

WOMEN EDUCATION AND MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

Olayemi Benjamin

Abstract

This paper considers women education and manpower development: the few African women who enjoy a good education have proved their abilities in several walks of life. Globally, African women should be properly educated so that their influence would be felt. The focus of this paper is to trace the history of women education in Nigeria. The importance of women education in general, purpose of women education, problem facing women education in Nigeria and how these problems can be minimized to allow for women employment, giving room for women involvement in development, the recommendations and conclusions are made.

Introduction

Education of girls has begun to receive the attention it deserves for thousands of years men have believed that the proper place for the women is the home and that the home can be properly managed by ignorant women. But today, other views are changing the views of women and several influences are steadily changing the old-fashioned attitudes. Fortunate African women who enjoy a good education have proved their abilities in several walks of life. They successfully attended doctors, teachers, lawyers etc. They are also found in industry, commerce and public administration. These set of women have proved the case for women's education by demonstrating their usefulness outside the home.

Equally, there is that new desire of educated men marrying educated women, thereby their children having educated mothers. This marks a great change in male attitude to the education of women and a steadily increasing demand for girls' education. But according to Daramola (1992) there is still a long way to go. In all African countries, there are far more boys than girls in primary schools and many of these girls even leave before course.

In any society, where things work well, the women of such a society are figures to reckon with negative attitude of people to education of women should be a thing of concern in some localities within the Nigerian society. Even in Yoruba land, some people still believe, despite the socialization level that when you train females, they end up being other person's properties so they feel it is not necessary wasting one's money. Since the introduction of western education in Nigeria in 1842, women were encouraged to acquire western education. During the time of the missionaries, a lot of effort were made in promoting women education in Nigeria. This brought about the establishment of girls' schools. Although women education has gained grounds in the country, the question still remains that how many of these women occupy key positions in their various callings.

According to Abdulkareem (1992), in recent time in Nigeria, educated women as a pressure group have risen to imbalances in sex participation in rates in education, civil service and invariably national development in spite of the fact that women constitute a significant percentage of the nation's population.

As a result of education, Nigerian women have decried that act of relegating women status in the society. In any given society, if you educate a man you are educating an individual but educate a woman and you are educating a family, a nation (Adaralegbe in NERC, 1972:129). Pressures have been on various governments to accord women education a great priority in Nigeria.

History of Women Education in Nigeria and Its Implications

This will be sub-divided into three namely: Traditional, Islamic and Western education.

1) Traditional Education

The beginning of women education can be traced back to the beginning of education in Nigeria. Women education was an integral part of traditional systems of education in the country. In traditional system of education, females were separated from males for moral sanctity 'females learn from their mothers and other women in the society'. They are expected to reach perfection socially, morally, culturally and economically. They are not expected to take part in rigorous physical activities. In some societies, when we talk about women education, it includes political participation, agricultural training, farming, poultry and husbandry and religious training.

In some other societies however, women are not expected to be heard but only to be seen. They are regarded as inferior to men in intellect and education. This has been researched into and found to be false in some other societies women.

2) **Islamic Education**

Islamic education was ushered in by the advent of Islamic education according to Islamic scholars aims at developing both male and female talents and inspiring lofty ethical values on them. In spite of this, it was discouraged by the Islamic scholars that Nigerian Muslim women lag behind their male counterparts on Islamic education and Muslim general education. Islam recognizes women as to acquire knowledge and participate in human development in all ramifications, but frowns at any thing job, duly function, role expectation that would disrespect or dishonour the woman. In Nigeria, efforts are being made by education. But in spite of all efforts to encourage woman education, many girls and women are disallowed to acquire either Islamic education due to a lot of reasons.

3) **Western Education**

Since the inception of western education in Nigeria, women have been encouraged to acquire education.

Many parents did not allow their children to go early schools because they were afraid that they would learn from ideas and foreign ways of leaving which can bring dishonour to the custom and tradition of the society. But in spite of the early efforts on the education of women in education is discouraging, although some are found in almost all fields of endeavours. For instance Confab: woman group praises Nnamani Over female nominee. Eminent woman leaders in Nigeria under the aegis of the Women Organizations for Representative National Conference (WORKNACO) have praised Governor Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu State for ensuring that the women were adequately represented on the state delegation list to the ongoing National Political Reform Conference. The women led by the former Vice Chancellor of the Lagos State University, Professor Jadesola Akande lauded Nnamani's drive for gender equality (Nigerian Tribune March 2^m, 2005), Even within the National Policy on Education, there is provision for equal opportunities (equalitarianism) for males and females in schools and even in adult education (men and women) that are not within the formal school system. Thus the National Policy on Education recognizes equality for men and women when it comes to education.

In order to ensure adequate women education for meaningful participation in national development, special and adequate measures have been taken by the federal government to revise and adopt women education to the realities of the changing world. Through the United Nations pronouncement on women education in 1985, the Federal Ministry of Education has committed itself to the achievement of the certain policy objectives on women education which are:

- Awakening the consciousness of all women to the need for the developing of a positive self image.
- Promoting the education of girls in the field of science, technology and mathematics.
- Re-orientating the attitude of all females irrespective of age, towards education.
- Creating awareness of all citizens to the fact that equal opportunities exist irrespective of gender, age, locality, creed or special status etc. and should be made available.

