

Education for National Development: A Study of Experience of Tiv Women of Benue State: 1900-2006

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Abstract

This aim of the paper is to discuss how the education of Tiv women has impacted on national development. Through the use of primary and secondary sources, the paper conceptualizes the concept of education. It also discusses some of the importance of education to women. Some of them are: education increases the chance of women breaking out of the poverty cycle, Tiv women are able to secure greater power to make decisions relevant in the family and the wider community, they are provided with the better life skills they need to make informed choices and to develop both economic and intellectual independence, they also gain self-esteem along with knowledge acquired through education amongst others. The study also highlights some constraints affecting the education of Tiv women of Benue State. These include: the economic, religious and social headings. Some recommendations are proffered by the paper to include some of the following: Parents should give equal treatment and opportunities especially as it concerns education to children not minding their sexes, the state government should as a matter of urgency, Gender stereotyping which is a prominent feature of Tiv traditional education should be discarded with immediate effect

Keywords: education, women, pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial, Tiv women

1. Introduction

The paper attempts to examine the experience of Tiv women of Benue state from 1900 to 2006 as it concern's education for national development. even though there are other Tiv women in other parts of North Central Nigeria which is a geopolitical entity. The states specifically are: Plateau, Cross River, Nasarawa, and Taraba states respectively. It is the concern of this paper to choose Tiv women of Benue state because this will unveil their historical as well as contemporary social role in National development in general and Tiv land of Benue state in particular. The choose of Tiv women of Benue state is also premise on the fact that they form a sizeable population of about 2, 109, 598 (<http://www.citypopulation.de>php>ni...> 20/12.2017) as compare to that of their counterparts in other states of North Central Nigeria.

Development through education has indeed been a major concept in the globalization process and the progress in the educational domain varies with time and place (Gyuse 2010). Among the Tiv people of Benue, education is a very big industry for development. This is because of the potential education has in facilitating development as well as in shaping the lives of many individuals in Tivland. Thus, the conviction that education generally is an important factor for all knowledge as well as an indispensable capital for the transformation of society is not new (Nsamenang et al 2011).

This paper using a historical analysis, examines the concept of education especially the education of Tiv women of Benue state, with emphasis on the importance of the education of Tiv women, the constraints and recommendations. The researcher made use of primary and secondary sources in the form of conducting oral interviews and the use of published materials respectively to assist in laying the basis for the study.

The study is guided by the following objectives: Firstly, to examine the importance of women education to national development, secondly, to discuss the constraints faced by women in their educational pursuits, and thirdly, to proffer solutions to enhance the education of women.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

This segment of the paper will put into proper perspective important concepts such as education and development which are aimed at shedding more light on the discourse. The highlight of these concepts will better help readers understand the course of discussion.

2.1. Education

According to O' Cornell (2003), education is the social mechanism designed to bring about in the persons submitted to it, certain skills and attitudes that are judged to be useful and desirable in the society. Fafunwa (1991) broadly defines education as "all efforts consciously and directly made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of society where these educational programmes are obtained.

Okafor (1989) asserts that education especially higher education, must conduct a sound inquiry into the meaning and development of man- the nature of man, before it can offer maximum assistance to the individual in

the over-all fulfillment of his personality.

2.2. Development

Development on the other hand, is a complex concept with many different and sometimes contentious definitions. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1998), development means to lead long and 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. Achieving development is viewed as freeing people from obstacles that affect their ability to develop their own lives, and communities. Thus, development is empowerment, it is about local people taking control of their lives, expressing their demands and finding their own solutions to their problems.

In an attempt to further define development Dudley (1972) posed the most fundamental questions relating to the concept when he stated that: The questions to ask about a country's development are three: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to inequality? And what has been happening to unemployment? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond this has been a period of development concern.

Todaro (1981) explicitly upholds that: Development should be perceived as a multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social systems. In addition to improvement in incomes and output, it typically involves radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as in popular attitudes and in many cases even customs and beliefs.

This definition stresses that development is aimed towards positive and holistic transformation of lives of individuals in a country in its entirety. At this point, it is pertinent to maintain that education as it relates to development in this study is a process by which an individual acquires the needed physical and social capabilities required by the society in which one lives. Education is also a pathway to national development because it provides an enlightened society, enhances democratic participation, and creates a large middle class of professionals like technicians, doctors, teachers that provide the necessary expertise that is needed for national development.

