



## Repositioning Women Education for National Development

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### Abstract

The proverb saying “If you educate a woman, you educate the nation” translates the power of educated women in the development of a nation and proves that with education every woman is a star. Beside the women’s vast roles that linger their struggles and anticipations towards acquiring knowledge for national growth and development, education enables women to take advantage of opportunities that could help them to identify and understand their legal rights and allow them to fully participate in socio-political and economic aspects of society anytime. This paper discusses the meaning of education, women’s education, and national development. It also focuses on the content, the objectives and the significance of women’s education. The paper further examines the barriers to women’s education such as; poverty, culture, insecurity, gender inequality and recommends that government should establish functional women centers in every ward across the federation where women could be empowered with skills and knowledge for self-reliance among others.

**Keywords:** Women Education, Empowerment, Gender-Bias, Girls, Out-of-schools-children

### Introduction

It is a basic right for women to be educated in Nigeria. Women’s education, according to a report in 2014 has an important impact on the development of a stable, prosperous, and healthy nation-state, resulting in active, productive and empowered citizens (Wikipedia, 2020). However, it has also been on record that the Beijing Declaration adopted at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference in 1995 on women, stated that the participated governments shall express commitments to advance the goals of equality development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of humanity.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) which were set up to promote gender equality and empower women, use education as its target and the measure of gender disparity in education as its indicator of progress. But despite all the commitments towards female education, the statistical report indicated that out of 14 million out of school’s children in Nigeria, 60% are females (Nawrozzada, 2020). Although, the figures decrease in October 2020 as Federal Government enrolled one million out-of-school children through Best Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) (Clement and Attahiru, 2020). Women liberated themselves from female subordination, ignorance, and poverty through education, women are today no longer tradable goods, house keepers’ and

reproductive objects as considered in most of the African cultures for many centuries.

### The Concept of Education

Farrant in Ekuafeh, et-al (2015) defined education as the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed. Also, Adeyemo in Ekuafeh, et-al (2015) sees education as anything that is done consciously and unconsciously to influence the thoughts, behaviours, and attitudes of others. In this light, Farrant in Ekuafeh, et-al (2015), submits that education could be formal, informal, and non-formal and it can have desired effects or influence on the persons acquiring it.

Education here does not connote western education only; it can be all types spelled in the culture of people that has to do with skills and values which majority of our ancestors used in moving their communities forward. Education produces a good leader who develops the competence and commitment of his people and in equal measure, expands the capacity of an individual to perform in leadership roles and enable a leader to identify with his subordinates needed change, and creates a vision to guide them.

### Women Education

Who is a woman? A woman is a general term that refers to an adult female human being, one paradigm



of gender and biological sex for adult human beings (Dictionary.COM, 2002). Women's education can be regarded as a kind of knowledge given to women for enhancing their self-respect and self-dignity. This knowledge can be in form of formal, non-formal, and informal education, it can also be in form of Adult Education, Community Development, Workshops, Seminars, Conferences, and Training. Women's education is for making women become economically independent and self-reliant (Adamu, 2009). Educated women shall remain an important moving force in every society/nation and it can be a tool for promoting productivity, whereas illiteracy relegated women to the background which should be pushed in the world political agenda and included in various policies documents.

### **National Development**

A nation is referred to as a group of people living in a particular area, forming a single political and economic unit. It can also be seen as a large number of people who share the same history, ancestors, culture, and interests. The term national development is very comprehensive. It includes all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation. Bawa (2010) defined national development as the total effort of all citizen forces and added to the stock of physical, human resources, knowledge, and skill. Similarly, United Nations Decade report in Bawa (2010) has defined it as growth plus change. Change in turn is social and cultural as well as economic and qualitative as well as quantitative. However, Bawa (2010) opined that the development of the nation encapsulates such parameters as:

- a) development through a planned national economy,
- b) increase in agricultural production through application of modern technical know-how,
- c) harnessing industrial production,
- d) development of human resources,
- e) application of science and technology in the production sector,
- f) provision of mass education and
- g) provision of various facilities to meet the needs and aspirations of disadvantaged, deprived, and poorest of the poor segments of the population.

