

EMPOWERING THE NIGERIAN WOMAN FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF CRITICAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: *The potentials of Nigeria women are underutilized in Nigeria's quest for sustainable development and this has resulted to the gross undermining of the Nigerian woman including subjecting her to various forms of marginalization, deprivation, domination and other forms of injustices and human right abuses. The undermining of the Nigerian woman has implications for Nigeria's general development. Using the philosophical method, this paper makes a case for the empowerment of the Nigerian woman through critical education; which is justified on the premise that critical education can critically beam searchlight into political, economic, social, cultural and environmental variables that promote the various inhuman treatments Nigerian women receive and at the same time provide the right education and educational experiences for conscientizing Nigerian women and consequently introduce positive changes. The paper among other things challenges Nigerian women that individual actions and initiatives are critical in the empowerment of the individual and that the process of teaching learners in a critical education class should instill in learners and awareness that they have the power to create history, rewrite history and influence history in their favour through their actions. The paper is optimistic that Nigeria's sustainable development will be assured when Nigerian women are rightly empowered through critical education.*

KEYWORD: empowerment, sustainable national development, critical education, Nigerian women.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, mass education has come to stay as part of the official policy of most modern states, thereby ending preferential access to education and the privileges that come with it, which previously was accessible to mainly one sex and elite members of the society. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Right in its article 26 declared that education is a human right. A human right is "God-given right to every individual base on the humanity of the individual or base on the essence that one is a human being and variables such as sex, social status, or social economic status, religion, occupation, level of education or lack of it etc do not count as what qualifies the individual to access his or her human right. The basis for one's qualification to enjoy his human right is simply his or her humanity.

A general feature of human right is that it is deeply rooted in moral rationality so much that all areas upon which human survival revolve or depend enjoy the status of human right or fall within the frame of reference that is covered by human right. Part of what projects human rights to its prominent height globally is that it affords individuals- man and woman social, religious, political, economic, environmental and educational space to morally and humanely demand what is the minimum standard or global best practices from the states and institutions of the state for the survival and well being of the individual. This is in addition to human right affording individuals platforms upon which to explore opportunities in both one's states and outside one's state as under the frame of reference or platform of human right, one can garner local and international support or sympathy from civil society groups and international community especially when there are threats or abuses of one's human right. It is on record that anyone whose human right is denied has been fundamentally impaired so much that he or she must live a subhuman life. This accounts for why any perceived infringement on the human right of anyone must definitely trigger agitations that will end up skyrocketing further demand of one's human right. The justification for people fighting with the last drop of their blood when their human right have been trampled upon or violated derives from this.

It is convenient to say that part of why United Nations and humanity generally recognized education as a human right is the supposedly in-built mechanisms of both human right and education to forge a common front for the emancipation and empowerment of human beings—man and woman. True, there is mass education which underlying should enhance peoples' enjoyment their human right to education, but a million dollars question that is begging for answers is: to what degree has mass education prepared the woman (the girl child) to the point of her emancipation and empowerment in the Nigerian society? The tragedies and predicaments of the woman (the girl child) are double fold especially on the educational front. Part of the tragedy and predicament of the woman (girl child) in as much as education is concern is highlighted by Staudt (2008:54) when she writes that "even in the twenty-first century, girls are the majority of illiterates in South Asia and some African countries, although equal access to primary and secondary education now exists in many Latin American countries".

History is replete with facts that there are massive disinvestments in the education of the woman or the girl child and this has its roots in cultural, historical and axiological fronts. In most societies, parents are always hesitant to send their girl child to school and this attitude is never extended to the boy child. The justification for denying the girl child opportunity of going to school and favouring the boy child with opportunity of going to school and other investment is that culturally it is the boy child who sustains the lineage in addition to maintaining and caring for the parents during old age whereas the girl child will be married out, implying that any investment made in her is like an investment made for an unknown person and whose dividend is something no one is sure of. The cumulative effect of the disinvestment in the education of the girl child is one in which the little formal education she is exposed to conditions and socializes her into accepting less assertive roles in the family and in the society, a development that never allows her to aspire or dream of

becoming a leader, the breadwinner of the house or a participant in the decision making process in the house.

