

WOMEN EDUCATION AS TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT; ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

Mus'ab Shu'aibu¹, Mohammed Ayuba²

¹Department of Psychology,

²Department of Educational Foundation

^{1,2}School of Education, Jigawa State College of Education, P.M.B 1002, Gumel, Nigeria.

muiddeenringim@gmail.com

Abstract- Nigeria is a society in transition subjected to the hardest test of growth and development. The paper attempts to examine the prospects of women education as a tool for sustainable development. In many countries, it has been recognized that the development process does not promote gender equity in the distribution of the benefits of economic growth. Indeed, there is a growing awareness of the existence of differential access that the distribution of the benefits of economic growth is skewed in favor of the men fork. Female labor is regarded as supplementary to that of male and consequently, the benefits of development programs are only expected to filter down to women through their men fork. Furthermore, socio-cultural restrictions often inhibit women active participation in the development process. Women have therefore, become a major focus of research and policy throughout the world. The paper discusses what women education, national unity and integration entailed, particularly their roles as the transformers or engines that propel sustainable development in Nigeria. A questionnaire technique was used to collect relevant data. Due to inferential nature of the study, background information obtained from the respondents were interpreted and analyzed using t-test. However, the presentation and discussion of results were carried out around the research questions hypotheses which have guided the analysis. The paper began with introduction, objective of the study, conceptual and theoretical frame work related to the study. And followed with conclusions and some recommendations on how best to overhaul the present educational system with a view to providing final approach to the persistent problems of women education globally.

Keywords; women education, sustainable development, gender equity, national unity and integration.

I. INTRODUCTION

The report of the political bureau of 1987 acknowledged that women constitute an oppressed, exploited and under privileged group in the third world countries. The women question is an important social and political issue that has attracted the attention of international organization like the united nation organization (UNO), (FRN, 1987). This condition of women has made them to put up a struggle to fight the injustice against them by men. The women's bold step might have been inspired by the 'United nation's Universal declaration of human rights'. It is necessary for a developing nation such as Nigeria to develop all its human resources. This is because in the absence of it, the country cannot achieve much development. Human development can

only be achieved through education. Special attention for women education in the country therefore becomes imperative.

Moreover, the 1991 population census in Nigeria shows that female population is a little more than that of the male. (Behibiafia, 2000). Considering the fact about the population of women in the country, the government cannot afford to neglect women education. The report of the United Nation as contain in Behibiafia (2000), shows that women are homemakers and centers of the family. They are also the custodians of social, cultural and fundamental values of a society and permanent change is often best achieved through them. In fact, full community development is not possible without their understanding and effective participation.

Socially, women empowerment can be achieved through education. The woman's role as mother in the house is very important. When critically examine for a woman to be a good housewife, she needs education to be able to do it. A woman needs education to be able to take good care of the children in the house. With good education, the woman is better empowered to take decisions regarding the children education, feeding, clothing and other needs of the family.

Women are regarded as the 'possession' of their fathers. They do not usually have the right to freedom of choosing the types of partners to marry or even have the idea of marriage. They are force to accept whatever fate their parents inflict on them (Nwambara in Ujo, 1994). When women are educated along with their male counterparts, they will be in better position to decide who and when to marry. Most women who are educated enjoy this benefit. Educated women apart from having a say in their marriage issues do not usually accept the idea of early marriage because they know the implications.

Education of women will bring about improvement of their health practices. Lasebikan (1996) asserted that women are denied holistic health when they suffer deprivation in any form and are allowed to function as the 'total woman' or 'total human'. The deprivation of women in terms of empowerment makes it clear that they cannot be said to enjoy the full facilities of health, which the World Health Organization defined as a state of complete physical, mental, emotional and social well being of an individual (Nash in Lasebikan, 1996). Unhealthy cultural practices such as female genital mutilation will be a thing of the past if women are educated. Aburate, (2001).

The woman as an agent of cultural transmission will function better in doing this if she is educated. Women play a major role in the character formation of their children and since children are the future leaders of every society, children of educated mothers are exposing to acquire qualitative education. By this, the educated women would have achieved their role of cultural transmitters.

