

CURRICULUM INNOVATION FOR INCREASED WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract.

Women constitute an indispensable force in the quest for National development of any nation especially in the developed nations. However in Nigeria, women are still relegated to the background as they lack the educational, economic and political power necessary to actualize their innate potentials. Curriculum Innovation for women empowerment can be described as the provision of adequate opportunities to women to develop their potentials and contribute to the development of the nation in particular and the world in general. The word innovation carries with it ideas of newness. Curriculum innovation is the process of introducing new content and learning experiences into an educational system. The introduction of population and family life education and HIV/AIDS were novel to the Nigerian education system in the late 1980s and 1990s. Similarly the introduction of security education in the Nine (9)-year basic education curriculum is an innovation for increased women participation in national development. It has been observed that since creation women have been disempowered. Efforts made so far towards women empowerment has yielded little fruits. The paper attempted to re-emphasize and re-awaken the mind of humanity on the undisputable role of women in national development, challenges hindering Nigeria women's effective contribution to national development, different roles of women in national development and various efforts made towards women empowerment to enable them contribute their quota to national development. Furthermore the paper postulates that Government and other stake holders need to take more pro-active actions to ensure gender parity in education through special girls child education, scholarship, effective implementation of policies and programme and removal of those artificial and institutional barriers based on religion, culture or traditional considerations which have incapacitated Nigerian women in participating effectively and freely in National affairs especially at the political and economic levels.

Introduction

Women constitute a very significant and indispensable portion of the population across the globe. A few countries especially the developed ones, have appreciated and empowered to a large extent their women to enable them play their roles and contribute their quota to National development. The progress and development of any nation are the women in the society. Thus the women represent a tool for positive change, depending on how they are treated and the levels of opportunities given to them to actualize their potentials.

Development of any human society could hardly be attainable when women's roles are not factored in, nor acknowledged and appreciated. This is because women form about half the world population (Akubue 2001). She also maintained that any society which neglect such a large number of human resource potential cannot achieve any meaningful development. God did not stop creation until women manifested in the scene. No human society is complete without women folk. This is equally applicable to the world. According to Amucheazi (1991), the African traditional society women is described as follows: "They engage themselves in income generating activities of various types such as processing of palm-oil, garri, soap making, weaving, sewing and pottery. Generally, African women carry significant proportions of the workload in food crop production, animal husbandry, food processing and distribution.

They combine all these with their traditional role of procreation and home management". Implication of the above statement is the fact that women are important resource for development, judging from the contribution of the rural women in the development of their communities which could be rightly imagined that naturally women are embodiments of national development. No wonder the United Nations organization (UNO) on realizing the importance of women in national development, set up in 1946, a commission on status of women.

Development in the context of this work has to do with the transformation of the entire society through total mobilization of the society irrespective of sex. This kind of development is such that opposed to any form of obstacle whether political, economic or sociological in the process of transformation. There is no meaningful development of any nation where indice is gender stereo-typed. This is because for genuine national development to be attained, there is need for both men and women to complement each other and as each has a specific role to play. In Nigeria, the numerical strength of women has been considered to be of great potentials that are necessary for the evolution of a new economy and good governance that accelerate social and political development. According to the Nigerian population census of 1999, the country's population census stands at 140 million, out of which 80.2 of them are women and girls (Gender in Nigeria Report: 2012:45-48). Thus over the years, scholars have emphasized on the importance of empowering women for National development. The Report (British Council, Nigeria) shows that although much has been achieved in the area of primary Education, the gender gap still widens in secondary and Tertiary institutions. For example as at 2008, the enrolment ratio for girls in secondary School is 22 and boys 29. All these statistics point to the fact that a lot is still required in terms of educating the women to participate and contribute their quota to National development.

We may ask ourselves this question: what is responsible for gender disparity in Education and how can curriculum innovation be made effective to achieve gender parity as stipulated in the National Policy of Education? The objective of this paper is to explore the important place of education in empowering women thereby enhancing their participation in National development.

Role of Women in National Development in Nigeria

Chauhan (1979), opined that, to innovate in Education, is to create something new in the school Curriculum. This is something new that is being created could be in respect of the goals and objectives of education, content learning experience, curriculum materials and evaluation. What should be borne in mind is that curriculum innovation as regards women empowerment entails the introduction of novel ideas and practices.

Various roles played by women are as follows.

