

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CREATIVE AND FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

This paper investigated women empowerment through creative and functional education in Delta State, Nigeria. The study was premised on the fact that despite the increase awareness of the influence of education, its impact on the empowerment of women have faced setback in Nigeria. This is blamed in part to non-exposure of most women to creative education. This situation made most of them find it difficult to function in environment that demand skill related competence. Thus, it was the main objective of the researcher to examine the extent to which women empowerment is affected by creative and functional education. the study was guided by four assumptions reflecting the variables of creative-functional education and women empowerment. Review of related literature was hinged on conflict theory which is a sociological perspective on education. The study utilizes the survey research design involving the use of a self respondent interview research instrument titled: Women Empowerment Through Creative and Functional Education Interview (WETCFEI). The instrument which obtained its validity through experts judgment was subsequently administered to a purposively selected sample consisting 20 participants. Generated data were subjected to computation on a true or false rating scale. The exploratory technique was employed for the analysis of data. Results produced the finding that, Nigeria education is not creative enough and thus the paper concludes that women empowerment can be achieved through creative and functional education and that since education increases the chances of women empowerment, it was recommended among others that creative and functional education should be included in the nation's curriculum of education at all levels in Nigeria.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Creative, Functional, Education

Creative and functional education seems to be one of the many attempts to bring innovation to education. Study by Agbowuro, Saidu and Jimwan (2017) found that creativity is a key driver in the

global economy. Their observation is informed by the fact that in the majority of national curricula, creativity is perceived as secondary in many subjects. The consequence therefore is that students

leave school without knowing how to create and innovate. The implication is that they will be under prepared for challenges that our society and economy is facing. It is against this backdrop there is the clamour for a type of education that will be functional. This is because society is at the cross road of the output the educational system is achieving in terms of manpower turnover, where majority of the workforce from all level of education seems to be performing abysmally in nearly almost sectors of the economy in Nigeria.

Adewale (2014) argued that education has to be functional. According to him, a functional education deals with a holistic and functional experience that is focused on the identification of situational problems, gathering of information to make decisions in a world of challenges and realities of life, enhancing users and end users to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes to showcase new concepts as a vehicle of globalizing such countries or state for meaningful co-existence, sustainability and development. His understanding of the concept indicates that education should be able to prepare the individual for meaningful living and be able to contribute his or her quota to the development of the environment they find themselves. In other words education is said to be functional if learners are able to demonstrate cognitive, affective and psychomotor competencies resulting in self-realization and actualization of set goals in life.

Further, Udoh and Akpan (2014) agree with the fact that functional

education should be capable of producing Nigerians who can manufacture raw materials, machines and tools needed for local and international markets, invent new designs, discover drugs capable of curing diseases hitherto incurable and transform the nation from consumption to a manufacturing status. The observation contained in their conceptualization points to the fact that economic growth as well as national development draws from education that is creative and functional. This is because a functional and creative educational programme has the objective of enhancing capacity building aimed at reproducing the needed manpower that will achieve national goal, including integration and economic development. Hence, in the opinion of Arisekola (2009), a functional education will make Nigeria attain her national goal consisting of the vision 20/2020. This observation show the importance of a creative and functional education in Nigeria. According to Ajayi (2016), the importance of functional education to national life cannot be over stated. He believed that education makes us think rationally amongst several other benefits. This indicates that a creative and functional education empowers individual to enable them meaningfully contribute to the development and growth of society. It also help them to fulfill their dream and become self-reliant, independent, reliable and dependable, particularly as it affects women empowerment.

While education is seen as a major tool for the empowerment of individual in society, much of it influence and focusing it on the empowering the women in

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modern society has become a growing concern. This is because women empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society. Education plays a significant role in empowering women because the educated women is able to acquire increase and improve her social, economic, political and legal strength to ensure equal right to women and to make them confident enough to claim their rights such as freely live their life with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity; have complete control of their life both within and outside of their home and work place; to make their own choices and decisions, have equal rights to participate in social, religious and public activities, have equal social status in the society among other gender equality.