Purpose of Women Education

These are identified by the 1969 curriculum conference and they include:

- To enable women to make contribution to life.
- To enable women to adopt themselves to the society.
- To develop and broaden the minds of the women.
- To develop total personality of the women.
- " Development of pride in human achievement.

- To help to free women from the shackles of male domination.
- Contributions to decisions in the society.

Problems of Facing Women Education in Nigeria

1. Cost of acquiring education.
2. School organizational patterns location of schools far from home.
3. Time constraint which compelled girls to spend more time on domestic activities.
4. Stereotyping in occupational choice which labels some jobs as the exclusive preserve of men.
5. Unsettled life styles of some groups e.g. Nomadic.
6. Isolation of some settlement especially in riverine areas.
7. Early Marriage: In some parts of the country, some girls marry early.
8. Ascribed roles of women: It is generally believed that women are to bear and rear children and carry out some domestic duties. Hence these sets of people have no regard for women education.
9. Cultural Restraints; Some women on the society are secluded from mixing with other people in the society.
10. Fear of Unwanted Pregnancy: Education is the greatest legacy that one can boast of in the life but some parents disallow their daughters from going to school thereby denying them the right to education.
11. Poverty: Many parents could not afford to send their children in general and their daughters in particular to school. They lack financial strength to cater for their children, if they are able to get some amount, they prefer sending the males and leaving the females.
12. Attitudes of some parents / husbands to women education. There are some husbands who are not progressive, hence they would try all within them to discourage their wives from going to school.
13. Problem of getting husband after schooling. It is a common belief that if women are highly educated getting husband to marry would be difficult.
14. Efforts of Polygamous/Extended family system: Men always shift the responsibility of children education to women in polygamous setting.

Thus, these women would prefer spending the little they have on males. Also some of the most significant impediments to women's participation in African development include the lack of access to education, lack of access to credit facilities, control of poverty, inheritance and unequal wages relative to the men.

Education As a Tool for Women Empowerment

Education has central role to play as far as empowering our women for national and nation building is concerned. If education is the key to success in life, it is education that can help to end discrimination, marginalization, subjugation, in-equality and enslavement our women have suffered hitherto in the hands of men. If our women are properly exposed to different fields of human learning such as: social sciences, sciences, law, education and other fields, they will become qualified as men and can compete with men for employment in both public and private sectors. When women are educated, they become more informed and this will enable them to claim their rights and equality with men and challenge traditional constraints imposed on them because once they get educated, they will get gainful employment. Education can empower women to develop and tap their potentials to the fullest, and they will be able to contribute better to societal development. Fadeiye and Olanegan (2001) contend that the interest of women, which is still being neglected, can only be served when they are educated. They will then be in a better position to contribute substantially to development in all its ramifications.

Recommendations

Improvement on women education. The importance of women education in any society cannot be over-emphasized, thus effort should be made to promote and improve this type of education.

- 1) Adequate attention should be provided by the government to women education, by the provision of incentives that would encourage women to be educated. Some of these incentives could be quota system admission, in favour of females, scholarship, bursary awards, in-service programme,

Establishment of more girls' schools especially secondary, legislation against early marriage for girls, child abuse, ensuring that universal primary education is really universal primary and compulsory.

- 2) Educated and enlightened women should come together to form more formidable organizations to advance women education.
- 3) Encouraging women to participate in developing the national curriculum policy formulation and implementation so as to represent womenfolk on ways of developing their education.
- 4) Enlightenment programme on women education should be intensified in the mass media.
- 5) Government should place women in positions of responsibility or management. If possible, certain percentages should be set-aside for the womenfolk in that regard.
- 6) Government needs to review certain laws and national regulations which place women at disadvantaged positions in matters relating to inheritance, property ownership and land ownership.

The educational gap in turn can be traced to socio-cultural factors which made parents to prefer educating males to educating females. Education has placed men in positions of power in the political system and this enabled them to pass discriminatory decisions and policies to relegate women to the backgrounds. In summary, if women education is improved, manpower development will be enhanced. Without education, no country can be developed, hence no manpower development. Therefore, education is the tool for reduce the poverty level among because once they get educated, they will get gainful employment, hence manpower development is enhanced.

Conclusion

From the fore-going analysis, it is obvious that women have not been treated equally with men. Besides, women are still marginalized, cheated, oppressed and treated as second-class citizens by men. The root-cause of the discrimination could be traced to the educational gap between men and women. If the curriculum is carefully planned, it can provide both a general and vocational education and will ultimately add to the number of educated wives and mothers. In many parts of the country, parents are now becoming aware of the importance of sending their daughters to school. Women now educate themselves so as to close the gap between them and their male counterparts. More encouragement should be given to parents to send their female children to school, giving their daughters in marriage at a tender age should equally be stopped. Women should be given the opportunity to lead the time of delegating. When this happens, then women education and manpower development will be enhanced. But without education, manpower development cannot be fulfilled. Therefore, women education is highly necessary because of their population which is half of the total population of the country. And if the half of the population is not highly educated, the manpower development will be affected.

References

- Abdulkareem, A. Y. (1992). *Issues in Nigerian education*. Ilorin,
- Adaralegbe. A. O. (1972). The act of relegating women status in the society (NERC) p. 129.
- Daramola, C. O. (1994). *Introduction to the sociology of education*.
- Padeiye and Qlanegan (2001). Education as a panacea for women empowerment. *Journal of Educational Development*, Pp. 64-69.