Socio-Economic Advancement: The steady advancement of women in contributing to the socio-economic development of the nations scheme of affairs has to a large extent impacted on the federal government and the federal Government have responded positively in many ways. For instance, the late Maryan Babangida (first lady of Nigeria 1985-1998) was active in promoting gender related issues and interests during her husband's tenure as Head of State of Nigeria. Also the subsequent creation of National commission for women and the ministerial post for women affairs provided additional avenue for the promotion of women related issues and the enhancement of the role of women to National development by way of statutory body and ministry.

Home Management: According to Awe (1990), the importance of women could be seen from their roles in maintaining peace and stability at home which depends largely on their managerial abilities. She further stressed that women, especially the mothers plan, organize, direct and coordinate all resources at home to the benefit of all members of the family. Effective management of the home promotes national development.

* **Agricultural Sector:** In the agricultural sector, women have made significant contribution to food production and processing. As far back as the early 1980s, the United Nation's report reveals that 60-90 percent of the agricultural labour forces were women and they produce two-third of the food crops. Olawoye (1985) describes Nigerian women as crucial factor of producing. To him, they are largely responsible for the bulk production of crops, agro-based food processing, presentation of crops and distribution of yields from farm centres to urban areas. In spite of these, there is the widespread assumption that the men and not the women make the key farm management decision. Sadly female farmers in the country were among the voiceless, especially with respect to influencing Agricultural policies. Their role in decision making process in agriculture has not been widely or at best, remains minimal.

Politics: In journal of Public Administration and Government by Dr Kayode Asaju (2013:59-64), opined that in the political and decision making spheres, women in Nigeria have also played important and vital roles. Our recent past speaks of prominent women leaders like Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Magaret Ekpo and Hajia Gambo Swaba who championed various causes of women emancipation. The legacies of these women are at the risk of extinction. In addition to the above, Attoe (2010) traced the historical participation of women in politics and decision making from the Pre-colonial period to the post-colonial era in Nigeria. He concluded that despite all that, it is evident that only few Nigerian women have participated and emerged in Nigerian political landscape.

In spite of the pioneering efforts of these women, especially since 1950s, statistics shows that at the April 2007 election, there were total of 1200 women aspirants to 1532 offices, 660 of these aspirants won their primaries out of these 660 candidates, only 93 finally emerged as winners and 6 Deputy Governors, a Senator, 27 House of Representative and 52 at various House of Assembly. Out of 109 Senate members of House of representative, only 7 were women. Also about 4 percent of local Government councillors in Nigeria were women (Eyinade), 2010 & British council of Nigeria, 2012). Based on the above statistics, there is a declining trend in the number of women elected into various political offices between 2007 & 2011 and this is a far cry from aspirations of women. Women participation in politics is a strategic importance, not only for women empowerment but also for other benefits and impact.

Factors influencing women participation in politics according to the Gender in Nigeria Report (2012:57) include their low level of education (especially in the North) to have completed secondary education, lack of capacity in political and interpersonal skills and knowledge; public speaking; organizing and coordinating campaign, advocacy and negotiation, financial constraints, lack of resources for registration fees and establishment of campaign structures e.t.c.

There are several impediments which limited the participation of women to political fronts, according to Eyinade (2010:3-4). These, according to her include cultural mores: social conventions, values and mores which combine to maintain the stereotype of women as kitchen dwellers and gate crashers outside their matrimonial homes; Religion also stands as an accomplishment of cultural mores in reinforcing the barriers that prevent women from participating politically. Furthermore, women's perception of politics as a dirty game, time consuming of political meetings, violence and threats in political activities, funding etc. pose challenges to women.

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They are found in the field of medicine, engineering, military, entrepreneurship, administration, management, banking and finance, police, Judiciary, journalism, etc. Also in the past one decade (2001-date) most states Governors and the federal government have appointed women to positions of greater responsibilities ranging from committee chairman and member, permanent secretaries, special advisers, commissioners, directors, director-generals of important and sensitive parastatals. While this is commendable and tend to change the trend, many have argued that this development has by no means addressed the problem of marginalization of women in the area of employment (Agu, 2007) (Lasicle, 1999). The percentage of women in development is like a drop of water in an ocean with regard to the population of women who should be employed whether in the public or private sectors. According to the National Bureau for (NBS,2010), in 2017 only 32.5 percent of women were employed in non-agriculture private sector. It is not any better even in the public sector which is seen as more progressive in terms of direct public intervention as it attracts gender composition. As at 2001 it was 28.5; in 2002 it increased to 28.7; in 2003, it increased to 30.7 while it dropped in 2004 to 29.5. Win (2012), asserted that successful women need not to spun marital and family commitment in search of socio-political advancement. In Nigeria, considering the population of women a conscious or an unconscious representation of Nigeria women in educational, economic, social and political programmes could lead to a serious set-back and thus the need for women empowerment through education cannot be over estimated.