Therefore, national development depends largely on the individual, because it is the efforts of individuals that make a nation that requires development through nation-building.

### **Contents and Strategies for Teaching Women Education**

The education of women shall emphasize more in entrepreneurship training to prepare them for self-reliance and shall not be a liability to society at the end of their graduation. The themes in Teigeler in Adamu (2009) include occupational enrichment, consumer economics, civics, health, and family living. The content of women's education should be the reflection of the society's idea of the role assigned to women, namely, cooking, sewing, and laundry for house-keeping and home management for rearing children. Other subjects are: science, technology, commerce, and arts. These are to make them able to compete with men in getting an equal opportunity and income in the labour market.

Adamu (2009) submitted that the content has to be the one that girls or women bring home from school useful information about health and nutrition as well as vocational skill that can be put to good service by the family. The women's education scheme should be as a professional approach towards the eventual move to give all Nigerians the relevant and necessary education for effective economic recovery and social justice. Ideally, women are to educate themselves, acquire information and knowledge which will help them promote the norms, values, and behavior patterns of the society.

Adamu (2009) also opined that woman need an education that will not only help them in the search and acquisition of new skills and knowledge but also help them to acquire and strengthen values such as: justice, equality, honesty, truthfulness, and solidarity. It should also create or release energies in women to act with conviction and courage in their various struggles at different levels.

### **Objectives of Women's Education**

Women, as mothers, are also educators within their families, what they learn; they pass on to their children (Adamu, 2009). Ahmed and Muhammad quoted United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), (2021) highlights the objectives for women education as follows:

- a) to enable women to improve their family health and diet,
- b) to increase women's productive ability, thus raising their family's standard of living,
- c) to give women access to appropriate technologies and management of cooperatives,



- d) to enable women to discharge their responsibilities more effectively,
- e) to improve women’s social and cultural states,
- f) to help women fight for their own tears and feelings of inadequacy or inferiority,
- g) to develop them all round, that is mentally, socially, psychologically, physically, morally & economically,
- h) to make women acquire their own basic needs of the society like food, shelter, fuel, clothes and nourishing, and
- i) to enhance national and human development.

### Significance of Women Education

Education is identified as an ingredient to every successful life and a key to national growth and development since time immemorial. It is the focal and join-forces and efforts of many international, national and local organizations towards eradicating illiteracy among women (the care givers and producers of future generations) that have been rightly put in place.

Equally, Ahmed and Muhammad (2015) emphasized that the primary aim of women education is to prepare them for social, economic, and more importantly as effective family care-givers and generally managers of the home, which surely leads to stability in the home and consequently the society and the world at large. In the same vein, King and Hill in Ahmed and Muhammad (2015) further explained:

*The importance of investing in women’s education is that they are true custodians of children for the younger generation and leaders of tomorrow. These ones received their first and most important moral, social, physical and psychological forms of education in the home, which if successfully inculcated will be built upon in the formal education environment. The much later outcome will be men and women leaders who will dream and focus on a great and sustainable developed nation.*

The role of women, as primary producers and caregivers of human capital development in ensuring the achievements of potentials for national growth and development, cannot be overemphasized. The rapid socio-economic development of a nation depends on the quality of women and their education as true partners to every successful man.

### Women Education Barriers

It might seem obvious that even among the educated and the schooling, women are facing peculiar challenges; which attributes to either dropping out from schooling or otherwise. With all the world’s forces and commitments, it is very disturbing and unfortunate to hear that, there are 60 million out-of-school-girls worldwide; 25 million never even attended any school (David, 2022). This portrays negative future consequences for the growing women and it judgmentally requires immediate action and more commitments to salvage our most valuable asset. The following are some of the barriers that render women into provisional or permanent illiteracy syndrome:

**Poverty:** The challenge of extreme poverty among many families necessitated more criminalities among humanity. Wherever there is poverty, there is also ignorance, diseases, starvation, beggars, etc., and it forces women into destitutions, prostitution, trafficking, and other crimes. It has been stated by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) that 40% of the total population of almost 83millions Nigerians live in poverty on less than \$1 a day. The NBS assertion is based on the 2019 standard survey conducted with the support of the World Bank (World Bank, 2021). Insecurity, rapid population growth, corruption, and bad governance are responsible for Nigeria’s poverty. The women make up the largest portion of the poorest, despite the fact that the nation is the top oil exporter in Africa. Even Transparency International (2022) cited Nigeria as the poverty capital of the world. However, the Federal government stated that they disbursed N58billion to uplifted poor Nigerians out of poverty through Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) (Wale, 2021).