Despite the increase awareness of the influence of education and its impact on women empowerment which appears to have gained attention since the start of the 21st century, it seems there is setback to achieving the goal of women empowerment in Nigeria. This is blamed in part due to the non exposure of most women to creative education making it difficult for them to function in environment demanding skill related competencies and knowledge based utilization. As a result, many women are grossly affected whereas women empowerment is made possible through creative and functional education. but if education is not creative enough, it will be difficult to stimulate most women to show

interest in it and as such it is not possible for most women to be motivated in the creative disciplines. In addition, gender hegemony seems to frustrate women attempts to consider the option of choosing career relating to creative education. Hence, most sectors in the Nigerian economy is male dominated, even though the contribution of women in the growth of every section of society cannot be overstressed. Observation points to the fact that most educated women occupy respected social, economic and political position in Nigeria.

Prompted by this observation, the researcher of this paper intends to investigate the issue affecting women empowerment through creative and functional education. This investigation is carried out in Delta State. It utilizes the survey research design involving the use of a self-respondent interview research instrument titled: Women Empowerment Through Creative and Functional Education Interview (WETCFEI). The instrument which obtained its validity through experts judgment of colleagues in the Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka was subsequently administered to purposively selected sample consisting of 20 participants where male =16 and female =4 respectively. 19 of the participants were gainfully employed, giving 99% of the employment status of the sampled participants. Also, educational qualification of participants indicates that 18 posses as highest qualification the M.Sc, M.A. and M.Ed degree, giving 88% of their qualification ratio. Experience of participants shows

that 5 have 10 years of working experience while 15 of these have between 2-9 years of working experience. Thus, the choice of the interviewee is considered suitable because majority had high degree, they are in one form of employment or the other and had considerable years of working experience to be able to respond to the question raised during the interview session which is structured for self-response which attempts to elicit information based on their opinion in relation to women empowerment through creative and functional education in their immediate environment.

The study is guided by four main assumptions. These are:

- i. Nigeria education is not creative enough and as such it is not empowering and that women are grossly affected.
- ii. Gender hegemony is responsible for most women not participating in creative education
- iii. Education will become functional if every sector of society contributes their quota
- iv. Education is a veritable tool for the empowerment of individual in any society.

Exploration of these assumptions was based on both secondary data and responses generated from the candid opinion of interviewee whose observation on each of the stated assumptions is subjected to content analysis noting that the study is non parametric but essentially qualitative research approach.

Theoretical Basis of the Study

The paper adopts the conflict theory which is a theoretical sociological perspective on education contained in the study by Ballantine and Hammack (2009). According to this theory, education promotes social inequality through the use of tracking and standardized testing and the impact of its hidden "curriculum". The theory is an aspect of functional and creative education because it provides the understanding of how education serves in fulfilling a society's various needs of which empowerment is an aspect. It is a general notion that the most important function of education is sociological elevation and empowerment of member of society to actualize their life goals including women participation in economic, political and employment generating activities. Since conflict theory tended towards social inequality, its adoption to examine this study becomes relevant and adequate because one of the assumptions of this study was that gender hegemony is responsible for most women not participating in creative education. Therefore, the study is hinged on this perspective to direct its conceptualization and review of related literature under the following thematic structure.

The Concept of Functional and Creative Education

Different explanations have been adduced as to what is meant by the term creative education. most of the definition about the concept stem from the fact that creative education can be broadly defined as creative ways of teaching, thinking and

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learning. From a psychological perspective as stated by Psychology Today (2017), creative education is when students are encouraged to problem solving when faced with a challenge and can be used in all subjects. That instead of being taught to reiterate what was learned, students learn to develop their ability to find various solutions to a problem. Pearson, Russ and Spannagel (2008) reasoned that creativity is an important component of the positive psychology movement which comprises a variety of cognitive, affective and interpersonal processes intended to optimize children's functioning in social domains, academic domains or artistic domains. The postulation of the three authors indicate that creative education has as its goal the preparation of the individual to be equipped in the three domain of life knowledge so that he/she can adequately function in his/her immediate environment by using his/her head, heart and hands to build his/her future. Guided by this notion, Robinson (2010) say that creativity can be defined on a variety which consists cognitively, intellectually, socially, economically, spiritually and from the perspective of different disciplines within the arts, sciences and humanities. According to him, the creative process involves being imaginative, creative and innovative. This results in three distinct but related concepts, that is:

- See – which deals with seeing something in the mind's eye
- Think – it relates with creativity where the individual uses imagination to solve problems, and

- Produce – this deals with innovation and how the individual apply creative ideas and be able to implement solutions.

