

## WOMEN EDUCATION: A MEANS TO POVERTY REDUCTION AND JOB CREATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

***E.N. Iortyer***

*School of Business Education  
Federal College of Education (Technical),  
Asaba, Delta State*

***R.N. Udoye***

*School of Business Education  
Federal College of Education (Technical),  
Asaba, Delta State*

### **Abstract**

As a developing Nation, Nigeria needs to achieve her objectives and plans of being among the first twenty (20) industrialized nations come 2020. Therefore, Nigeria should view the education of women as the key towards industrialization and development. Thus, this paper examines the need for women education, challenges and the benefits that a nation can achieve, if women are educated. This paper concluded with some recommendations, one of which is that, all discriminatory laws and practices against women in all aspect of life should be nullified and offenders should be penalized.

### **Introduction**

Nigeria as an independent Nation has experienced various system of Government with a view of identifying the suitable one for the country. The first system of Government was the parliamentary system; which was terminated by the military intervention. Also, from 1979 to 1999 the Nigerian system of government kept on changing from military to Democracy. Although, from 1999 till date democracy as a system of government has become stable in Nigeria.

It is important to note that, each system or form of government in Nigeria

brought on board it's brilliant and wonderful policies to move the Nigeria economy from that of a developing nation to that of a developed one.

It is rather unfortunate that each system and dispensation was characterized by gross mismanagement, misrule, embezzlement, electoral fraud, poor education standard, poverty and high rate of corruption. It is also interesting to note that, it is the men that dominate each dispensation of government.

Economically, Nigeria has not fared well. A country experiences a favourable balance of trade and a stable

economy when her level of importation does not exceed her level of exportation. This explains why, embargos are often placed on the importation of some items. The advantage of placing such embargos include saving of foreign exchange, growth of indigenous industries, giving room for employment opportunities thereby, improving the standard of living of the citizen, which of course is the main essence of governance.

It is then, viewed by many that the dreams of Nigeria moving from a developing nation to develop one is a mirage and can never be attained.

It is also a bitter truth that, women have been relegated to the background in terms of governance, they are not been given a chance by their men counter part to play active part in decision and policy making of the country.

Olowoye and Olarinde (1991), observed that “the reality of today’s world shows that certain groups are left behind to the advantage of other groups and women constitute the majority of those who are not enjoying much benefits in terms of education and job opportunities and leadership despite their considerable contributions to National development”. It is rather unfortunate that in common issues like education, Nigerian girl child are discriminated against their wish to the advantage of their brothers, in most case due to poverty. They are also forced into early marriages in which case, the bride price collected is usually used to train the boys to school to acquire the education which the girl is usually deprived-of.

Education is essential for self-actualization, better health, better job opportunities, politics, income, improved life style or quality of life, all of which induces national development. Article 26 of 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Right which Nigeria subscribed to on joining the United Nations in 1960 stated that,

Every one has the right to Education, education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages, Elementary Education shall be compulsory. Technically and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality.

Education of female (women) could therefore be regarded as a right step in the right direction, so as to encourage occupational, technical, scientific, political, poverty reduction and above all National development in Nigeria. Especially as female (women) constitute nearly half of the nations population.

### **Who is a Woman?**

A woman is that creature that co-habits the planet earth with man. The Chambers Dictionary describes a woman as an adult female of the human race. Women are different from men because of their natural roles and physiology. According to Folashade (1997), the women possess less muscles and strength than the men and they are naturally designed or

created to incubate the young ones. A woman is the most powerful individual despite being gentle, tender and intangible. Most Nigerian societies see women as not being able and equal to men and so, must never compete with men.

In consonance with how powerful a woman is, Abe (1991) regarded woman as "The prime mover who is always behind the curtains". This according to him makes it difficult for due regards to be given to her contributions.

### **Women and Education**

Individual education is the bedrock of national development. A nation can only attain a high degree of development if it's citizens (male and female) are educated. Thus, a wider meaning of the concept refers to the training of the entire, individually to enable him or her not only to be able to read, write or to be a professional in a given job but also to enable them fit and function effectively in the society.

Scholars of different callings including those of Education have tried to provide some road maps as to what the term means but in all, it is the application of their understanding of the term that makes the difference rather than the term itself. Education has been seen as the sum total of experiences that are made available to an individual to enable him make a worth-while living and have positive adjustment by functioning as a fully-fledged member of the society where he/she lives in, (Ifelunni, 2009).

Farrant (1980), also defines education as a universal practice engaged

in by the society for the purpose of development. According to Mbayuar and Achineku (2008), education can be described as an instrument of social change that can create awareness into people from time to time.

The Oxford Advanced Dictionary (2000) stated that education is a process of teaching, training and learning especially in schools or colleges to improve knowledge and develop skills.

From the above definitions, education is a powerful instrument through which the ability of a woman can be developed to helping her identify her potentials, a means to getting employed and reducing poverty in her family and the nation at large. Through her skills and professionalism acquired, she can contribute to national development.

### **Women and Poverty**

Poverty is a situation of perpetual need for the daily necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothe. It is a feeling of powerlessness to influence the things around you (Abdulkarin, 2007).

Consequently, the Universal Declaration of Human Right declares that every one has a right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of his or her-self and family. Thus Carter (1999), said, it is implied therefore, that the crisis portrayed by poverty are much more than the lack of food cloth and shelter. They also include poor health and education, deprivation, inadequate knowledge and communication and the inability to exercise human right and obligation by contributing to national development.

