

Women Education and Peace Building in Nigeria: Implication for Curriculum Planners

by
Dr. Mrs. Christiana N. Nwadiokwu¹

Abstract

This study examined Women Education and Peace Education in Nigeria.. Education helps men and women to claim their rights and realize their potentials in economic, political and social transformation for peace education. Many women are still excluded from education in Nigeria. This paper defined the concept of education and peace education as the deliberate attempt to educate the young ones in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peace making skills in homes, schools and communities throughout the world. It identifies the importance and challenges of women education to peace building and its implication for curriculum planners. The paper suggested among others that since the role played by women in peace building are of great importance, they should be availed with good educational opportunities to enhance their social, political, moral and economic contributions in building a peaceful home and teaching of peace education in promoting national security.

Keywords: Women, Education, Peace building.

Introduction

Women education according to Offorma (2009) is the education received by women to make them function in the society, empower them economically and equip them with skills. Peace building as regards women education implies complete protection of individuals from cradle to the grave. Role of women cannot be overlooked and the saying that when you “train a woman, you have trained nations” cannot be overestimated.

The current wave of globalization has greatly improved the lives of women worldwide, particularly the lives of women in the developing world. Nevertheless, women remain disadvantaged in many areas of life including education, employment, health and civil rights. According to the U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank, 57 percent of the 72 million primary school aged children who do not attend school are female. Additionally girls are four percent less likely than boys to complete primary schools (Gender Statistics 2010). While many gains have been made with regards to overall levels of education worldwide and more children than ever are now attending primary school (King, 2013) there is still not worldwide gender parity in education. In every income bracket, there are more female children than male children who are not attending school. Generally, girls in the poorest 20

percent of household have the lowest chance of getting an education (Jensen, 2010). This inequality does not necessarily change in adulthood.

