

WOMEN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: A PRECURSOR TO PARTICIPATING IN POLICY FORMULATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The interplay of financial burden, pursuance of western education and ability to participate actively by women in policy formulation has been a major issue in Nigeria. In contemporary times, the role of women had been compounded by the need to seek paid employment to supplement income into the family. This to a great extent is affecting her ability to attain high level education and consequently the position she can aspire for. This paper examines the compounded financial obligations of women, the limits placed by this increasing financial obligation on her educational attainment and consequently the inability to aspire for higher policy formulation position in office, business and most importantly higher institution. The paper makes use of both primary and secondary sources in its methodology. The ratio of male to female lecturers as well as male Ph.D holders to female Ph.D lecturers in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education were examined as a corollary in order to arrive at a reasonable conclusion on the challenges of their female counterparts. Textbooks, journal articles and newspapers reports were part of the secondary sources. The paper concludes that women were mostly disadvantaged (due to the cultural and financial burden) from attaining the peak of their career especially in higher institutions. Hence, the need for husbands to assist their wives in carrying out domestic chores and that special scholarships to be granted to women in pursuance of higher education amongst others.

Introduction

Policy formulation is an integral part of any organisation and society. It is the center point of any developmental effort. It stands as a pedestal on which development is hinged. Policy formulation therefore, has to do with what policies are being put in place, the formulators as well as the resources that will be deployed and the implementation.

The pivotal role played by policy formulators cannot be over-emphasised. Formulators play a great role in influencing what policy statements that would be made. Hence, sometimes policies reflects the interest of the formulators that is, the bias of policy formulators may not be totally divorced from the policies so formulated. It must be noted however that the quality of the formulators will ultimately determine to a

large extent (all other things being equal) the level of development that will be witnessed in the affected organization or society.

The quality of the intellectual capabilities is accentuated by the level of educational attainment. The level of educational attainment tends to impinge on the experience, exposure, knowledge, reasoning, perception of things, level of thoughts and ability to engage in highly cerebral thinking and discourse. These all put together are capable of affecting the productivity of the possessor. It is on this note that there has been increasing clamour by women to be part of the stakeholders in policy formulation. They want to use the media available to project their own interest with the understanding that the policies so formulated determine the course of any

system. However, it is unfortunate that the overall pattern of gender relations seems to favour men in the distribution of resources, opportunities and power, and the determination of values that prevail which is accentuated by the advantaged position given to men (Schalkwyk, 2000).

Women hitherto to a great extent have not been able to perform at the level of policy making which is unlike their men folk who are at an advantaged position in the formulation of educational, business and political policies etc. This could largely be due to the level of education, women are able to attain. Most women because of a number of factors, have not been able to attain high educational status that would afford them the opportunity of competing at an advantageous level or favourable position with their male counterparts in getting to the managerial posts where decisions are taken and policies formulated. This is a perennial problem that the womenfolk have been grappling with over time. Though it could be said that there had been improvement over time but these are very negligible (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Women in traditional African setting implicitly played a pivotal role in the process of income generation into the family by following their husbands to farm, serving as harvesters and marketers of farm produce. Some weave, engage in tie and dye amongst others. These, are in addition to the performance of their cultural roles. It should be noted that during this period women were not paid wages directly for these services rendered. (African Women Culture, 2011)

In the contemporary times in Nigeria, as well as other parts of the world, educational attainment, exposure, globalization the inability of men to shoulder the financial obligations had increased the need for the augmentation of

family income making women who were hitherto confined to taking care of the home front, children, husband, the extended family and simultaneously serve as free labourers on their husband's farms have had to take a paid employment. Presently, a sizeable number of women are involved in activities and jobs which were hitherto traditionally, culturally and religiously ascribed to men folk and they also carry the responsibilities which were men's exclusive preserve.

Educating these women therefore is important to the extent that, in the contemporary system, educational attainment is a major determinant of the extent to which the recipient can achieve. The higher the qualification, the higher the level of managerial post that can be attained. It has been increasingly difficult for women to attain high level of education which can afford them the opportunity and exposure to attain these high posts and thereby be part of decision makers, making the desired developmental impacts.

