



# Education as a Means of Socio-Economic Development: A Review

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## ABSTRACT

Education is a process whereby an individual acquires positive changes in behaviour geared towards contributing positive development to himself and the society in which he lives. It is a necessary weapon that can be used to surmount ignorance, poverty and disease and to produce functional citizens with positive attitudes towards loving what they ought to love and hating what they ought to hate, Enaibe & Imonivwerha (2007:10). This paper focuses, on the importance of education in improving the socio-economic development of individual's with special reference to the socio-economic development of women (girl child) in the society. Poverty is an offspring of under-development as equal education is the way out of the women's plight and their contribution to, sustainable socio-economic development. When a girl child is educated the whole family, state and nation is educated. Without education there can be no meaningful development in any nation. Some useful suggestions were made and conclusion drawn that education for sure enhances the socio-economic development of the citizenry.

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## Introduction

Education spreads out to different sphere and it's structured towards making individual's possess sound character, useful knowledge and skills, sound physical health and social qualities, creative power of imagination and logical reasoning. As Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and Head World Health Organization (Who) puts it.

Experience shows that investing in women is one of the most cost effective ways of promoting development. As mothers, producers or suppliers of food, fuel and water, as traders and manufacturers, as political and community leaders, women are central to development, they need not be invisible in developmental issues even though there is a call for new reforms that will enhance productivity and sustainable development which addresses the needs of women and children as well as other vulnerable groups in Rivers State and beyond (George, 2008:195).

Genuine development involves any attempt to improve the existential conditions of the human being. Nigeria has over 50% females in its population of over 140 million people and so cannot afford to neglect the females if genuine development must be attained. The importance of Education for All (EFA) has been addressed by the United Nations (UN) repeatedly over its entire history, Poverty means lack of something or poor quality, illiteracy, therefore can be classified under poverty. The ills of poverty are diversifying, one of which is slow or lack of development. The stunted lives of children deprived of education will culminate in the stunted development of the nation. United Nations reported in Enaibe & Imonivwerha (2009:39) that "one out of (3) three households in the world has a woman as its breadwinner".

In spite of these, the woman is marginalized. It is through women education that women will be able to identify their potentials beyond childbearing and care for husbands. It will

also help them to overcome social prejudices, take control over their lives, assume a social status, combat undue violence and subjection, sex-stereotyping challenge, the discriminatory, debasing and biased gender roles and relations against them and create in them political awareness, make them develop life for their economic development, national unity and reconstruction, instill in them cultural values and the realization of the importance of child care, reduce maternal and child mortality and HIV/Aids transmission.

A man's life begins in the woman's womb. The survival of the child beyond the first year depends on the level of literacy of the mother. It is through education that the woman knows that during pregnancy, good eating habits, proper hygiene and medical care should be maintained in order to produce a healthy baby to make a healthy nation. Enaibe & Imonivwerha (2009) put it thus; with literacy; a woman knows the danger in frequent/uncontrolled childbearing. Illiterate women are forced to accept the voicelessness and invisibility of women in the family and society but educated women will have a greater understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Equal education is the way out of the women's plight and their contribution to sustainable socio-economic development, more also, when a girl (woman) is educated, the whole family, state and nation is educated.

## Education as A Means of Socio-Economic Development

It is clear that development is the product of education and education is the product of the society, while society is all about man and his environment, education, according to Peters in Kopsemano (2000:13) has 'normative' implications.

In other words, it "has criteria that something worthwhile should be achieved". Peters in his view is right because education should change the individual for better and influence the individual to reflect the change in him on the society, and to effect positive change in the society. Kosemani (2000:13) remarking on the above, opined that "it is in

this sense that education can be liken to reform". That is, education should be able to reform the individual, the society and the productive forces for good.

The B.B.C. English Dictionary (1992) sees development as "the growth or formation of something over a period of time...the process or result of improving a basic design..." Development essentially refers to "the capacity and creative capability of the people to effectively transform the natural resources of their environment into goods and services through the application of their talents and labour power" (Adekola, 2007:120).