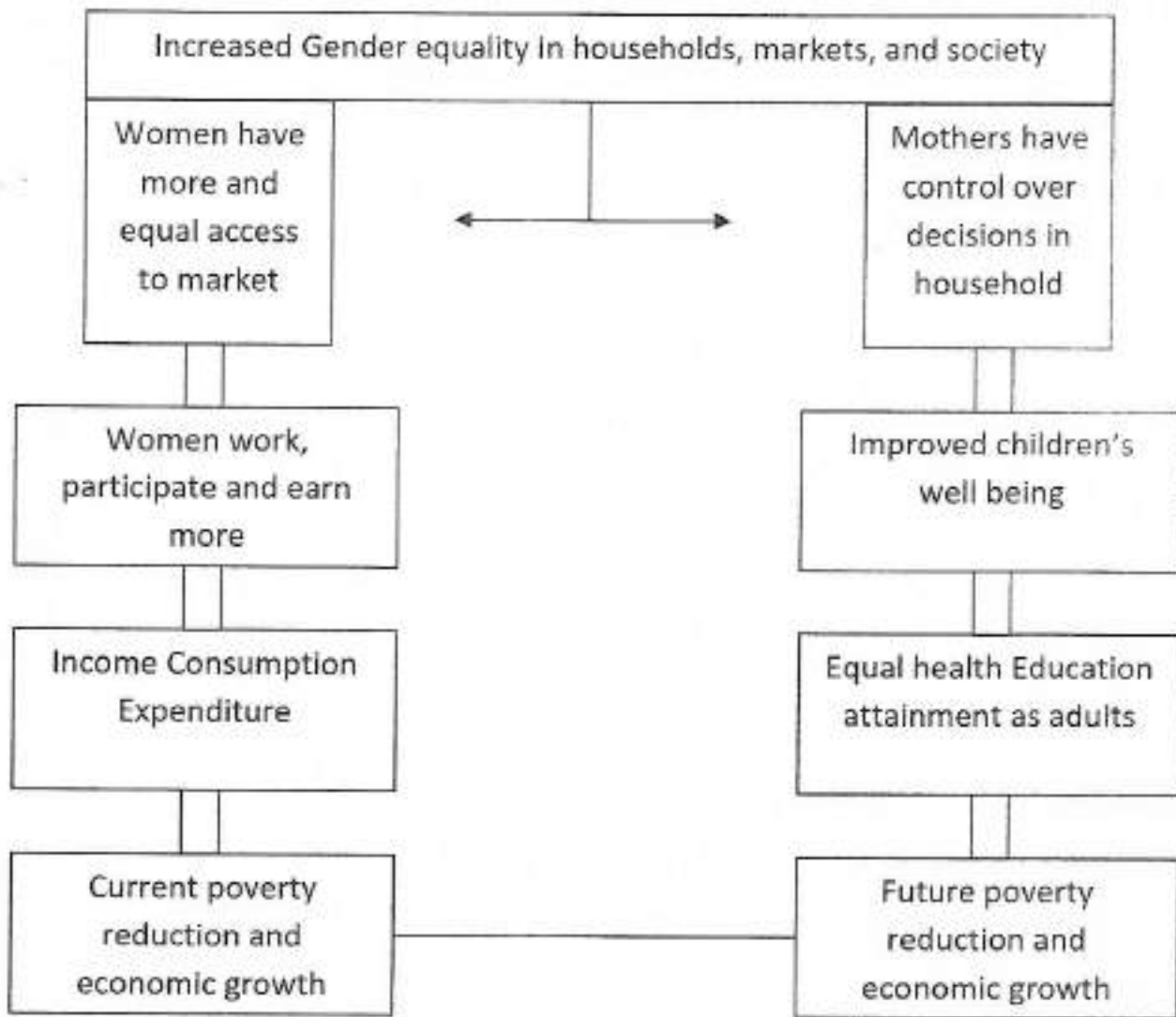
Statistics shows that of the 774 million illiterate adults worldwide, 64 percent are women - a statistic virtually unchanged from the early 1990s (Gender Statistics, 2010). The United Nation Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to promote gender equality and empower women therefore uses education as its target and the measure of gender disparity in education as its education in progress through the efforts of the international community. United nation progress to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education in all levels of education no later than 2015. What a lofty target to realize. This begs the question can this Millennium Development Goal be achieved? What progress have countries made to achieve this goal? And specifically how far has Nigeria as a nation gone to meet this goal? Nigeria is still among the nations facing many challenges in reaching that target by 2015 as well as bringing gender gap in primary and secondary education. It is imperatives to say this education plays a particularly important role as a foundation for girls' development towards adult life. At the time ensuring foundation for gender equality requires adapting equally to the needs and interests of girls and boys. International human right law lays down a three fold set of criteria where by girls should have an equal right to education, equal right in education and their equal right should be protected and promoted through education (Tomaseshi, 2005).

Gender inequality in education is extreme. Girls are less likely to access school, to remain in school or to achieve in education. Despite almost 30 years of the convention on the elimination of all forms of Discriminations Against Women (CEDAW), and 20 years of the convention of the Right of the Child (CRC), today girls make up around 56 percent of the 77 million children not in school, and women make up two thirds of the adults who are illiterate. 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. Girls are most likely to repeat years, to drop out early and to fail key subjects and in most countries girls are less likely to complete the transition to secondary schooling. Inequality in society inevitably has an impact on the provision and content of education. Hence, the need to examine and address the issue, surrounding poor education of women in our society cannot be overemphasized, Nigeria at a glance.

At anytime in any context, women are critical actors in the education process. The role of women in school are often defined in terms of the national affinities with children and their innate love for teaching and nurturing as well as their ability to do it. Nonetheless, man still dominates women in every country in the women and girls. The impact of unequal power relations and discrimination is often felt most severely when material poverty exists as this increases vulnerability. Inequality in the Nigerian

society inevitably has an impact on the provision and context of education, as well as on the ability of girls to enter and remain in school.