Thus, it will not be wrong to submit that, wealth is a prime source of social status, moreover it can readily be converted into power and prestige which an average Nigerian women lacks. The statistics of (UNESCO 2005) have also shown that even though women represent half the global population and one third of the labour-force, they receive only one tenth of the world's income and own less than 1% of the property. Furthermore, in Nigeria it is believe that any property a woman has belongs to the husband (man), as such women are viewed as pertatic beings left to the mercies of the men. How then can a women be educated let alone contribute to national development.

#### **Women and National Development**

One of the definitions of development as stated in the BBC English Dictionary (2000) posited that, "It is the growth or formation of something over a period of time". It also viewed development as "the process or result of improving a basic design ... an event which is likely to have an effect on an existing situations". By implication, development here means change and it describes the process of economic, political and social transformation within societies. National development therefore could imply the improvement in the quality of life of the people. A nation can only be said to be developed when it is able to provide all the basic needs of its people; needs like food, clothing, adequate shelter, quality education and healthcare facilities. National development efforts are those moves geared towards the utilization of

national resources to meet the need of the society by achieving good quality livelihood, eliminating or at least reducing poverty and maintaining physical and human environment for the present as well as the succeeding generation. This can only be achieved by ensuring the mobilization and participation of all members of the society (both men and women) in the developmental process, (Achineku and Ityav, 2008).

#### **The Need for Women Education**

Women's access to education will not only improve them as individual but also her economic status and that of her family. This will go a long way to boost her contributions and effective participation in nation building.

Mile (2006), maintained that "educated women who are gainfully employed are sources of income to their homes with their earnings as they are able to augment financially what the man provides". A woman's access to education will go a long way to improve her poor economic status as well as that of the entire family and the nation at large. Women education also exposes them to good habits which are further inculcated in the children to be good citizens. This notion is in line with the popular statement quoted by Adaralegbe (1985), which say's that "when you educate a man, you are educate an individual, but when you educate a woman, you are educate a family and a nation in general".

### Challenges of Women in Education

The challenges of women education can be viewed as follows:

- (1) **Home Background:** In most Nigerian homes women or female children are relegated to the background, their male counterparts are given preferential treatment. Some people do not even believe in the education of their female children.
- (2) **Religious Background:** In Muslim dominated societies in the core north, women education is not taken as a necessity. Some Muslim parents believe that when they send their female children to school, they could become promiscuous and would not respect their husbands as well as desist from the practice of the religion.
- (3) **Career Opportunities:** Social inequality and gender discrimination have been the problems faced not only in Nigeria but worldwide. Some believe that positions of authority are exclusively for men (Abdulazeez, 2004).
- (4) **Economic Factor:** The cost of education is still out of reach of most parents. Even the government schools which supposedly do not charge fees, do not have adequate facilities or learning materials so parent have to buy books, uniforms, chairs etc. for their children. Thus, some parents prefer to use their insufficient funds to train a male child to the detriment of the female child.

### Roles of Educated Women for the Creation of Jobs and National Development

Educated women have numerous roles to play in the society. That is by taking active and effective part in governance, decision making process and at all level of governance and in the sharing of economic resources of the nation. Educated women in governance will implement projects that will liberate other women, thus creating job opportunities and reducing poverty. That is, job creation, poverty reduction etc induces national development. Shonibare (2001), also perceived the following as roles played by educated women for national development.

1. A policy maker who is responsible for the overall determination of direction, budget planning and implementation.
2. An administrator who is involved in the daily routine of students, staff and visitors in schools and educational ministry.
3. As a teacher who stimulates knowledge awareness in the upcoming generation.
4. Counselor responding to the systematic sharpening of ideas and clarifying options and consequences.
5. As a researcher who investigates the depth, causes, consequences, trends and conclusions in a given educational phenomenon.
6. An employer of labour and school director.

7. A citizen who is a member of a given community and a dynamic participant in the course of development.

From the above, it is convincing that women education is the gateway to job creation, poverty reduction and nation building. Education is the key to knowledge and self-confidence to enable a woman venture into tasks or challenges which ordinarily, she would not have.

The formation of cooperatives organization, training forum and non-governmental organization by women can be viewed as risk taking, which can only be achieved by a woman if she is educated. This can provide jobs for them and if possible for others. The job so created can lead to poverty reduction and national development at large.

It can then be submitted that an education women can be self-sustained, without waiting for the government to provide for her and if all women are educated, then there would be a revolution in national development in Nigeria.

### Conclusion

The education of women should be regarded as the beginning of the growth of any nation. The Nigerian government should view women education as the key to their set plans and objectives of becoming one among the first twenty (20) industrialized nation come 2020.

### Recommendations

- (1) Local, State and Federal Government should provide adequate and articulated general education and

vocational training for Nigeria women.

- (2) All discriminating laws and practices against women in all aspect of life should be nullified and penalties be place on violators of such laws.
- (3) There should be re-orientation of families and religious fanatics on matters concerning women education.
- (4) The Ministry of Women Affairs, stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organization should organize grass root workshops, campaigns to sensitize parents and society on the importance of educating women and highlight the accruable benefits of female education to individuals and the nation. They should also provide opportunities to empower the educated ones.

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