**Insecurity:** Nigeria become the ground for insecurity in recent years with insurgents, kidnappers, cattle rustlers, bandits, armed robbers everywhere, the senseless killings, burning of villages and springing up of IDP (Internally Displace Person) camp that has even forced some states government to shut down schools for the fear of students’ abduction by bandits and insurgents that become too rampant in the northern region. Women are raped and taken as captive. So many are killed and this render, the fortunate ones as refugees and widows with additional family’s burdens. Figures from various UN, World Bank sources, former governors Shattima and Yari of Borno and Zamfara states as cited in Abubakar (2020) stated that available estimate indicates that about 3 million persons have been displaced internally 100,000 or so killed and



about 9 trillion Naira (net present value) spent on counter insurgency/terrorism war apart from missed opportunities. Nigeria ranked as the third most terrorized nation by Global Terrorism Index (2021). The insecurity has continued to plague Northern part of Nigeria due to gruesome activities of some unscrupulous bandit, kidnappers and terrorist.

**Culture and Attitude:** In our society, there are some limitations for women to progress in education traditionally, and to be considered outside their family roles, expectation and responsibilities. Uzoma (2013) stated that the tradition, customs, socio cultural values, ethics, motherhood instincts are some of the factors influencing gender bias in the education sector. Cultural and social beliefs, attitudes and practices prevent girls from benefiting from educational opportunities to the same extent as boys. Similarly, a part from culture that relegated women to reproductive machine and caregivers at home the nonchalant attitudes contribute immensely to poor education of women. The government at all level lack credibility and acceptability from the masses due to their obnoxious policies and unending hardship imposes in the country. More so, many of the women programmes are Western-world oriented in which majority people are against, even the pro-west governments lack political will due to their money driven quest and corruption that is why many programmes and policies ended in deprived. There is an unprecedented improvement to cultural bias for women’s education in every Nigerian society.

**Gender inequality:** Artificial domination of women by men is inevitable in every country of the world, Nigeria inclusive and is resulting in widespread discrimination against women. The impact of unequal access to education exists and increases vulnerability of women in many professional disciplines, such as: science, engineering, technical, astronomy, medicine, etc. not talking of political leadership where the vulnerability gap remains wider even in the developed

societies, indeed Mrs. Hilary Clinton dashed presidential ambition in the USA is one of the major examples. Furthermore, it has been noted by Oladunni in Uzoma (2013), that because of societal stereotype and stigmatization on certain professions and subjects as the exclusive preserve of men and or women most Nigerian women have been forced into less paid jobs (teaching, nursing services, agriculture, small scale food processing, secretariat duties, clerical duties, note- counting in banks, cleaners and middle level professional occupations). In most public and private sectors men continue to dominate women, leading parents to ask themselves: why bother educating our girls if they will never make it anyway? That is why women make up two thirds of the adults who are illiterate. Uzoma (2013) stated that Nigeria has performed poorly in terms of gender equality. According to the 2012 Gender Report in Nigeria cited in Uzoma (2013), noted that Nigeria ranks 118 out of 134 countries in the Gender Equality Index.

Even girls who do enroll in school may have irregular attendance due to other demands on them and the fact that their education may not be prioritized. Nigeria has performed poorly in terms of policies implementations towards women education. Sharif (2021) cited research that postulates 9 million out-of-school-children in Nigeria with 5.5 million girls. Uzoma (2013) also observed that despite almost 30 years (now 37 years) of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and 20 years (now 27years) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Yet, nothing tangible can be show in the areas of women education policy or girls’ child education policies. Uzoma (2013) further stressed that what is more worrisome is that it seems efforts by the Nigerian government for the past 20 years (now 27 years) to tackle the gender disparity in education have not had any significant impact. With regard to women's education, Nigeria's education policy has evolved since 1980s towards a gender focus. Below are some examples of deprived policies.