Politically, women in the past have no right to education, according to Omololu (1972), Nigerian women are not aware with the political situation in the country, before they did not understand what was going on. They are more contented to stay at home, look after their children and cook food for their husbands, but with more education, their mentality was shaken up and they became alive to the fact that the happenings in the country were as much as their concern as that of their husbands. Women are now active participants in the politics of the country. They participate in elections by voting and are voted for. They are in the senate, Federal House of Representatives and State House of Representatives. Some are ministers and others occupy high positions in the governments.

Economically, uneducated and illiterate women suffer poor conditions especially in the third world countries (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1996). Women, who traditionally were employed in subsistence agriculture, petty trading and handcrafts, are being displaced by the emergence of agricultural marketing mechanisms. Education has become the primary avenue to employ in the new economic structures; thus women with poor education are subjected to unemployed or unskilled low-paying jobs (Kelly in Isiugo Abanihe, 1996).

According to Ujo (1994), in most rural areas, men control land, but those who work on the farms are women. Also, according to Iweriebor in Ujo (1994), the operation of the farms and division of labour was fairly hierarchical in nature. At a time when yam was very staple food and the prime source of carbohydrate, as well as a revenue-generating crop, the farm generally were own by men. Women were allowed to plant the lesser starch providers cassava, maize, ingredients, vegetables, tomatoes, onions, egusi etc, most of which were direct to their cooking favourites.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Girls Participation in Education*

Engine-Dehir (2009) stated that education is not a charity rather a fundamental human right for all people irrespective of their sex, race, economic status which is the key to sustainable development, peace and stability among countries. In any society, the provision of education is a fundamental and basic for human resources development. Education represents a major form of human resource development. Human resource development is determined by the availability and quality of education. Human resource development constitutes an underlying basis for material development. It is a corner stone for the nation's fast socio-economic development.

King and Hill (2010) argued that educating females yields far-reaching benefits for girls and women themselves, their families and their societies in which they live. The benefits of investing in human capital are especially pertinent for women

in developing countries where gender equity in education is often lagging behind. Without educating women, national endeavors can be less effective and the efforts of women are weaker. Equal opportunity of education for both sexes is equally important. In a number of developing countries, the participation of women in education is characterized by low enrolment and poor performance. Herz, 2000, King and Hill 2010; Odaga and Heneveld, 2005.

The significant contribution of female education is expressed in terms of economic, cultural and political aspect of a country. Onanya (2005:15) stated that an educated female is likely to be productive and better paid worker, an informed citizen, a self confident individual and a skilled decision maker. Geiger (2002:3) indicated that the benefits of education relates to more or less in all aspects of development. Education empowers them to participate in the public and political life. The potential benefits of education are always present by the females education often has stronger and more significant impacts than male's education (King, 2010). This does not mean education is unnecessary for males. One of the Nigeria's research efforts pointed that girl's low level of school attainment and correspondingly, low levels of literacy, political integration and economic productivity (Seged, et al 2012).

In the universal declaration of Human Rights 1948, Article 13 (1 and 2), the development of a system of quality education at all levels shall be actively pursued, and the material conditions of the teaching staff shall be continuously improved. Currently, girl's education is a critical development agenda, because of its inherent value to individual girls, and benefits for its wider society. There is need for much attention to make education accessible to girls.

B. *The Debate on Gender Parity in Education*

Nearly a billion of school age children cannot read and write, and all over the world 300 million of school age children are not in school. Two-thirds of those who cannot read and write are women, 60% of children not in the school are girls (World Bank). Many countries still do not provide basic education for all children. Numerous students are not in school and those lucky enough to be enrolled in primary schools dropout before completion and the level of achievement students attain is often low. These problems affect girls more than boys. In Africa, for instance girls' primary enrolment accounts for only 57% of the age population, compared with 75% to boys (Adetunde and Akesina, 2008:338). Female participation in education as female enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment by the level of education. UNESCO, (2002:1):

