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ROLE OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND NATIONAL DEVELOMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of Social Studies Education in emancipation of women in Nigeria. Education is a very important tool in improving the status of women in any society. It is indispensable as it enables women to gain knowledge about the world which helps women upgrade their status, gain positive self-esteem, self-confidence, and necessary strength needed to face challenges in life. Therefore, educated women have a vital role to play in governance, agricultural sector, industrial sector, and the commerce sector for the nation's building. Although Nigeria women are faced daily with some grassroots challenges that have hindered their participation in the nation's building. The challenges faced by women daily which have limited their contributions to the development of Nigerian economy includes; cultural and traditional belief system, religion, illiteracy and low standard of living. The study concluded that, across the country women access to education has widened over the years as against the gender disparity in the enrolment of women into all level of educational institutions in the past.. To strengthen this development, the government should as a matter of urgency create and implement policies capable of promoting gender balance in access to education across the country, by insisting on the enrolment of a higher percentage of girl child in schools from primary schools. The government should also create policies that can remove institutional and artificial barriers based on culture, religion and traditional considerations impeding women from contributing to economic development.

Keywords: Social Studies Education, Women Empowerment and National Development.

INTRODUCTION

Social studies education is an indispensable tool that is capable of serving as a road map for national development. The government of Nigeria however, is expected to develop the programme at all levels of education so as to achieve the desired national development and societal harmony. Considering the present situation in the country, one cannot help but to seek for the way forward towards restoring peace, harmony, national unity and consciousness in the society. Social studies education therefore has been developed with those required traits which can be introduced and taught in schools. This will enable government channel the mind of its demographic in the right way.

There is an adage which says that when you train a woman you have trained a nation but train a man you have trained an individual. Social studies education enhances the achievement of the national educational aims and objectives by equipping learners with self-realization, human relationship, civic responsibility, economic competencies and critical thinking through its various content and methods. According to Osakwe (2013), Social Studies is a course of study that

studied human beings in various capacity of his interaction with his fellow counterpart. Social studies is a program of study which a society uses to instill in learners the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important in relationships with each other, their world and themselves Mezieobi, Ossai, and Young (2013). Social studies is an integrated social science subject which focuses on man and his environment. According to Ololobou (2017), Social Studies is a core subject at basic education curriculum in Nigeria that is designed to instill in students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions the society considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves. Social Studies is an integrated subject that deals with the activities of man and his interaction with one another in his environment and his knowledge of science and technology to solve his immediate environmental problems.

In view of the above, Odedele and Egotanwa (2013) defined Social Studies as a programme of studies, evolution of social opinions and democratic life in order to broaden the understanding of the world and the community in which people live. Social Studies is a subject designed to build a sound and balanced mind, societal values, skills, knowledge and attitude to the learner, it's a foundation for functional social education directed towards the development of intelligent, responsible and self-directing citizen. In view of the above definition , social studies is the study of ,man as a social, political, economic, and spiritual entity who aspires to be a responsible and responsive citizen in all areas of life. Nigeria has encountered and is still encountering numerous social challenges which requires urgent and adequate attention. Social studies curriculum has been equipped with the required rudiments that are capable of promoting national unity and aspiration. This was done through various stages and conferences to enhance the workability of the programme.

According to Mezieobi (2012), the 1967 conference at Queens college, Oxford where the 'needs and priorities of the African countries with regard to curriculum development in Social Studies' was considered, which led to the 1968 Mombassa Conference in Kenya. This further boosted the development of Social Studies in Nigeria. It was at the Mombassa Conference that the African Social Studies Programme (ASSP) was established. Another important point in the evolution of Social Studies in Nigeria was the 1969 National Curriculum Conference held in Lagos. The conference recommended the formulation of a new National policy on Education for the country. The policy stimulated the introduction of some new subjects into the school curricula and Social Studies was one of them. The objectives of Social Studies as stated in the national curriculum for teaching according to NERDC (2007, p.iii) are as follows to:

a. develop the ability to adapt to the changing environment;
b. become responsible and disciplined individual capable and willing to contribute to the development of the society;
c. inculcate thee right type of values in learners;
d. develop the sense of comprehension as citizens towards other people, their diverse culture, history and those fundamental things that make them human;
e. develop the capacity to recognize the many dimensions of being human in different cultural and social contexts;
f. develop the sense of solidarity and sharing as a security in one's own identity.

