

WOMEN EDUCATION: A STEP TO ACHIEVING ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This paper highlighted some traditional roles of women in the society. It also stressed the need for economic rehabilitation and reliance in the Nigerian society. Similarly, women education was presented as a step to achieving economic rehabilitation and reliance in the society. Some steps were recommended to achieving this. This includes among others, inclusion of practical skills such as fashion designing, typing and soap making in the junior secondary school curriculum.

Introduction

Education is a catalyst for change. It brings about intellectual, physical and social changes in the life of individuals and nations who are committed to it. In fact, there is no aspect of a nation or individual's life which education cannot influence. Education therefore, takes care of the total man and the total nation.

Nobody can gainsay the claim that no nation can develop above its education. "Nations like United States of America, Japan, and Europe, who have experienced high levels of economic, social and scientific development put high premium on education. Little wonder that individuals and nations who desire to arise above their present detestable levels of development are seeking solace in education. The nations are also ensuring that both male and female citizens of their nations are given equal educational opportunities. This is because they cannot be regarded as educated societies if some percentage of the citizens remain illiterates. They will also be far from sustainable development.

Traditionally, in most African societies, women were given a place only in the kitchen, they were to be seen and not heard, and were considered unworthy for western type of education.

However, some events have led to the emancipation of women from these traditional ties and hardy notion. One of such events was United Nations declaration of the year 1975 as International Women's year. 1976 - 1985 was also later declared as a decade for women. This resulted to the mobilization of action for women education for future development of many nations (Umezulike, 2003).

The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (1995) and the Indian National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) are also policies geared towards the emancipation of women from prejudice and unnecessary deprivations (UNIFEM, 2001).

Nigeria as a nation understood the implications of these declarations and policies. This is why she made provisions for the education of both male and female members of the society. The provisions on women education stated in the National Policy on Education is a provision made by the nation to identify with international communities; it is also to give women the opportunities to harness their in-built potentialities for the benefit of themselves in particular and the society in general. This paper focuses on the use of women education for achieving economic rehabilitation and reliance in the Nigerian society, it will consider these sub - divisions: The meaning of key concepts

The need for economic rehabilitation and reliance in the Nigerian society. Women education: A step achieving economic rehabilitation and reliance in Nigerian society.

Conclusion

Recommendations

The Meaning of Key Concepts

Education: Education is a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools, to improve knowledge and develop skills (Wehmeier, 2000). Education is a process of interaction between a teacher and a learner, which has as its aim, inculcation or development of knowledge and skills. Fafunwa (1974) also

holds the view that education is a process by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes, capabilities and other forms of behaviour of positive value to the society in which he lives.

There are basically three forms of education. Informal education is the home system or latent mode of education which has its origin at the homes of individual children. An example of it is the traditional education. The second is the non-formal or semiformal education which is education for survival and living. The third is the formal education which takes place in formal institutions of learning. It is more widely accepted and recognised. It is also better planned and organized.

Economy: This is the relationship between production, trade and the supply of money in a particular country (Weluneier, 2000). Economic is therefore connected with the economy of a country or with the money that a society or an individual has.

Rehabilitation: This means helping someone to have a normal, useful life again after a long period of sickness or imprisonment. It also means to return a building to its previous good condition (Wehmeier, 2000). Economic rehabilitation therefore, has to do with rebuilding our manpower or our battered economy. In other words, it is a way of improving the income generation of an individual or nation, it also means lifting individuals up from a chronic state of poverty to a state of bounty,

Reliance: Is the state of needing somebody or something in order to survive or be successful. It is a state of dependency (Wehmeier, 2000). The Nigerian society depends on her educated citizens for manpower development and economic rehabilitation. Similarly, no individual is self sufficient. Each profession or skill must complement another in order to enhance the development of the society. No profession or skill should be disregarded in the society.

The Need for Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance in the Nigerian Society

At the National Curriculum Conference held between 8 - 12 September, 1969, the main national objectives of the Nigerian society were stated as:

A free and democratic society.

A just and egalitarian society.

A united, strong and self-reliant nation.

A great and dynamic economy.

A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (Federal Republic Of Nigeria, 1998:13).

Education is the instrument par excellence for achieving these objectives. This is because philosophy dictates the nature of the good life (Amaele, 2002). It is however disturbing to know that in Nigerian education, certification has taken the place of skill acquisition, thus making the individuals less functional in the society.

Amaele (2002) also stated that economically, an educated society will have farmers, industrialists, traders, bricklayers, mechanics, carpenters, teachers, nurses, drivers, pilots, military personnel etc. He further maintained that it is having people spread in all areas of life that will make such a society to be economically self-reliant.

The Nigerian society is devilled by unemployment. This is because most pupils, students and undergraduates leave the school with a certificate but not a skill to show for their education. Little wonder, they cannot but wait endlessly for white-collar jobs since they acquired no skill with which to fend for themselves. The society itself also continues to be dependent on other nations because it has provided her citizens with the kind of education that makes her deficient in realistic manpower development. Both the nation and the citizens become economically bankrupt. This makes the nation to continue depending on other nations instead of on her own citizens for manpower development and income generation.