Paradoxically even in a regime of mass education, most girl children are socialized into accepting less assertive roles that prevent them from exploring the empowerment that comes with education for themselves and members of the society. This behaviour in the education of the girl child is detrimental to the well being of the society generally as the woman, more than the man wields more influence in the upbringing of the members of the family. As the family is a fundamental unit of the society it follows naturally that any defect in the education of the woman has potentials to impair the family and any impairment in the family structure also has potentials to impair the society. As self evident as women are in the stability of the family and consequently national development, a worrisome trend and a cause for concern is that most women and other well meaning members of the Nigerian society are not aware that the empowerment of the Nigerian woman is the start of the foundation for genuine national development. The successful working of any society is comparable to what happens in the chain system where any disarticulation in a unit of a chain affects the functioning of the entire chain system. Every society is made up of man and woman and any attempt to ignore the woman can translate to nonsense all the efforts of the man as the man cannot sustainably and successfully handle his own responsibilities and the responsibilities of the woman. The efforts of the woman are needed for meaningful progress and development and this is where the empowerment of the Nigerian woman is of fundamental importance.

Conscientizing the woman and other well-meaning members of the Nigerian society into recognizing that the empowerment of the Nigerian woman is the foundation for genuine development is possible. A platform through which the necessary awareness can be created on how the empowerment of the Nigerian woman can translate into the empowerment of the larger Nigerian society is critical education. This is focus of this paper and the methodology to be adopted is purely philosophical. A methodology in an academic discourse according to Nwaokugha and Danladi (2016) is said to be philosophical when the researcher uses speculative, analytic and normative or prescriptive methods. Speculation or the speculative method in philosophical research revolves around systematic attempt to find logical consistency in a proposition, presentation or a line of thought. This means the use of this methodology in a philosophical research strives to establish the degree of logical connectivity between one proposition and the other and the orderly and sequential flow of any proposition or presentation is key to determining the reasonableness acceptability and authenticity of that proposition or presentation. In any case, part of what determines the rightness, acceptability and correctness of a speculation is the order of its presentation. Its presentation must maintain an order where its conclusion derives from the premise and because this methodology dwells much on reasonableness and logical consistency, language and logic are crucial to it and they serve as tool in any effective speculation.

Analysis as a method of philosophical research focuses on meaning and proper use of words, concepts, terms and propositions. In an attempt to establish meaning and use words, concepts, terms and propositions appropriately, the analyst embarks on an exercise that involves the breaking down of concepts, terms, words and propositions into the smallest units that constitute them and systematically show how each is related to one another in establishing meaning and proper use of word, concept, term and proposition and the establishment of meaning helps to illuminate what Hirst and White (2000) call relationship between language and reality and word and the world.

What comes to the mind when prescription is mentioned as a method of philosophical research is simply the establishment of criteria or standard for judging values or making prescriptive value judgement. It is natural for anyone who discusses any topic academically to proffer solutions or pass judgment on the topic so discussed. This is the frame of mind in which prescription functions as a method of philosophical research.

There are reasons why scholars choose the philosophical research method. According to Nwaokugha and Ihuoma (2019), the philosophical research method is associated with promoting growth in the knowledge industry across disciplines through sharpening the reasoning and investigative skills of researchers on one hand and helping, to boost the confidence of researchers as researchers see every challenge in any academic discipline as solvable and resolvable. In fact, the philosophical method of enquiry stimulates in researchers the desire to critically and continuously try out new academic options that can result in phenomenal improvement of scholars and the breaking of new frontiers of knowledge (p.277).

What can be said to be a detailed and elaborate benefit of the philosophical method of enquiry is highlighted by Nwaokugha and Danladi (2016:421) when they write that:

Indulgence or embrace of philosophical research methods affords freedom and opportunity that invites, motivates and challenges researchers to venture into various problem areas across disciplines. By this feature researchers are availed platforms, which in addition to tackling diversified subject matters also promote progress in the form of extending and breaking new frontiers of knowledge philosophical research method is not restrictive and consequently does not in any way impoverish researchers and disciplines ... it rather contributes in ground breaking breakthroughs in the knowledge industry.