Indeed, bearing the above objectives in mind, it is envisaged that proper teaching of Social Studies at Basic Education levels will no doubt enhance the attainment of the UBE

programmes in Nigeria. The inclusion of Social Studies at basic education level as a core subject is an indication of its perceived importance as an integrated and holistic approach to learning (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Indeed, as rightly observed by Mezieobi (2018), the teaching of Social Studies at UBE levels in Nigeria will no doubt assist in producing functional citizens who are morally articulated, attitudinally developed, value motivated and skillfully equipped to contribute their potentials to the development of the society.

Globally, education (formal or informal) plays a significant role in women empowerment. Though education skills and knowledge are acquired for the transformation of societies and maximization of women's freedom. The knowledge gained through education endows women with the cognitive skills necessary to contribute socially, politically and economically towards national development. Women are classified as the fundamental building block of the society, they contribute immensely to the development of both the formal (trained wage labour, banking sector, cooperate jobs etc.) and informal sector (subsistence agriculture, child bearing, home-based workers, street vendors) of the economy.

In developed and developing societies, women are referred to as currency with which economic and political alliance are cemented. Furthermore, women are agents of reproduction and procreation, this places them in a position of life blood of the entire humanity. According to the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) 2015, education strengthens the wellbeing of women and creates an opportunity for them to air their voices in household decisions and have better opportunities to participate in the labour market and community as a whole. Women have the capacity of eradicating social vices in the society.

Nigeria is faced with various social vices ranging from bad leadership, crime, corruption, mismanagement and misappropriation of funds. Most of which are problems inherited while some of them are self-inflicted. Those problems ranges from the influence of colonialism, bad leadership, limited resources and imperialism.

Achebe (1983) posited that the problem with Nigeria is squarely, that of leadership. It is a general saying that children are leaders of tomorrow. Therefore if adequate attention is given to the study of social studies at primary and secondary school levels lots of societal challenges that has to do with juvenile delinquency will be averted. This will in no small measure promote national unity and national consciousness. It is no more a hidden fact that the national unity is highly threatened and families are not left out in this struggle for national unity. However, home grown education helps to evolve a shared language, joy, pains, recreation and awakens the act of patriotism among citizens..

Nwaubani (2010) affirmed that social studies is equipped with values, contents and objectives directed at promoting peace education while peace education facilitates good governance and nation building in a polity. In addition, social studies education can help in achieving national development through its peculiar way of equipping learners with the skills and attitudes necessary for responsible democratic (leadership governance) and effective citizenship (Ogoh and Udonti, 2013:93). National council for the Social Studies (2010:27) reveal that social studies "helps learners to analyze and explain governmental mechanism (and quality of good democratic governance) mechanism to meet the needs and aspirations of citizens". Bozimo and Ikwumelu (2012) observed that the problem-solving nature of social studies makes it apt to inculcate governmental policies and good governance in a democratic society.

However, it is worthy to note, that women have greater influence on their children than men. It is the seed they plant in the minds of their children at a tender age that they grow with. They are the catalyst that is actively functional in the first socialization of children in the family. Society is therefore a product of various families and women are capable of bringing desired lasting peace if given the opportunity to do so.

The term "empowerment" is often associated with the promotion of self-worth. It implies freedom from legal, political or social restrictions. It is equally a process which enables the less powerful social groups to gain access and control of resources in a given society. In tandem with this, woman empowerment is inextricably linked to efforts or social schemes aimed at setting the women free from all types of bondage and sociopolitical and economic exploitation. The term "women empowerment" is thus generally used to refer to the process by which women in general and poor women in particular are made to gain access and control of all forms of resources in a nation (Endong and Calvain, 2018). It is a movement which aims at ensuring freedom of self-fulfillment and self-development for women, as well as equal access to domestic and community resources. Empowerment of women goes a long way towards developing the nation because it is human beings that make up the nation and women are capable of making a strong impact on the children of the society. It is the quality of education a woman has, that will determine the quality of impact she is capable of making on children and subsequently to national development.