The 6-3-3-4 system of education took its root from the pragmatic school of philosophy. It is supposed to produce citizens who have acquired one skill or the other for useful living in the society. However, this is far from reality. The rate of poverty in the society has continued to increase because many citizens cannot take care of themselves without depending on white-collar jobs. This deplorable situation cuts across both gender in the society, hence the need of education for economic rehabilitation and reliance in the society.

Nigeria needs responsible citizens whom she can rely on for adequate manpower supply, in all areas of life. She needs doctors, engineers, teachers, pilots etc. She also needs citizens who

are loyal, honest and trustworthy.

Women Education: A Step to Achieving Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance in Nigeria Society

According to Abdullahi (2003) traditionally, the role of women had been that of a mother who cared for her children, husband and society in general. Traditionally, women engage themselves in pottery, handcraft, agricultural production, food processing, food storage and marketing for income generation. In assessing the effect of western education on the traditional roles of women, Abdullahi (2003:61) further states that:

Education (Western education) should have widened the horizon of African women to embrace the idea of a nation that fosters the growth of skills needed in a more differentiated economy with improved health and social welfare. Western education should have brought about silent revolution of immense proportion that changed more decisively the worth of womanhood in Africa.

The submission of this writer is therefore that education has not been able to diversify the role and skill acquisition among women in order to enhance their usefulness in a nation with diversified economy.

Education is the most important instrument of change. This is because any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution (F.R.N, 1998). The education of women will contribute to changing the economic situation of Nigerian society. It is also educated women that the society, will be able to rely upon.

Obi (2001) opined that education strives to reduce or eliminate completely the inhibiting factors on women such as low income, inferior social status, superstition, ill health, dogmatism, cases of early marriage and low-level aspirations. The elimination of these inhibiting factors will improve the economic status of women and make them more useful to themselves, their families and the society at large.

According to Yoloje (1980:85) as cited in Oyinloye(2001), education was defined as :

A weapon for combating ignorance, poverty and disease; a bridge between confusion and comprehension, a dam for conserving man's store of civilisation, and for generating the power to move to greater civilization; a rocket for transporting man from a state of intellectual subservience to a state of intellectual sovereignty.

For women to venture into different areas of life and profession, and become better contributors to national development, they need to be highly educated. This is why a former legislator in the Second Republic, Chief (Mrs.) Victoria Akinyele, has advised Nigerian women to embrace education to enable them realize their ambition of producing a female President for Nigeria. She also challenged them to read courses such as political science, law and mass communication which would make them become versatile politicians and administrators.

Education instills worthy societal values into individuals in order to make them responsible members of the society. The importance of societal values cannot be over emphasized in the society. This is because it helps to ensure unity and stability in the society. This is why inculcation of the right type of value for the survival of the individual and the society became one of the broad objectives of Nigerian education (F.R.N, 1998), Education will make women right thinkers (Khan, 2000). It will also instill the virtue of prudence, honesty, benevolence, and loyalty into women (White, 1957). Other worthy values which women can acquire through education are hardwork, temperance, tolerance, and patience. Such educated women can be trusted by the society to hold public offices faithfully. Examples of such educated women are Dr. (Mrs.) Dora Akunyili of NAFDAC and Dr. (Mrs) Ngozi -Okonjo Iweala; (he Finance Minister, to mention a few. These are women the society can depend on.

However, the education given to women, whether at the formal, informal and non-formal levels must emphasize skill acquisition.

Conclusion

Women education has been identified in this paper as a step towards achieving economic

rehabilitation and reliance in Nigerian society, Education will widen a woman's mental horizon, and also help her develop personal philosophies for self-actualization. This will help her to be more creative and resourceful. These qualities will also make her more productive in her traditional roles, When this is achieved the nation will be able to depend on her for useful contributions.

Education, when fully acquired by women, will lift them out of chronic poverty, from (he doldrums of ignorance, superstition and fear, lo a consciousness that makes for useful contributions in the society. Education should uplift women's occupational skills in order to enhance economic growth. It should instill into women an awareness of what they can do for themselves and for their society or nation. This is the essence of economic rehabilitation and reliance.

Recommendations

The following are recommended as steps towards achieving economic rehabilitation and reliance in Nigerian society:

- I. Practical skills such as fashion designing, typing, soap making, garri processing and dyeing should be compulsory part of the junior secondary school curriculum.
2. Seminars and workshops should be organized for rural women and drop-outs in order to teach them skills mentioned in (1) above.
3. Government and philanthropists should assist women in setting up workshops where they will develop their skills and make use of it for useful living in the society.
4. The government should create more employment opportunities in the society.
5. Women should be encouraged to venture into different professions, in order to be useful to the society.

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