

WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper examined some women who were advocates of women education. These were women who had acted bravely and confidently in Nigeria and overseas countries on the education of women. The paper also examined the importance of education towards career development. That with education, women will excel in their chosen career; that education is not only a social service but transformative act that is fundamental to social and personal development. The paper also examined the issue of life skills and potentials inherent in women that need to be awakened to make use of their opportunities to improve their chosen careers. The paper examined life skills that could aid women to build their careers successfully such as self-esteem, critical thinking, personal decision-making skills, and problem-solving skills among others and obstacles to women education were examined. The phrase career development was defined to mean the total encompassment of an individual's work-related experiences leading to the occupational functions they may need to perform. The paper concluded that women's education and career development are intricately linked and so every woman must be given equal access to education and it was recommended that girl-child education as well as women's education should be prioritized to lead women to the zenith of their career and women should be willing to attend seminars, conferences, training and re-training sessions in order to network and be mentored by others who are more experienced in various professions.

Key words: Women Education, Career, Career Development, Mentoring, Networking.

Introduction

A society that will thrive must not put women aside in the scheme of things. They must be adequately prepared, given access to education and put them in proper places in the society. A woman that is not educated is likely to be a liability to the man at home and even the society hence every woman must be educated. Women are the first teachers, nurses and counsellors in homes. When women fail to perform their functions very well at home, the society becomes dysfunctional.

Traditionally in the Nigerian society, education is not for women as men are preferred to women. Women traditionally are expected to be full house wives staying in the kitchen all day long. But today things have changed as every family with female children want education for them. Today many women are found in

top positions in the three tiers of government and in businesses not allowing the glass ceiling and glass wall syndromes to hinder them from acquiring not only initial education but further education. Women's career development and education are thus intricately linked and are crucial for both individual and societal progress.

Women are prominent figures in the world of education contributing as teachers, leaders, researchers, advocates and policy makers. Many educated women now advocate for the education of girls' children as these little ones today will become older women tomorrow. Examples abound worldwide. Some of these great and women of confidence advocates are discussed below:

Malala Yousafzai, a brave Pakistani is a strong advocate for young

women's education; facing many obstacles would not stop her from advocating for women's education.

Michelle Obama, the former First Lady along with her husband, former President Barrack Obama launched the "Let Girls Learn Organization" in March 2015. The organization was meant to promote girls' education bearing in mind that young girls would become adult women in the future. Mrs Obama in her advocacy for Women education visited Africa and raised \$27 million to fund young women's education in Liberia.

Graca Machel fought for young women's education and childhood marriage. Her fight was based on the fact that women and girls pay the highest prices from war in Nigeria. Her efforts led to the "Graca Machal Trust"

Others are **Ellen Johnson Sir Leaf**, the first female president in Africa, Liberia who did a lot in advocating for women's education. She was a supporter of general human right to education. She used her power to expand the quality of education in pre-school and primary education by joining the "Global partnership for Education in 2007. (Majewski, 2025).

Ximama (2024) expressed that in many parts of the world, women remain underrepresented and under supported in teaching and leadership roles. All women should have access to educational opportunities without any systemic obstacles, expressed Ximama. She opined that going to school for girls who will transform to adults is more than just an opportunity to learn as education can lead to financial security, staying healthy and safe, acquiring the skills, knowledge and confidence to overcome the cycle of poverty ravaging our women today. (UNICEF, 2024)

Many Nigerian women whose name are not often heard are not left out of advocacy for women's and girl child education. Such women include;

Ladi Alexandra Shehu who advocated for women' education, political participation and social empowerment in Northern Nigeria, **Kofoworola Ademola**; a prominent educator, author and activist who worked relentlessly to establish schools and promoted educational opportunities for girls. She was able to do this because she had good education, she was the first black woman to earn a degree from Oxford University. This simply indicates that what you do not have, you cannot give to others. (Plural Policy.com); **Funmilayo Ransome Kuti** was a Nigerian educator, political campaigner and women's rights activist. She was a prominent figure in the fight for women's right. (Your Commonwealth, 2024).

Olaoluwa Abayomi She is a lawyer and feminist who founded the "Girls' Pride Circle Initiative", advocating for girls' right to education, equal opportunities and safe communities. (Ayo Yusuff, 2024). And others like Karimot Odebode, whose focus is on education and gender equality because to her, the biggest challenge in promoting gender equality is the intentional ignorance by men and institutional actors to silence girls and women. Rose Adewuyi is another woman who is committed to advancing gender equality and providing equal opportunities for women in all spheres of life. She emphasizes amplifying the voices of young women, empowering them to overcome societal barriers and stereotypes

The overall message from these great women is that women should be educated to have their voices heard and not only their faces seen and they should be empowered with education to make their career development a reality and not mirage. Realizing that education is the heart of sustainability, education for women and all must be prioritized. When thinking about education, it is not only about classroom, it is much about creating awareness and sensitization. The process of women bringing about change and developing

career path starts with education. When women are educated, they can drive positive change not only for themselves but for the nation at large. (Gueye, 2025).

