiving the following goals:** income generation, nutrition education, literacy and community problem solving. Women should be encouraged to organize themselves to learn particular skills and acquire knowledge associated with each project often inviting government workers to assist them. (Areole, 2011).

(c) **Women should be equipped with enough information or knowledge on entrepreneurship:** They should be able to know why there is need for entrepreneurship and have knowledge of how to start a business and the laws that governs purchasing, contract and ownership, and so on.

(d) **Local craft making:** This involves the making of mats, baskets, weaving, pottering making, leather work, hairdressing, crocheting, knitting, weaving, or woodcarving or calabash designing. Local craft making may be look upon as menial but yet could be developed and sustained as viable way of empowering women.

**(iv) Role of Empowerment**

The term empowerment varies in meaning and it depends on the political, cultural and socio-economic context in which it is represented. Empowerment is a multifaceted social process that assists people to have control over their own lives, communities, and societies (Spires, 2012). It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important'. Australia (2017) view empowerment

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as “the expansion of freedom of choice and actions an increasing one’s authority and control over the resources and decisions that affects one’s life.” Thus by extension, women’s empowerment implies women gaining control and power over their own lives such that their rights, opportunities and responsibilities will be independent. Women’s empowerment is deemed important in achieving gender equality. According to Corcos (2016), an empowered woman possess a sense of self-worth, has the capability to e me her own choices, has access to resources and a wide array of opportunities she can pursue as well as being able to persuade the direction of social change to fashion a more just economic and social order locally and internationally. Bulman (2017), further maintain that empowerment is not a zero-sum game where women’s gain automatically translate to losses for men, but rather a phenomenon where men are brought alongside women in the change process. Thus, the empowerment of women is needed in so as to narrow the gender gap and establish a level playing field between men and women for gender equality to be reached and maintained, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF 2012).

**(v) Threats to Women Education in Nigeria**

Some factors responsible for threats to women education in Nigeria by Mohammed (2016) are stated below:

- a) **Economic Factor:** Nigeria as an independent entity is undoubtedly characterized by very harsh economic conditions. This has resulted into scarce resources. As a result of this, choice has to be made between whom to send to school. Most often, it is the female child that remains at home. Due to poverty, female child get withdrawn from schools so as to help to supplement family income through trading or even working on the farm so as to support the family.
- b) **Sexual. Violence and Abuse:** This also hampers the female child from going to school. Due to this fear of sexual violence, most parents deny their girl children access to education.
- c) **Political Factors:** Despite Nigeria’s signatory to various international conventions on the right of the children generally, so far very little has been achieved. The situation remains pathetic and serious. For instance, at the formation-of United Nations almost six decades old, the precarious situation of the children worldwide became so obvious that it became necessary to establish United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) with special focus on the needs of the children around the world.
- d) **The School Environmental Factors:** Often most parents are scared of sending their female children to school in distant places and would rather keep them at home. Curricular, textbooks and other learning materials are usually gender-biased (Winifred, 2014). Also, sexual harassments during educational pursuit create serious emotional and psychological strain on the girl child.
- e) **Social Cultural and Religions Factors:** In most African societies especially in Nigeria, the role of the woman as a wife and mother is conceived as the utmost priority not only by her parents, but also by her parents, but also by the female child herself.

**(vi) Challenges Facing Women Education in Nigeria**

Some challenges facing Women Education in Nigeria is as follows:

**(a) Family Ties:** Basically, the function of women in Nigerian society is to take care of children and other members in the family. Definitely married women have home distraction. Their involvement in domestic activities is enough to distract them as they should be taught to strike a balance between taking care of the family and business.

**(b) Inadequate Capital:** Women empowerment required financial involvement as women feeding from hands to mouths will pose a very big threat. A financially handicapped woman cannot go into a business without money, sometimes if she does the business will be liquidated by siphoning the money to feed the family.

**(c) Limited Mobility:** The stress involved in women's empowerment is the area of mobility. It is a fatigue to the weaker vessels. Strength and mobility are required to make business flourish this means more hands to be engaged with adequate communication gadgets such as cell phone, etc. use of good means of transportation to deliver the goods to the consumers must be provided.

**(d) Low Risk Bearing Ability:** Risk bearing is an essential prerequisite of a successful empowerment which most women cannot undertake due to educational and income. There are a lot of risks facing business men and women. Loss of products by sudden fire outbreak, accident, fake raw materials and poor and low demand of products expired products that cannot be sold is part of the risks.

**(e) Low Level of Education:** Low level of education is serious barrier to women entrepreneurship in various parts of the country. Reading, writing and keeping of financial records are very important in maintaining a business. This is where education of women comes in the management of a business which requires a sound education to a certain level.

**(vii) Roles of Religious Education**

The role of religious education in women Education and empowerment cannot be overemphasized: The awareness created in women development and empowerment through religious education should suppose to produce the following qualities on women: honesty; steadfast; thoughtful gift-giver; honorable; humility; gracefulness promotes moral excellence; leadership; self-awareness; expression of genuine interest on others; originality; kindness; should know when to let go and the best version of herself.

**Conclusion**

Women education remain a veritable tool in nation development. Thus development of any society would be grossly lopsided if the female child is not given quality education. Improving access to and the quality of education is the most rewarding investment a country can make. Women education is very necessary and an issue that cannot be over emphasised as a veritable tool to curbing child marriage.

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Every child should be given the opportunity to be educated irrespective of the gender of the child as both sexes can bring equal growth and contributions to the society; the female child should not be seen as an inferior gender that is only good in the kitchen, which usually results in marrying her out as a child. An African proverb says, “If we educate a boy, we educate one person; if we educate a girl, we educate a family and a whole nation.” An empowered woman is full of great potentials, strength, courage and knowledge that does not end only in the kitchen but is passed down to her children and the society. The religion teacher helps in the direction of acquisition of right character towards education and empowerment through moral values.

### **Recommendations**

Sequel to the above discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Local, State and Federal Government should provide enlightenment programme to all women in our various communities for women education and empowerment;
- b. Government should ensure that education is free at the primary and secondary levels in all states in Nigeria. This will help a great deal in tackling excuses of non-affordability, by Parents and guardians;
- c. Government should ensure that the female child has access to quality education and schools that are safe and girl-friendly especially in the northern part of Nigeria where girls’ schools are the major targets of insurgents. This must be available at the critical transition from primary to secondary schooling, a time when school dropout rates for girls escalate;
- d. Government and non-governmental organisations should do well to create awareness-raising campaigns for parents and community leaders on the benefits of girls’ education, scholarship programmes for girls, female mentors and teachers, equip schools with sex-segregated toilets and provide training and re-training exercises for teachers on how to ensure a safe environment for all students;
- e. The Federal, State and Local Government to establish women empowerment through vocational and entrepreneurship education financial units;
- f. Non-governmental organization to invest in empowering women through entrepreneurship education and
- g. Religious Education on values of Women empowerment should be taught in schools to enable women become virtuous women.
- h. Government should invest more money in making the school environment favourable and conducive for the girl child to learn.

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