

Women Socio-Economic Status and Development: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the importance of development of women to enhance their socio-economic status in the society. Equal education is the way out of the women's plight and their contribution to sustainable socio-economic development in the society. Development means to improve or make better especially by removing faults or abuses. It means to improve a system or changes made to a system to improve it. It could be seen as economic growth in addition to social and cultural change. Without education, there is no meaningful development in any nation. Some suggestions were made and conclusion drawn that, there is development in a society, when such a society is able to bridge the gap between the educated and the ignorance, economically frustrated, the rich and the poor and also between those whose education gives the freedom of choice in the development of the skills and those who cannot choose because they have no skills to offer.

Keywords: *Women, Socio-economic Status, Development*

Introduction

Development is the process by which people create and recreated themselves to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choices and values (Ake, 2001). Development is of the people, it is people oriented. Man is the centre of all forms of development and the primary concern of education is to develop man, so that he can be able to 'create and recreate' himself/herself and her society. Lawal (2006) citing Anyanwu (1981) puts it this way, development in any society is always expressed in terms of the quality of living in that particular society. According to him, there is development in a society, when such a society is able to bridge the gap between the educated and the ignorance, economically frustrated, the rich and the poor and between those whose education gives the freedom of choice in the development of their skills, and those who cannot choose because they have no skills to offer. In the society, members have a way of rating their respective social positions. However, the ranking of societal members on individual or family basis into identified strata where prestige, benefits and power are unequally distributed is referred to as social stratification, although, stratification connotes division between different socio-economic groupings (Okeke, 2002).

In our society today, the entire societal members could be grouped into two main social classes: the upper and lower classes. The upper class comprises of people with high socio-economic status (H.S.E.S.) while the low class are people with low socio-economic status (L.S.E.S.). The researcher is of the opinion that a woman's educational level can help or hinder her development rate to an extent because the education level of an individual or individual's parent can enhance his/her level of performance early in life and lead to her high socio-economic development in Elekwa (2006).

Socio-Economic Status and Education

Factors like educational level, occupation and income of a family-social class determines its values. It is pertinent, that teachers take cognizance of these differences in the family of the students they teach. Highlighting the effect of social class on education attainment (Ezewu, 1983) in Dienye (2012) observed that people of high socio-economic status send their children to school at an earlier age. Children from these homes start from the day care or pre-nursery centres through kindergarten before the age of five. Most of them leave the secondary schools to tertiary institutions at an earlier age. High socio-economic status (H.S.E.S.) families prepare their children for school, unlike those from low socio-economic families (L.S.E.S.). The H.S.E.S. parents provide school materials much more easily for their children by virtue of their high income. He pointed out that some of these families have children education fund – a standard formula of the amount to be saved every month to spend on children's education. Children of H.S.E.S. families usually have access to the best schools both within and outside the country, it is common knowledge that they gain entry into the federal government unity and special science schools that are better equipped and adequately provided for in terms of qualified personnel. For the records, even the best private international and demonstration schools are dominated by children from the H.S.E.S. families because they can afford them.

This has to do with the fact that in order to maintain their status, high socio-economic status' families ensure that their children attend the best schools right from nursery – tertiary institutions. This guarantees access to prestigious profession and high income jobs for their children. The motivation with which children pursue education depends on the value their families place on education. A family's socio-economic status influences the lifestyle and chances of its members. Children of low socio-economic status are often victims of excessive domestic chores which affects their education. They are often given too much house chores as well as engaged in other commercial activities like having to augment the family income at the expense of their school work. Ezewu (1983) in Dienye pointed out the fact that most late comers at both the primary and secondary school levels are usually from the low socio-economic status homes.

In a nutshell, children from high socio-economic status homes do better in every ramification in school than those children for low socio-economic status homes; indeed it has been proven that over the years, that education enhances socio-economic states of individuals in the society at large.

Women Socio-Economic Status and Development

A woman's socio-economic status goes a long way to encourage or hamper her socio-economic development in the society. Women that are in the high socio-economic status group tend to have high educational status and tend to motivate their children educationally, which brings about socio-economic development later in life, as this gears the individuals to be high achievers in their various works of life thereby making for self, state and national development. The level of a woman's education appears to be an extremely important factor. As would be expected, the greater the level education attained by a woman or individuals, the stronger the probability of their socio-economic development. The women in the low socio-economic status group have little or no education formally and so may not be able to contribute visibly to the socio-economic development of themselves, state and society at large. The women with high socio-economic status are usually rich, educated and influential in the society, while the women with low socio-economic status are usually poor, uneducated, ignorant and naïve.

Attitudes towards education are influenced by social class. Dienne (2004) women from smaller families are more socio-economically developed than those from larger families. That is to say that a woman's or parental socio-economic status influences mobility and development generally. People or women from high socio-economic background tend to enjoy a high level of socio-economic development. Since, their families are usually smaller because of the high level of their parent's educational background and high level of socio-economic status. Women and parents with high socio-economic status in the society are majorly urban dwellers, enjoying a higher socio-economic development than the rural dwellers whose parents and they are of the low socio-economic status. A woman's education, mother's education, parent's occupational level and the kind of job one takes for his/her first jobs are particularly very important Denisoff and Wahrman (1975). A woman's socio-economic status influences the socio-economic development of her children and self in the society. Socio-economic status of one has been identified as one of the factors that can help or hinder development of an individual. For example, intergenerational social mobility, the social standing of children in relation to their parents (mothers) has special significance because it often reflects changes in society that affect virtually everyone (Macionis, 1994).

In our society today, earning a higher college degree, securing a higher paying job or succeeding in a business endeavor contribute to upward mobility and all these can be enhanced by an individual or individual's parental socio-economic status in the society which in turn enhances socio-economic development of one and the state.

The achievement and status of ones parents, grandparents and great grandparents could affect the status and access to privilege, power and prestige in the individual. Although the significance of family background is not pronounced in the Nigerian society but it has always been a factor that affects social mobility in the society (Oniyama & Oniyama, 2002).

For example, an individual from a high socio-economic background or family will have access to good schools and therefore will be exposed to all the good opportunities in life which will enhance his/her socio-economic development.

Conclusion

The importance of higher socio-economic status of a woman or one's parents as a distinct advantage in access to privileges power and prestige in the society cannot be over-emphasized. Socio-economic development of women from high socio-economic status or background is a sure thing. The socio-economic status of one or parents to a large extent influences the level of education one gets and so enhances the socio-economic development rate in the society. More women from H.S.E.S. homes aspire to those highly rated professions in Nigeria like the medical profession unlike most women from L.S.E.S. homes.

Recommendations

- Government should encourage women education at all levels so that women will be able to contribute meaningfully to our national economy and also better their lives.
- Special attention should be given to women in our state by way of scholarship to women from L.S.E.S homes.
- Parents should strive harder to train their female children in school since; it is believe that when you train a woman you train the society at large.
- Non-governmental organizations and even oil companies in our states should pay special attention to give scholarships to the women to go to school since education enhances the socio-economic status of individuals, which will lead to meaningful development in our society.

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