WOMEN EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT: TOOL FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL (MDGs)

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Abstract
Education performs a major role in equipping an individual with the necessary skill and knowledge which will help to transform any society. The development of any nation cannot be comparatively rapid if women folks are not availed the opportunities of acquiring skills through education. Thus one of the objectives of women education and empowerment states that education will enable women to participate fully in all the affairs of the nation and to be at the centre of sustainable development. Therefore education is a tool that will equip women for self-confidence, self-esteem and desire for respect for accuracy and efficiency which will lead to achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the country. This paper examines women education and empowerment as a tool for achievement of millennium development goal. Lastly, recommendations are made.

Education is a process that helps develop the whole human being, physically, mentally, morally, politically, socially and technologically, to enable one function in any given environment. Fafunwa. 1991 in Ogwuazoe (2008) sees education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour which are of positive values to the society in which he lives. It is a process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge to ensure social control or of individuals. Umar and Gbana (2004) in Ogwuazor stated that education performs a major role in equipping the individual with the skill and knowledge, which will help to transform any society.

Therefore, education is the greatest investment that any nation can provide for the quick development of its natural and human resources. Recognizing the importance of education, federal government (2004) advocated for equal educational opportunities for all citizens without giving any preference to any particularly sex. According to Okah (2006) in Ogwuazo (2008), in reality, there is a wide disparity in educational opportunities in Nigeria according to gender. There
exists particular at the religious and cultural levels, inequalities in educational opportunities among sexes whereby girl-child is less favoured than her male counterpart.

Since education brings about the development of any nation, education of the girl-child is an indispensable tool for the development of any nation. Hence the saying- “train a man, you train a soul or just an individual but train a women, you train a nation” Imala in Ogwuazor (2008) opines that women constitute the nerve centre of the family unit, the main custodian of social cultural and fundamental values of the society paramount change is often through them. Girls are mothers of tomorrow, therefore they should be given that best education for the best foundation of the best foundation of the future generation to sustain the civilization of the nation as cited by Ogwuazor (2008) women are unequally created for unique purpose. Their feminine nature, mental capability organization ability power of womanhood and influence they exert in the world are unique.

Therefore in any good and sustainable governmental system, and effective social economic and religious governance of any nation there is a great need for women being active and non-transient participation in all facets of life and this can only be feasible, possible and effective by the acquisition of good quality education.

**Concept of Education**

Education has been generally recognized as a powerful catalyst for achievement of millennium development goals which every members of the society should possess for national development. Education can be viewed as the transmission of the value and accumulated knowledge of a society Graham 1991, in Mohd (2009). Education is a fundamental instrument which differentiates a fully developed human being from other mammals. It is a criterion for measuring the mental, spiritual, political, and to some extent, the material development of man Aliyu, (2004) in Mohammed (2009). Education is therefore necessary ingredient for a meaningful development for a man and women as well as their society.

Lazuru (1996) states that for the life of mankind to be meaningful, purposeful, goal-oriented as well as living in peace and tranquility and achieve society’s concord, men and women must acquire a qualitative functional, goal-oriented, useful, positively beneficial and goal-oriented education. He goes on to say that, education is the basis, the invariable index for the socio-political, economic physical, and technological development of man and his society, women education is therefore a must for achievement of millennium development goal. Citing Allele (1989) in Muhammed (2009) education is a fundamental instrument for individual to develop mentally, psychologically, morally, socially, politically, educationally and physically. To him we need a sound education which may not necessarily be quantitative but
qualitative. It is also of vital importance that the two sexes should have access to education up to the highest level possible. Ugali (1995) in Muhammed (2009) Education is an integral component of the policy and is considered to be an essential tool for the realization of better quality of life of the people as well as achieving sustained economy and social development of the country as a whole. Thus, the function of education cut across social, cultural, economical and political spheres of life. Its major goal therefore aims at achievement of millennium development goal.