3. The History of Education amongst the Tiv of Benue State, Nigeria

In the pre-colonial period, Tivland was a small but powerful society south of the Sokoto caliphate. Its economy was agrarian in nature. The pre-capitalist form of education in Tivland was based on apprenticeship (Ityavyar 1992). The Tiv people adopted the informal type of education which was based on oral tradition and practical activities. The mothers' responsibility was to ensure that they educated their daughters on all that they needed to know before marriage. This brand of education focused on domestic life, motherhood, weaving, pottery, farming and other roles that generally fell within the division of labour on the basis of gender. The other aspect of this model of education was informal training to acquire skills that would enable them function effectively in their homes. Women were also taught how to source for and prepare food for their homes, and how to cater for their husbands' emotional and sexual satisfaction. Tiv traditional education was fashioned to cater for the needs of the immediate family and the society at large. Apparently, there were no special school premises, employed teachers with salaries, text books, exercise books, pens, pencils, erasers, chalk nor white board makers and boarding facilities (Dzurgba 2007). As a communal responsibility, fathers took it upon themselves to educate the males.

With the arrival of Britain in Tivland in 1900, colonialism was established as an agent of change. It was not only a system of government but also a way of life. Colonialism ruthlessly displaced economic, political and social institutions in Tivland. Where these traditional values were not completely destroyed they were altered to meet the immediate interest of the colonialists. Colonialism and its antics of capitalism adversely affected gender relationship among Tiv. For instance, division of labour was no more on the basis of sex and age, but followed the rule of capitalist division of labour (Ityavyar 1992).

Though the intention of the missionaries was to enhance literacy among converts so as to be able to read the Bible and be able to propagate the gospel. Another objective of the early missionaries was to get local interpreters to satisfy the needs of the local converts. During the colonial era, Ityavyar (1992) holds it that: Colonial education was not available to many Tiv people. But the condition of women was even worse. Missionaries, who first encouraged Western education tended to educate men and rarely included females. Fathers in turn preferred to give their sons and male relatives to school but gave girls for early marriages.

The Tiv women however, received little or no attention in acquiring western education because they were denied opportunity to benefit from the values of western education. This was of course not based on the nature of division of labour of early societies where roles were assigned according to the physical distinctions of sex. This is to say, formal education in Benue state was directed to men only instead of been based on individual needs and abilities (Terwase et al 2003). Not only was that to educate women at this period considered a non-valuable venture as it is assumed that the role of women is for procreation and confinement to kitchen and other domestic chores. This attitude towards female education led parents to think that, it is a wasteful venture to educate the girl child even when observed to be more intelligent than their male counterparts. The Victorian concept of the place

of women was introduced and this contrasted with the little public positions which Tiv women occupied during the pre-colonial era. The British ruled the Tiv people based on its gender ideology of separate spheres for men and women (Igyeseh 2010). The missionaries denied Tiv women access to formal education. They established mainly boys' schools. The first was St. Michael's Aliade, Mount Saint Gabriel Secondary, Makurdi, Saint Jude Secondary School, Mkar, Saint Andrews Secondary School, Adipko, Mount Carmel secondary School, Makurdi. While the first girls' institution was not established until 1963. It is called Queen of the Rosary Secondary School, Gboko (Atagher 2015). The patriarchal cultural prejudices, which prevailed in Britain created a favourable environment for the gender ideology of making sure women played on domestic roles in an already patriarchal Tiv society. The dominant perception was that Tiv women were not meant to play any role in the public sphere. Instead, the colonial administration encouraged the training of women to be good mothers, house wives and epitomes of elegance and reticence (Igyeseh 2010).

With the achievement of independence in 1960, the Western missionaries did not stop their evangelization activities, but the most important thing is that the Nigerian government subscribed to the concept of the equality of all and non-discrimination on any ground whatsoever. The Nigerian government also realized that "education is a basic tool for national development, national regeneration and continuity (Mahachi 2003). Thus, women got more opportunities to attend schools in order to acquire western education. This was based on the fact that, education in its widest form has been identified as a veritable tool for freeing women from ignorance and backwardness and bringing them to a position of liberty and awareness.

The attitude towards the education of women changed considerably. Largely, it was economic circumstances that shaped the new attitude. Parents who wanted good marriages for their daughters, good bride wealth, and respect for themselves during the post-colonial era invested in their education (Wegh 2003). Ikpe (1997) affirms that: The education of Tiv women heightened, following the Declaration of an International Decade for Women 1975-1985 and the consequent debates on women's status and problems world-wide also had consequences in Nigeria. The problems of the Nigerian women were also discussed intensively, thus creating awareness. The then military government under General Obasanjo made a tentative attempt to give the Nigerian women a chance in every facet of development especially education. From the 1970s, there was an education boom. By the late 1980s over 42 percent of those enrolled in the primary schools were female pupils. Female students constituted 38% enrolment in the secondary schools and about 27% in the tertiary institutions .

