

Empowering Women for Sustainable Development through Entrepreneurship Education

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Abstract

The central contention of this paper is that women are the ones who suffer most from the pervasive effects of poverty in present Nigerian society. One can point to some of the ways in which poverty and structural violence affect the health, and well-being of women in terms of maternal mortality, domestic violence, susceptibility to diseases like HIV/AIDS and STD, sexual violence, abuse and exploitation etc. This situation has also given rise to child trafficking and prostitution as women seek for various illegitimate means of survival. It is against this background that this paper focuses on researching on ways and means of empowering women for sustainable development through entrepreneurship education. This paper argues that entrepreneurship education will equip women with skills and ideas to start up small scale business that would make them self-reliant and also contribute to sustainable development in Nigeria.

Introduction

There are many reports in several mass media about increasing rate of poverty and unemployment resulting from current economic recession in Nigeria. Poverty manifests in form of lack of access to three square meal per day, poor access to quality

health care, shelter, clean water among others, which makes an individual vulnerable to ill-health among others. Women, especially the illiterate and those in rural areas seem to be seriously affected by the current economic recession in Nigeria. Observation by the author has shown that some women engage in prostitution and child trafficking to survive in this unpleasant period in Nigeria. Some women also seem to have difficulties developing business ideas and starting up a business due to insufficient knowledge, skills and the necessary support they need. There is dire need for women to be empowered through entrepreneurship education. Mallum (2014) pointed out that entrepreneurship education has been recognized globally as the greatest tool for empowering an individual and the whole nation to achieve financial stability and poverty reduction. Entrepreneurship education help women to develop self-esteem and self-confidence necessary to be creative and innovative, which is a milestone to sustainable development. It can inculcate in women, the spirit of self-reliant and wealth creation and as such bring about financial independence.

Conceptual Clarification

The conceptual clarification focused on the basic concepts of this paper, which are women empowerment, sustainable development and entrepreneurship education.

Women Empowerment

Several authors have defined woman empowerment in different perspectives. According to Rajeshwari (2015), women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of communities of women. Empowering women could refer to comprise building their capacity or making the best of lives of women for governance and socio-economic advancement (Borode, 2011). In the view of Kaego (2009) empowering women is a strategy that seeks to transform the structures of women subordination through changes in right and all these other institutions that reinforce and perpetuate total male dominance. In the conceptualization of Nwali and Akuma (2009), women empowerment is the process of equipping or supporting women with abilities to better appreciating their self-worth, which helps them to live their lives to the fullest and thus contributing to national development. In the same vein, Igboke and Nwali (2007) defined women empowerment as the state of being, which reflect certain level of women's critical consciousness about external reality and awareness of their internal thought, construction and belief systems that have a bearing on their well-being in terms of gender and social equity. According to Ovute, Dibia and Obasi (2015), women empowerment is the breaking of the barriers that limit women from doing certain things men do in the society. Continuing, Ovute et al stated that it is setting women free from cultural and traditional bondages and that which militate against their productive powers and development. In the context of this paper, women empowerment is conscious efforts directed at changing the orientation of women by rendering any form of support or training, which make them take decisive steps to venture into businesses or trade in a bid to become self-reliant and contribute to the

development of their families, communities and society at large. Empowering women entails uplifting their political, social and economic strength.

Sustainable Development

Enwere and Ugwu (2013) defined sustainable development as a pattern of economic growth in which resources use aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present but also for generations to come. In the perception of Ibeh and Nwafor (2009) sustainable development is development that is characterized by equity and that is socially responsive to the problem of poverty and inequality between classes, communities and nations. Equally contributing on the subject matter, Nwanekwe (2009) defined sustainable development as maintenance of a steady growth and improvement in the people's ability and capacity, discipline responsibility and material well-being. Sustainable development is steady and consistent political, cultural, economic, social and institutional growth that results to improved standard of living of individuals for the current and future generation. Sustainable is multi-faceted in the sense that capture positive political, cultural, social and institutional growth as well as consistent improvement of well-being of women and entire society at large. It also captures attitudinal change and perception on basic issues in the society.

Entrepreneurship Education

For clearer understanding, it is essential to define the two key words in entrepreneurship education. Omebe (2013) defined entrepreneurship as the ability to create and build up a new business through personal effort, creativity and innovativeness. Also, Ugiagbe (2007) defined entrepreneurship as

the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coping with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need, thereby creating wealth. Education, on the other hand, is the training given to individuals to enable them acquire the necessary knowledge, attitudes, skills, values to contribute to the development of individuals and the society at large. Mbaeri, Muoemenam, Nwachukwu and Njoku (2016) defined entrepreneurship education as a specialized training given to acquire the skills, ideas and managerial activities and capacity for self-employment. According to Akpomi (2009), Entrepreneurship education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit, of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes in widely different contexts. In the context of this paper, Entrepreneurship education is a practical form of education that is geared towards building women's self-confidence, developing their potentials and inculcating necessary skills, knowledge and ideas to undertake a business or trade and effectively manage it.