In our society there are some limitations for women to progress on education and to be considered outside their family roles, expectation and responsibility. Reinartz (2002) argues that balancing work and family is a major handle for working women. Hence, family responsibilities influence the careers and education choice of women who mostly have disproportionate work in care of children and the home. The tradition, customs, socio cultural values, ethics, motherhood instincts are some of the factors influencing bias in the education sector. Cultural and social beliefs, attitudes and practices present girls from benefiting from educational opportunities to the same extent as boys. The achievement of girls' right to education can address some of societies deeply rooted inequalities, which condemn millions of girls to a life without deeply quality education and, therefore also all too often to a life of missed opportunities. Education is seen in some societies as a fear of change and now with globalization the fear become even greater-fear to lose the cultural identity, fear of moving towards the unknown or unwanted. Furthermore, the gender disparity is exacerbated by the powerful economic and social rationale for investing in the education of Sons rather than daughters, as daughters are perceived to be less valuable once educated, and less likely to abide by the will of the father, brother or husband. The plight of women, in terms of education is compounded by this negative attitude of parents towards female education (Onyinye, 2010)

Fig. 1: Gender empowerment- Growth-Poverty Eradication Cycle.

Source: Morrison et al (2007:2)

Review of Related Literature

Education for women is the bed rock or basic force for socio-economic and political transformation. It is an important tool for the achievement of social justice and is generally regarded as a process of acquiring knowledge that would make people better equipped to contribute meaningfully to the society in which they find themselves. It is a motor that drives human developmental process.

Olubadewa (2013) defines education as a cure for all social ailments: be it poverty, ignorance or unemployment. It can be argued that education is an indispensable master key for unlocking the human mind and national development because it occupies a central position as an agent of social change. On the other hand, women

are indispensable assets in the home and it is the homes that make up the society and the nation, hence one would rightly say that women are indispensable assets in our nation. If educated, women become better instruments as agents of social mobilization. Imhabekhai and Olomukoro (2012) are of the opinion that literacy is a basic instrument for social transformation.

Concept of Education

Efedi in Ebuta (2014) defined education as an instrument for social change, which ushers in social-cultural, political and economic growth. Education is said to be an instrument for social equity, the most potent instrument for emancipation of any group of people and assured gateway to the liberation of the mind and the improvement of social-economic status of people. Going further, Efedi (2014), added that for any fundamental change or reconstruction to be achieved in the intellectual and social sphere of any society, it has to be preceded by an educational reconstruction in women who are the mothers of the nation, mothers and trainers of our children who are the leaders of tomorrow. Quality education therefore is the education that gives the recipient the enabling ability to harness potentials. Abilities and capacity as to perform well whenever duty calls, thus making him/her useful to self and society. Furthermore, Osagie (2008) defined education as an investment in human beings, which turns to capital after they have been transformed. It is a process which transforms citizen into finished products or skilled workers. She added that the individual a finished product is capital necessary for the development of the family system and the society at large. This is based on the fact that education inculcates into the recipients the right value and attitude for survival, endowment and enablement to acquire appropriate skills, abilities and competence. Thus equipping them to live and contribute to the development of the society.

From the above stated concept of education, one will agree with me that, denying or depriving the girl child/women of such valuable assets like education is tantamount to social, economic and political injustice and wickedness to humanity. For this reason it is necessary to appreciate the policy of Education For All (EFA), which is based on the principle of quality to ensure that every child is given the privilege to be educated, a common goal which should benefit every citizen male as well as female as a right. This however, does not only pertain to illiterate citizens to become literate, but also with good emphasizes bridging the gap or wide disparity between boys and girls education. According to United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2008), Education for All by 2015 stated that, out of 129 countries, 51 have achieved or are close to achieving the four most quantifiable EFA goals, 53 are in an intermediate position and 25 are far from achieving EFA as a whole.