Why Women's Education?

Education is important for women to excel in their chosen career- when mention is made of career, it does not only mean white collar jobs but all fields of endeavors. It may be big businesses, petty trading, frying bean cakes and food vending. Education is key in every area of human life. There will always be a difference between activities performed by educated women and non-educated ones. Illiterates and semi- illiterate women may not have the opportunities for community dialogues and engage in leadership positions due to educational limitations and socio-cultural norms (Salihu & Adepoju, 2022). Education is thus, a key factor in women empowerment and career success. Higher levels of education are linked to increased earning potential, social mobility and access to leadership positions (Bonesso& Cartella, 2024). Education is a powerful catalyst for individual empowerment and societal transformation. Educational attainment plays a critical role in shaping individual's awareness, attitudes and capacity to contribute meaningfully to development initiatives (Bello & Ibrahim, 2023). When an insight is gained into how education influences participation: this can provide valuable insights for policy and practice and for career development. Education initiatives encompass a range of activities from decision making to financial support.

It is usually discovered that individuals with higher levels of education often possess the skills and confidence necessary to engage in planning, organizing and implementing in their chosen career. Those without education or limited education may be marginalized or restricted to non-decision making roles; thereby

reducing their impact in the world of works. Educational attainments remain a critical barrier to inclusive participation in all spheres of life. Factors such as poverty, gender disparity and socio- cultural practices have historically limited access to education particularly for women and the marginalized groups. (Yusuf and Danjuma, 2022). When women face structural barriers to education, they are disadvantaged in participating in development process and may they have their career development stagnated.

Education is important because it is mainly about transmission of knowledge, skills and the development of character traits which has to do with how you handle your workers or how you behave to your superiors in your places of work in such a way that excellence will be attained. Skills and knowledge can be acquired through the three main forms of education, namely formal education- which is structured, systematized and certificate oriented and which (traditionally) takes place in the four walls of the classroom: (but now there are digital classrooms where education takes place). Education could be attained through non- formal education which involves learning outside the traditional schooling system such as vocational training or community programmes. This includes family education, recurrent education, community education, vocational training and other educational activities through which people can improve on the performances of their vocations. (Adedokun, 2020). There is also the informal type of education, it is education that occurs accidentally without being prepared for it but which brings about some sort of learning, (Iseke, 2013, Adedokun 2020).

Education to Adedokun (2012) is not only a social service but a transformative act that is fundamental to social and personal development. When there is access to education, there is an

increase in social and political awareness, heightened aspiration, self-assurance, and self-assertiveness. When a woman reaches the levels described above, she would be able to make her full impact on developing her career and contribute meaningfully to her society in which she lives. Education is, therefore, the right of every woman as it will aid her effective contributions towards the growth of the society. The importance of education is brought to light by Julius Nyerere who equates development with education as something which brings about changes in human beings; as changes come through knowledge and knowledge comes through education, (Adedokun & Adeyemo, 2011)

Education is thus, enlightening and its access should not be denied women. Education would empower women to allocate resources towards their health, nutrition and to re-engineer their business endeavour (Kabeer, 2019). With financial independence arising from the skills and knowledge gained from education, women will thus enhance their abilities to support their families, thereby reducing poverty and focusing on sustainable development (Adebawale, Adekojo & Okorie, 2020). Education is thus crucial to career development especially in nations like Nigeria where women and young people face social, economic and cultural challenges that hinder their full participation in economic activities. Pervasive societal and cultural barriers limit the equitable access not only to education but also to health care and leadership opportunities (Kabeer, 2019).

Education is a human right, a powerful driver of development and an instrument for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace and stability. It aids equity and inclusion. For individuals education promotes employment, learning, earnings and makes women confident. The importance attached to education makes the World Bank

committed to financing education in the developing world in order to fulfill the SDGs which is about access to inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. (World bank 2025)

The importance of education to all is emphasized by UNICEF through working in 147 countries of the world to provide quality learning opportunities and prepare children of both sexes and adolescents with knowledge and skills needed to survive. Their foci are an equitable access to quality and skill development, making efforts to make learning available to those excluded from education and learning on the basis of gender, disability, poverty, ethnicity and languages; making efforts at giving quality learning in a safe and friendly environment and with quality and monitored teachers.

