

# WOMKN EDUCATION, ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

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## **Abstract**

In recent time, the issue of women education in Nigeria has generated a lot of controversy. the mental torture, economic deprivation and social annihilation suffered by women as a result of illiteracy should prick (he conscience of antagonists. Education liberates the mind and serves as an instrument for self discipline and as well as a catalyst for development. This paper sees women education as *a* right and not a privilege. It condemns any cultural practice which deprives women of (heir right to education. However, the paper opines (hat in pursuing this goal, women should not adopt any confrontational posture. The paper concludes that for any meaningful development to lake place in Nigeria, all citizens have to be given equal and unrestricted access to education.

## **Introduction**

In recent time, the issue of woman education in Nigeria has generated a lot of controversy. The mental torture, economic deprivation and social annihilation suffered by women as a result of illiteracy should prick the conscience of the antagonists of women education. The education of women in Nigeria is a right and not a privilege. Without doubt, education is an instrument for self development. Amalu (2003), opines that "for any society to witness rapid development of its human and material resources, equal opportunity must be given to its citizens in the provision of educational' opportunities irrespective of gender, creed or colour."

Any country or society that treats the education of a section of its citizens with levity will remain in perpetual under-development. The world over, education is the catalyst for development. This is why Amao-Kehinde (2004), asserts that "no nation can attain a genuine socio-economic, development without involving a11 sectors of (he population." Ellah (2001), in corroboration holds that "the stability of any society demands that every member participates in the activities of the society according to the individual's interest and expectation,"

All the benefits associated with education not withstanding some critics hold that any ; expenditure on women's education would have been better spend on something else. Fafunwa (1974), ' as quoted by Mammansawa and Kidah (2004), says that traditional society sees women as temporary members of (heir places of birth and as such, any expenses on their education were regarded as a waste since they have another define role in their marital home. Unfortunately, this view sees education as a means of livelihood and not an instrument for development. Amao-Kehinde (2004), opines that "the effectiveness of any third-world country's development effort and ability to sustain such development depends on a full participation of all its human resources." On this premise, [his paper focuses on women education as an indispensable aspect of Nigeria's development.

## **Women Education and Self Fulfillment**

Both the extrinsic and intrinsic values of education reveal that education is more than a means of livelihood. Instead, it is an instrument for self development. Unfortunately, the traditional view of education dominated the thinking of many Nigerians, who contend that since .every woman will one clay get married; sending them to school will not be of benefit. Today, it is clear that education is more than a means of livelihood. It is rather an instrument for self fulfillment.

The task of nation building requires the collective effort of all. Unfortunately, owing to the low education of women they have not participated adequately in this regard. Filshak Yioi and Daze (2004), laments "there are some women who are intelligent and hard working and would have contributed immensely in the socio-economic development of Nigeria but are constraints in gaining access to formal education.

Women are enormously endowed and if given the opportunity to prove themselves have a lot to offer humanity. Amao-Kehinde (2004), writes that "the potentials of women derive from many factors. Women constitute over 50% of Nigeria's population. In most countries, women work longer hours than men. For instance, in Africa, Asia and Pacific, women work for an average 12-13 hours daily." Sadly enough, despite this remarkable effort, it is not captured by employment statistics nor credited in any way by society.

Education builds confidence in its holder. When a person is educated he/she is no longer afraid of his environment. Sharing a similar view Fayam (2005), contends that "at the individual level, people will want to acquire education for many reasons: one of which may be to acquire knowledge, and at the same time to enable them understand the world around." If a woman understands her environment, she is in a position to explore same to her benefit. This will help her to contribute to the development of her society. Abdulazeez (2004), says that when a woman is educated. She is equipped with the knowledge of so many things about herself and her life. This woman can stand on her own if she is engaged in a trade or given any employment in any establishment. Here, it is obvious that education liberates the mind from ignorance.

An educated woman performs optimally in anything she finds her hands doing. Women are meticulous and fear failure. This accounts for their good performance in anything they set their minds on. Relating this to Art Education, Adcwumi (2004), argues that "Art Education synthesizes the woman's sense of creativity and helps her to appropriately and aesthetically appreciate her environment." In this wise, an educated woman is usually very creative and resourceful because of the awareness that any failure finally bounces back on her as the mother of the nation.

In view of the above, it is crystal clear that the lip service paid to women education in Nigeria is largely responsible for our under-development. A country in dear need of development is supposed to harness all its human and material resource without prejudice.

### **Impediments to Women Education**

Several factors are responsible for the poor participation of women in the acquisition of formal education. According to Abdulazeez (2004), these include: "home background, religious and societal background as well as career opportunities." Unfortunately, all these are culturally based. It is not difficult for any woman to shake herself away from these impediments and acquire formal education where a favourable climate is created.