A conventional practice with the philosophical research method is to begin with the clarification of key concepts under investigation, so we begin with the concept of empowerment.

The Concept of Empowerment

Researchers, practitioners and the general public show a lot of interests and concerns to the concept of empowerment and in the same way as researchers, practitioners and members of the general public identify with and show interests and concerns to the concept empowerment, so is it of interest to many disciplines ranging from education, economics, political science, community development, health education, health promotion etc.

Interestingly, there is something that is unique about the concept of empowerment. As many researchers, practitioners and disciplines show interests and concerns to the concept of empowerment, each researcher, practitioner and discipline has its own unique way of discussing and approaching the concept of empowerment.

To be expected of a concept that manifests the above features and characteristics is the ability of such a concept to be contested. A concept falls within the frame of reference of concepts that are contested when it yields itself to more than one meaning or interpretation. The position of Lord and Hutchison (1993:19) that the concept of empowerment has diverse meanings attests to this. That this is the case make the concept of empower one that is much in use and consequently a construct which is not well defined and its lack of precise definition according to Cattaneo and Chapman (2010:646) has made the concept of empowerment amenable to diffuse application. What this development exposes is that among scholars, practitioners and disciplines, there can be definitions and meanings of empowerment that apply in a specific context that may not apply in another context. Discussing this feature of the concept of empowerment, Cattaneo and Chapman (2010:646) write that people's plausible response to this feature of the concept is one in which "the many ways empowerment has been defined allowed researchers and practitioners to pick from a menu of related, and at times vague concepts rather than rely on a cohesive picture". We can demonstrate all the above using definitions of empowerment as provided by scholars. Empowerment according to Wallerstein (1992) is a social-action process that promotes participation of people, organizations and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life and social justice. Power and gaining power is always at the centre of the concept of empowerment and guided by this understanding, Cattaneo and Chapman (2010:647) define empowerment as:

Iterative process in which a person who lack power sets a personally meaningful goal oriented toward increasing power, takes action towards that goal, and observes and reflects on the impact of this action, drawing on his or her evolving self-efficacy, knowledge and competence related to the goal.

Empowerment according to Rappaport (1987:122) is "a mechanism by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their affairs", while Lord and Hutchison (1993:4) define empowerment as processes whereby individuals achieve increasing control of various aspects of their lives and participate in the community with dignity. From a different perspective, Mc Whirter (1991:224) defines empowerment as:

The process by which people, organizations or groups who are powerless

(a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the right of others, and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community.

In his own contribution in the concept of empowerment, Mechanic (1991:641) defines empowerment as “a process in which individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve goals and a sense of how to achieve them and a relationship between their efforts and life outcome. Tenglund (2008:80) categorizes empowerment into goal and process. According to him, empowerment as a goal is to have control over the determinants of one’s quality of life and empowerment as a process is to create a professional relation where the client or community takes control over the change process, determining both the goals of the process and the means to use.

Any casual observer of the various definitions of empowerment can simply agree with Lord and Hutchison(1993:5) that “understanding empowerment is complex and ecological” and one can by way of rational exposition say that the plurality in the definition and meaning of empowerment derives from the fact that too many things come together in the frame of reference of empowerment. The complexity in the understanding of empowerment can be illuminated upon through some level of analysis.

Analytically, discussions that are centred on empowerment can start by highlighting social, educational, economic, political and environmental variables that promote marginalization, deprivation, abuse of rights and inequalities in the society and systematically makes a case for change through strategies that can lead to the enhancement and improvement of the quality of lives of a people. This means that irrespective of the direction from where practitioners, researchers and disciplines look at the concept of empowerment, common denominators that run through all despite individual approaches to the concept is that empowerment invokes a frame of reference that focuses and prioritizes improving human lives (Cattaneo and Chapman, 2010), changing settings (Lord and Hutchison, 1993), and the concept of power and powerlessness (Moscovitch and Drover, 1981).