Concept of Peace Building

Peace Building through women education in schools focuses on using the activities of daily school community the children (class by class), the teachers, and the parents through the PTA to contribute to peace-building in the community. The school develops a peace plan with all the stakeholders, the aim of which is to assist the community. The peace plans would include such elements as organizing games and sports in which out-of-school children join in with the children enrolled in the school, clearing a market space in the village; having rotating groups of students assist families in need with their chores, work, or children-minding; using some Saturdays to work with or play with out-of-school children; making improvements to the school environment; helping children in younger classes with their home assignments; listening to them practicing reading or teaching them new games. Furthermore, the school as an institution reaches out to other school, given children the opportunity of mixing with a different community. This equally increases the feeling of belongingness and encourages children to communicate with others, accept differences; and value the qualities of other schools' children. The collaborative partnerships that are formed between schools help to promote peace in wider society thereby ensuring national security (Olivia, 2003)

Importance of Women Education to Peace Building:

Education is seen as a powerful agent of socialization in that it plays a tremendous role in preparing an individual to render active and useful service both to the family and society in general. Boliva (2010) states that investing in Women's education carries very high returns and improves livelihood. He further emphasizes that when women are literate, it is the society that gains. In the same vein, Olomukoro (2012) says that education is not just mastering the skills of reading, writing and computing but it also entails the ability to use those skills effectively for communications in all aspect of one's life in social, cultural, economic and political sphere. Therefore, education bestows on women a disposition for a lifelong acquisition of knowledge, value, attitude, competence and skills.

Thus the skillful, justly and magnanimous contributions to social security of some women elites in the likes of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala of the Ministry of Finance who played key role in negotiating Nigeria out of the 18 billion debt relief from the Paris Club of public creditors in October, 2005. This was a big relief because the money which was meant to settle that debt was channeled to other projects, which can fasten the development and better living condition of the people in the country thereby ensuring social security. Diezani Alison Madueke, a one-time Minister of Petroleum Resources, who helped to control the supply of fuel in the country thereby saving Nigerians from sleepless nights in filling stations that, may lead to calamities and sudden mishaps, Dora Akunyili, who valiantly fought fake drugs and saved many Nigerians from untimely death, Stella Odua, who secured many lives by reforming

the aviation sector when she was the minister. These are among the many educated women that have proved that the live of women does not just end in the kitchen.

Policy makers also argue that literacy for women increases job opportunity and access to higher education. It is also often viewed that a working class woman benefits her family. It has also been observed by Otiite and Ogiunwo (2006) that educated women tend to have monogamous marriages, fewer children, accept family planning methods, observe all children vaccinations and give birth to children in the hospitals. This therefore means that women with some formal education seek medical care, are better informed about their children's nutritional requirements and are more likely to adopt improved sanitation practices. As a result, their infants and children have higher survival rate and are healthier and better nourished and this is an aspect of social security. Dr. Robert Limlim, UNICEF'S Deputy Representative summed this up by saying that educating women translates to better health for children and reduction in child morbidity mortality UNICEF (2004).

Ezegbe and Akubue (2012), assert that any society which neglects women in her human resource potentials cannot achieve any meaningful development. Educating women is known to be the basis for sound economic and social development. An educated woman is likely to be gainfully employed, economically helping to keep her family above the waters Hence, education helps women to be self reliant which is one major way of reducing poverty in the society.

If one accepts the fact that education is the life-wire of every society, which begins from cradle to the grave, it therefore stands that mothers play the most vital role in the socialization of children. The personality and social identity of every child is highly influence by the kind of environment he/she dwells in at the formative years of existence. Mothers being the major caregivers in the family spend much more time with their children. In this regard, they mould the infant into adolescent without much stress. In a situation where a mother is an illiterate; she is likely to be insufficiently socialized and as such may end up grooming sociopaths that may constantly pose serious threats to social security of her children. But where the woman is educated, she is likely to breed children that can socialize with others and relate harmoniously with people around them in love and unity resulting in peaceful co-existence which foster social security.

Challenges in Women Education and Peace Building

inspite of the seemingly remarkable achievements recorded by Nigerian educated women, some factors still constrain the women from playing major role in peace building. At present, the forces which combine to hamper women education, family stability and sustainable development in Nigeria could be viewed broadly to include:

choices forced on women; (e) discrimination and harassment at work; (f) political disenfranchisement from elective and political appointment and (g) exposure to cruel mourning rites upon the death of their husband (Onyinye 2000). These cultural barriers and environmental manipulation create inferiority complex in many Nigerian women. Onyinye (2010) further ascertained that through the traditional socialization process of our culture society, women tend to accept negative self fulfilling, prophecy, stereotyping and stigmatization. All these predispositions transmit negatively on the family role and responsibilities, which invariably interplay adversely in the national agenda. women and development rather than women in development becomes an apparatus for gender focus.