The model outlined from the study by Robinson shows the importance of creative education because to see, think and product result of acquired knowledge for the well-being of society cannot be quantified when compared with the barrenness of the mind based on the fact that the eyes have not received enlightenment because the individual is not subject to the process that is involved in thinking critically and as a result cannot optimally perform assigned functions and duties when faced with challenge of social responsibilities. Ivana and Jakub (2015) traced the importance of creative education by linking it with the need for more critical thinkers in business and politics and to be able to solve complex problems. They maintained that “as the world becomes more interconnected, it is no longer possible to make linear decisions in business and in politics”. According to them, “current leaders are looking for people who can bring about new ideas to solve pressing issues. They also acknowledged the fact that creative education create a more engaging, personalized learning experience which typically improves the performance of each student. It is their believe that when students have more say in their education, they become more engaged which helps facilitate learning.

Tsai (2015) discussed the term creative education from the standpoint of pedagogy. In his view, creative education

could be viewed as the employment of creative means and perspectives in support of the energization of existing educational structures. He found that creative education is broadly defined as creative ways of teaching, thinking and learning. According to him, to fulfill that goal, educators should employ different approaches to encourage students to think differently and to learn efficiently. In other words, the essence of creative education is to strengthen instructional strategy that could guarantee a child centred learning. The outcome of such approach will lead to self-worth and self-reliant and ability to get task done with minimal assistance. The implication of the observation by Tsai (2015) is that creative education is attainable when teachers respond to the challenge of pedagogy. This means that creative education is a function of teacher education. The near absence of this component in teacher education in Nigeria was investigated in the study by Olibie and Akudolu (2009). They found that teacher education institutions appear to inadequately foster the spirit of creativity in the students. In a study involving four hundred students selected through random sampling technique in Anambra State using a descriptive survey design with the use of a 40-item questionnaire analyzed using mean and standard deviation found that lecturers did not use a variety of learning experiences to encourage creativity among students. The study also found that the use of instructional technologies to promote creativity was low. Going by this finding, the authors conclude that creativity

remains a blind spot in quality teacher education in Nigeria. Thus, until this situation is remedied, there is the doubt if Nigeria education will become functional.

Meaning of Functional Education

Every serious nation resorts to the instrument of education in its bid for social mobilization and change. Hence, this agent of change is made to function in such a way it propels and engineers the required change. Standing on this assumption, Asaju and Adagba (2016) described functional education as the type of education that equips the recipient with the knowledge and skills needed for that performance of productive task. According to them, it is one that helps the society meet their developmental needs. In alignment with this thought, Eze (2003) defines functional education as the education in which the ability to perform productive tasks is more emphasized than the education that aims at producing ideological conformity. He found that it is a kind of education that emphasized practice more than theory. In contrast, it appears that the Nigerian education has not been functional. This is due to the fact that too much emphasis has been placed on theoretical and academic knowledge. Ukeje (1994) associates the situation where emphasis is placed on theory far and above practice to undue emphasis on the possession of certificates instead of on what one can do. His observation is stated in the following that, "the educational processes are geared primarily to preparing candidates for examinations. Through this process of education, the

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product acquires knowledge and facts with little real understanding and without sellable skills”.

The expressed opinion by Ukeje in above perception tends to support the view that the result of this type of education will results in a dysfunctional education. The long run effect of such educational system would be that schools are likely to turn out graduates without useful cognate knowledge and skills and by extension such graduates becomes alienated from their own environment. Whereas, education is intended to empower individuals to take responsibility for their life and be able to tackle challenges that confronts them in every sphere of the economy. Thus, the idea of functional education is its ability to governize individual and make them productive economically, socially, politically and become self-sufficient by the reason of acquired skills and knowledge gained from education.