All these are indications that empowerment is associated with any of the following: an aura of personal control and fulfillment that bring about greater autonomy and greater well-being of the individual or members of the society, a mechanism for correcting, righting and improving on past imbalances and injustices that previously existed in the society as well as strengths based intellectual disposition (psychological empowerment) that an individual can be exposed to, whose exploration can spur or trigger in him or her social actions for the development of self and humanity.

To this end, there are areas of focus or unique characteristics or property which the concept of empowerment identifies itself with. These are:

1. The concept of empowerment focuses directly on enhancing, changing and improving the lives of the poor and other marginalized members or groups in the society.
2. The concept of empowerment illuminates an aura of radicalism. In other words empowerment as a concept is suggestive of radical ideas which jettisons, repudiates and cast aspersion on the existing social order.
3. Empowerment as a concept is associated with element of posterity and this positive outlook targets changing the world and humanity for the better.

4. Empowerment illuminates meanings that connote something that a people or group can have, lack or give fully or partly (Tengland, 2008).
5. Empowerment as a concept has become too elastic and inclusive so much that there are emerging doubts on whether what the concept aims to achieve in one discipline or profession can be the same in another discipline or profession.
6. Empowerment contains within its frame of reference some other concepts, one of which is autonomy. The importance of autonomy in empowerment discourse is that people who have gained autonomy have brighter chances of enjoying full control of themselves, their environment and its resources and consequently can be better placed to access and enjoy the dividends of empowerment. On the other hand, a decrease in autonomy is a sure bet for a decrease in empowerment and more nursery in the quality of life of a people.
7. Empowerment can be a foundation or basis for changing settings and adding quality to the life of a people.
8. Empowerment in all its configurations comes to function or becomes successful through the efforts of a people especially those who are to benefit from the process of empowerment. What is implicated here is that a people who are to be empowered must recognize that they have some responsibilities for their own lives or their own empowerment.
9. Empowerment is a relational concept and to this end it usually involves a helper, one who is to be helped and a scheme or trade that one who is being helped is to benefit from. In any case there are aspects where the process of empowerment can be by force and there are aspects where the beneficiaries of the process of empowerment willingly do the prescribed things for their empowerment by themselves. This conception of empowerment create room for what Tengland (2008:91) calls “influences like manipulating ordering, recommending, suggesting, encouraging, arguing and informing” and in this relationship, the more opportunity and freedom the principal or institution that is responsible for the empowerment process provides for those to be helped in the empowerment scheme to exercise their individual initiatives, the more successful the empowerment becomes.

The above expositions are revealing and part of the revelation is that the process of empowerment may not be as easy as some persons may think it is, even though as a relational initiative and a process that may be initiated by a state or institutions, any person who is desirous of benefiting from the process of empowerment must set out goals and objectives for himself or herself and critically and continuously subject such goals and objectives to evaluation and reevaluation. He or she must have some individual charisma, part of which should be increase in his or her level of social relations and social interactions. The goals and objectives of the individual who is aspiring for empowerment should be those that can help the individual to acquire power and exert some influence in the society. The emphasis on individuals who are interested in empowerment to be committed or show some forms of doggedness is premised on the position highlighted by Cattaneo and Chapman (2010: 647) that “the successful outcome of the process of empowerment is a personally meaningful increase in power that a person obtains through his or her own effort”.

This means that it will be difficult for the magic of empowerment to work on anyone who has no goals or objectives and these goals or objectives as set out by the individual must (1) be personally meaningful to the individual who sets out the goals and objectives (2) be tilted towards the acquisition of power (3) must target bringing about change in the individual's social influence and (4) there must be stimulating social context where the empowerment process can be effectively practiced. An idea which stimulating social context suggests is one where there is effective interaction and one where there is sufficient support for the empowerment process. In discussing power in the empowerment process, it is important to critically examine a sensitive point highlighted by Cattaneo and Chapman (2010:647), which is that:

All people who lack power do not have an equal chance of gaining it. Instead the process of empowerment takes place in the context where power is unequally distributed and where structures exist to perpetuate the advantage of some over others.

