

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE: A LEVERAGE FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Generally, the problem of marginalization of women and their low participation in politics and decision making has been attracting a lot of attention from scholars. The fact that women are major stakeholders in the developmental project of any given nation cannot be swept under the carpet. Also the fact that the biological and physiological make-up of women and men are different is clear, that notwithstanding they still share common features with men in areas of educational qualification, socio-economic status, occupational dexterity to mention but a few. Yet women are marginalized in almost all spheres of public life. In Nigeria for instance, there is leadership exclusion of women in public meetings, lopsidedness in political appointments at the detriment of women and some other forms of relegation. Foreign language such as English language has also been the chief medium of communication in political terrain instead of indigenous languages. This has not been helpful as women at the grass root level are losing out. The bias as well made them to lose focus in politics forgetting the fact that every human person has equal right and freedom to exercise his or her political franchise whether as a leader or as a follower. This paper therefore is concerned with the option of indigenous languages as leverage for women participation in politics for national development. To this end, the paper takes a look at what language is, its importance to the society and the role of education in this regard since language and education cannot be separated. The work believes that if language education is properly implemented, women's quest for political participation will accelerate greatly.

Keywords: Languages, Leverage, Women Participation in Politics and National Development.

Introduction

Over the years, women have been relegated to the background in issues of overall development especially in a developing nation like Nigeria. According to Ngara and Ayabam (2007), this has been a topical issue since independence. Towards the end of twentieth century, a number of both international, regional as well as national conferences have been organized to address the situation by creating better awareness on gender and women issues. 1975 was The International Women's year, United Nations Decade for Women between 1975-85, Rio Conference on Environment and Development was in 1992, 1993 was Vienna Human Right Conference, by 1995 it was Copenhagen Summit on Social Development, while in 1995 as well, Beijing World Conference was held which gave room for 35% allocation for women in political participation, power and decision making. Evidently, Nigeria participated in quite a number of agreements, declarations, resolutions cum communiqué and even conferences showing their stand on the issue.

In spite of all these developments, women involvement in politics and other crucial national issues is still regrettably minimal. Nothing significant has been done in the political arena to capture the broad concerns of women. Dominant gender is still male because of Nigeria's highly patriarchal cultural background.

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many nations are making frantic efforts to bridge the gender gap in politics. This is based on the fact that both male and their female counterparts share equal rights to contribute meaningfully to their countries' development. Nigeria can only realize her aspirations if and only when it strives towards achieving gender equality in her governance and increase the number of woman in politics. However, there is no doubt that the government of Jonathan Ebele Goodluck deserves commendation in that this is because women got a fair share in his administration. According to Vanguard the 2011 election Nigeria saw some important gains in women political participation as Jonathan appointed 33% of cabinet positions to women (up from 10% in the previous government). This is in keeping with the National Gender Policy which sets the target for women's seats in parliaments at 35%.

Language is a system of communication that employs conventional signs composed of a set of rules, interacting into the experience of its users. According to theunnu language is defined as any symbol or system for the storage and exchange of information. Language is a means of communication and a subject taught at school which should play a role in education. It is an attempt to examine how leadership and electoral programmes could be made give room for women to participate actively in politics. Also how the government could contribute to proper funding of language education especially as it is indigenous languages for attainment of national development through involving women in Nigeria. The aim of this paper therefore, is to elicit how the power of indigenous languages could be resolved the present problem of marginalization against women when it comes to positions in Nigeria.

It has often been suggested that man is clearly distinguished from other animal species, in that thought or intelligence but by his capacity for language (Lyons, 1970). Language is an essential aspect of human existence via activities and so without language a rudimentary kind of communication and interaction would be impossible. Language is seen as a medium through which thoughts or feelings are transferred to the decoder. To Anyama and Obiayo (2016) language is as essential as the air we breathe. Explaining further, human language is a communication system, for it entails the use of certain agreed upon symbols or signals to convey from one person to another within a given speech community (Ndiemele 2007). The power of universal is the basic expression of man's ability to transcend his individuality (Aushem, 1986).

Webster English Dictionary, leverage implies any influence or power used to produce a result. Also Business Dictionary defines leverage as the ability to influence a government in a way that multiplies the outcome of one's efforts while What is Leverage or helpful when one wants to achieve an objective.

Political parties are male dominated and this reduces women's chances of being in leadership positions. In spite of declarations affirming the rights and equality between men and women, available evidence still portrays that women constitute a disproportionate small percentage of those participating in politics, decision making

... global conferences, including Fourth World Conference On Women (1993) reveals this. ... (2014), the poor participation of women in politics and governance has ... major concern at the global level.

Also, the national policy law passed during the Convention on Elimination of all forms of ... (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action remain the ... tool for holding national government accountable on women low participation in politics ... making process. Irrespective of the fact that Nigeria's democratization and the ... span since 1999-2014, women representation is still grossly inadequate and below ...

Considering the proportion of women in public sector and public offices, there exists ... instead of progress because naturally women are always better managers. Men took ... all the offices and portfolios. In the 2015 elections, after the primary, women ... constituted just over 9% of the total number of candidates contesting the polls ... (2015). About 360 members of House of Representatives between 2001-2007, only 25 ... Nigeria is now ranked 118 out of 192 countries in terms of gender parity. ... Nigeria has only 7% of women which is far below South Africa and ... (see NBS 2009). It is obvious that women have a ... to go with their male counterparts in politics.

