

**THE INFLUENCE OF SKILL ACQUISITION PROGRAMMES ON WOMEN  
EMPOWERMENT IN BENIN METROPOLIS**

**OMIUNU STELLA EBUN P.hD**

Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education,

University of Benin, Benin City

stellaomiunu@yahoo.com

**AIRHIAVBERE OSARO FRIDAY**

Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education,

University of Benin, Benin City

arhiavbereosaro@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

*The paper investigated the influence of skill acquisition, programmes on women empowerment in Benin metropolis. A simple survey research design was employed to explore the issue. A 20 item questionnaire supplemented with oral interview provided the data used for the study. The study involved 300 randomly selected women in Benin metropolis. The sample was drawn from across (5) five skill training development centres within Benin metropolis. The data collected were analysed using mean analyses, frequency count and simple percentages. The findings of the study showed the skill acquisition programmes have helped to empower women economically. Based on the findings it recommended that opportunity should be provided for women to participate in the programme.*

**Keywords: Skill Acquisition, Women Empowerment, Metropolis**

## **Introduction**

There is a popular and accepted saying that when you educate a woman, you educate a nation. This is an acceptable fact because of the indispensable roles of women in all viable societies beginning from home. This explains why the international women's year (1975) and the United Nations Decade for Women were aimed at drawing the world's attention to the critical roles of women in development. This gave the needed impetus for international organizations, agencies and government to work for the elimination of discrimination against women. It was this development, that informed in recent times the establishment of the National Commission for Women and the National Commission for Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education to address women development and educational issues.

Women's education which is often referred to as 'Gender Education' is directed at creating a critical awareness amongst women about their awkward situation and what they should do to remedy the situation so as to strengthen their behaviour and attitude in such a way that they become more confident in themselves. The International Council for Adult Education News (ICAE) (1995), stressed that through education, women will no longer be recipients of development assistance, but will empower themselves to work towards their own-development and the development of the country.

Bhasin (1992) postulates that women need the education, which will not help in the search and acquisition of new skills and knowledge but also help them to acquire and strengthen values like justice, equality, honesty, truthfulness and solidarity amongst oppressed groups. It should also create and release energies in women to act with conviction and courage in their various struggles at different levels.

Women education programmes serve as an empowering tool for creating more awareness of their rights, how, why and where they are being oppressed and how they can change the situation. This is because, if they become more confident, they can proceed to take a leading role and formulate strategies that challenge oppressive situations and structures. The practice of women's education in Nigeria is a combination of formal and non-formal education as well as feminism. The prime objective of giving formal education to women is

to enable them to be involved in the development of Nigeria by taking part in decision-making in order to justify their felt needs. Therefore, women's education entails a great deal of politicization, empowerment, awareness and motivation.

However, in some developing countries, including Nigeria, it has been observed that education and training are lopsided. The kind of education geared towards women is being used to socialized them to be docile, accept that they are second to men in all aspect of human endeavour. This kind of education has limited the women horizon as to the choice of occupation. She is brought up to accept certain occupation as being for male only and others as female only. This discrimination against women has been seen to be one of the factors responsible for under-development in the third world countries.

Women in Nigeria according to educational experts constitute about 55% of the entire population. The estimate is important in order to understand the place of women in the society. This has become necessary in view of the fact that women are still being treated as social minorities whereby little or no attention is paid to them in government circles, particularly as its relates to development. (UNESCO, 2001)

The problem of women education did not just start today. It emanated from creation when God created man and found out that it was not good for man to be alone, and He made him a helpmate. And since God created man, the position of women has been in the home to help their husbands on such matters as the household budget and disbursement, taking care of children and family generally. This is not to say that there was no form of education alongside with other matters at home, the education of children was handled traditionally. Traditionally, female children were given home training under strict supervision of their mothers. They were taught how to take care of children, home, prepare food, cloth weaving and other domestic duties. In addition, the girls helped their mothers in their local or petty trading and farming. Under this training, the girls were exposed to code of conduct in preparation for their future role as housewives and mothers, while the male children accompanied their fathers to farms, hunting and fishing, etc.

This long held tradition has been persisting all over the world even until this present day in most communities especially in our African countries. This traditions and cultural bias determine how they (women) should behave and what they are suited to do in the communities. And this perception has in fact tended to restrict women's participation or

involvement in socio-economic and political development, because they believe it was strictly meant for men or husbands. (Oduaran, 1997)

With the coming of western education into African countries, the focus of attention was on the men by the missionaries. Men were trained as catechist and priest to be able to read and interpret the Bible. And as time went on, the trained men saw the need to educate their children both male and female. Taking cognizance of the influence of women over their children, women education cannot be treated as a triviality, this is supported by the old adage which states thus: "train a man, you train an individual", but "train a woman, you train a nation", it is also a truism that the hand, that rocks the cradle rules the world.

