

## Research Article

## Revitalising Women Education for Sustainable Development and Nation Building

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**Abstract:** All over the world, education is regarded as the factor in overcoming the barriers that women face and basic tool for empowering women and bringing them into the main part of development. This paper highlights the role of women in sustainable development that hinges on education, economic, socio-political and human biological changes as the root of sustainable development. A nation desiring to catch up with development must realize that development cannot be complete without the education of women. Equity should be the watchword for sustainable development. The paper employed survey research design, while a total of one hundred and twenty samples for the study were drawn from four local governments in Oyo metropolis to whom a self-designed 10-item questionnaire titled Revitalizing Women Education in Nigeria for Sustainable Development (RWESDQ) was administered. The instrument was validated and its reliability ascertained through test-retest method that yielded a co-efficient of 0.67. Among others, the study revealed that women education is of significant influence to sustainable development in Nigeria, women education is of significant influence to nation building, hence it was recommended that the government should provide fund for education and send female teachers to workshops/seminar to add to what they have acquired intellectually and equip more for the enormous task and that female educators should serve as a role model to female students to develop positive attitude towards their studies.

**Keywords:** Women Education, Sustainable Development.

### INTRODUCTION

Education all over the world has been seen as an instrument per excellence at achieving various goals and making meaningful progress in all ramifications. In Nigeria, the three tiers of the state (federal, state and local government) play a role in the provision of education (British Council, Nigeria, 2012). This accounts for the guided efforts made by every nation to provide qualitative education through relevant educational policies. Great world economies like Japan, China, USA, have used education as the springboard to social mobility socio-economic growth and development. Education is one of the most important weapons to give people the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the developmental process of any nation (Mandara *et al.*, 2010). Every society, simple or complex, has its own system of training and educating its younger ones. Suffice it to say that throughout history, education has been one of the most persistent concerns of men. Acquisition of skills is a lifelong process and starting early in life is crucial to the attainment of its objectives. Acquisition of skills in women is highly important due to the fact that women

constitute a key resource person whose idea, ability, creative solutions and concern for social cohesiveness that can be passed on to the younger ones that always stay closer to them. This in turn is believed to bring about economic and social transformation which will lead to achievement of the developmental goals of a nation.

The barrier placed against women's self-actualization especially in traditional Nigerian society was without recourse to the roles women played in such a society. Apart from domestic tasks which may be seen as part of socialization and convention, women are also very productive in the economic sphere of the Nigerian society. The gender bias against women ranges from labour market discrimination to exclusion from policy making. This discrimination exacerbates poverty by preventing majority of women from obtaining the credit, education, training, health services, child care and legal status needed to improve their prospects (Mamman, 1996). One clear area noted imbalance against women has been the area of education. It is therefore not surprising that women's inadequate access

Quick Response Code



Journal homepage:

<http://www.easpublisher.com/easjehl/>

Article History

Received: 15.03.2018

Accepted: 25.03.2019

Published: 12.04.2019

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to education has been seen as the source of the various discriminations that they suffer (Afigbo, 1991). As a result, there has been a groundswell of agreement that women's lot and general socio-economic improvement of nations can be achieved through the acquisition of education by women (Stephen 1992).

In every part of the world, there's a growing awareness and increased interest in the roles played by women with particular emphasis on their position and status in the society. The development of women through education has become a very important issue such that governmental and non-governmental organizations are giving it a very serious attention (Adepoju 2010). Education in the words of Alabi and Alabi (2013) prepares a woman to fit properly into the web of social interaction and equally enhance better performance of her social roles in the society. Through education, women become knowledgeable enough to become self-reliant, self-sufficient and develop the ability to solve societal problems. To capitalize on the potential of its people, and ensure healthier, more educated, empowered and productive citizens, Nigeria must invest in educating the mothers of the next generation.

Education is the basis for the promotion and improvement of the status of women. It is the basic tool that should be given to women in order to fulfill their roles as full members of the society. Besides, the Education for All (EFA.) goals sees women and girls education issues as a major national development challenge. Economic growth is not possible without the understanding, cooperation, contribution and active participation of women (Akhaluola 1998). He stated further that women constituted 12.7% of agricultural manpower, 1.6% of professional manpower and 1.4% of craftsmen. The education and training of women for status improvement is imperative because of the roles they play in the modeling and shaping of children's lives. Women are the nation builders and historically and culturally they are linked to life and nature. (Shiva, 1997).