Impact of Creative and Functional Education

Education that is creative and functional ought to meet some basic objectives

- It empowers individual for creative living;
- It breaks the barrier created by gender hegemony; and
- It encourages every society to contribute their quota.

Creative living consists of one of the objectives of a functional education. This is because, education provides the engineering process for individual to live creatively. Bird (2017) found that

education could meet this objective because it brings the best potential in people exposed to its tenets. In support of the above view, Gilber (2016) discovered that through education, individuals are able to gain the courage to bring forth the treasures that are hidden within them. A model of what constitutes creative living resulting from creative and functional education is contained in the study by Cameron (2017). She outlined the following as composite of creative living to include; that with creative living, the individual will be able to; perceive meaning in the most mundane tasks; experience beauty even in the heaviest of storms; receives inspiration even from the most ordinary events; see the invisible dots that connect two distant but related objects; and feel love, the source essence that connects everything. This model is in consonant with the impact the individual draws from the exposure with education and assists him or her to take control of his life and environment.

Similarly, there is the impact of education which equips the individual to brake barrier created by gender hegemony. Hegemony implies dominance. In gender studies, hegemony is defined as the current configuration of practice that legitimizes men’s dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of women and other marginalized ways of being a man. The study by Allanana (2013) assessed the extent to which gender hegemony affects women in Nigeria. She found that the womanhood is reduced to a mere infidel and a second class citizen, hence in her view, there is the

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commonality of general belief system that the best place for women is the kitchen. According to her, “this trend has brought about tremendous misrepresentation of women right at the level of the family down to the circular society”. Igeblina-Igbokwe (2013) supports the above assertion. She observed that there is gender based violence that is entrenched in the strong patriarchal ideologies of control, subversion and subordination of women and girls, that effort to resist this has mostly been undertaken at individual level and that as a result gender hegemony continues to thrive.

It appears that education provides the efforts to resist the continued gender hegemony everywhere including Nigeria. This line of reasoning is contained in the finding by Werfhorst and Shavit (2015). They found that education is to a significant degree, a positional good. According to them, education does not only generate skills and competences, rather education also functions as a social filter. This means that values in the labour market is determined but only by the skills that are acquired in school but also by the relative position of educational qualifications. The attainment of such qualification is not a subject of gender hegemony. Hence, the liberating force of education is cherished by every spectrum of society and in this regard to the liberation of women who through education are empowered to favourably compete with their male counterparts in any sector of the economy. This argument is potent in favour of women because education not only influences labour

market outcomes but it also affects the distribution of education across families, social classes, sexes or regions. Consequent upon this truth, families are aware that the labour market value of education is positional. Therefore, they realize that their children must compete with peers in their cohort to stay ahead of the rising educational tide. It is this realization that has resulted in the increase interest in women education in Nigeria and other parts of Africa.

Education equips every member of society to contribute their quota towards the growth and development of the community they are situated. This is in tandem with the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) 6th edition (2013) in her National Policy on Education stating amongst other aims of the Nigeria education to include the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society. The informed judgment of the FRN indicates that Nigeria intends to use education to mobilize her citizens both male and female for national development and economic growth. However, it is doubtful about the extent to which education has found expression in its capacity to empower women in the Nigerian society. The gender gap appears to be widening between men and women raising the fear that educated as women are, the ratio of men to women in places of leadership remains unimaginable. This experience is captured in the observation made in the study by Allana where she

expressed her feeling that, the plight of Nigerian women like their counterparts in other parts of developed countries have been characterized by lack of adequate representation, lack of access to well-developed education and training systems for women's leadership in general, undue dominance of men in the socio-political scheme of things, lopsided political appointments and the general imbalances associated with very unjust treatment of the female citizens in its entirety. This graphic illustration of how society compresses women in Nigeria points to the urgent need for special education for women.