For Fletcher in Okorosaye- Orubite, (2007:75), development can mean "the actualization of an implicit potentiality, the simplest example being the patterned growth and maturation of a seed or an initial germ cell, to the full adult form of the individual plant or animal or a person, without stipulating at this point, anything too weighty or too precise". This can also certainly seem to apply to man and his social situation. Fagerlind and Saha in Okorosaye (2007) explained the above position further: "it is based on the assumption that both societies and individuals have innate biological, psychological and sociological capacities which can be evaluated in terms of their level of actualization. Societies can be judged as efficient or inefficient in making possible the actualization of their human potential".

Ake (2001:125) sees development as "the process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choices and values". For Okorosaye-Orubite (2005:42), development does not necessarily stop at economic prosperity alone, but transcends beyond it to include psychological, social, political and environmental change for the betterment and well being of the society. Development is of the people and for the people, it is people oriented.

Man is the center of all forms of development and the primary concern of education is to develop man so that he can able to "create and recreate" himself and his society according to his desires. Perhaps this is why the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004:8) insists that: "Education shall continue to be highly rated in the National development Plans because education is the most important Instrument of change: any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be proceeded by an education revolution.

#### **Women Education and Socio-Economic Development**

Women education is vital to meeting any development goals. Studies by Abu and Klessen (2004) reveal that girls' education increases economic growth. Women education has been shown to reduce child mortality and malnutrition; improves their functioning in the wage labour force, strengthen their survival strategies, improve family health, delay the age of first marriage, lower fertility rates, enhance women's domestic role and political participation in the society and probably increase economic growth.

As Benwari & Igwesi (2009:104) puts it. The World Bank African Region human development report shows that a mother with few years of formal education is considerably more likely to send her children to school than the illiterate mother. The more formal education a woman has, the more likely her children are to remain in school for a longer duration. Annan (2005:1), sums it up thus, "there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls: No other policy is likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition and promote health, including helping to prevent the spread of Hiv/Aids".

In most works reviewed, education has been recommended in one form or another as a tool for bridging the socio-economic gap between the genders. Quadri and Amaike (2005:26) in their study of women in the workplace recommend education as a major solution because "education influences occupational" status and income earned in later life". For Bature as cited in Agabi (2008:9), massive education of the girl child is the solution to effective socio-economic development because the economic advancement of women can only be achieved through relevant functional education capable of transforming them and alleviating the present cycle of poverty and ignorance which they have suffered over the years.

In the opinion of Akudolu (2005) as cited in Agabi (2008:9), the development and implication of educational curriculum should include programmes that help the girl child develop positive self- image, critical thinking and the ability to take decisions, Agabi in Elekwa (2006:6). The adverse effect of gender discrimination on human capital development recommends a twelve year compulsory pre-marital education for the girl child. This is directed at empowering her to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of herself, state and society at large. Maidugu (2004) in Agabi while supporting that the education is very important in national development emphasizes an urgent need to incorporate women issues in the formulation of national policies and programmes. Maidugu goes further to recommend the establishment of Non- Government Organizations (NGOs) and community Based organization (CBOs) directed at advocating the economic advancement of women.

Functional education has become a necessary part of the educational policy in contemporary African Nations. In Nigeria, for instance, skill development is inculcated into the curriculum of primary and secondary education. The Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE) in Nigeria provides a nine year free and compulsory education for every child, with a legal backing for every child of school age, to attend school, irrespective of gender, religion or place of origin, so long as the child is domiciled in the country and attends a public school.

The problem, however, is that the policy of providing functional education does not make education functional in practice, if it is not adequately backed by relevant human and materials resources. Schools should be adequately equipped with instructional resources, good classroom accommodation and adequate number of trained teachers; especially in the teaching of subjects that are directed at skill development and functional living for every youth, irrespective of gender. This will ensure that no young person graduates from a school without at least one functional skill. Functional education is seen here as that education that makes a person economically productive upon graduation from a school.

The education of a woman is as important as that of a man. An educated woman is an invaluable asset to her family, her state and nation at large because with the right opportunity she will bring her wealth of knowledge to bear on all spheres of state and national development.

The more education a woman acquires, the greater will be her chances of contributing to the economic development of her family and her state.

The education of a woman like that of every youth should be functional. This implies that she should be given the type of education that makes her economically productive upon

graduation, either in self employment or in public employment. If this is achieved in every state in Nigeria, poverty and illiteracy will soon be a thing of the past in this richly endowed but poorly managed state of Nigeria.