**Table 1: Key Policy Initiatives with a Gender Focus in Nigeria**

S/N	Policy Initiative	Year
1	Blueprint on Women's Education	1986
2	Nomadic Education Programme	1986
3	National Commission for Mass Literacy and Non-formal Education	1991
4	Family Support Basic Education Programme	1994
5	Universal Basic Education	1999
6	National Policy on Women	2001
7	Education For All-Fast Track Initiative	2002



8	Strategy for Acceleration of Girls' Education in Nigeria	2003
9	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)	2004
10	Universal Basic Education Act	2004

**Source: Gender in Nigeria Report 2012 cited in Uzoma (2013)**

Other obstacles are: sexual harassment syndrome among women/girls' students in schools and to some extent between male bosses and women employees. Others are community sanctions, force marriage, home background, divorce, sexual based violence, domestic violence etc. Reinartz in Uzoma (2013) argues that balancing work and family is a major hurdle for working women. Hence, family responsibilities influence the careers and education choices of women who mostly have disproportionate work in care of children and the home.

**Relationship between Women Education and National Development**

There is general agreement that women produce and remain caregivers of younger generation from birth to maturity and even after maturity, they are also serving as custodians of the societal norms, values, attitudes, competency, etc., that are needed in every human for development. These qualities are extending to child within the family system where women serve as the conveyers or teachers. The family functions as the primary agent of morality, socialization and civilization are also rudimentary ingredients to national development.

There are so many issues of national development that rely on women as observed by Wikipedia (2020), a positive correlation exists between the enrolment of girls in primary school and the Gross National Product (GNP) and increase of life expectancy. Because of this correlation, enrollment in schools represents the largest component of the investment in human capital in any society. Similarly, UNESCO in Stepp (2016) noted that a single year of primary education has shown to increase a girl's wages later in life by 20% and when 10% more women attend school, Gross Domestic Products (GDP) increases by 3% on average. Therefore, the increment in the country's GDP and GNP is economic growth and development and almost every nation depends largely upon, from the numerous ethnic, cultural and religious diversities as well as socio-economic and artificial tribulations, which women education is considered as vital and essential ingredient for that. Education gives women a disposition for a lifelong acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, fitness and patriotism for active

partaking in societal activities, education also enable women a real voice in government as well as in decision making process which serve as an element to succeed in building trust, mutual understanding, and common brotherhood for national development. Therefore, women education remained critical to national development especially at this time when all the developmental process in Africa and third worlds needs to be reviewed for better.

**Recommendations**

The paper offers the following recommendations:

- a) Establish functional women centers in every ward across the federation where women could be empowered with skills and knowledge for self-reliance;
- b) Engage in mass mobilization for women education programmes and campaign in all the media platforms, religious worship centers, social gathering across the nation and in the local language;
- c) Government decisive actions toward enacting laws that aimed in protecting the rights of women education everywhere, anytime and in any circumstances is highly necessary;
- d) Adopt the holistic approach and involvement of all the stake holders (Governments at all levels, NGO's, Traditional rulers, religious organizations,) in the women education policy implementations;
- e) Women students should be prepared for digital world – to help them learn how to use new technologies and keep up with new and rapid developing fields of knowledge.

**Conclusion**

With the current wave of globalization that has greatly improved the lives of women in the developing world where women can choose their lifestyle with relative freedom. But for Nigerian women, it might seem obvious and remain at disadvantaged in many areas of life, including education which has been seen as bedrock of any development since time immemorial. The need to examine and address the issues surrounding depressed women education programmes in our society by all means must be stressed, so as to



attained national growth and development. Yes, the former US President Obama once said while addressing the United Nation General Assembly in 2012, that the future must not belong to those who bully women, it must be shaped by girls who go to school and those who stand for a world where our daughters can live their dreams just like our sons (Stepp, 2016).

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