The Concept of Critical Education

An insightful discussion of the concept of critical education may at best start with the concept of education. Across societies, people preciously hold education in high esteem so much that societies that have reached their peak in development still embrace education as a platform upon which they can manage their development and societies that are terribly under-developed and those that are developing see education and its vigorous pursuit as the route for their attaining their ambition. There are sufficient reasons why individual and states are favourably disposed to education. Education provides individuals with the creative thought for addressing the ever present challenges that confront man and his institutions. In states, individuals who are desirous of influencing changes in the society use education as an instrument for achieving such ambition either by sponsoring the education of citizens or by introducing innovations or ideas in the education industry for the common advancement of humanity. The regard that is accorded to education in the scale of preference of values in the society especially by parents is highlighted by Nwaokugha (2019:148) when he writes that:

The role education plays in the existential survival of man has been so monumental that parents commit themselves to ensure that their children receive quality education and any parent who comes short of this expectation considers himself/ herself a big failure.

The state pays no less attention to education for according to Shively (2005), education is one social service every responsible state provides for the citizens. The position of the above scholar on education is supported by Nwaokugha and Kalu (2014) when they write that education ranks high in acting as an article of faith in addressing social, moral, scientific, technological, economic, political and ecological problems of man. Education provides the state epistemological, axiological and metaphysical space upon which the state forms, reforms, transforms, orients and reorients the citizens in directions that can result in the best development for the citizens and the state. Paradoxically, despite the fact that both the individual and the state look up to education for guides and directions,

education is very fluid and has remained a slippery concepts so much that an aura of definitional confusion surrounds the concept and this is most noticeable in the constant etymological shift in the operational definitions of the concept. In the face of all these, one can be bold to say that all the senses invoked by the fluidity of education and aura of definitional confusion that surrounds the concept of education melt like wax and vacate the epistemological, axiological and metaphysical space when focus is on the instrumentality of education in moralizing, mobilizing, sensitizing and conscientizing the citizenry on the core and fundamental issues that border on the survival of man and the sustainable development of the state. What this translates into is that scholars, no matter their school of thought on education agree and quickly reconcile their differences when focus is on how to use education to address the general problems of man and his society. In this outlook and frame of mind, scholars in recent times play down issues bordering on the definition of education but focus attention on how education can be explored in its provisions for the empowerment, liberation and emancipation of man. One key area in the provision of education that has been identified as fundamentally necessary and indispensable in translating the values of education into reality is critical education.

In an elaborate discussion of the concept of critical education, Eboh (1996:132) gives incisive clues to what constitutes critical education in these words:

And by critical education, we mean not just literacy, numeracy and training or “inculcated automatisms,” but insightful learning, an education capable of helping women develop the ability to perceive clearly, deeply or penetratingly; an education that facilitates immediate understanding of a complex situation and of the significance of events or actions; an education that offers insight into fundamental principles and fosters the acquisition of intrinsic values.

According to Carr and Kemmis (1986) critical education simply refers to the empowering of teachers with regard to the social and pragmatic consequences of the curriculum. A critical look at what the above scholars say about critical education can be pointing in the direction that more is expected from both the education industry, the teacher and the products of the education. What is expected is a change of gear in what is packaged for delivery to learners, methods of delivery to learners as well as change of attitudes on the part of learners. Cumulatively all these target a new emphasis and a new focus where the learners are provided analytical and penetrating insightful skills and knowledge that can challenge learners to initiate ideas and struggle for the expansion of social, political, cultural, economic and other empowerment and right asserting space that can enhance the chances of survival of individuals in the state. To be instilled and inculcated in the learners in the process of teaching them in a regime of critical education is an awareness that they have the power to create history, reshape history and influence history in their favour and the recipe for this is their constant actions and repudiating status quo especially aspects that discriminate, marginalize, disempower and abuse the human rights of the citizens.