Specific Innovation for Increased Women Participation in National Development

The chief purpose of curriculum innovation is to address a felt need in the society. Population and family life education addressed population issue, HIV/AIDS education addressed a major pandemic, and security education addressed the global scourge of insecurity, terrorism and violence. Curriculum innovation is usually propelled by dissatisfaction with the existing curriculum's clear inability to deal with a major societal or technological challenge; by public outcry, demand and in some cases by legislative actions. It is usually preceded by dialogue, deliberation and extensive consultations and research.

The degree to which governments of different nations adopt and implement innovation depends on number of factors. Some of these include the degree to which policy makers and stakeholders in education understand the nature and need of the innovation, availability of resource (materials, human, and capital), culture of the area, teachers' readiness, age of the learners, and nature of the subjects offered by the school e.t.c. However, the type of the new curricula chosen by any government or school system depends on goals and objectives of the programme, curriculum structure of different subjects, degree of standardization of content, time frame for its introduction, level of resources to be allocated, time allocation for new curriculum, grade(s)/level(s) where it should be included (UNESCO/ISCOMPE, 1978; UNESCO, 1983).

Based on these factors, the following are the different types or modes of inclusion of innovative curriculum in school programme for increased women participation in national development;

- ❖ Separate Subject Approach
- ❖ Integration and Infusion Approach
- ❖ Sensitization Seminar Approach
- ❖ System-wide Approach
- ❖ Incremental Pattern
- ❖ Sequential Approach

i. Separate Subject Approach: By this mode of inclusion, the innovation says population education, becomes a distinct subject area along with other existing subjects in schools. This approach has different forms from which nations may adopt any:

Elective Subject: At the secondary level, especially at the third or fourth year, the innovation may be offered as an elective subject for a given session. The republic of the Philippines used this approach to implement their population education programme to increase women population.

ii. Core or Required Subject: At the tertiary level especially in teacher training institutions the innovation may be taken as a compulsory course. This is now the practice in College of Education in Nigeria where the NCCE has modified the content of population and Family Life Education (POPFILE) as Family Life Education and Emerging Health Issue (FLEHI). FLEHI is now a compulsory General Studies course taken in the first year in all Colleges of Education in Nigeria

The strength of the separate subject approach lies in the fact that it provides students with concentrated course that would make for systematic and sustained learning that would give them in-depth knowledge about the subject. It also meets the criteria of continuity, sequence and integration. It would also reduce the number of teachers that would be requiring to be trained to teach the subject. This would make training more extensive, intensive, as well as cost-effective

Its major handicap is that most school timetables are already overcrowded and can hardly accommodate new subjects. It may also take a longer time to train an entirely new set of teachers to handle this new multifaceted and interdisciplinary study area. In school systems with high wastage rate, majority of the students can be reached only in the early classes at a stage when most of them lack the maturity, experience and skills needed to comprehend, apply, synthesize, and evaluate much significant content.

Integration and Infusion Approach: Integration and infusion are used here to mean the process of incorporating an innovation into existing courses in such a way that it is absorbed completely by these courses. They involve the enrichment and extension of existing units in such a way that a new course may be borne altogether.

Usually, integration and infusion take the unit approach because the innovation content, concepts, and message become units or subunits. For population education, this involves adding separate units to carrier subjects. Population education may also be integrated or infused as a larger segment or module. These are made up of a number of units and lessons. This is the principal approach that has been adopted in Nigeria to increase women participation in national development.

Sensitization Seminar Approach: In this approach, seminars are organized to sensitize teachers about the innovation and to stimulate their creativity for introducing it appropriately to involve women to participate in national development. However, it is probably unrealistic to assume that teachers will seek those opportunities with uniform interest and efficiency since the priorities they perceive will differ greatly from individual to individual and may be subject to change. This is why this method is usually regarded as less satisfactory method.

Incremental Pattern: In the incremental pattern, the innovation is first introduced in a few selected schools usually referred to as pilot school, and then gradually extended to more schools. After some time, the programme is incorporated into all educational levels in the country

System-Wide Approach: the system-wide approach, on the other hand, entails the simultaneous introduction of an innovation throughout the educational system after the needed preliminary work would have been done. This preliminary work may include securing the legal/policy framework for the programme, personal development and provision of resource materials and sensitization of the entire populace to justify its inclusion in the school curriculum.