Some years back women were victims of all kinds of traditions and beliefs that determine how they should behave and what they are suited to do. They were relegated to the back ground in socio-economic, cultural and political activities. They were even seen as having their place in the kitchen, some were made to believe that their role is that of baby making. They were regarded as beast of burden or appendages of their husbands that may be discarded at will, this of course made them to be regarded as men's property. Women who were generally regarded as passive beneficiaries of the good things of life seemed satisfied with playing only reproductive and other domestic roles. They were usually debased as a result of cultural practice especially when they loose their husbands thereby subjecting the widows to one form of affliction or the other. However, some scholars stated below, disagreed with this view. They argued that women have been contributing in social and political sectors but such roles were often overlooked and were never promoted.

Most developing countries including Nigeria woke up from their slumber by "The United Nations Decade For Women" with regards to women education as well as sensitized them to realize the invaluable potentials of women to development, lack of skill and discrimination. Illiteracy is one major barrier to effective participation and contribution of rural women for national development. (Azikiwe 1990).

In Nigeria, Women hold valuable place in family matters such as in the upkeep of the family, training and marriage of the children. They take care of the health, hygiene, physical and moral development of their children who are the future leaders. Their influence on their children cannot be overstressed. Women are therefore a force to be reckoned with in nation

building. But, (Busari 2003) have observed that inspite of the influence of women on nation building, tradition and culture have relegated them to inferior status and subordinate position in the society. Hence their contributions were generally neglected, disregarded and unrecognized in development plans. This has been the bane of many developing countries. Nigeria should not lose sight of the fact that it has been acknowledged in many studies and in developed countries that women play a major role in traditional and in all human endeavours such as subsistence food production, food processing, transportation of food, water, fuel, home craft, trade, domestic chores, child bearing and rearing. Improvement in these activities which in turns improves family incomes and quality of living are indicators of development and nation building. (Okeke 1995), as can be observed a lot has to be done to improve women's income and standard of living in the rural areas, improvement of women so that they may perform their task more efficiently and effectively could be achieved by providing them with better skills and equipment.

Vocational skill acquisition is not new in Africa. It has been part of the traditional system of learning. This is because the traditional system of learning, although largely informal has always lay emphasis on skill development of the individual in a particular or chosen occupation. There were various institutional provision for passing on specific skills and knowledge in specific trade from one generation to another. In other words, the vocational training, women were oriented towards domestic activities such as home management and child care and not for any gainful employment (Omoruyi & Egbadon 2000).

In view of the above, it was advocated that women should be given skill training and knowledge that will enable them perform more actively in women empowerment toward socio-economic and political development of their countries. This perceived importance of the need to provide women with skills and knowledge led many bodies to introduce or establish educational institutions for the training of females at different times.

In Nigeria the emerging trend of women empowerment has found expression in the development and initiation of a number of educational activities aimed at providing women with skills and knowledge that would make them self-reliant and take up their roles in their community along with their male counterparts, irrespective of their literacy background. It was also observed that literacy will broaden, enhanced and activate the acquired skills for

women empowerment. In other words, when literacy is combined with skill acquisition, it hasten the acquisition of skills within a very short time.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For about three decades now, women issues are being raised at their at their relation to the background in the various facets of the economy. Several attempts have been made to empower women through skill acquisition programmes in Benin Metropolis by the federal, state, local and non-governmental organizations to enhance the empowerment of women so that they can actively and effectively contribute to the development of the nation. These attempts have not yielded any fruit.

The central problem of this study is that women have been disempowered, neglected, relegated to the background in social economic life. Hence the major issue of interest in this study is to investigate what could be done to empower the women

## **Purpose of the Study**

The cardinal purpose of this study was to ascertain the influence of skill acquisition programmes on women empowerment in Benin Metropolis. Specifically, the study sought to.

1. find out if skill acquisition has influence on social security and stability.
2. ascertain if skill acquisition has contributed in empowering women.
3. assess factors enhancing women participation in skill acquisition programmes
4. investigate if the acquisition of skills has affected the economic growth of the area.

## **Research Questions**

In view of the purposes, the following questions were raised to guide the investigation

1. In what way has skill acquisition influenced social security and stability of women in the area?
2. In what ways has skill acquisition has contributed in empowering women?
3. What factors enhances women participation in skill acquisition programmes?
4. Has the acquisition of skills affected the women empowerment in economic growth of the area?

## **Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design to investigate the influence of skill acquisition programmes on women empowerment in Benin Metropolis. This type of research design was chosen because it allows for the description of attributes in a situation at one or more points in time. According to Kelinger (1979), the method has the ability to provide accurate information on a whole population even when a reliable sample is used.

The study consisted of a total of 300 women selected from five skill training development centres within Benin metropolis. Sixty (60) participants were selected from each of the five skill training development centres. The major instrument was the research questionnaire designed in the Likert format of items design. The instrument titled: “The Influence of Skill Acquisition on Women Empowerment” (ISAWÉ). Five research assistants (one for each skill training development centres) were used in administering the instrument. Participants were made to record their responses on a four-point continuum ranging from strongly agreed to strongly disagreed, with a weight of 4 to 1. The data collected was analysed using simple descriptive statistical technique and cut-off point was determined by finding the mean score



of 2.50 to the options. The instrument was validated using expert judgement approach before it was used.