It is correct that what critical education targets to achieve is to create some level of awareness in the learners that can conscientize them on how social, political, cultural, economic and other forces shape what happens in the society on one hand and a desire to

challenge and reposition learners to positively contribute in reshaping the society for the better. The need to plant the genes for critical and penetrating insightful skills in learners through critical education is to prepare them for continuous actions that can lead to positive changes, which is possible through their resilience to resist passive acceptance of the status quo especially when the status quo is characterized by marginalization, injustice, abuse of rights, domination, deprivation against women and other vulnerable groups in the state.

Educational provision with an outlook and frame of reference of critical education should be more analytical, insightful and more towards solving problems and resolving political, social, economic, moral and environmental problems of a state. An education system that is deep rooted in critical education should incorporate in its provisions skills and dispositions that can be higher than mere acquisition of skills of literacy and numeracy. The expected skills and dispositions that the education system can provide for learners can be that type of learning which has the capacity to challenge the learner to read in -between lines and to develop competence for questioning the order of things in the society or in human affairs. By becoming bold to question the order of things, learners should correspondingly cease to be yes-members of the society but should become more analytically minded so as to differentiate when the quality of education that is provided for them is targeted at their domestication or for their freedom. It is correct states value education and it is equally correct and important citizens understand that there is no neutral education (Eboh, 1996), as can states merely socialize their citizens under the cover of providing them education. Such is an opposite of critical education. An honest and sincere attempt at providing critical education for citizens of a state is one where such educational provisions result in the liberation of the citizens as well as bring about increase in the citizens' level of critical and analytic consciousness. Anywhere critical education becomes a norm, the products of the education system become phenomenal agents of positive change or a people whose sense of autonomous reasoning or thinking can be easily triggered and consequently become people who can be challenged to learn how to existentially take their destiny in their own hands.'

A brief focus on the woman

Globally, women suffer terrible marginalization, deprivation and many human right abuses so much that any right thinking individual can ponder if the woman is a paradox (Eboh, 1996) or one who merely escorted the man to the world, whose relevance can only be appreciated when she is to be exploited or when it comes to providing emotional comfort to the man. The attitude that is meted to the woman on all indexes is one that best sees her as an inferior and debase person who is capable of contributing nothing to her developmental and the development of humanity. To compound the predicament of the woman, political, economic, social, culture and cultural practices are systematically tailored to work against her and even her natural build-up is claimed to be associated with bad luck and calamity. The summary of it all is that the woman is usually subjected to inhuman and subhuman experiences. But be all these as it may, a solace for the woman is that creation or the world is incomplete without her.

In many presentations involving man and woman, the two dominant persons who inhabit the earth, the man is idealized while the woman is debased. This attitude to the woman has persisted across cultures and has permanently set the woman out as a victim of circumstances she cannot account for. Eboh (1996:107) speculates and her speculation can be one hundred percent correct in providing justifications on the source of the plight of the woman when she writes that:

The point is that women are tacitly denied access to the Olympus not because they are capricious, but because man wants to maintain the hegemony of patriarchy which he instituted with himself as life hegumen (ruler of mankind in perpetuity). One classic authority whose argument and position has negative influence to the point of perpetually destroying whatever that remains about the woman is Hegel. Hegel sees the woman as a person that is conscious of nothing except matters bordering on family piety. He associates the woman with attributes whose exploration cannot lead to the attainment of any ideal for the advancement of the society. Infact the peak of the low regard for women can be attested to in the way it is considered unimaginable practice for any society that dreams of moving forward to cede leadership and other responsible positions to women, for doing so is tantamount to one consciously laying foundations for his failure.

The condemnation of the woman is so heavy that even in the family where it is acknowledged the woman has substantive destiny, she abysmally cannot attain consciousness that can be linked or attributed to rigorous, deep, rational and creative abstract thinking. What this signifies is that women do not possess universal endowments that God in his infinite mercies bequeaths to every human being and on the strength and basis of these misconceptions about women, women are treated as second class citizens and are subjected to various inhuman and subhuman treatments.