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It may also include resource support, feedback mechanisms and channels, user participation in decision making, and adequate organizational arrangements. This preliminary work helps to guarantee the success of the programme because as Fullan and Pomfret (1977) concluded in their review of curriculum implementation, the success of any innovation depends upon;

- ❖ The extent to which teachers are clear about the innovation;
- ❖ The degree to which they are competent to perform it;
- ❖ The degree to which the innovation is appropriate;
- ❖ The extent to which the organizational structure is adequate and the commitment and motivation of the user.

Sequential Approach: The sequential approach focuses attention initially on just one level of the educational system (for example, the primary, secondary, or tertiary level). Over a period of time, the programme is introduced in sequence up and down the academic ladder. In Nigeria the secondary level was the level of focus for population education since the age range of the students is the one which is critical in the innovation programme especially for increased women participation in national development.

With respect to POPFLE most countries adopt a combination of the different strategies. In the Philippines for example, the country's Population Education Programme (PEP) adopted a combination of the first two strategies. In Nigeria, all the approaches were adopted. There were five pilot schools in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State where population education was offered as distinctive subject. University of Lagos, (Department of Curriculum Studies) offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (M.Ed, Ph.D) in Education. Sensitization seminars and training workshops are being organized for secondary school teachers across the country too to increase women participation in national development.

Overview of Women in National Development

In trying to examine the participation of women on development it is necessary to note that the development of any human society is determined by the effort and commitment of its members irrespective of class, age or sex. In the pre-colonial era, women were not only equipped with the skill of child bearing and home management but were equally equipped with political, social, economic skills. Ojeh, (2007), opined that "women helped significantly to shape the mental and attitudinal infrastructure of a pre-colonial past". Women need adequate formal education to enable them face challenges of changing global economy. Educated women are crucial in the development of any nation. Uneducated women are not only a hell on earth, but a real drag on progress. In a statement incorporated in women advocates research and documentation centre (WARDC) 2003:35) stated that without the active participation of women and incorporation of women's perspective in all levels of decision making, the goals of equality development and peace cannot be achieved. The above points to the fact that removal of women in any development programme may lead to no development at all.

Pre-Colonial Era-Status of Women

The type of education received in the traditional society is based on Gender stereotype. A girl-child in the pre-colonial era as in the traditional setting today was expected to learn the skills that would make her, play the role of responsible adult womanhood. This simply means that gender role was pre-determined by the sex of a person. While the male child was being socialized into manhood status, the female child was exposed to socially imposed responsibilities of motherhood and domesticity, to embrace the characteristics of motherhood which are rooted in the domestic function reserved for girl child. Women skill waxed very strong in political, social and economic spheres despite the domestication of women's role in the pre-colonial era.

Some women exhibited virtues in pre-colonial history: women like Queen Amina of Zaria, who led armies to drive out invaders from Zaria, Moremi of Ile-ife whose sacrifices for her people speaks of selfless leadership. Women all over the world and African in particular, during the pre-colonial era apart from domestic role as mother, made immense contributions in areas of farming, trade and distribution as well as the local craft and industry. Also women in pre-colonial period acquire certain political skills that enable them to carry out certain political functions to some extent which helped to sharpen pre-colonial political infrastructures.

In the pre-colonial era, women participated actively in politics e.g. Among the Igbos, the institution of Umuada has definite rituals and political role to play in the village; among the Yorubas, women actively participated in politics e.g. moremi stepped into politics singlehandedly and saved her society. Idia, the king's mother was the first to have her own separate court with the same paraphernalia as the Oba. In Lagos and Abeokuta, Madam Tinubu showed power of the traditional Yoruba women in the political life of her society prior to 1914. In Hausaland, there are records of women who held titles and offices like the Iya, Magajiya and Mardam. They held outstanding positions in the society like their male counterparts because of their titles.

Women in pre-colonial period did not limit themselves to mere household keeping; rather they competed with their male counterparts in economic, social and political spheres.

Colonial Era-Status of Women

Western type of education was introduced for the purpose of preparing boys for available job opportunities within the system. Just like gender-stereotyped form of Education in African traditional society and pre-colonial period, the western type of education was promised along this ideology. Ezeani (1998) stated that the Basic premise of the colonial gender ideology was therefore, the domestication of women. They were not to function in the public domain like the men. He further maintained that the purpose of Education was to enable men acquire skills that help them to serve in public offices. Onwuka (2008) pointed out that when western-type education was initially introduced, it was considered useful only for boys to be qualified for employment as clerks, interpreters, teachers, catechist, evangelist, stewards, cooks etc. for government offices, commercial house and missionaries. Girls were not fit for such employment opportunities.