Nigeria is a member nation of the United Nations which lays emphasis on the training of girls and women as a means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth. However, despite its commitment to the organization, the education of the girl-child is still lagging behind compared to that of the boys (Olanrewaju, 2002) Nnaka and Anaekwe(2006) also reported that females are grossly under-represented in terms of enrollment, participation and achievement in science, technology and mathematics education at all levels of education. Agwagah and Aguele (2007) asserted that gender imbalance in education is a major issue desired to be given needed emphasis in the on-going education reforms embarked upon by the Federal Government of Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this paper sets out to examine the topic "revitalizing

women education in Nigeria for sustainable development with a view to promoting women/girl education in Nigeria. To this end, the paper will start with a conceptual clarifications in terms of women education, development as well as sustainable development.

Development implies an inclusive concept having social, political and economic facets, hence it involve qualitative and quantitative transformation of the lives of the people. Subscribing in the same vein, Frances (2007) opines that development is seen as a process that is aimed at improving the living conditions and circumstances of human beings in all ramifications. Hence for meaningful development to take place there must be development in the social, economic, political and cultural aspect of the society.

Development can only be achieved through the deliberate efforts of young men and women of purpose and vision (Mofoluwawo, 2011). Development has to do with improving people's lives, a process which helps people by providing them with skills and knowledge so as to improve their lives so as to rise out of poverty and to foster self-pride and self confidence (Odiba 2007). Corroborating still, Yenkw(2004) emphasizing the fourth national development plan indicates that development implies development of man, the unfolding and realization of his creative potentials, enabling him to improve his material condition of living through the use of resources available to him.

The phrase sustainable development lexically contains two key words i.e. "development" and "sustain". To sustain means to keep from falling or stinking, to maintain or keep up. Sustainable development therefore is a kind of development based on enduring structures imbued in the society. Sustainable development is a broad term used and applies to various fields of knowledge. As a concept, it is the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (Akanbi 2010). Sustainable development also means an effort directed at resolving variance between the society and its institutions. It means economic development without polluting, jeopardizing or compromising the ability of the next generation. Hence sustainable development focuses on '3ps' of people, prosperity and posterity (Onucheyo 2005). It denotes maintenance of already established structures, building of new structures to accommodate changes and planning steady growth in a country. For any nation to achieve sustainable development, the full participation of women is essentially required.

Women education on the other hand according to Terdood and Ityar (2008) is the type of education received by women who would make them become aware of themselves and their capacity to exploit their

environment. Everyone has a right to education which shall be directed to the full development of human dignity and potential, with particular attention to women and girl-child. This made the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development in 1995 to place women and girls education at the centre stage in the struggle for human development and social justice. Women education can be seen as the most important tool for societal growth and development. This corroborates the saying “if you educate a man you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate families, communities and a whole nation. Duilemi (2006) agreed that women are homebuilders. A homebuilder is a nation builder and a good builder will start on a solid foundation anchored on acquired education. United Nation’s Education, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 1995), outlined the main objectives for women education among others as;

- To enable women to improve their family health and diet
- To increase women productivity ability thus raising their family standard of living
- To give women access to appropriate technologies, management and cooperation
- To improve societal and cultural status
- To enable women discharge their responsibility effectively
- To make women participate fully in all the affairs of their nation and to be at the centre of sustainable development.
- To enhance societal and nation building in the economic and human development

Succinctly, Rao (2004) emphasizes that education is a matter for the whole of mankind, for men and women alike and not for one of the two sexes only. Women must be given all the means of participating in the building of the world. Rao further declares that women do not enjoy all the educational opportunities they should have. Nearly everywhere in the world, women are given less education than men and over vast areas of the globe, majority of the illiterates are women who are look down upon as inferior people. Women education therefore contributes in no small measure to the elimination of the idea that women are inferior but also to the elimination of their actual status. In the word of Ofoefuna (2006) education of women will definitely empower them to share in the labour of development and contribute tangibly to national development. Women education will enable her to understand and appreciate her children’s needs, make informed decisions about their discipline, better equip to practice hygiene and so on.

Women who contribute to most national development are those that are able to successfully assume leadership responsibilities as mothers,

sisters, daughters or wives. (Akunyili, 2006) women have the responsibility to influence society through exemplary leadership especially if she is enabled. An enabled woman carries out household chores. However, women cannot do the above functions unless they are reasonably educated and economically emancipated (Ebere, 2010). Carr(2004) submits that women have tendency to obtain safer, better jobs, have greater levels of health literacy and experience, greater level of controls in their lives hence; adequate and standard education for women will empower them to demand more good-quality life and health services. Education given to women is not a waste, they should therefore be encouraged to use their God-given talent, knowledge and experience in managing the available resources around them for optimum positive craftiness.