Education thus, goes beyond acquisition of information to include the cultivation of critical thinking, creativity, problem solving abilities and ethical decision making. It makes an individual a lifelong learner who is adaptive to the challenges evolving every day in the world. The above expositions on education suggest that learning is a lifelong process through which one uses acquired experiences to deal with new situations. Through quality education, women will wake up various life skills lying dormant in them to be used for career development. Such skills to Adedokun, (2019) includes self-efficacy which could either be described as self-belief, self-esteem and academic skills which is described by Pitan (2016) as referring to subjects in discipline, skills and knowledge which are needed to provide basic foundation for career development.

Adedokun (2019) in her study on effective learning skills and labour market making use of 100 respondents and using descriptive research of the survey type found that education brings about

improvement in skills that are related to labour market and that there is a significant relationship between effective labour skills and employability and that employability is significantly related to improved living. She recommended among others that in the process of education, career education should be included in the school programme to lead both boys and girls to the choice of their future career.

Life skills should be a matter of priority in the process of education not only for women but for all. Life skills according to World Health Organization (WHO) in Adedokun (2019) are cross cultural as they cut across feelings, emotions and other coping capacities and the skills are germane to living qualitative life. They include the following:

Decision making and problem solving skills. Women who are educated will not be found giving prerogatives to others to make decisions concerning their careers and life progress for them and every woman through education must be capacitated in the area of personal problem solving.

Others include,

- creative and critical thinking
- Interpersonal and communication skills
- Self-awareness and empathy
- Assertiveness and equanimity (to be able to express their opinions strongly and calmly).
- Resilience and coping with emotions
- Focus and self-control
- Perspective taking
- Taking on challenges

(Mind in the Making, (2019) British Council Greece, (2019), and Adedokun, 2019)

The above skills are closely associated to the idea of life skills as expressed by British council Greece, (2019) that perceives life skills as a set of basic skills acquired through learning or through life direct

experiences that enable individuals and groups to effectively handle issues and problems commonly encountered in daily life. The above skills are essential for healthy societies and for career development. These life skills should be taught to all because people over the course of their lives will meet various challenges which call for dynamism and flexibility.

Dingra and Chanher (2017) whose research was on assessment of life skills of adolescents in relation to selected variables confirmed in their studies that life skills are abilities for positive and adaptive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with day to day needs and challenges using thinking skills, social skills and emotional skills as basis of their study. They found that education is important to the awareness of needs of not only adolescents but women who are willing to improve on their careers.

Giving education to women will awaken their dormant potentials towards their career development. When all the life skills are well developed in women through education, women would have been on a path to career development. When women are educated, they would understand their rights in their places of work and fight for them, their voices would be heard and not only their faces seen. Education has the advantage of providing better career opportunities and giving the courage needed to move up the ladder. Education becomes important based on the following points:

- ❖ Education ensures and assures financial stability as one can improve on whatever one does with the acquired knowledge
- ❖ Education bridges the gaps between social classes thus paving way to move up the ladder of their careers
- ❖ Education allows for self-dependency
- ❖ Education induces confidence in women to express their opinions, and speak out their minds when need be

- ❖ Giving education to women will make them more productive

One can then allude to these great men:

Nelson Mandela says “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world”

Malcolm says Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.

John Dewy says education is not preparation for life but education is life in itself.

Barriers to Women education

Some of the specific barriers to women education include

- Cultural and social norms – like early marriage and early pregnancy
- Poverty which is based on financial constraints
- Preference for boy’s education over girl’s education
- Gender based violence including sexual harassment and abuse which can create unsafe environment for women education
- Gender inequality

(UNICEF, 2025)

(UNICEF 2025) believes that gender equitable education systems help both boys and girls in school, building prosperity for entire communities. Efforts should therefore, be made to limit the barriers to women education as much as possible in order to make education accessible to all our women.

Career Development

Career development is a must for every woman. This involves attending trainings, re-training programmes and further education in order to be very dynamic in the world of work. There is need for one to be dynamic in the issue of career development as it is usually stated that a stagnant pool stinks. Career development is

a process every woman must undergo to get to the zenith of their profession. This is necessary to make useful decisions for progress in one’s chosen career. This is done to put shape to personal needs of physical or psychological fulfillment with career progression opportunities.

Career development can also be described as the total encompassment of an individual’s work related experiences leading to the occupational functions they may need to perform either in their individual establishments or in an organization. It is a process by which a person advances one’s career to meet up with changes in technology and global economy.