“Gender equality is one of the fundamental goals in human development highlighted at numerous global conferences. Eliminating gender gaps and gender inequality means bringing the disadvantaged sex at par with the favored. It ensures that both sexes leave the school system with an education that provides life skills and permits them to pursue higher levels of education or

motivational training to their capabilities and is free from gender stereotyping. Most importantly, they should be equipped with skills and attitudes that will help them to pressure their potential regardless of their sex”

According to Oxford (2005:1) and Adetunde and Akesina (2008:338), why do some countries succeed in promoting gender parity and equality in education while others do not? The answer often given is political will, why governments are unwilling or unable to change their policies and priorities to achieved equal access to education for girls and boys, as expected in the Millennium Development Goals. The second answer is that policy research should point constraints and should give attention to primary schooling. The balance achieved in primary schooling may help as basis for research and practice in secondary schooling.

C. Conceptual Frameworks

Women are agents of informal and formal education. The foundation of formal education is usually established at home through what the mother provides at home. The woman teaches the child cooking, catering for the home, caring for her future husband or his future wife and friends. By the time the child grows up, he or she is already a competent adult in overall home management. An empowered woman ensures that children are fed properly with balance diet. She provides a conducive atmosphere for study at home to enrich the learning experience for her children.

The personality, which the child takes for formal school, depends on the upbringing and the woman is therefore regarded as a teacher at home because of her role in the upbringing of the children. Children are taught good habits to desist from telling lies, stealing, cheating and other bad habits. Education at childhood level is essentially dealing with character training in order to bring up children that will be up right, honest, kind and helpful to others, which are largely carried out by woman.

According to Tuoye in Ugbede (1999), through informal education given by women at home, half of the purpose of education has been achieved before formal education. This is because before formal education, many children have developed self-discipline, good relationship, morally and physically and therefore the formal school helps in enhancing these acquisitions and conditions.

In another dimension, women are recognized as strong weapon in formal education in the country considering their participation, dedication, efficiency and their role in educational administration and management. For example, as Tuoye (1999), observed, majority of the headmasters and teachers in primary schools in the country are women. Their involvements in primary education ventures enabled the realization of educational objectives. He (Tuoye, 1996:154) further added that it is the mode of administration of a school that determines how good such school would be. Most good schools have women as their school administrators. “Majority of women school administrators are generally good and act as a model to the school community”. Empowerment of women

in the country will enhance their role performance in the direction, which will go a long way in promoting educational development in the country.

Women educational empowerment will also bring about puberty alleviation among the women and even the men. When women are empowered educationally, with the knowledge and skills acquired, they will be competent to take up jobs in any organization just like their men counterparts. Such jobs may be in the areas teaching, medicine, nursing, secretariat and jobs etc. the salaries they receive will empower them economically. With better condition of living they will be able to finance or compliment the effort of their husbands in financing their children education. It therefore means that women empowerment will lead to more children being sent to schools thereby bringing to the realization of the objectives of the Universal Basic Education, which is education for all children of school-going age.

Economic empowerment of educated women will afford them the opportunity to be able to establish private schools like their man counterparts. Already, some educated women who are economically viable are in the venture. As earlier pointed out, most administrators of schools are women and they are generally good and act as a model to the school community. In fact, at this juncture, the proprietors of private schools throughout the country should be commended for salvaging the collapse nature of the public schools. The three levels of governments in the country appear to have lost grip of the provision of quality education in the country. Women involvement in the education industry will help to achieve the educational objectives of the country.

Politically, women contribute to the building of the nation. Women have formidable political power, which can be expressed through voting because of their number. Consequently, they can determine and influence political leadership of the country. Women have also been known to hold political responsibilities at various levels and they can perform very well in terms of accountability. It should be noted that whatever goes on in the education sector is largely determined by the political will of the leaders. Women empowerment will help not only in choosing good leaders but help themselves in assuming positions that will make good decisions for the educational development of the country.