The above quotation clearly shows a phenomenal increase in women's participation in education compared to what was obtainable under the British rule. Western education has given more Tiv women the ability to contribute more effectively to national development. Osuman (1997) assiduously asserts that In Benue state of Nigeria as at 1992 had 222 post-primary schools, of which 212 were co-educational and 10 were exclusively for girls. The population figures of co-educational post-primary enrolment was 120,433 and out of this, 29, 721 were females while the total population figures for the 10 institutions which were exclusively for the girls were 7, 582. It is good to note that the total number of females in both the co-educational and exclusively girls' schools (37, 303) was approximately one quarter of the total enrolment. The female population in education is higher during this era compared to what was obtainable during the colonial period (Osuman 1997).

With education there was the emergence of informal motherhood, less superstitious, more hygienic, better feeding methods and with a high value for education. The quality of upbringing given to children and the quality of services rendered within the household improved tremendously. This is why infant mortality in such families is generally lower than in the past. It is believed that the education of women is the foundation of a healthy and prosperous society, since the quality of women determines the quality of future generations. Within the epoch, Tiv women are seen in all the facets of development. In the educational arena we have prominent Tiv women to include some of the following: Ivase Afadzwana Elizabeth, Arama Anenge Elizabeth, Angya Charity Ashiemen, Ishuwa Miriam Nguuma, Nyitse Leticia Mbaiver, Agbe, Nancy Ngunan, Amera Erdoo Becky, Ugoh Elizabeth Audu, Shimeza Rebecca Atese, Mbapuuun Elizabeth. Some of the Tiv women that have established a noticeable feat in the economic sphere include: Victoria MbakaanTsedzuul, Lucy Anapine Katsina-Alu, Aernyam Mbalamen Theresa, Agundu Nguher Keziah, Akaagerger Mbafan Joyce, Akume Mbavekomtor Regina, Aku Victoria Mbanengen, Gemade Mnguenyi Victoria. And some of the Tiv women in the medical profession include: Malu Keziah. In politics we have prominent Tiv women such as; Icheen Margaret Mwuese, Lydia Ikuma Nyor, Mhunghur Chile, keziah Agundu, Lucy Zaiyol Aluor, Lydia Ikuma Nyor, Elizabeth Shuluwa, Elizabeth Mises, Elizabeth Ulam (Ihundu et al 2010). Some Tiv women surveyors include; Iyortyer Mercy Torkwase. In religion we have Tiv women such as: Pastors Hannah Ikyernum of the New Anointing Chapel actively involved in propagation of the gospel.

4.The Importance of Tiv Women in the Educational Facet of Development

The importance of the education of Tiv women cannot be over emphasized. The importance are numerous, but for the purpose of this paper it is pertinent to discuss just a few. Thus, armed with sound and qualitative education, Tiv women have made great impact in the running of the state and the country. Since education sets

them free from the bondage of ignorance and makes them useful to themselves, families and their communities. It also increases their chance of breaking out of the poverty cycle. With increased education, Tiv women, have gained status and are able to secure greater power to make decisions relevant in the family and in the wider community. Most of the women with good educational qualification have the impact, providing the greatest pay-off for women's empowerment (Ogbuagu 2012). Apparently, with education, Tiv women are provided with the largest life skills they need to make informed choices and to develop both economic, intellectual independence, and self-esteem. Educated Tiv women are able to prepare for the work force, better able to protect their flies' health and less likely to die during childbirth than those who are less educated (Ogbuagu 2012). Educated Tiv women make things happen positively in Benue state. Education has paved the way for Tiv women's understanding of their rights, privileges and responsibilities to their immediate families, communities, societies, state and the country at large.

When the family invests in women and girls' education, they are investing in people who in turn invest in everybody else. The educated Tiv women take it upon themselves the responsibility and challenge of providing a child with the right care and attention. This is a process that requires deep commitment of time and thought. Educated Tiv women help the child become a responsible and matured individual. When they do this, Tiv women are sure that, the child will give them joy and not grief, pride and not shame; become a great asset and not liability. The child will also become a viable and virile potential nation builder (Ogbuagu 2012). One of the greatest importance of Tiv women attaining education is that it provides an opportunity for the female folks to support themselves rather than remaining superfluous unmarried daughters at home.