In spite of all efforts by international organizations especially the United Nations, at achieving gender equality between men and women has been increasingly difficult for women to operate on the same pedestal with their male counterparts. The level of education they acquired cannot compete favourably with that of the men. The best their certificates afford them is to serve as middle level officers while their male counterparts are able to further their education to higher levels and are able to aspire to managerial levels or senior posts in bureaucracy and business world. ("Obstacles to female leadership", 2015).

The United Nations working through the defunct or rested Millennium Development Goals and the newly

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introduced/adopted sustainable developments goals mainstreamed women education in their Goal 5 respectively which are to attain gender equality between men and women. (“Sustainable Development Goals”, 2016; Robb, 2016). Attainment of this very laudable goal will in no small measure afford women folk the opportunity of moving from the low and middle level officer cadre to high level cadre and thereby become major players in developmental efforts. If women can aspire and achieve higher qualifications and certificates, it means that they will also be well represented at topmost posts thereby increasing their financial power and more importantly, take part in governance and high level decision making for development.

The questions that therefore, come to mind are why are women not able to attain high educational status inspite of earning income from paid employment? Why are few women in managerial and policy formulation positions? And what are the solutions? This paper is poised towards giving answers to these questions.

Conceptual Clarifications

The following concepts are defined as used in this research work.

Policy Formulation

Policy formulation like other concepts has enjoyed a number of definitions. It was defined as consisting of policy makers discussing and suggesting approaches to correcting problems that have been raised as part of the agenda, which sometimes demand the necessity to choose out of different options available (“Policy formulation”, 2017). In his own opinion, Wayne (2014) saw policy formulation as gaining support for a policy through the cumbersome legislative process. Ultimately

to him, policy formulation is the development of effective and acceptable courses of action for addressing what has been placed on policy agenda. As posited by The Nation.com (2017), policy formulation is an idea and solution that addresses the problem and does so in a way that is socially acceptable and politically palatable.

In essence, policy formulation therefore, consists of or can be summed-up to be the human and material resources deployed into charting a course or direction towards solving a problem or meeting a stated objective which is to achieve improvement, development, growth amongst others.

Educational Attainment

Education is an important factor and a major determinant of human achievements and attainment in life. Education is to serve the purpose of inculcating in the young mastery of their personality in relation to others and the environment in order to take a place of positive contributor to the society (Smith 2015). By implication, the usefulness of education is to the extent that the recipient is able to translate the knowledge and other benefits to develop, improve himself/herself and to serve the society.

Educational attainment has been defined as the highest level of education which a person attained or obtained. It also means certificates or the highest level of qualifications. It is a predictor of well-being as it levels determines the economic success of its possessor. The range of jobs, wages and income are determined by the level of educational attainment (Caspi, Wright, Moffit, & Silva, 1998; “Educational Attainment”, 2016; Educational Attainment and Child Trends”2016)

Development

To develop is to bring out the capabilities or possibilities of, or to bring to a more advanced level for effective state. Development is making something better than it was before through improvement. This improvement could be in the lives of a people, place or thing. It is a phenomenon that is highly desired by all people of the world (“Sustainable Development Goals”, 2016; “What is Development?”, 2016). It is a growth and improvement in the standard of living of people, the economy as well as other institutions in the society (Oyinloye, Igwesi & Benwari, 2011). The concept has also been seen to be bringing about, orchestrating and causing a social change to the extent that it allows people to achieve their human potential, a positive change which is a process rather than an outcome (“What is Development?”, 2016).

Development therefore is not a static thing and is seen as relating to a way to improve, make better and bring out the capabilities, abilities, possibilities in human being (women) to the extent that it allows them to achieve their potentials.

Gender Issues

Gender issues have been a very burning one with a number of scholars lending their voices to the discourse around this concept. Gender has been viewed as a socially constructed perspectives of women and men, this is as against the biological concept of both that is, sex. Gender is given meaning to by the concept of functions, tasks and roles ascribed to women and one as peculiar to each society (“What is the Gender?”, 2017). Gender is viewed as culturally and socially constructed distinguishing factors between men and women which differs from place to place and time to time as against sex which

denotes biologically determined static difference between them. (“What is Gender?” 2017).

The gender discourse is not basically on women but related to the relationship between the female and the male to the extent that are does not dominate the other and that equal opportunities are opened to all. These lay credence to article 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which affirm that all human beings are born equal and are entitled to all the rights and freedoms as set forth in the declaration regardless of the race, colour, sex, language, religion etc. and therefore, should be treated equally (Okere, 2017). It was also opined to be related to the changes that are often experienced in roles and relations as a result of ever fluidity of social, economic and technical trends. (“What is the Gender?”, 2017).