Contrary to the current trend, intensive efforts to foster a gender-inclusive culture from the family level through education across the board up to higher education, in order to promote sustainable human development needs to be vigorously pursued. The legislative arm of government must be precise on the principle of gender equality in education by costing viable channels to the legal right of women.

Generally speaking, improving access to and the quality of women education in peace building is the most rewarding investment a country can make investing in female education will accelerate Nigerians economic and social development by enhancing human capital, showing population growth and alleviating poverty. According to Agbakwuru (2002) education equips one with marketable skills thereby lifting the possessor up from the poverty arena. Essentially, through education, the individual learns good health habits, principles and practices which promote healthy living and longevity as well as acquired marketable skills that confer economic power on the educated.

Implications for curriculum Planners

Since the girl child education has become a contemporary issue to nations of the world, the curriculum planners have a role to play in ensuring its enhancement for sustainable development to be achieved. In view at the above, curriculum planners should include in its content, basic skill acquisition in the curriculum at all levels, the absence of which will make economic advancement difficult. The learning materials should equally be relevant to the girl child to encourage participation and performance. There is need to make the content taught as functional as possible especially for the girl child to enable her use the knowledge acquired and contribute to the development of the wider society and consequently the nation. Most importantly, the curriculum should constantly be reviewed to conform to global trends.

Conclusion

This paper took a critical look on the need to educate women and it also viewed women as an important asset or catalyst for realization of peace building in the

nation. This can be done only if women are given access and full support to quality and functional education which will enhance peace building and in turn national development. Therefore, government, International Development Agencies, Civil Society Groups, Non-governmental and Private Organizations should partner together to ensure promotion of women education programmes to achieve peace building to ensure that national development receives priority attention.

Therefore, through Peace Education, small conflicts can be resolved before they occur. If the world community can eliminate the potential conflicts, or runs large-scale conflicts into minor ones, or turns minor conflicts into nothing, the world and each nation state will be safer for humanity. The imperative of Peace Education for the development of culture of peace has stimulated political leaders to incorporate Peace Education into the school curriculum. Nigeria with her myriad of conflicts which created a lot of security challenges prompted her to integrate Peace Education concepts into the lower and upper Basic Education Social Studies curriculum. This paper has examined the concept of Women Education and Peace Education and has drawn its potentials in promoting peace building in Nigeria

Recommendations

Sequel to the above discussion, the following recommendations were made:

- i. The policy makers and school administrators should avail women of good educational opportunities to enhance their social, political, moral & economic contributions in building a peaceful home;
- ii. The various government (national, state and local) and non-government agencies should set up programs to carry out and popularize through the media educational and information programs on promoting equal status of women and men;
- iii. Women on their part should try to break through societal barriers and develop high esteem and self-confidence through exhibiting their God-given potentials, capabilities, initiatives and charisma in whatever they find themselves doing, to conquer the natural challenges of their origin;
- iv. Women Organizations and Movements should seek to protect the interest of women and shoulder the responsibility of seeing that Institutions of society are not deliberately structured to place hindrances and constraints on the part of women. The Ministries of Women Affairs all over the Federation should ensure that the challenges of women folk are brought into focus for government attention and eventually eradicated. They should also mount pressure on the Authorities to create positions of responsibility and advancement for the womenfolk. Literacy programmes

should be incorporated so that women can be well equipped to contribute to improving social security;

- v. There should be positive motivation and reinforcement of female students by teachers. Teachers should ensure the elimination of all negative representation of women and girls as inferior by assigning female students to leadership positions, and use female educators and professionals as role models for career talks and guest speakers in Women programmes. They should encourage female students to participate fully in action based learning. This will boost their self esteem;
- vi. The few educated women should work hard to create awareness on peace building in their homes, work places and organizations through effective communication on the power of "motherhood and womanhood". Educative programmes and women forum should be held in the cities and rural areas to educate the illiterate ones and
- vii. Government should go beyond making laws to enforcing them for the woman right so as to protect women from political, religious and social injustices that work against their being focused in the pursuit and achievement of their potentials and set goals in peace building.