In an interview with Yakubu (2017), a lecturer in the department of Theatre Arts espouses that, due to lack of white-collar jobs, some educated Tiv women engaged in trading of items such as clothing, household wares, cosmetics, stationary and jewelries. Educated Tiv women also provide vital services in the informal sector. They also participate in other economic ventures such as hair dressing, sewing, beer brewing popularly called *burukutu* alias BKT, traditional textile manufacture, pottery, basketry, mat, sweets and soap making, cosmetics production and so on. Thus, with their presence in these ventures, women have provided goods and services at affordable prices. By owing hair dressing salons, restaurants or hotels, beer parlours, boutiques, large farms, e.g. poultry, fish ponds, yam farms, etc, Tiv women have provided jobs thereby contributing to the reduction of unemployment levels in Tivland. Though many of the activities of women in the informal sector are never reflected in the gross national product, it cannot be denied that a women-dominated informal sector exists in Tivland and that comfortable livings have been made in this sector by individuals.

The education of Tiv women is important to development because their education directly affects sustainability plans in three areas which include; implementation, decision making and quality of life. On implementation, sustainable and sustainability plans can be enhanced or limited by the education of Tiv women. A society with high illiteracy rate and unskilled work force has fewer development options. Or the most part, such a society is forced to buy energy and manufacture goods from the international market with hard currency and to acquire hard currency such a society needs international trade; usually this leads to exploitation of natural resources and conversion of land for sufficient family based farming for cash crop agricultural activities. An educated workforce is important to moving beyond an extractive and agricultural economy (Mckeoan 2015). On decision making, a good society based decisions which affects socio-economic and environmental wellbeing also depends on the education of its citizens, women inclusive and development options expands as education increases (Mckeoan 2015).

On the quality of life, education is also central to improving the quality of life because education raises the economic status of the family, improves live conditions, lowers infant mortality and improves the educational attainment of the next generations' choices for economic and social wellbeing; and that improved education holds both individual and national implications (Mckeoan 2015).

Educated Tiv women have economic value both for their parents and husbands. With their work, they could contribute meaningfully to the family income. Thus, the education of Tiv women could be personal, as Tiv women may consider their own education to be an essential element in their own development (Wegh 2003).

5. Factors Militating Against Educational Advancement of Tiv Women

The constraints Tiv women encountered in the educational sector are numerous but for the purpose of clarity and convenience of focus, it will be pertinent to group and discuss them under economic, social and religious sub-headings.

Economic constraints

In the first place, the finances are not always enough to meet the needs of the entire household, in such a situation most Tiv parents, send only the boy-child to obtain the western education because such parents believe that money spent on a girl's education is a waste, since she will marry into her husband's family, thus leaving only boys in their original family to cater for their parents.

Social Constraints

Most women, in their bid to play multiple roles such as house wives, mothers, providing house hold labour work, often have little time for educational advancement. At times, school traditions discriminate against women's education. Some textbooks are full of materials that reinforce gender discrimination and sex stereotyping. The career development of women is often tailored along specific occupations, traditionally stereotyped as female occupation. The school system encourages the boy child to be a tough engineer or a medical doctor, while at the same time encouraging the girl child to become a gentle nurse or a primary school teacher. It is difficult for the nation to move forward effectively without adequate participation of women in the educational system (Alao 1998).

In an oral interview with Iorakpera (2017), a female teacher, she maintains that, it is a known fact that educated Tiv women have made valuable contributions to the development of the state, and Nigeria at large, yet they are burdened with prejudices emanating from cultural sentiments which deter them from making even more significant contributions as they are the first to bear the consequences of economic and political degeneration .

Ihugh (2017), a male teacher, succinctly enunciates that one other social constraint, could be seen in the attitude that emerged as a result of the belief surrounding the excessive emancipation of the educated women. This has gone a long way in restraining fathers and husbands from educating their daughters and wives to full capacity. It is widely believed that, educated women are difficult to control and are not submissive. Some even think that educated women are arrogant, promiscuous, disobedient, bold, and disrespectful and therefore, would not make good house wives. Some husbands are afraid that if their wives were educated or more educated than they are, they would always want to be bossy and 'lord' over them (the husband). This is quite an unfortunate stand (Alao 1998). The campaign against educating female children was strategically located around the conception that educated women never found husbands. Ityavyar (1992) further reiterates: That educated women are loose and insensitive to cultural norms and expectations. It was also feared that educated women would lose their virginity before marriage and this would bring shame to the parents. Educated girls would become pregnant before marriage.