In recognition of women’s contribution to the nation, during Jonathan’s regime, women’s participation in politics were recognized and therefore few of them were included in his cabinet. He also directed that state governments should include women in their cabinets and so there were few of them as deputy governors. Other women activist worthy of note in the political arena include professor Bolanle Awe, Mrs. Laila Dogonyero, Mrs. Hilda Adefarasin, Zainab Maina, Hajiya Laila Dogon Yaro, Professor Rukayya Ahmed Rufai etc. (Olugbodi 1998). These women either directly or indirectly have contributed greatly to the social, economic, political and educational progress of women in the country. The present minister of education, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau, though his appointment being a political one, as a minister of education, he was definitely having consideration for women education in the country.

Women forums at national and international levels have contributed in one way or the other to educational development of the country. For example, the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China was attended by the women from all parts of the world. Nigeria participated in the conference, the conference attracted both the government and non-governmental organizations, 189 countries were in attendance, they spoke on the situation of women in their countries and steps have been taken to better the condition of women in various countries (Bebibiafai,2000). Education was proffered on the key to development, poverty alleviation, and basis for gender equality, especially among the developing countries. The decision of the conference gave inspiration to nations of the world on the need to give attention to female education women are regarded as mothers and first June of every year is observed as mother's day throughout the world.

Generally, women empowerment to education will afford the women the opportunity to exercise their God given and constitutional rights. As they exercise their rights, their social, political, economic and educational conditions will be greatly improved. Consequently, their attitudes toward education will become positive, as they come to appreciate that education is the greatest instrument for self and national development. Going by the above discourse, women empowerment will go a long way to enhancing educational development not only among the female folk, but the entire citizens of the country and world at large.

D. Sustainable Educational Developments

Sustainable development embodies the principles, ideas and values seen as desirable and necessary if Nigeria for instance is to deal effectively with current global problems of the development process, thus it can said that; "sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and apparatus of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future. It is a process in which the exploitation of technological development and institutional changes are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potentials to meet human needs and aspiration, Toluhi (2001).

Sustainable educational development should be providing an educational system through policy formulation and programs intervention that would not bequeath liabilities to Nigerians now and in the future, such an educational system will address these key issues; access, quality teachers motivation, instructional materials, provision of facilities, curriculum funding etc. for Nigerian education to become relevant to sustainable development, it must meet the following objectives;

1. It must train the individual for a better appreciation of his own cultural traditions while at the same time equipping him with the ability to absorb good ideas, new information and a new data for resolving the constantly changing problem of his environment.
2. It must train the individual to relate to and interact meaning fully with other individuals in the society and to appreciate the importance of effective organization for human progress.

3. It must develop the creative ability of individuals especially in the cultural and technological realms.
4. It must foster in the individuals values, which make good citizenship, such as honesty, selflessness, tolerance, dedication, hard work and personal integrity, all of which provide the rich soil from which good leadership is spawned.
5. It must promote the culture of productive by enabling many individuals to discover the creative genius in him and apply it to the improvement of existing skills and techniques of performing specific tasks thereby increasing the efficiency of his personal and social effort.

E. National Unity and integration

MacIver, (1996) alerts us to the fact that national integration may be conceived from either a subjective or objective perspective. Subjectively, it posits the presence of those feelings and attitudes among people that lead them to make their own identifications often times, this include a psychological sentiment of national consciousness among the citizen of a state; citizen's love for and loyalty to their particular state. On the objective side, it relates to common identities that in realities are not always present, yet does not hinder the spirit of nationalism. For instance, the united state is a vast nation comprising numerous different people who come from different parts of the world and, live as one people while still retaining their district ethnic and cultural identities. They share and are bound together by common ideology, common language, common political and economic system, common supra – cultural and national values, and even identify with common national icons (war – heroes, popstars, outstanding politicians, etc) moreover, when state is generally perceived as serving the particular interest of one group (no gender equity). It starts losing its legitimacy and indeed its authority. The result therefore, is the perennial social tensions, political instability and change that have not been accompanied with progress. This has greatly hampered national integration in our polity.