Concept of Woman Education

Citing Alele (1994) in Muhammed (2009) women education is that type education received by women in order to make them to become aware of themselves and their capacity to exploit the environment as this lead to achievement of millennium development goal in our country (Nigeria). Women education can be seen as a process whereby women are given equal opportunities to knowledge, skills, job participation in the wider society which help in achievement of millennium development goal. This type of education involves various training in literacy and vocational skills, to enable them become functional in the society, especially in their home.

Suara (1996) believes that education is a potential ingredient for changing a woman is life. Women education is recognized as one of the critical Path-ways to promote millennium development goal.

Millennium development goals (MDGs) are those eight (8) goals that all 191 united nation members states have agreed and signed to achieve by the year 2015, alongside the goals, a series of 18 targets were also draw up to give the international community a numbers of tangible improvement to aim for within a fixed period of time and make it easier for them to measure their progress to date.

The eight millennium development goals (MDCS)
1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary in education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

Objectives of Women Education

The objectives as stated by UNESCO in Ogwuazor (2008):
1. To enable women to improve their family health and diet
2. To increase women’s productive ability thus raising their family’s standard of living.
3. To give women access to appropriate technologies and management of co-operatives
4. To give women societal and cultural status
5. To enable women discharge their responsibilities more effectively.
6. Helping women to high their own fears and feelings of inadequacy or inferiority.
7. Educating women in all round development that is mentally, socially physically, psychologically, religiously and economically.
8. To make women participate fully in all the affairs of their nation and to be at the centre of sustainable development.
9. To make women acquire their own basic needs of the society, like food, shelters clothes and nurturing.
10. To enhance societal and nation building in terms of economic and human development.

It is an undisputable fact that through the provision of quality education to women, these laudable objective will be attained, which will invariably enhance women in the world of excellence, labour and productivity, fulfillment, integrity, dignity and fame.

**Importance of Women Education and Empowerment**

Unlike before most parents are now becoming aware of the necessity of their daughter’s education having realized the consequences of illiteracy, illiteracy, they say is a disease, chained in prison, disabled, caged and blinded victims experiencing only death in life of gaining this golden assess called education.

For Nigeria to achieves its millennium development the contributions of women to that achievement is needed. UNECA in Akpan (2005) opines that the development of a nation can be comparatively rapid if the women folks are availed the opportunities of acquiring skills through, education like their male counter parts such that would enable them contribute immensely to life.

Women play a major role in the economic production and at the same time bear the primary responsibility of the health and well being of all Nigerians. Therefore, it is imperative to create opportunities for the women folk to acquire the necessary skills through education and training that will help them contribute to a rapid and sustainable achievement of millennium development goal of our nation, no matter the age, class or group, because lack of education and training will place them in an unproductive position in the society.

Imala (2000) in Ogwuazor (2008) enumerate the following as the importance education.

1. To be happy in these modern times, we need to give them function effectively in the modern economic system therefore should attend institutionalized schools of various grade to acquire the require skills
2. They need to function in the creation of the wealth of the nation. Education endows them with skills and knowledge and makes them function as professionals
3. It equips them for self confidence, self esteem and a desire for respect for accuracy and efficiency.
4. It provides equal opportunities as she can compete on equal terms with man.
5. The educated mother managers the environment more effectively and is able to help the children cope with
environmental circumstances and problems posed by modern living.

vi. Education makes her stable and pleasant even when under stress.

vii. It makes her understand complex issues associated with modern homes such as health care, suitable diet for the family among others.

viii. Whatever her profession is, she must be a mother who must take care of her husband children and home.

Maduewesi (2005) pointed out that an empowered educated women is better because she is will able to understand and appreciate her children's needs, make informed decisions about their discipline and help them with their school work. When a women is empowered with sound education, it creates political awareness is her and inspires her to victor political positions.

ix. Education creates awareness in women that they are no long the eaters, consumers of wealth of their husband rather they are better managers of wealth and family resources. It is an acceptable fact that many families are getting on well not because the women of the house is on longer just child manufacturing industry, but the family bread winner. So many business men to day whose business have collapsed or at the verge of collapsing are getting fantastic financial support from their working class wives when we look at the landscape of our national ii.

development, we see deep foot prints of some great women who were able to achieve such greatness because of education empowerment. Educating the girl child means empowering her to remain focused and determined to forge a common front with concerned and knowledgeable members of the community or county so as to take any problem that might confront them. Thus, they participate usually in the national development process for which to be effective, all hands must be on deck.