Education and Women Empowerment

A comprehensive framework that provided the basis for discussing the need for women empowerment is contained in the theory advanced by Sen (2013) on the theory of human development which conceptualizes that human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe and that if we continue to leave vast sections of the people of the world outside the orbit of education, we make the world not only less just but also less secure. To Sen, the gender aspect of education is a direct link between illiteracy and women's security and by extension lack of empowerment. Findings suggests that not being able to read or write is a significant barrier for under privileged women, since this can lead to their failure to make use of even the rather limited rights they may legally have to own land or other property, or to appeal against unfair judgment and unjust

treatment. This idea points to the fact that women education should be channeled towards their empowerment.

Women empowerment refers to the creation of an environment where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society. Education of girls and women plays significant role in this regard. This is because their education can lead to a wide range of benefits from improved maternal health, reduced infant mortality rates to increased prevention against HIV and AIDS. Further, the study by Paroha (2017) assessed the need for women empowerment and found that it helps women to play a significant role in society. According to her, "women and girls are the most potentially capable untapped resources on the face of the earth". Hence, it is her resolve that women need to be empowered and she found that education is the most viable means for the complete emancipation of women from socio-economic shackles of dependency and deprivations. In (2017) affirms this fact stating that "empowering girls and women is powerful. Today, we know it is the key to economic growth, political stability and social transformation. World leaders, experts and scholars alike are giving their voice to this critical endeavour". This assertion is further subjected to empirical investigation in order to determine contextually the prevailing circumstances affecting women empowerment in the study area.

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Data Analysis on Women Empowerment through Creative and Functional Education

Data that provides the empirical evidence of the state of women empowerment

through education came from the interview response on the different assumptions surrounding the issue of women empowerment.

Table 1: Table of Assumptions 1-4

s/n	Assumptions	No. of participants	Rating scale		Remark
			True	False	
1	It is becoming true that Nigeria education is not creative enough and as such it is not empowering and that women are grossly affected. How true is this assumption?	20	16	4	Upheld
2	Gender hegemony seems to be responsible to most women not participating in creative education. Could there be other factors affecting women participation in creative education?	20	13	7	Upheld
3	It is believed that education could become functional if every section of society contributes their quota. What in your opinion has women contributed to make education functional in Nigeria?	20	17	3	Upheld
4	Education is considered as a veritable tool for the empowerment of individual in any society. How has education empowered women in your environment? Please support your view with some specific examples.	20	20	0	Upheld

Assumption One:

It was assumed that Nigeria education is not creative enough and as such it is not empowering and that women are grossly affected. The aim of this assumption was to clarify the extent to which the assumption could be accepted based on the opinion of interviewees sampled for the purpose. The assumption arising from the data generated on this variable and its subsequent analysis shows that of the 20 participants that were interviewed on the

subject-matter, it strongly affirmed positively the assumption as true as against 4 who thought otherwise. Based on this result, the assumption is upheld, meaning that Nigerian education is not creative enough. The implication is that it is not empowering and women are grossly affected.

Assumption Two:

This assumption stated that gender hegemony is responsible for most women not participating in creative education. The purpose of this assumption was to find out if gender hegemony account for the perceived low interest of women in creative education in the country. In order to establish this assumption the responses on the variable from 20 sampled interviewee were utilized. The collation of the opinion suggests that 13 of the sampled figure support the assumption while 7 participants disagree. Since the opinion of those who support the assumption are higher, it means that the assumption is upheld, indicating that gender hegemony is an influencing factor affecting most women for not participating in creative education.

Assumption Three

This assumption postulates that education will become functional if every section of society contributes their quota. To test this assumption, the researcher utilizes the pool of opinion generated from the self respondents interview conducted in the study area. The computation of the pool shows that 17 participants held the assumption as true as against 3 participants who disagree. The computation result proved that the assumption is upheld, meaning that functional education is made possible if every section of society contributes their quota.

Assumption Four:

The research assumed that education is a veritable tool for the empowerment of individual in any society. The intention of the author was to verify the extent to which education has empowered women in Nigeria. Data generated from the pool of opinion collated from the self respondent interview instrument produced a 100% agreement because the 20 participants upheld the notion that education empowers women as well as their male counterparts. Therefore, it is correct to state that education is veritable tool for women empowerment.