REFERENCES

- Agbakwuru, C. (2002). The role of primary education in the promotion of national integration and cohesion knowledge preview, 1 (2), 15-23
- Boliva, I. (2010). Investing in women's education. A paper delivered on the occasion of the International Literacy Day. *A Quarterly Newsletter of the National Mass Education Commission, Nigeria.*
- Ebuta, E.E. (2014) Repositioning Nigeria higher education for the challenges of the 21st Century; a philosophy discourse, *A Multidisciplinary Journal (NAFAK)* 28 (2) 117-212.
- Efedi, O.E (2014). Women education: a vehicle for effective and efficient role performance in nation development in Nigeria. *Benin Journal of gender studies*, 1(1) 66-75
<http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/154743e.pdf> Retrieved dates 16/09/2015
- Ezegbe, B.N. & Akubue, F. (2012) An appraisal of the status of Nigerian women: Educational implications and national development. *American Journal of Sociological Research*, 2(2): 27-31.

- Gender in Nigerian Report, (2012). Improving the lives of women and girls in Nigeria: issues, policies and actions. British Council, Nigeria, 2012
- Gender Statistics, (2010). Improving the lives of women and girls in Nigeria: Issues, Policies and actions: British Council, Nigeria, 2012
- Imhabekhai & Olomukoro, C.O.(2012), Influence of literacy education programmes on socio-economic and psychological empowerment of women in Edo and Delta state, Nigeria. *An unpublished Ph.D Thesis*. University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Jenson, L. (2010). Millennium development goal report. Accessed online at <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/resources/static/products/progress>, 2019/MDG
- Kings, E. (2013). Intersecting sources of education inequality world bank data blog. Accessed online at <http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/intersecting.sources> of education inequality on September 19, 2013.
- Offorma, G.C. (2009). *Girl child-education in Africa*. Keystone Address Resented at the Conference of the Federation of the University, Women of Africa, held in Lagos-Nigeria, 16th - 19th July
- Olivia Martin (2013). Peace Education in action practices and agents. Lead speaker presentation at 56th Annual DP/NGO conference, Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the promise of the United Nations Headquarters, New York, Sept. 3rd, 2003.
- Olomukoro, C.O.(2012), Influence of literacy education programmes on socio-economic and psychological empowerment of women in Edo and Delta state, Nigeria. *An unpublished Ph.D Thesis*. University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Olubadewa, A. (2013). Contemporary issues in Nigeria education. Accessed on 22/09/2015 on by 7.48pm.
- Onyinye, A. (2010). Women education; problems and implication for family responsibilities. *The Nigeria Journal of guidance and Counselling* g. 9 (1)
- Onyinye, A. O. (2000). Cross ethnic study of stress levels, support systems and adjustment strategies among Nigeria widows: unpublished Ph. D thesis. Department of Educational Guidance and Counselling University of Ilorin, Ilorin.
- Onyinye, A.O. (2010). Women education; problems and implication for family responsibilities. *The Nigeria Journal of guidance and Counselling*. 9(1)
- Osagies R.O. (2008). Investment in girl-child and women education. *Benin Journal of General Studies*. 1(1) 55-65
- Otite & Ogionwo (2006). *An Introduction to Sociological Studies*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, Nigeria PLC.

Tomasershi, K. (2005). Not education for all, only for those who can pay: the world bank model for financing primary education, law, social justice and global development journal (LGD). Accessed online at <http://www.go.worwick.ac.uk/elj/lgd/2005-1/tomasershi> on September 20, 2013.

UNESCO. (2008) "Education for all 2015: will we make it? Global monitor Reporting. New York, UNESCO/SS/1. UNESCO database

UNICEF (2004) *State of the World's children*. Available at <http://www.unicef.org/sowefl4/files/chapter2.pdf>. Retrieved on 29/9/2025.

Wikipedia, (2013) Peace Education en. *Wikipedia.org/wiki/peace_education*.