The World Health Organisation (2002) defined gender as the socially constructed roles, behaviour, activities and attributes that are ascribed by each society as fitting for men and women (“Gender issues in Education” 2017). These constructed views and perceptions impinge on, to a large extent what, each on the gender divide access material resources, such as land, credit and training. It also have grave implications for day-to-day living including division of labour. The responsibilities of family members both in and out of the home and more importantly education and opportunities for professional advancement as well as a voice in policy making (n-r (“Gender issues in Education”, 2017).

From the foregoing amongst others the male and female folks are expected to have the same opportunity to be educated and trained in order to occupy posts or offices for policy making and formation. However, in Nigeria there is still a

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noticeable gender gap in education, economic empowerment, political participation and ascension to offices that are concerned with policy making and formulations (n-r (“Nigeria Social Institutions”, 2017)

Hindrances to High Level Educational Attainment by Women

Human beings world over, including women, by nature abhor being static and therefore, are always in quest of efforts and actions that would bring about their development i.e. improvement and positive change in all spheres of human life. Education presents itself as a veritable tool towards achieving this, for the women both the informal education (the one learnt at home) and the formal education (within the four walls of the school) are advantageous to her. The importance of her educational attainment cannot be overemphasised.

Researchers have alluded to the fact that there is a very strong link between women's education and international development in all spheres including social and economic. It was observed that investment in the education of girls may well be the highest – return investment available in the developing world (Ibekwe, Udosen & Okoro, 2014; “Social economic impact”, 2016)

Women education is a formidable tool for development to the extent that it has the tendency of decreasing fertility rate, lowering infant and maternal mortality rate, reducing domestic violence, more involvement in policy formulation, increase in gender equality and Gross Domestic Products (GDP). It also serves cognitive benefits by increasing the quality of life for women because educated women are more able to make good decisions relating to themselves and increase their political

participation (King & Hill, 1998; Kabeer, 2005; Levine et al, 2008; Nussbaum, 2011).

The United Nations has always mainstreamed women issues into its efforts directed towards achieving development of the global life. Particular reference is hereby made to the convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Subsequently, the Beijing Conference was held in 1995 and Beijing +10 in 2005. By the Millennium Development Goals was adapted with its goal number 5 centered on gender equality with women education as a major focus. The inability of many countries to achieve the MDGs by 2015 target led to the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals in 2014.

The SDGs which embraces the need for all round development recognises the importance of everyone men, women and children to its achievement and therefore, included gender equality (Goal 5 – coincidentally the same with MDGs Goal 5) as one of its seventeen (17) major goals (“Sustainable Development Goals”, 2016). Being signatories to the charter of the United Nations, women access to education has been an important women's right issues in many countries of the world but, there are a number of hindrances to women's achievement of this, not just education but most especially high level educational attainment which has the possibility of making her well placed in the male dominated bureaucratic, business and policy formulation set up.

Some of the already identified factors responsible for the female-child ability to access the required education in Nigeria include the following; early marriage, culture and religion, poverty, over bloated/large families, priority given to

boy's education, lack of parental expectations for girls, Teenage pregnancies, girls low self-esteem and female gender role/responsibilities (Ibekwe, Udosen & Okoro, 2014).

Women due to urbanization, globalization, economic change and exposure to western education and most especially the inability of men (husbands) to meet or shoulder exclusively the families financial needs have entered into the labour market by taking up paid employments which inevitably has caused some changes in cultural roles thereby compounding women's roles. They are employed as office clerks, messengers, executive officers, middle level officers etc. Although in the business world women are found to be dominant in local markets in Africa and Nigeria in particular but with a very negligible number found in western styled economic institutions where policies that will ultimately impinge on them are taken and executed. In spite of the fact that women have stepped out of their prescribed cultural role in Nigeria cultural and traditional

constraints still exist threatening the opportunities opened to them. (Nwoko, 2004; Mickenzie, 2011; Hamilton, 2011 and African Women's role" 2011).