Women need to be educated to acquire knowledge and skills needed to advance her status-knowledge for social interaction, self-improvement and status advancement. Girl/women education also prepares women and girls adequately for societal realities. Education would break the shell of ignorance and open that of self-discovery. There are examples of vibrant women in Nigeria like late Prof. Dora Akunyili, Mrs. Farida Waziri, Prof Rukayatu Rufai, Mrs Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala among others who confirmed the saying that what a man can do, a woman can do much more better.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed the descriptive survey research design to collect data from the subjects. The sample for this study consisted of one hundred and twenty respondents. A systematic random sampling technique was used to select the subjects for this study from four local governments within Oyo metropolis. A 10-items questionnaire title “Re-vitalizing women education for sustainable development (RWESD) comprising two sections on general information and women education for sustainable development was developed, validated and its reliability was estimated through test-retest method which yielded a co-efficient of 0.67 was employed for the study while data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical of mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics.

The development of women through education has become a very important issue such that the government needs to give it a serious attention. It is in the light of the above that this study attempts to x-ray how revitalization of women education can bring about sustainable development. Based on this, two null hypotheses were raised for the study as followed:

- Women education is of no significant influence on sustainable development.

- Women education is of no significant influence on nation building.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Table 1: t-test analysis of the influence of women education on sustainable development in Nigeria.**

Variation	Number	%	X	SD	t-obs	t-cal	Df	P<0.05
Agreed	90	74.2	5.86667	.93091	1.25	.022	119	
Disagreed	30	25.8	5.86667	.93091				

The above table depicts that in the administered 120 questionnaires (90) (74.2%) of the responses were agreed with the mean score of 5.87 and standard deviation of 0.93 and (30) (25.8%) disagreed respectively with the mean score of 5.87 and standard deviation of 0.93. the calculated value was less than the observed value at 0.05 significant level i.e.  $0.22 < 1.25$  and degree of freedom of 119. Since the calculated

value is less than the observed value, women education is of significant influence on sustainable development in Nigeria.

The finding is in line with the views of Ofoefuna (2006), UNESCO (1995), Rao (2004), Akunyili, 2006, Alabi and Alabi 2013 among others.

**Table 2: t-test of the influence of women education on nation building.**

The Variation	Number	%	X	SD	t-obs	t-cal	Df	P<0.05
Agreed	80	66.7	5.86667	.92521	1.25	.000	119	
Disagreed	40	33.3	5.86667	.92521				

The above table 2 indicates that out of 120 responses, (80) (66.7%) were agreed or supported to the items while 40) (33.33%) were disagreed to the items and the mean score of 5.87 and standard deviation of 0.93, the calculated value was less than the observed value with degree of freedom of 119 at 0.05 significant level hence, since the calculated value is less than the observed value, women education has significant influence on nation building. This finding is in line with the views of Akhaluola (1998), Shiva (1997), Duilema (2006), terdood and Ityar (2008) among others.

## CONCLUSIONS

Women are the backbone of any civilized society. A nation or society, without the participation of women can hardly successfully achieve desired development. Sustainable development is hence a far reaching dream. Education is the key to influence human behaviors, attitude and actions. When women are not educated, it is impossible to achieve optimal level of sustainable development. A balanced society requires the active involvement of educated women. Women constitute half of the world's human capital, yet they are one of her most underutilized resources. Sustainable economic growth at national and global levels depends on women joining the labour force and fuller use being made of their skills and qualifications. So if Nigeria wants to achieve sustainable development women education is the need of the hour which must be given paramount consideration at any level.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, it is therefore recommended amongst others that:

- Government should provide fund for education and send female teachers to

workshop and seminars to add to what they have acquired intellectually and equip more for the enormous task of sustainable development and nation building.

- Female educators should serve as a role model to female students to develop positive attitudes towards their studies.
- For the shell of ignorance to be broken, there is the need for women to be educated
- There should be improvement of women social awareness and capability level by organizing workshops, conferences and additional extracurricular activities.

Raising the educational levels, literacy rates of women should be one of the most effective investments for increasing female productivity as well as enhancing the well-being of families.

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