Link between Women Empowerment and sustainable Development through Entrepreneurship Education

The wide spread and acceptance of entrepreneurship education in several countries, is a clear indication of its roles in empowering women for sustainable development. Empowering women through entrepreneurship education enable them play active roles in mainstream of economic activities. Entrepreneurship education equip women with skills, knowledge and ideas to develop and start up small or medium scale businesses that will in the long run, develop to large scale business. Similar to this, Ojeifo (2012) pointed out that entrepreneurship

education is a key driver of the economy and wealth, with the assertion that majority of available jobs are created by small businesses that are started by entrepreneurially spirited individuals. Many of these businesses most times advance to, as well as create big businesses.

There are viable investment opportunities that have remained untapped due to insufficient or lack of knowledge and skills. Entrepreneurship education equips the recipients (women) with skills and knowledge that would enable them identify viable investment opportunities in their societies (Mbaeri, Muoemenam, Nwachukwu & Njoku, 2016). Identification and undertaking of viable investment opportunities contributes to real per capita income of any nation.

Sustainable development is not one-sided; it captures improvement on the living standard of individuals in the society irrespective of one's gender or age. Empowering women with basic ideas to venture and success in the business of their interest brings about even development. With more participation in entrepreneurship activities, more wealth is created thereby reducing gender inequality in the society.

Empowerment of women through entrepreneurship education enables them to participate fully in family and societal decision-making, attend increased health and control of their children's education (Okafor, Agboola & Faboye, 2011). This implies that empowerment through entrepreneurship education will go a long way to enhance the provision of quality education for their children. Empowering women can help in checking and limiting moral decadence among them. Hardship or unpleasant economic condition seems to make women more sexually vulnerable which at the long run increase the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and crimes among others.

Dimensions of Women Empowerment

Mujahid, Ali, Noman and Begum (2015) identified three major dimension of women empowerment. These are social, economic and political dimensions.

1. **Social Dimension:** social dimension of empowerment covers the various aspects of social well-being of women like female literacy, health, equal opportunities and equal access to justice

(Mujahid, Ali, Noman & Begum, 2015) Female literacy is concerned with the ability to read, write and effectively communicate in the society. Social empowerment helps women to develop self-confidence and participate effectively in the various activities in the society.

2. **Economic Dimension:** Economic dimension of women empowerment includes: access to credit, remunerated and sustainable development (Mujahid, Ali, Noman & Begum, 2015). Women could be economically empowered by giving top priority to women entrepreneurship development programmes, training and employment scheme for women. etc. There are some areas that could be less capital intensive to train women and financially support them to start a business after receiving such trainings and education. For instance; bead-making, hat-making, baking, hair-dressing, internet provider, supplies of computer accessories such as papers, photocopiers and stationeries, selling of GSM recharge cards and event management among others. These will contribute to economic empowerment of women which eventually will increase women's access to economic resources and opportunities like jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and

market information (OECD cited in Ayobade, 2012).

3. **Political Dimension:** Political dimension of women empowerment is basically concerned with women political freedom. This include: equal right to vote and be voted for. Ovute, Dibia and Obasi (2015) asserted that very few women in Nigeria contest for elective post; rather, they limit their political activities to voting or appointment into political position. Women's negative attitude toward contesting for elective position seems to be attributed to their perception of politics as a dirty game. To support this, Agu (2007) pointed out that women see politics as a dirty game, a business involving intimidation, rigging, assassination, kidnapping of opponents and all sorts of electoral violence which they cannot cope with. Women could be politically empowered by creating an atmosphere of free and fair election in the country. An enabling environment that allows women to engage in decision making process in a sustainable and effective way, free from political harassments and violence as well as identifying aspirants and pairing them with establishment women politicians; playing a mentoring role and providing capacity building training to young or aspiring female politicians among others increase women's intentions to politics (Agabalajobi, 2010). Also, Jacobs cited Ayobade (2012) opined that women should regain their confidence and prove themselves worthy of leadership and they should not be contended with token appointments and must also ensure that they take hold of the evolving political agenda alongside their male counterparts.

Problems Facing Women Empowerment for Sustainable Development through Entrepreneurship Education

There are several problems facing women empowerment for sustainable development through entrepreneurship education. These problems are discussed below:

- (1) **Inadequate Funding:** Women seem not to have access to banks and other financial institutions because they lack collateral security. This can be attributed to the fact that houses, land and other properties that facilitate access to bank credit is usually owned by men. The ability and or difficulty to source fund is a very serious setback in the process of developing a positive entrepreneurial spirit (Obikezie, 2010). Sometimes, women with zeal or interest in small scale business have difficulty in accessing credit facilities.
- (2) **Traditional/Cultural Barriers:** The patriarchal culture of male supremacy still remain embedded, obscured within traditional institutions and structures held in abeyance and relative utmost sacredness (Ejumudo, 2013). In most parts of Nigeria, women by tradition and culture are usually excluded in many activities that affect them such as family meetings, village and community meetings (Livinus, 2009). Various cultures restrict the roles of women to domestic activities such as keeping the home clean, bearing children, cooking food for the entire family members among others (Undiyaundeye, 2013). The cultural or traditional restriction of women to the kitchen, the sitting room and other room make their roles to sustainable development less important and as such, it is conceived that they require little or no empowerment and or entrepreneurship education.
- (3) **Inadequate Facilities:** Entrepreneurship education is a practical-oriented training that is better taught with certain tools, equipment or machinery in order to enable its recipient to internalize the skills and knowledge acquired. Akinfolarin and Rufai (2017) posit that some facilities in our schools are underutilized while some are overutilized and some are not available. Insufficient teaching equipment, tool, gadgets or machinery for practical-oriented training for women pose great challenges when it comes to empowering women for sustainable development through entrepreneurship education.
- (4) **Poor Infrastructures:** Constant power supply, efficient transportation and communication network and host of others are essential ingredients to practical-oriented training for empowering women. Shortage of the above infrastructures adversely affects women interest in entrepreneurship education.
- (5) **Religious Barrier:** Nigerian women seem to be exploited in the name of religion. This is evident in some part of Nigeria where religion permit women to be placed in purdah. This limits women's roles just within the house. This type of religious practices abhor women empowerment of any form and so would not permit them to go through formal education, which is a foremost form of empowerment (Livinus, 2009). Similarly, Ovute, Dibia and Obasi (2015) pointed out that some religions strongly believe that women should only be seen and not heard while some view men as superior, just very few others see them as equal. They further stated that these different religious beliefs adversely affect the way women are treated and also the opportunities provided for them in life.
- (6) **Insufficient specialized entrepreneurship instructors:** Mbaeri, Muoemenam, Nwachukwu and Njoku (2016) pointed out that one of the handicaps in the improvement

and expansion of entrepreneurship education is the acute shortage of qualified personnel. Skilled personnel in entrepreneurship field should be employed into various entrepreneurship training and development centers in order to provide quality training and knowledge to young and aspiring entrepreneurs

Measures to Empowering for Sustainable Development through Entrepreneurship Education

(1) **Funding:** Entrepreneurship education require enough capital for its execution. A lot of capital intensive equipment and technologies are required in fostering entrepreneurship education. It is essential for government to channel more fund to women empowerment through entrepreneurship education.

(2) **Reorientation of Women Mind:** Women need to be re-oriented that their role in the society is not limited to the house chores. They need to understand that they have roles to play in economic, social, cultural and political development of the country by participating in and contributing to various issues in the country. To this effect Ejumudo (2013) opined that there is need for a re-orientation by individuals, groups, institutions and agencies (both governmental and non-governmental) on gender equality issues that will translate into attitudinal change and response, which is germane for the efficacy of gender equality and women empowerment in Nigeria.

(3) **Training of Personnel:** People who are experts in entrepreneurship education need to be committed and encouraged. They are the ones that should be engaged in continuing professional development in the field of entrepreneurship education (Nwangwu & Ezugworie, 2013). It is

essential to organize workshops, seminars or conferences to people in different professions that engage in entrepreneurship education and training of others. This will enable them cope with global changes, as well as keep pace with new challenges and needs of entrepreneurship education.

(4) **Provision of Credit Facilities:** Loan Facilities by government and financial institution will encourage women to develop entrepreneurship spirit knowing very well that they will have access to credit facilities to embark on any viable business.

(5) **Infrastructural Development:** Availability of infrastructural facilities such as good road and communication network, electricity, access to good water among others, play vital roles in stimulating ones interest in developing business ideas and venturing into such businesses. These infrastructural facilities will in no doubt help them to excel in their businesses. Community and government need to facilitate the provision of basic infrastructural facilities in order to stimulate women's interest in entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

Empowering women through entrepreneurship education help them to adjust to these current challenges of Nigeria economy. Furthermore, it will develop their potentials, thereby enable them contribute to sustainable development in Nigeria. When women are equipped with entrepreneurship skills, they are spurred to take decisions and venture into businesses. Having been grounded in identifying viable business opportunities as well acquired and developed the needed skills to start and excel in such ventures, they fully opt for it. The women become part of the businesses that promote developmental activities in the communities

and at the same time sustain them. It is essential to note that sustainable development require full participation of both men and women in economic, political, social, cultural and religious activities in the society.

Recommendations

The following recommendation is made by the author:

1. There is need for each state of the federation to have at least standard entrepreneurship development centre to training qualified personnel in entrepreneurship that would serve as extension workers to educate and develop entrepreneurship spirit in women. The development centre could also be used as a training ground for women empowerment.
2. The Government should develop feasible policies that encourage women empowerment through entrepreneurship. Furthermore, an independent committee should be constituted to monitor and annually review the implementation level of the policy.
3. Other than collateral, Government and financial institutions should create conditions that make it possible for women to access credit facilities. For instance, the women should be granted loan when she has a good business plan and feasible repayment schedule.
4. Government and stakeholders through mass media such as radio, television, newspaper, internet among others, sensitize the women on the need to develop positive entrepreneurial spirit.

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