Constraints of Women Education in Nigeria Women Education is Faced with Some Constraints

Women education is faced with some constraints these include:

i. Unprogressive cultural, religious and traditional gender discriminating facts militating against women education. In the core north, a girl may be very brilliant and doing well at the early stages of her education, but there might be same underground force that could be the cause of her drawback in the upper stages of her learning, such as parents and grandparents, who exercise undesirable powers over her. A girl that is 12 or 13 years old may be withdrawn from school to get married to a man who already has two or more wives. At this age, the girl is too young to be in a position to shoulder family responsibilities. If the little girl is unlucky and the marriage breaks up, she may resort to prostitution.

ii. Job discrimination some jobs are exclusive reserve of males and women if included at all are very few claiming female roles to be only in motherhood and kitchen. This has resulted in
wastage of food potentials and talents, because men are not in any way more intelligent than women.

iii. Even when opportunity is given to girls to be educated, some waste their lives along the streets which consequently lead to unwanted pregnancy, abandoned babies, abortion etc, thereby washing the talent God gave to them.

iv. Parent's socio-economic background. Some parents are swimming in abject poverty, so much so that they cannot afford one square meal a day let alone send the girl child to school.

v. Mentality of parents, that male child is more valued than the female child, thereby preventing the girl child the right to education.

Conclusion

The development of any nation cannot be comparative rapid if women-folks are availed the opportunities of acquiring skills through education. Thus one of the objectives of women education and empowerment states that education will enable women to participate fully in all the affairs of their nation and to be at the centre of sustainable development. So education is a tool that equips women for self-confidence, self-esteem and desire for respect for accuracy and efficiency which can lead to achievement of (MDGs) goals in the country.

Nigeria is one of the countries that did not achieve the MDGs as they related to the girl child education. There is still pronounced imbalance between male and female enrollment. Nigeria has however put in place several strategies to ensure the attainment of the MDGs. The united nation's committee on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) has revealed a link between the millennium developments goals (MDGs) and CEDAW, stating that the attainment of the MDGs is dependent on the full and effective implementation of CEDAW (Igbinivia, 2009). This assertion was contained in the un concluding observations to the sixth periodic country report. On CEDAW and made available to selected journalists by BAOBAB for women’s rights in Lagos. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provision there in all efforts aimed at achieving the MDGs.

Recommendations

We have tried discussing the issue of women education and empowerment objective of women education and empowerment, its importance, and constraints of women education and empowerment, in that will promote girl child education insuring the achievement of the MDGS. It is not possible to discuss all the issue that are involved, it is recommended that:

i. There should be polices on teacher training and retraining especially female teachers

ii. There should be a comprehensive national policy on ICT that should favour the girl child

iii. Absolution of unprogressive cultures and religious beliefs. This will make the girl child to have more access to education
iv. Enactment of law on fundamental human right for the eradication of some un-progressive wicked selfish traditions that have jeopardized the good of the female folk. The people need to be re-educated through seminars and enlightenment campaign in market places and village squares against those obnoxious and repressive cultural practices tied with bias, taboos and beliefs e.g. child marriage, child labour, mourning system, Osu cost Idegbie purdal practice etc.

v. Free education for women at all levels. Should be introduced by government

vi. Girls schools should be established with boarding system

vii. The curriculum should include vocational, course that can lead to training or acquisition of careers.

viii. Strategies to accelerate the training of the girl-child should be properly articulated

References


Igbinovia. J. (2009), UN links attainment of MDGS to CEDAW. Vanguard Newspapers, Vol. 4 (60795) 47.