Traditional and cultural constraints are very vital issues that have hindered the massive education of Tiv women. The education for women right from the very beginning was designed to make them effective mothers and housewives. The women are brought up in the traditional family set-up to be passive, obedient, "lady-like" and always submissive to men. They are also taught how to take care of their dwelling places. Thus, gender stereotyping is a prominent feature of Tiv traditional education (Alao 1998).

Lack of white collar job opportunities in the state and the nation at large, has discouraged a lot of parents from sending their daughters to acquire the western education. The insurgency attacks on Schools in the far eastern north of the Nigeria (Maiduguri, Adamawa and Yobe states to be specific) have discouraged a lot of Tiv parents from sending their daughters to walk distances to schools. They are also reluctant to let their daughters travel to boarding schools. Though, no cases of terrorism have been reported in Benue state, parents are scared because they don't know when and where the terrorists will attack.

Religious Constraints

Tiv people of Benue state, practice three major religions; Christianity; Islam, and Traditional respectively. But none of these religions clearly support the education of women. Islam strongly believes in the seclusion of women from public activities, education inclusive. The practice of purdah, in Islamic religion makes it difficult for married and unmarried Muslim to fully benefit from the educational system.

Christianity is no exception as it clearly says let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach not to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence (1st Timothy 1971). Saint Paul admonishes the women folk to be submissive to their male counterparts as a basis for their argument as to why girls should not be given the desired relevant education. Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak... and if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home,; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (1st Corinthians 1971).

Tiv traditional religion which is a unique way of worship revolves around witchcraft and divinities. Witchcraft is a mysterious substance that is believed either to grow in a person's heart naturally or acquired through initiation and training. Its powers are frightening and uncanny.

6. Recommendations

Education is fundamental to national development since it is the human mind that makes all development possible. In order to reap the benefits of development, the potential of the human mind has to be unleashed through education. Thus, education should be made available to everybody; Tiv women inclusive, because it is the knowledge and skills that people acquire that determines their employability, productivity, health and wellbeing (King 2015).

Parents should give equal treatment and opportunities to children not minding their sexes especially as it concerns their education. They should manage the meager finances they have to educate their children not

looking at their sexes. Parents should know that their educated daughters when married to other families will still shoulder responsibilities of their parents. The state government should as matter of urgency, call upon the Commissioner of Education to ensure that school traditions do not discriminate against women's education. The government should also ban the use of textbooks that are full of materials that reinforce gender discrimination and sex stereotyping and introduce new ones that are neither gender discriminatory and nor sex stereotyped. As a matter of urgency, the state government should have a round table discussion with all the traditional rulers in the state to put a stop to all the cultural issues that burden women with prejudices which deter them from attaining educational advancement.

Parents should do away with the belief surrounding the excessive emancipation of the educated women. The unfortunate instances of one or two educated women should not be generalized such that all educated women in Tivland would be termed as being bossy, arrogant, promiscuous, disobedient, bold, and disrespectful. Gender stereotyping should never be associated with the education of Tiv women. In addition to been effective mothers and housewives, women should also be encouraged to be competitive and independent, they should be taught to be at the helms of affairs to make them more fulfilled human beings. For Tiv women to contribute meaningfully to development in the state, nation and the world at large, The government should ensure that the schools are safe, that is, they should be protected from violence, exploitation and discrimination in and around schools, so that the case of the brutal attack that led to the historic abduction of over 200 girls from a government secondary school at a small Chibok town, south of Borno State, Nigeria on April 14, 2014 by a renowned group of terrorists in Nigeria, popularly called "Boko Haram" operating predominately in the North Eastern part of Nigeria (Itua 2013) does not repeat itself in Benue state. The government should also provide an effective learning environment, which will in turn encourage staying in school.

Religious leaders in Tiv society should know that we are living in the 21st century, thus, they should encourage women education for their society to develop effectively, because any society that disregards the education of its females will face the full wrath of under development.

7. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to portray that the education of women was acceptable in Tivland during the pre-colonial era. But the coming of the British during the colonial period there was a drastic shift from Tiv women acquiring western education. But with the achievement of independence in 1960, Tiv women of Benue State were given the traditional and western education to enable them excel in life. But with this, Tiv women still face a lot of constraints that the paper clearly discussed under the economic, social and religious factors. But for Tiv women to contribute effectively to development via education the state government should do away with all the economic, social and religious constraints discussed above and adopt all the recommendations stated above for the betterment of the education of Tiv women.

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