### **Education and Development**

Education as a concept is used here according to Fafunwa's definition (1974:17) says:

Education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviours which are of positive values to the society in which he lives; that is to say, it is a process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge, either to ensure social control or to guarantee rational direction in the society or both.

The general deduction from these definitions points to the fact that education is a process whereby the individuals in the society are prepared and groomed to live a useful lifestyle in that particular environment. Therefore, we are looking at formal, informal and non-formal education of the Rivers State women and its impact on their socio-economic development.

In another vein, Okeem (1981:5) defined development... "Whether urban or rural as a complex process also involving several dimensions such as economic, political, social, cultural, psychological and aesthetic dimensions working in concert with one another". Development means the cause to grow or expand (Webster, 2004), possibly through human efforts and investments. One of the meanings in a dictionary of psychology has development as a progressive change leading to higher levels of differentiation and organization. Here, the concept is one of positive progress, increases in effectiveness of function, maturity, sophistication, richness and complexity. This sense is generally intended in phrases like human development, social development, economic development, intellectual development, emotional development amongst others.

Education is the springboard to socio-economic growth and development of every nation - that is - through education, developmental objectives of training the citizenry in skills and attitudes are imperative. Apart from the inculcation of values, the other purpose of education includes the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and physical skills. The individual requires these competences in order to enable him live fully and contribute to the development of his society. Education makes a man and a man makes the world.

Apart from nature, the greatest determinant of what the world is or will become is man; man makes the difference between happiness and sadness, victory and defeat, greatness and loneliness, peace and war and between enjoyment and suffering.

The ability of man to use the things of this world to improve life and living depends on education, the thrust, type and quality of education and depth of education received. Man's understanding of his place in the community, nation and in the world depends on his education. The ability of the nation to grow and develop depends on the quality and emphasis in its educational system. Education should develop a distinctive attribute of human beings, through education, man should be able to transmit, preserve and improve his culture. It is obvious that through education, we should be able to have a better appreciation of our environment and improve our standard of living (Kwaku, 2007:14).

Mabogunje in Noah and Dosunmu (2006:29) opined that 'there is development in a society when there is self-employment, independence and adjustment to a changing

environment by the individuals in the society". From the above, development is associated with self-reliance, independence and individual's ability to adjust to his immediate environment.

For Akintola in Dosunmu (2006), there is development in the society when a society is technologically efficient, effective and independent of others. In the same vein, Anyanwu in Elekwa (2006:10) says development in any society is always expressed in terms of the quality of living in that particular society. To him, development is pronounced when such a society is able to bridge the gap between the educated and the ignorant, economically frustrated, the rich and the poor and between those whose education gives the freedom of choice in the development of the skills, and those who cannot choose because they have no skills to offer.

As stated earlier, development is economic, social as well as political. Economically, the linear stages involved not only in the growth of a national economy, but also in the attainment of economic maturity are the traditional pre-conditions for economic take-off, or the drive to maturity and the high mass consumption stages. Rostko as cited in Oklorosaye-Orubite (2008:1006) describes development as representing the tipping point or watershed, whereby the resistance and "obstacles to growth are overcome and growth itself becomes the normal condition of a society". These pre-conditions are changes in the social, political and economic structures of the society as well as changes in the values, beliefs and behaviours of the nation. These pre-conditions are also the acquisition of values, which predispose a population to the possibility and desirability of change itself.

Education has been identified and accepted as the very crucial and important factor in this value acquisition process. It is believed that education exercises some modernizing influence on the values, beliefs and behaviour patterns of many people that are subjected to it, in primitive and semi-primitive societies (Oklorosaye-Orubite, 2008:1006). Therefore, sociologists conclude that 'in order for a society to become modern (to develop economically and socially), it must be composed of a modern population, meaning modern values, beliefs and behaviour' (Fagerlind and Saha, 1989:510). Thus, a modern population can only be realized through effective modern education. Put differently, modern societies/nations accord social, political and economic status to the individual in line and commensurate with his/her level of modern educational attainment and competence in the performance of certain technical tasks.

### **Conclusion**

One can conclude that education does not lead only to the socio-economic development of the society, but also economic development of the society is dependent on the quantity, quality and relevance of the education acquired. Thus, a two-way relationship exists between education and the economy of the society. Education produces the relevant and requisite manpower needed for economic development and subsequent sustenance. Without education, no meaningful development can occur in a given society.

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