It is however heartwarming that the family where the woman is acknowledged to be a genius is a fundamental unit of the society whose stability or otherwise has cumulative effects on the general functioning of the society and the success of man and contrary to the various false proclamations made against women, there have been women in academic disciplines that require high abstract, logical and speculative reasoning where women have exceptionally excelled to the point of dwarfing men. Records have to be put straight that women in their natural endowments and dispositions are according to Eboh (1996:106) "less abstract, more realistic and humane" and these qualities endowed them as better candidates for governance and prudent managers of social, political, environmental, moral and economic affairs of man and his society. Unfortunately, the translation of these potentials into actuality still remain a distant dream because women are still immured in a frame of reference that is prescribed for them by men. The act of empowerment and emancipation of the individual is a bold initiative which the individual must drive or put in motion by himself or herself for his or her development and what promises the full restoration of the dignity of human person especially for the woman is her embrace of critical education. The next section of this paper indentifies practical curricular and pedagogical steps for actualizing this noble objective.

Curricular and Pedagogical strategies for empowering Nigerian woman through critical education

A credit that is given to education globally is that it develops one's critical consciousness and an exploration of this results in creative thoughts for the advancement of the individual and institutions in one's society. It is also an acknowledged fact that education becomes a gateway to modernization, a key to moral, political, scientific, economic and social progress or advancement only when one exercises his/her creative and rational capabilities in the process of acquiring education. To this end, groups that are endangered in the society can exploit the power of education in creating awareness about their predicament or in freeing themselves from whatever precarious situations they find themselves. Whereas all these are true, the education that is more receptive in providing one with intellectual and general empowerment is critical education and innovations in education for making this possible can be realized through the curriculum and the pedagogy of its delivery.

Curriculum for critical education that targets the empowerment of the woman in Nigeria can start by matching words with actions in the form of* providing women with skills. To this end, school subjects that are capable of enhancing the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills should become priority subjects to be offered by Nigerian women. Such school subjects include Agricultural Science, Fine and Applied Arts, Theatre Art and Design, Home Economics, Engineering courses, Medical and Pharmaceutical courses among others. The participation of Nigerian women in the above courses have potentials to make them economically stable in any circumstance they find themselves. Aligning themselves with the above courses is necessary because empowerment does not come by accident rather it is a conscious choice through commitment made by the individual in the course of his growth and development.

Curriculum innovation in critical education for the empowerment of the Nigerian woman can focus on conscientizing Nigerian women on politics, the teaching and learning of political science and the need for the participation of the Nigerian women in politics. It has to be said and said very strongly that politics influences and determines the day to day affairs of men, women and what happens in the state. In fact, anyone who thinks that what happens in the areas of defense, education, economy, social welfare, health, security, police, environment, resource exploration, formula for revenue sharing etc are not determined and influenced by politics may be living in a world of self made fantasy. It therefore follows that if the numerous injustices, deprivation and marginalization that Nigerian women go through should attract the attention of the executive arm of government, women in Nigeria must be part of the executive and legislative arms of government. Common sense shows that politics in Nigeria is unique so unique that any ethnic group or sex that is not effectively represented suffers political losses, which reflect in the quality of infrastructural, manpower and general development of the people and their region. This is self evident because the manner in which matters involving women can be presented and discussed when the women are not there will be different from the way it will be discussed if they are to be there. It is important one points out that women in Nigeria

have political advantage that can be turned into asset due to their number and the reality of this can only manifest if and only if women make participation in politics a priority. It is only through effective participation in politics by women in Nigeria that the much talked about empowerment of the Nigerian woman can become a reality.

Another school subject whose epistemological focus is a great asset and through which critical education can make inroads for the empowerment of the Nigerian woman is social studies. Social studies is unique in the modification of the behaviour of citizens including enabling citizens to become more analytical in discussing issues of injustice, human rights abuses, marginalization, environmental degradation, culture and other matters that are controversial. To explore the uniqueness of social studies in the empowerment of the Nigerian woman requires the teacher and the learner to reposition educational experiences or provisions in a manner where learners' response to education can be one in which education transforms its products to become socially transformative. An idea suggested by products of the education system becoming socially transformative is the development of behaviours that predispose them to critique and question social order in human affairs with an aim that such critique and questioning can transform the political, economic, social and environmental setting for the better.