Ikwumelu (2016) described national development as improvements, reorganization, and reorientation of entire economic, political and social systems. However, national development involves increased modernization, productivity as well as stability of the government of a nation and ability of the citizens to co habit harmoniously within their geographical location. Hence, education is needed to produce knowledge, innovations, and skills required for national development.

Role of Women in National Development

The role of women in national affairs is very important. Across the world today, women have tangible records of their contributions to economic development. Nigeria women like their foreign counterparts have significant roles to play in the communication aspect of the citizens and Federal Republic of Nigeria, evidenced in recorded development by the education ministry from 2008 to 2010. Also, Nigeria's pre-colonial history is replete with the contribution of queen Amina of Zaria who led armies to drive out invaders from Zaria. Our recent past speaks of successful women in the likes of Professor Dora Akunyili, Oby Ezekwesili, just to mention but a few who championed and encouraged women empowerment in Nigeria. Aina, (2016), revealed the importance of women in governance as a vital tool for achieving national development because women play a critical role in peace building and economic stability at home and in their societies, Women especially mothers, plan, organize, direct and coordinate available resources and have good managerial abilities needed to develop all aspects of the economy which can promote national development. But whenever this is lacking, the reverse is always the case in such an economy. Women empowerment has not received needed attention and it is however, having significant impact on the societal progress. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of a woman. Key among them

was the convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993. The following among others were the roles of CEDAW:

1. Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in all areas of life.
2. Ensure women's full development and advancement in order that they can exercise and enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms in the same way as men
3. Allow CEDAW committee to scrutinize their efforts to implement the treaty by reporting to the body at regular intervals.

The CEDAW treaty is a tool that helps women around the world to bring about change in their daily lives. In countries that have ratified the treaty, CEDAW has proved invaluable in opposing the effects of discrimination, which includes violence, poverty, and lack of legal protections, along with the denial of inheritance, property rights and access to credit. This committee has continually worked towards the protection of the rights of women around the world, and has empowered women to a great extent towards contributing to national development as individuals and groups.

Constraints to Women's Participation in National Development

In spite of the seemingly remarkable achievements recorded by women across the globe, Nigerian women remain severely constrained in contributing their quota to national development. These barriers have hindered their efforts towards making decisive contribution in the social-political and economic development of the nation. Women in Nigeria no doubt belong to the disadvantaged group in the society when compared to their male and foreign counterparts for reasons beyond their control. Although there are obviously no formal policies of discrimination against women in Nigeria, but some existing traditional, social- cultural belief system, habits and ideas about women inhibit their progress and active participation in national affairs (okongwu, 2018). Some major factors that serve as constraints to women's participation in national development in Nigeria are outlined below in this section. They includes the following:-

1. **Culture and Tradition**

Some Prevailing cultural and traditional belief system in Nigeria restricts the role of women in participating in economic activities, belief system such that women should be restricted to keeping the home clean, bearing children, cooking food for the entire family members among others have constrained women from contributing to the nation building. The society as at today see these roles as less important as they require less extensive formal education for one to be able to perform them (Nwasike, 2019). In Nigeria, Most cultures and traditions depict male dominance in all situations and as such females are inferior. These unfortunate traditional belief systems have been a major barrier to women's participation in national development in Nigeria.

2. **Religious Belief**

Nigeria is a country with diverse religious belief system with different views as regards the position of women in developmental affairs. Some religions in Nigeria believe strongly that women should only be seen and with their voices and views not heard, while other religions see men as superior to women especially in decision making, few others see them as equal. Okonkwo, (2019) opined that national development will remain achievable if women are not

fully involved in political activities of the nation irrespective of their religious background. This difference in beliefs adversely affects the way women are treated and contribute to disparities in national development.

3. **Illiteracy**

Education is a medium through which individuals maximize opportunities that may arise from development. Through Education (formal or informal) women acquire vital knowledge and skills necessary for socioeconomic development of any society as well as that of the individuals concerned. Unfortunately, the problem of gender disparity in Nigeria's educational development as is the case in other parts of the world, is a strong constraint to women development in Nigeria.