In Nigeria, the concepts of integration disappeared to the concept of segregation as consciousness is patterned such a way that each group sees the other as rivals in contest rather than partners in progress.

III. PURPOSE OF STUDY

- To find out the difference in academic performance between students from educated mothers and those from uneducated mothers.
- To identify the importance of women education to that of men in terms of nation building.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Is there any significant difference in academic performance between students from educated mothers and those from illiterate mothers?
- Is there any significant difference in contribution to nation building between educated women and their male counter parts?

V. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- There is no significant difference in academic performance between students from educated mothers and those from uneducated mothers.
- There is no significant difference in terms of contribution to nation building between the educated women and their men counter parts.

A. Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one (1): there is no significant difference in academic performance between students from educated mothers and those from illiterate mothers.

T-test was used to test this hypothesis;

Table 5.1.1 Academic performance among educated mothers and uneducated mothers.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	S.D	Df	t-cal	t-crit	sign	decision
Educated mothers	184	22.1467	9.09615	354	1.997	1.960	0.05	rejected
Uneducated mothers	170	20.6471	9.18154					

The table above present t-test of academic performance among girls in Jigawa state, Nigeria.

The test showed that t-calculated values 1.9970 are greater than T-critical value 1.9600 (t-cal 1.9970) t-crit 1.9600 at df 352. Since the calculated t-value is greater the critical t-value, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude

that there is significance difference between the two samples in favour of students from the educated mothers.

Hypothesis two (2): There is no significant difference in contribution to nation building between educated women and their male counter parts.

Table 5.1.2 Contribution to nation building between educated women and male counter parts

Variables	N	\bar{X}	S.D	Df	T-cal	T-crit	sign	decision
Educated women	184	19.875	7.0432	354	2.712	1.960	0.05	rejected
Educated men	170	17.529	9.1614					

The table above present t-test between educated women and the male counterparts based on their contribution to national development. The test showed t-calculated value 2.712 is greater than t-critical value 1.9600 (t-cal 2.712 > t-crit 1.9600) at Df 352. Since, the calculated t-value is greater than t-critical t-value; we therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant difference between the educated mothers and their male counter parts at 0.05 level of significance in favour of the educated mothers.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the role of education in women empowerment. Women empowerment is seen as given women the power or more power to do things, which they could not do before. It involves giving them adequate knowledge and capacity, the confidence, the help and ideas to decide what is best for them, and act accordingly in fulfilling their own potentials.

The paper acknowledges the fact that women suffer deprivation in so many areas of life, which has relegated them to the background. With women being educated, they would be empowered socially, politically and economically. Women empowerment will lead to enhancing the nation’s educational development, as they will be able to contribute morally,

financially and materially to the educational program of the country. Women education will also bring about more children being educated, as they will be able to finance or support their husbands in financing their children’s education.

The paper puts forward some measures that will bring about women empowerment for educational development to include adequate punishment of parents who violate the compulsory Universal Basic Education program by refusing to send their children who are of school-going age to school. And respect for God given fundamental human rights of women among others. Constitutional provision is necessary for achieving this.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The ‘act’ of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program provides that the Universal Basic Education Scheme shall be compulsory and free for every Nigerian child-going age.
2. God given and fundamental human rights of women should be granted to them by the men folk. Women should not be relegated to the background in the name of custom and religion. Religious leaders should be directed by the government to mount vigorous campaign against women maltreatment and

enslavement in the name of religion. Good religious education for both Christians and Muslims about women will help to uplift their status in the society.

3. Economically, women should not be discriminated against. Women should be allowed to own property such as farm lands, obtain loan from the bank, take up jobs they are qualified for without been hindered by their husbands and have a say in affairs that will bring their economic progress. Constitutional backing is necessary for the achievement of these aspects of life.
4. A reasonable percentage of political positions in the country should be set aside for women. This will serve as a motivating force for women empowerment in the country. This should also be backed by the constitutional provision.

When these measures are put in place, women will be empowered socially, politically and economically, which will in effect enhance their contribution to educational development of the country.

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