**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

**Abstract**

*The role of women in national development of any nation cannot be over emphasized. Thus, this is an*

*attempt to re-emphasize and re-awaken the mind of humanity on the undisputable importance of*

*women education as a vehicle for sustainable national development in Nigeria. The paper x-rays the*

*concept of national development; empowerment of Nigerian women which when attained would*

*enhance women in the world of excellence, and productivity toward enhanced national development.*

*It also highlights the need for women education, the roles as well as some constraints militating*

*against the laudable objectives of women education for national development. The paper thus*

*suggests that since the roles played by women in national development are of great importance, they*

*should be availed with good educational opportunities to enhance their social, political, and*

*economic participation towards enhanced national development.*

**Keywords:** Education, Women Education, Implications, National Development, Nigeria

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**I. Introduction**

All over the world, education is recognized as the cornerstone for sustainable national development (Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012). In the last two decades, according to Olaleye (2008), debates on the status of women and the need to integrate them into development process of any nation have ranged on at national and

international workshops, seminars, and fora among

others. He further asserted that the problems of women

opportunities for education looms larger at the turn of

twenty-first century in Africa and that women

represents two-thirds of the world illiterate adults while

girls account for a similar proportion of the world’s outof-

school population. However, for women to be

integrated into development process, they need quality

education, in order to become co-partners in national

development.

UNESCO (2002) states that women form a high

percentage of the population, and as such they need

quality literacy education to be able to contribute their

quota to the development of the nation. There is now

the realization that sustainable human development

cannot be effective if half of the human race (the

womenfolk) remain ignorant, marginalized and

discriminated against. The provision of quality literacy

to them will greatly improve lives and livelihood and

will no doubt have a great and sustainable social and

economic impact on the womenfolk, and the nation in

general. This was based on the belief that the full

integration of women in all aspects of political,

economic and social life, at the international, regional

and national levels, is essential if the obstacles to the

achievement of the goals and objectives for women are

to be overcome (Okojie, 2011).

In Nigeria today, the women folk have come a

long way in businesses, politics, education, sports and

other professions. They have made an indelible mark in

their efforts to conquer the limitations of the past which

have sought to place them permanently in the kitchen

and bedroom. However, it is not all through a bed of

roses for women and their empowerment. Majority of

Nigerian women have not been fully mobilized and

empowered to contribute to national development. If it

had been so, we would not still be talking about good

health for women, educational, economic, social,

cultural and political empowerment of women.

Onwubiko (2012) asserts that they have been

dehumanized and traumatized in so many ways, as out

of over 1.3 billion people who live in abject poverty

around the globe, about seventy percent are women. For

these women, poverty does not just mean scarcity and

want, it implies rights denied, opportunities curtailed

and voices silenced. According to Unagha (2006),

poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and

freedom, and all these are majorly encountered and

faced by women.

The importance of literacy and women

empowerment in promoting gender equality and the

advancement of women was further stressed by the

Millennium Development Goals (2000), the Education

for All (EFA) and Dakar goals (2000). Olomukoro

(2012) opines that the National Policy on Women was

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approved and adopted in Nigeria in the year 2000, of

which the goal of the policy is the full integration of

women into the social and political status as a means of

developing the nation’s human resources for national

economic development. Its objectives included the

promotion of gender mainstreaming into all policies and

programmes. Access to women educational

development programmes, in the words of Kagiticibais,

Goksen and Gulgoz (2005), is considered one of the

main factors for women empowerment and national

development. However, Ifedili and Ifedili (2012),

assert that Nigerian women are stalled by culture, which

made them vulnerable to effectively join the workforce

and contribute to economic and thus, national

development.

**II. Concept of National Development**

The concept of development has been viewed

from different angles; social, economic, political and

cultural. From whatever angle it is however viewed, it

depicts positive change and development in socioeconomic

and political conditions or situations of the

society. Development, according to Akintayo and

Oghenekohwo (2004), is a process of economic, social,

political and cultural change engineered in a given

society by the efforts of all stakeholders both internal

and external. Osokoya (2008) sees national

development as the development of a nation’s human

and material resources, and education is perhaps the

only means to prepare individuals for participation in

national development. Fadeyi (1995), in Oyitso and

Olomukoro(2012),views development in terms of

human potentials and capabilities in the context of

relations with other social groups. He further

emphasized that development means greater

understanding of social, economic and political process,

enhanced competence to analyse and solve problems of

day-to-day living, expansion of manual skills, greater

control over economic resources, restoration of human

dignity, self respect and equality.

The 2001 Human Development Reports (HDR),

in Okojie (2011), states that the most basic capabilities

for human development are to lead long healthy lives,

to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources

needed for a decent standard of living, and to be able to

participate in the life of the community. Thus, from the

HDR dimensions, gender equality relates to differences

between women and men in education and health,

labour participation, participation in political decisionmaking,

and access to and power over economic

resources. Thus, national development is seen as a

multi-dimensional process involving the transformation

and improvement of the economic, social and political

situations.