Cases in point are that of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo where in its thirty years of establishment that is, 1980 it was not until 2013 when a female was appointed on the management team. Also the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo that was established in 1977 did not have any female on its management until 2012 while Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otoo-Ijanikin Lagos in its forty-nine (49) years just has a female member on its management in 2016. (EACOED Public Relations Unit, 2016).

The statistical table below states the number of male/female teachers and male Ph.D. holders/female Ph.D. holders across the six (6) schools of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education.

NUMBER OF MALE/FEMALE LECTURERS AND PH.D HOLDERS IN EACOED, OYO

S/N	NAME OF SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF MALE LECTURERS	NUMBER OF MALE Ph.D HOLDERS	NUMBER OF FEMALE LECTURERS	NUMBER OF FEMALE Ph.D HOLDERS
1.	Arts and Social Sciences	71	11	14	03
2.	Early Childhood Education	15	02	08	-
3.	Education	77	19	31	14
4.	Languages	31	-	17	-
5.	Science	54	10	19	06
6.	Vocational and Technical Education	52	05	09	03
	Total	300	47	98	26

(Source: Deans Offices Schools in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo).

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From the Table 1, it shows that while the total number of male lecturers in Emmanuel Alayande is 300 that of the female is 98 with the ratio 3.1. The male Ph.D. holders across all schools are 47 while female Ph.D. holders are 26 with a ratio 2>1. By implication for any three male lecturers we have only one female lecturer. This is bearing in mind that the minimum qualification for being a lecturer is a First Degree which means that males that are attaining First Degrees are more than the female. The column of male Ph.D. holders as against female Ph.D. holders reflect almost the same thing with a 2:1 ratio. This implies that if the need to appoint a Ph.D. holder arises, the male lecturers have a higher chance/opportunity of being appointed into the management positions where the policies are made more than the women Ph.D. holders. The analysis above makes an allusion to the fact that men access and thereby attain higher educational level or qualifications which qualifies them for occupying higher managerial posits than women. Other factors that have been identified as causal agents of this are:

Time Factor: Women are found to juggle a lot of things together, in addition to taking care of their home by cooking, performing house chores, caring for their husbands, children and extended family. They go to work to supplement the income of the husband. They therefore, have little or no time to further their education, it becomes increasingly difficult for them most especially after marriage to pursue educational advancement. Marriage has succeeded in scuttling the educational ambition of many women because of their inability to afford the time to pursue such.

Lack of Role Model: Women have very few role models, in that the number of women

who are occupying high positions of authority in the bureaucratic, managerial, institutional and business world are infinitesimal. There are negligible number of women to identify with and look up to in terms of achievements, statuses etc. in comparison to men, there are not many women who have attained high position through educational qualifications and attainments.

Finance: In spite of the fact that most women are involved in commercial or business activities and ventures as well as paid employment they are unable to translate their earnings and income into pursuance of higher education, they would rather spend the money in paying their children's education and other family financial obligations. Many women have sacrificed for their husbands and children's education believing that the success of these ones is their own success as well. Husbands and children's education are given preference and priorities over their own making the opportunity of attaining higher status is jeopardized.

Conclusion

Although, there have been very tremendous improvement in the number of women that are exposed to formal or western education, there has not been much improvement or increase in their number occupying high level positions in offices and business world where major decisions are taken. This is largely due to the fact that the level of education they pursue and attain do not afford them the opportunity of such.

Few women pursue higher degrees, in fact, in most cases the level of education they attain is to keep their jobs, most times as demanded by their employers because of fear of loosing their jobs and consequently

the income accruing to them through these jobs rather than being borne out of ambition and vision.

In view of these, women are therefore not able through their educational attainment make the desired impact on the development of Nigeria, attaining middle level status that limit them indirectly to their prescribed cultural roles of being decision takers rather than makers and implementers rather than formulators. The changes and improvement that leads to development demands high level abilities, capabilities, intellectual discuss which can only be achieved through high level educational attainment. The level of education determines the exposure and consequently the level of operation.

Recommendations

- Husband should encourage their wives to pursue higher degrees through sharing in the performance of domestic chores.
- Scholarship opportunities should be created exclusively for women.
- Women who are achievers should be celebrated in order to encourage more women to pursue such.
- Affirmative action (that is, 35percent) should be brought to bear in the appointment of women on managerial and management cadres.
- Women in position of authority should ensure that they are not bossy and arrogant at home.

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