A pedagogical dimension for achieving all the above is one where the teacher who manages the education industry strives to "act as transformative intellectual". An idea suggested or invoked by teachers acting as transformative intellectuals is highlighted by Foley, Morris, Gounari and Agostinone – Wilson (2015:116) when they write that "this means that teachers must struggle for social transformation inspired by the goal of democracy, freedom and justice". It is right to say that professional and pedagogical dispositions that teachers are expected to demonstrate in the course of their duties as producers of human capital is one in which they intensify efforts at shaping and persuading female learners and learners generally under their care to become active citizens so that the process of socially transforming the society for the better can become a reality.

Whereas this is true, teachers are also expected to develop and initiate classroom practices that are rich and robust in promoting democratic and egalitarian values especially those that promote teacher-student friendly relationships where all participants and stakeholders accord corresponding respect to one another. The commitment that the teacher demonstrates democratic and egalitarian values with all amount of vigour and seriousness in the course of discharging his duties should be one that challenges learners to be morally and socially responsible. Whereas teachers make the development of learners along the line spelt out above a priority, learners must ensure that they develop autonomously so that they can existentially make choices on their own or take their destiny in their own hands. Lastly, any attempt to consciously address the prevailing narratives where injustices, denials and marginalization against women are fast becoming norms through critical education must start with sound and solid foundations in teacher education. Stamping the seal of critical education on teacher education curriculum can consciously and existentially challenge would-be teachers to realistically identify philosophical and ideological practices

in the education system that may constitute obstacles or obstructions to achieving a harmonious and just world. As problems that are identified are half solved, this awareness can raise combatant army of teachers with efficient and effective skills to resolve the ever-present and split second developments in education for the sustainable development of humanity generally and the Nigeria woman in particular. Knowledge of critical education for the would-be teacher is necessary because the education industry is a hotbed where political, economic, metaphysical, religious, axiological, social and ideological issues battle for supremacy and all these at every point in time need to be attended to or clarified as necessary and fundamental conditions for successful outcome for learners and the state. Beside successful outcome for learners and the state, knowledge of the workings of critical education in teacher education promises equipping would-be teachers with skills for interrogating practices which on the surface may be simple but inherently may be harmful at the level of implementation. Through the skills of interrogation which the knowledge of critical education equips the would-be teacher with, the would-be teacher can resolve such conflicts in education.

CONCLUSION

We have in this paper focused on the role of critical education in the empowerment of the Nigerian woman and have established the role of the individual in his or her empowerment. Part of what is established is that self motivation is key to empowerment and this implies that the Nigerian woman has a lot to do for her empowerment. The paper proposed curricular and pedagogical directions critical education can be tailored to so that the empowerment of the Nigerian woman and by extension the empowerment of mankind can become a reality. The paper identified among other things that for real empowerment to take place, there must be increase in the level of participation of the people to be empowered in all key sectors of life that have potentials to improve the quality of life of a people. What this means is that consciously creating opportunities that allow marginalized people increase in control and participation in all the key sectors that can positively enhance life is a form of empowerment and a decrease in control and participation in all key sectors that can positively enhance life is a loss of empowerment for the citizens.

As self motivation is key for the empowerment of the Nigerian woman, women in Nigeria should strive to motivate themselves or be optimistic and forward looking. Part of how they can make this a reality in their lives is to have a vision of life and practically work towards actualizing that vision. Any woman who expects empowerment but has no vision can be seen as one who plans building something on nothing and in nature, this is not possible.

Any individual who is eager to benefit from the process or goal of empowerment must first and foremost believe in himself or herself as well as believe in the empowerment that is provided for him or her. It is only when he or she believes in himself or herself or in the empowerment package that is provided that any initiative, support or resources targeted for the said empowerment can become meaningful in his or her life. Where all these obtains, the individual in question can meaningfully develop himself or herself and consequently

contribute his or her quota to his or her empowerment and the sustainable development of his or her state.

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