Worthy of note was that in the process of time, few educated men who were teachers, clerks and catechist who knew the value of western education in human development encourage their wives to go to school. In order to encourage girls enrolment in schools, some missionary schools allowed girls to attend school without paying fees just to prepare them to be good mothers, wives and to be seen in public life. Despite the stereotype role of women in the traditional society, women still compete with their male counterparts in all spheres of life. On the contrary, the western-Education brought sharp dichotomy or contradiction in the women's role which uplifted men in the social ladder and relegated women.

Women were prevented from making their possible contribution to the development of their society during colonial period. The economic and political suppression of women in the colonial era gave rise to Igbo women's protest in Eastern Nigeria in 1929. Anugwom (2009) maintained that, socio-economic improvement of nations can be achieved through the acquisition of education and broad empowerment of women.

Post Colonial Era-Status of women

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) stated that Education is seen as powerful instrument through which national development can be attained. Education in this sense has no gender or sex attachment.

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This type of national development requires corporate participation of members of the society, men and women alike. Kano (1995), asserted the following: for maximum contribution towards national development in technology, both sexes (male and female) should be equally interested in science and arts subject.

The above statement simply shows the relevance of both sexes (male and female) in national development. Nigeria became a signatory to the United Nations 1979 convention known as "Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW)" this was based on the fact that education is one of the powerful instruments of empowering women with the knowledge and skills that would help them to participate actively in the development process. There still existed wide gap between men and sectors despite the effort of various governments to close the gap created by gender discrimination. A lot of cultural and traditional factors have been claimed to be limiting women educationally and economically among other opportunities. Non-Governmental organizations were formed by women to fight policies against women's participation, legal status and child marriage. One of such women (important group) is the National Council for Women Society (NCWS) made up of educated and influential women. Their objective is to render assistance to women groups in the rural area and educate them on how to be self-reliant and thereby play important role in their homes as mothers thereby contributing to nation building.

The NCWS (NGO) sees education as an instrument for the upliftment of women socio-economic status. They have done a lot to enable the present generation escape from the unfortunate experience of their predecessors. The council set up scholarship scheme and skill acquisition centers for indigent girls of school age. It can be said without much contradiction that in the post colonial era, the status of women has fairly improved. Women have tried to overcome discrimination against them through education. Nigerian women could be seen nowadays in a very highly placed positions. Some are medical doctors, pharmacists, architects, university dons of all ranks including professors, bankers, media women and even business tycoons. Nigerian women have indeed ventured into male dominated professions like aviation and armed forces. Access to education has gone a long way in making women realize their talents.

The barbaric practice that dehumanizes women must be resisted through education and skills acquisition. Women need to know their rights, their self-worth and be economically empowered to stand on their feet. This is what Governor Okowa of Delta state is doing because women discrimination must concern all. Ignorance pervades rural communities and women are victims. Maryam Ibrahim Babangida understood this and came up with "Better life for rural women" Dame Edith Okowa similarly understands the problems affecting women and came with 05 initiative meant to help women revive their self-esteem as mothers, housewives and economic contributors. Okowa's programmes are meant to help women find their feet in politics, economy and society. Women are in their need heroines like Mary Slessor who stopped the killing of twins. Governor Okowa of Delta State is giving all equal opportunities to reposition the state because the role of women in national development cannot be compromised.

Conclusion

Education is the bedrock of the development of any nation. Women had been noted for to have potentials that are necessary for development. However, they still derived certain rights due to some cultural, psychological, sociological and traditional factors. As rightly asserted by Babangida (1986:4) "A nation cannot fully develop, if her women remain illiterate, unskilled and unstable to harness resources in their environment and improve on such environment that is Hallmark of development and most women cannot contribute effectively to development with limited or basic education they acquire and other discriminatory practices against them".

The study shows clearly the importance of empowering women through education considering their numerical strength in Nigeria. The convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) has not been fully implemented in Nigeria though there seems to be a slight improvement in some sectors but the change is not significant compared with the number of women population in the country.

Recommendations

In light of the discourse, the following recommendations are made:
Governments at both state and federal should support effective implementation of women programmes such as Population and Family Life Education, HIV/AIDS and Security Education in the country;

Scholarship should be given to female students to encourage them to go to school at the secondary and tertiary levels;

There should be effective implementation of the various policies of the Government geared towards encouraging women education to achieve developmental objectives;

There should be attitudinal change towards those traditional and religious beliefs that are stereotype which impede on women's rights and opportunities and
Gender parity in education must be ensured in all the educational levels in the country.
Consideration should be given to women in deciding admission quota in all the levels of education in Nigeria.

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