Discussion of Findings

The variable as to whether education is creative and empowering enough in Nigeria obtained the result which points to the fact that education is not empowering enough with the implication on women being grossly affected. This finding aligned with the study by Udoh and Akpan (2014) who found that a functional education should be able to produced individuals who are capable of producing raw materials, machines and tools used for local and international market. That a functional education prepares those who are able to invent new designs, discover drugs capable of curing diseases hitherto incurable and transform the nation from consumption to a manufacturing status. The finding was also supported in the study by Asaju and Adagba (2016). They found that a functional and creative education equips the recipient with the knowledge and skills needed for that

performance of productive task. The implication of the finding indicates that since education in Nigeria tends towards theory to the detriment of practical, most women are not being educated in the skill oriented knowledge required for their empowerment in the Nigerian society.

Gender hegemony was found to influence most women for not participating in creative education in Nigeria. This finding was supported in the study by Allanana (2013). She found that womanhood is reduced to a mere infidel and second-class citizen in Nigeria. Her finding correspond with the commonality of the general belief system that the best place for women is the kitchen. Consequently, this trend affects most women for not being creative. Igbelina-Igbokwe (2013) found that the realm of creative education is dominated by male and due to gender based violence that is entrenched in the strong patriarchal ideologies of control, subversion and subordination of women, they are tempted to withdraw from the challenge imposed by gender consideration. Efforts to resist this experience has mostly been undertaken at individual levels. The implication of the observation is that gender hegemony will continue to thrive with the consequence that women will be reduced in the field of creative education and thereby widening the gender gap in Nigeria.

The author discovered that functional education is made possible if every section of society contributes their quota. This finding is consistent with the aim of Nigeria national policy on

education which projects the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his/her society. The study by Werfhorst and Shavit (2015) aligned with the finding. They found that education does not only generate skills and competencies but also functions as a social filter. Their finding implies value in the labour market is determined not only by the skills that are acquired in school but also by the relative position of educational qualifications. Hence, it could be inferred that education equips individual for the purpose of contributing their quota to their society. By implication, women are able to compete with their male counterpart in any sector of the economy due to the fact that they have acquired the prerequisite knowledge through education.

The study found that education is a veritable tool for women empowerment. Sen (2013) agreed with the finding. He found that education gives women security which in other words ensures their empowerment. Sen discovered that being able to read and write enables women to overcome barrier that is being faced by most underprivileged women. Paroha (2017) found that education helps women to play a significant role in society. That is gives the woman the key to economic growth, political stability and social transformation. The implication of this finding indicates that not being able to read or write is a significant barrier for women participation in the many spheres of society. Therefore, when they are educated or literate, women will become

useful to themselves and the global society, they operate with high self esteem and confidence as their male counterparts.

Conclusion

This study clarified assumptions affecting women empowerment as a result of the ineffective creative and perceived non functional educational system in Nigeria. The consequence of this situation is that women are grossly affected. A functional education is that type of education that is holistic with the goal of preparing individual for meaningful living and enables these individuals to contribute his or her quota to the development of the society. Women find it difficult to compete with their male counterpart in society due to gender hegemony. This gap can only be bridged when women acquired skillful ad practical knowledge that could empower them to make useful contribution to the society. Thus, the notion that education empowers is very significant for womanhood in Nigeria.

Therefore, the paper concludes that women empowerment can be achieved through creative and functional education. This is because education creates the enabling environment for women to make decisions of their own that will benefit them as well as for the society. Since education increases the chances of women empowerment including improving her social and economic status, a functional and creative education towards women cannot be overemphasized in the Nigerian educational system.

Recommendations

Arising from the conclusion reached in this study, the following recommendations have been drawn, that:

1. Creative and functional education should be included in the national curriculum of education at all level in Nigeria. This will enable learners to be exposed early enough to the usefulness of its programme.
2. Women should be encouraged to give more attention to creative education over and against theoretical knowledge. This is because empowerment of the individual is linked to the practical knowledge he/she demonstrates for self-reliant and wealth creation
3. Gender hegemony should be discouraged in all sectors of the Nigerian economy. This will allow for more women participation in national development. According to Gilber (2016) through education women are able to gain the courage to bring forth the treasures that are hidden within them.

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