Morhead (2024) stresses the importance of creating an effective career plan. She asserts that setting goals and identifying skills will help individuals towards professional success. Career development is a proactive lifelong process of managing and advancing one’s career. Career development is not just about getting a job. It is not just about finding a job but an ongoing journey of learning and growth throughout one’s professional life. It is goal oriented. It involves setting goals and developing plans to achieve them

It involves being aware of self, that is, knowing your strengths, weaknesses, interests and values

It focuses on building the skills and knowledge needed to advance one’s career

It also involves networking and mentorship. Women cannot advance their businesses without networking. They need to network with others in the same profession or business for better performance. No one is an island, people say, therefore women need mentorship and networking. When one dabbles into a business that one does not have knowledge about and one refuses mentorship, one cannot thrive in the business or profession. Career Development thus involves the following:

- Continuous learning; learning is a lifelong process hence the need for learning on a continuous basis. This involves attending seminars, conferences, training and retraining programmes.
- Taking initiatives. Be involved in critical thinking and take initiatives that will take you to higher ground than you are now.

The above are based on life skills education. In this digital age networking is important. It can be said that career development which is the lifelong process of managing and developing one's career involves acquisition of new skills, knowledge and experiences as well as making strategic decisions to enhance one's career development. All the above involve willingness- without willingness, nothing gets done.

There is need for guidance and counselling services as it fosters an increased range of educational and career alternatives. William et.al (2010) give detailed reasons for career guidance and counselling. These include, greater academic achievement, greater satisfaction with work, positive business / professional practice. For teachers, guidance and counselling service in career development would reduce dropout rates, lower absenteeism, reduce exposure to bullying and harassment and create more positive school climate as well as creating more satisfaction with schooling while greater participation in school programmes is enhanced. These authors opined that the need for guidance and counselling is very important stating that in Nigeria 40% of students graduating from Polytechnic institutions end up in jobs that are not related to their training.

They are of the opinion that anyone seeking career development must have a career concept that is based on personal values, beliefs, abilities and the activities

one finds meaningful or enjoyable making use of the tools and techniques a person feels comfortable with in order to form a self-concept. Career satisfaction results from integrating work roles with a person's self-concept. Career development involves opportunity awareness to identify productive events as they unfold together with willingness to risk taking action when the result is unpredictable and the need to adjust one's plans as events unfold.

Based on the above, there is need for career education as it develops an attitude that encourages the belief that what you are doing is good and preferred. It is to be noted that the world is rapidly changing and people face numerous challenges but people need a vision for their lives that will drive a purposeful approach to career development planning. When challenges and obstacles are encountered, people should network and be mentored to bring them back on track. Electives Team (2024) believe that workers need to climb upward ladder in their places of work. Climbing this ladder is based on continuous learning. This implies that education is important to climb the ladder of success and reaching the top in any profession.

Electives Team adduce reasons why career development is important. These will be summarized here:

- Career development enhances employee's engagement and retention. It allows for progression of staff and makes employees to be loyal in their places of work
- Career development makes for attracting top talent
- It drives performance and motivation. It encourages workers to acquire new skills and knowledge for performance improvement and it is a continuous learning that can foster the needed innovation
- It fosters positive company culture that values growth, learning and personal achievement

For the above reasons and more career development strategy can benefit individuals and organizations in that it leads to employee's satisfaction, retention and organizational success. The following points can be said to be garnered from Career Development:

- It is a lifelong journey encompassing various activities such as skill enhancement, goals setting and networking
- It leads to increased employee engagement, satisfaction and organizational success
- It helps individuals to be on top of the situations in their chosen career

Davis (2024) discusses some barriers to career development. Some of these are gender bias, lack of guidance, work life balance, pay equity and lack of representation in leadership as well as lack of supportive policies and practices.

Conclusion

The paper examined the importance of women education as it is linked to career development. Education will make women to be independent, make women confident in all they do even in their career and education will bridge the gaps between social classes thereby paving way for educated women to reach the top of the ladder of their career. Education is thus intricately linked with career development so every woman must not be robbed of the access to quality education through which they can better improve their lives and that of the society.

Recommendations

Based on the above, it is recommended that:

1. Every woman should make themselves available for further education.
2. Employers should avail their employees the opportunity of attending conferences, seminars, training and re-t

raining programmes in order to improve their performances on the job and enhance their upward movement like their male counterparts.

3. The government should make more policies that favour girl-child education and follow such policies to the letter.
4. Women should be given ample chance for leadership roles as their male counterparts

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