Many scholars have different perspectives on development. According to Kanbhompoti ... development is defined as progress of some kind. Sen (2008) views development as a ... of expanding the real freedom that people enjoy. Based on her explanation, development ... the removal of major sources as enslavement or inhibited freedom, poverty, tyranny, ... economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public or social ... to mention but a few. To Tomon (1979) development implies modernization of a ... the conversion of a peasant society into an individual one and means of change in the ... of life, in expectation and motivation and even physical environment of daily life.

National development occurs when sustainable development is of immense benefit to the ... is marked by the ability of a country to protect the fundamental human rights and ... and aspirations of its citizens and eradicate political, economic, social, cultural and ... National instability (Nwaka, 2003). National development ought to address the problems of ... and condition of living of young and old and make them have sense of belonging. It ... positive growth and modernization. Ropers (1980) sees national development as a type ... change in which new ideas are introduced thereby producing higher income and ... the living conditions of citizens.

... of Language in National Development

Broadly speaking, language is the medium of human interaction. Like humans, it is very ... associations, enterprises and achievements, and fearfully complex in its own being. ... its pursuit by scholars ever stands still, even in its own apparently dormant parts lies ... At its heart are the sounds we use, the patterns we honour, the meanings we exploit, ... grammar and semantics are its respective sciences. Milroy, J. and Milroy, L. ... language is central to the sustenance of a group of people for it is the vehicle through ... constituents of culture and political activities are communicated. Without language, ... to be problem in the society. For thoughts, ideas, information and other forms of ... would be greatly blurred. Dikenwosi and Dimjessi (2015).

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Therefore, is of paramount importance to national development. It is not something that is dismissed or toyed with. For any country to attain significant advancement in national and a host of other nations demonstrate what it means to be conscious and proud of ones and speak their languages. This is to demonstrate how powerful and important language features prominently in all facets of human endeavours; be it education, social interaction, religious gathering, political campaign and manifestos and so on. We, therefore, achieve national development without language, especially as it concerns

Indigenous Languages to Promote Women Participation in Politics

Indigenous languages are considered language of one's immediate environment or one's language. They are languages native to a region and spoken by indigenous people. They are primarily national languages. People tend to be more at home and comfortable when they speak their native language.

Nigeria today, there is an overwhelming number of over 400 indigenous languages. In any country in the whole of Africa can claim. Of these however, three languages, Igbo and Yoruba were singled out to serve as major Nigerian languages as by the 1999 constitution of Nigeria while English language was adopted as the language. With the adoption of a foreign language such as English in Nigeria coupled with the adoption of a foreign language such as English in Nigeria coupled with the government interactions or communications are solely carried out in English. The attitude is adversely affecting women who aspire to be in politics especially those who are less educated are considered being political animals and so deserving to be carried out at a grassroots level. Every human being, male or female, rich or poor, urban or rural dwellers, are considered being political animals and so deserving to be carried out at a grassroots level. Every human being, male or female, rich or poor, urban or rural dwellers, are considered being political animals and so deserving to be carried out at a grassroots level.

the multilingual nature of Nigeria, and also the fact that no language is every speech community deserves to be addressed with the language of their own. According to Hudson (1980), individual speaker is important in society in the language and politics to be a circular one as one cannot do without the other. Also the importance of indigenous languages and recognizing their vulnerability, the united Nations proclaimed 2019, the international year of indigenous languages with the bid to recognizing them. (Wikipedia).

of the paper is, therefore, calling on Nigeria government, Independent Electoral Commission and other stakeholders in the educational sector to do everything possible to ensure and maximal utilization of indigenous languages during electioneering process and grassroots level for women who constitute areas to benefit. This will enable them to participate actively in politics where they can bring their shrewdness, intelligence and dexterity for national development.

Women themselves in their various professions thereby contributing to national development. Women occupy sensitive positions as a result of their closeness to the family. And so their operational performance and vision could mar or make national development.

Through women, leaders, professionals and experts in various fields emerge some giants. We have some women of substance who are professionals and experts in various fields of endeavours like Obi Ezekewesili who served as Federal Minister for Solid Minerals and later Federal Minister of Education, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as Finance Minister for two consecutive terms, late Professor Dora Akuyili as the Director General for National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) are few among these professionals and experts and these women among others contributed immensely, to the nation's development.

Women in politics always involve themselves in the task of contributing to and solving the nation's socio-economic and political issues (Ojobo 2001). Women in politics produce women and youth who are trained to be self-reliant as they acquire managerial and entrepreneurial skills for national development. This means they serve as role models and motivations of other women.

Recommendations

Electoral policies should be redesigned to make it easier for women to contest for political offices. All vices or inhibitions that characterize political campaigns should be outlawed if women are to succeed in political positions.

Secondly, discriminations of any sort, be it family, religion, cultural, economical and social against women should be removed to encourage women to participate actively in politics for national development.

Also there should be effective use of indigenous languages by Local Language Experts to educate and enlighten the populace especially women on the urgent need to involve themselves in politics and to adopt practices that will favour women in politics for national development.

Again, INEC or any electoral body should organize debates, seminars, workshops and conferences meant to convince the women on the importance of being actively involved in politics so as to impact more on national development.

Conclusion

The high point of this discussion remains that women are marginalized and hence discriminated against especially when it comes to political matters in Nigeria. Gender disparity all over its ugly head with men dominating and usurping almost all the political positions. There is communication logjam which hinders participation of women in politics. Indigenous languages are scarcely utilized in sensitizing the women especially the rural dwellers and course constitute the majority.

Language is a comprehensively dominating tool for national development and in this sustainable development at that, so tangible efforts by both government, the populace and other stakeholders should be geared towards ensuring that only the vehicle of effective communication which is language is not allowed to crumble, because that would be tantamount to stalling of economy and national development.

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