4. **Low Standard of Living**

Most Nigerian women are classified poor with very low standard of living. This situation may be related to their low level of educational attainment, unemployment, general economic hardship that have restricted their contribution to the national development. In business, most women do not often involve themselves in high profile ventures. Instead, engaging in petty trading where the gains and losses are articulated at the end of each day and used primarily to run the affairs of the family. The level of discrimination met out on women especially the widowed ones has resulted to relatively low standard of living among women in the Nigerian nation.

The Role of Social Studies Education in Women Empowerment in Nigeria

The role of social studies education in empowerment of women cannot be over emphasized, as this is a back drop of their level of participation to the economic development of the nation. Generally speaking, the level of women's access to either formal or informal education in Nigeria is relatively low compared to other developed nations low (Okigbo, 2022). This can be attributed to religious, traditional and sociocultural believe and sex stereotype (Nwakor, 2021).

In recent times, the international development community and government of most developing countries have made increasing girls primary education a central policy of interest. According to International Centre for Research on Women (2011) women are more likely to control their destinies and make effective changes to their communities when they have higher levels of education. As such government of developing nations are investing significantly on girls and women post-primary education in a bid to achieve the third millennium development goal (MDG) of gender equality and women empowerment. All these efforts can be traced in Social Studies Education programme which has been equipped with all the requirements for a better society.

Social Studies Education refers to the training of students on interdisciplinary on the interdisciplinary approaches of social sciences in order to enable them to teach social studies at various levels of education. Aliko, (2016) described social studies education as a program that prepares educators to expand and deepen their students' critical knowledge and thinking about history, government, geography and the social sciences.enables women to attain the development of all their potentialities and their maximum activation when necessary. According to right reasons and there by achieving their perfect self-fulfillment. Through social studies education women acquire knowledge, skills, values and habits that enable them to function effectively as members of the society. Education aids women to maximize their mental, physical and emotional capabilities which are useful for national development. Hence, through social studies education

women acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for their personal development and that of the society. Education provides the enabling environment for women's productive and intellectual abilities to be realized. The benefits derived from social studies education includes;

- Enhancement of the quality and standard of living for all citizens including women.
- Enhancement of the personal and interpersonal relationship and development of men and women.
- Improvement in developing the sense of belonging of women in making household decisions.
- Improvement in health care, also women are likely to have better confidence in themselves and their ability to contribute effectively to nation's building and reconstruction.
- Proper upbringing of the children who will become responsible and responsive leaders of tomorrow in the country.

Findings of the Study

The following findings among other were made by the researcher:

1. Women in developing nations still face discrimination despite all efforts made by government and non-government organizations.
2. Most women in African countries are denied access to education because they are seen as another man's property.
3. The level of uneducated women are still higher than the educated ones and this affects the sense of belong of the uneducated women thereby making them feel inferior among their fellow women.

Recommendations

1. There should be more sophisticated public enlightenment about women empowerment.
2. Government should provide support for women who desires to be in school thereby making access to schools relatively affordable to women
3. Uneducated women in the society should also be carried along in decision making both in their homes and the society at large.
4. Government should as a matter of urgency create and implement policies capable of promoting gender equality in access to education across the country, by insisting on the enrolment of a higher percentage of girl child in schools from primary level.
5. The government should create policies that can remove institutional and artificial barriers based on culture, religion and traditional considerations which have served as a constraint to Nigerian women's participation in national affairs particularly in economic decision making and politics.

Conclusion

The 21st century have witnessed significant contribution of women to national development. However, a number of socio-cultural barriers still exist in Nigeria that has seriously impeded the participation of women in national development. Education remains a vital tool to break this barrier and empower women with the needed knowledge and skills to contribute their quota towards nation building. In Nigeria the emancipation of women through

education in attaining economic development should be of top most priority to policy makers and other stakeholders. This requires the immediate attention and commitment of every member of the society. The ministry of women affairs should establish more women forums in cities and rural areas, these forums should be effectively utilized as avenues to educate women on skills, knowledge and values necessary to improve their economic, political and social lifestyle need for their effective contribution to national development.

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