The gender bias in traditional society is largely responsible for the disparity experienced today in the rate of education of men and women in Nigeria. Traditional education is characterized by sex-role stereotype. According to Obodoegdulam (1997), "traditional societies spelt out roles for males and females. In this respect, their education was therefore tailored to suit their ascribed roles in the society.

In support of the above, Fafunwa (1974), as quoted by Mammansawa and Kidah (2004), holds that "in traditional society girls are initiated at early stage in the form of cooking, keeping the household clean, protecting herself from any form of abuse in order to reach her husband's house in good shape." Here, we can see that the education of the girl child was restricted to domestic chores. Unfortunately, this type of education denies the girl child her individuality and personal goals, since her well being was tied to that of the entire family.

The exploits of the early missionaries did not help the predicament of women either, especially in the area of formal education. Since their objective was not to empower the people intellectually. Women were considered not relevant to their goal. As Mammansawa and Kidah (2004), observe "the objectives of the missionaries was to train men who will help them to spread the gospel and at the same time, do some artisan jobs. As it were, these may require them travelling from place to place, considered not possible for women.

The social and intellectual discrimination suffered by women helped to demoralize those who would have loved to try. At all public gathering, women are not allowed to talk, irrespective of the occasion, level of participation or issue at stake. Even if the topic of discussion is for or against women, men assume that whatever decision they reach has to be acceptable to them. As stated earlier, -women are more energetic and put in an average of 12-14 hours per day. If this can be directed towards the acquisition of formal education, it is apparent that the society would be better for it.

Home background has been one of the factors which worked negatively against the education of women. Sinha (1998), recalls that girls do enormous work at home and at the field. They carry water fetch-by-fetch, collect fuel wood, cook, clean, wash, take care of siblings and act as little mother." After discharging these responsibilities the girl will be tired and exhausted and may not be able to do any academic work, if at all, all the opportunity may be provided.

Parents, have also contributed negatively towards the education of the girl child. Filshak, Yilji and Daze (2004), content that "at childhood, girls are made to play with dolls and help in the kitchen while boys are made to play with gun-like structures, cars and machine tools outdoors and just content to take meals." Regrettably, this attitude towards the girl child by parents helps to dull the intellectual ambition of the girl child. Since all children are gifts from God, one expects that parents will give them equal opportunities.

The low level of income of some families has been advanced as one of the factors discriminating against women in the area of education. Bebebiafia (2000), "holds that in traditional societies seeing a girl to school as a waste, since they have a role they were going to perform in someone

else's home and will just answer the family's name temporarily." Sinha (1995) recalls some of the questions some parents ask concerning the women education. According to her, those parents ask: "why should a girl go to school? These girls will get married and go to their in-law's instead of sending them to formal schools, it is better to teach them how to cook and work in the field." Given the fact that women are temporary members of their parents home, parents prefer sending their male children to school since they were going to maintain their family's name and are potential heads of the house (Babutu and Okeyi, 2004). Insist these parents do not consider the interest of the girl child to self development.

Iduniangc (2003), asserts that inspile of the-large population of women in the Niger-delta, only 8% is educated. Amao-Kehinde (2004), in her own assessment of the degree of injustice done to women, records that "women receive only 10% of the total income generated world wide and have only 1% of the world's property registered in their names." The implications of these are that women in Nigeria and indeed many parts of the world are held in perpetual illiteracy and their intellectual pursuit frustrated to satisfy male chauvinism.

### **The Way Forward**

Thus far, it is clear that the issue of women education in Nigeria is being treated with levity. However, since there was no legislation per say restricting women from acquiring formal education, any socio-cultural impediment plaguing their participation are not insurmountable. In this regard, a dogged determination on the part of women themselves will change their status viz:

- (i) Educated women should use their position to impress on others the fact that education liberates the mind.

Pregnancy and child birth should not be a permanent barrier to women education.

If a woman suspends her academic activities on grounds of pregnancy or child birth, should be encouraged to continue soon after, as the child in question has a future which his/her mother's education will help to foster.

- (iv) Women NGOS should step up their mobilizing efforts to encourage more women to go to school, without necessarily being confrontational.
- (v) Feminists should direct their energies towards highlighting the insert qualities and value of educated women rather than placing her side-by-side with her male counterparts.
- (vi) Educated women should lower their arrogance, pride and self aggrandizement.
- (vii) Without doubt, educated women build educated societies. This is why it is often said that when you educate a woman, you educate a nation. The mothering role of women will be enhanced where she is educated. Mothers spend more time with their children than their fathers. They are the first teacher of the child and whatever experienced they pass on to the child (timid or civilized) serves as a great influence throughout the lives of such children.

### **Conclusion**

No matter the argument against women education, Nigerian society is at the losing end. "Amao-Kehinde (2004), asserts that no nation or civilization will boost of development if a section of its population is isolated". Amalu (2003), sees education as the key to development. Without mincing words, education is the parameter for assessing the level of development of any society. When a woman is educated she is placed on the same pedestal with her male counterparts

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