### Data Analysis

The results that emerged from the investigation in relation to all the issues examined as stated in the research questions are presented in the table below.

#### Research Question 1: in what ways has skill acquisition influenced social security and stability?

Table 1: Data on the ways skill acquisition has influenced on social security and stability

S/N	ITEMS	WEIGHTED MEAN	MEAN SCORE	REMARK
1.	Raising women's awareness of social security	520	3.20	Accepted
2	Making women contribute more on security and stability in their communities	540	3.27	Accepted
3	Encouraging women to be more involved in social security and stability provision in the area	530	3.20	Accepted
4	Making women to take up the responsibility of social security and stability	550	2.30	Not Accepted

The data presented in table 1 revealed that items 1, 2 and 3 met the criterion mean score of 2.50. Only item number 4 did not meet the mean score standard or criterion. This means that respondent agree that the acquisition of skills has impact on social security and stability in the area by raising their awareness about social security and stability, making them contribute more on social security and stability and encouraging them to be more involved in social security and stability provisions in the area.

## Research 2: in what ways has skills acquisition contributed in empowering women?

Table 2: Data on Contribution of skills acquisition to empowerment of women.

S/N	ITEMS	WEIGHTED MEAN	MEAN SCORE	REMARK
1.	Raising their social status as women	570	3.20	Accepted
2.	Raising the cognitive understanding/development	510	3.00	Accepted
3.	Raising their economic or financial status	590	3.27	Accepted
4.	Raising the level of involvement in decision making	560	3.10	Accepted
5.	Raising their contribution to family well being	580	3.20	Accepted

The result in Table 2 show areas in which the acquisition of skill has influenced on women empowerment. As could be seen from the result, all of the items met the criterion means score of 2.50. This implies that the acquisition of skill by women has contributed to empowering them by raising their social status, their cognitive understanding/development, their economic or financial status, their level of involvement in decision making and making them contribute more to the wellbeing of their families.

**Research Question 3: What factors enhances women participation in skill acquisition programmes?**

Table 3: Data on factors enhancing women’s participation in skill acquisition

<b>S/N</b>	<b>ITEMS</b>	<b>WEIGHTED MEAN</b>	<b>MEAN SCORE</b>	<b>REMARK</b>
1.	The need to raise their economic status	510	3.10	Accepted
2.	The need to raise their social status	530	3.00	Accepted
3.	The need to be self-reliant and dependent	520	3.20	Accepted
4.	The desire to be useful and make their contribution to family	530	3.10	Accepted
5.	The desire to raise their level of understanding	540	3.27	Accepted
6.	The need to build or raise their self-confidence	570	3.00	Accepted
7.	The desire to become self-actualised	580	3.20	Accepted
8.	The desire to show that women can be self-dependent	560	3.10	Accepted

The data presented in table 3 revealed the responses on factors enhancing women’s participation in skill acquisition programme. The result revealed that all the items met the mean score criterion. This implies that the respondents agree that all the factors identified enhance women’s participation in skill acquisition programme. It can therefore be concluded that the need to raise their status, social status, be self-reliant and dependent, more useful and make them contribute to family wellbeing, the desire to raise their level of understanding, the need to build or raise their self-confident to show that they can be self-dependent and self-actualise themselves enhance women’s participation in skill acquisition programme.

**Research Question 4: Has the acquisition of skills affected the women empowerment in economic growth?**

Table 4: Data on effect of skill acquisition on economic growth

<b>Level of Response</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	261	87
No	39	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100%</b>

The result in Table 4 reveals that 87 percent out of the 300 respondents indicated that the acquisition of skill by women has affected positively the economic growth of the area, while 13 percent of them disagreed on the issue. This implies that the acquisition of skills by women has affected economic growth in the area.

**Discussion of Results**

The result of this investigation has been quite revealing and instructive. The analysis of the data collected provided an opportunity to ascertain the influence of skill acquisition programmes on women empowerment. It was also observed that the study has helped justified the need to accord women a form of authority and opportunity to participate in education, politics and in all affairs of the State. The study has enabled those in charge of women affairs evolves strategies or means of helping the women to perform their different roles as mothers, mother-in-laws and teachers. The study has also helped the women to utilise their potent for the good of the society in assisting the men to achieve development goals for the society.

Finally, the study also found that a number of women’s training programmes have been put in place to fast track progress in empowering women folk. In spite of various progress achieved by women in acquiring skills, several constraints have prevented women from participating fully in development process in the society.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of skill acquisition programmes on women empowerment requires that the women play important roles in most facets of nation's life. The women acquire income generating skills which empowers instead of depending on their husbands and government assistance. Also, the success in skill acquisition on women empowerment is still very minimal and the culture and tradition has limited the women folk for participation fully in the training development programmes, hence they are assigned or restricted to some specific jobs. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Women should be effectively enlightened and mobilised in order to gain the benefit of skill acquisition on women empowerment
- Husbands should be educated on the importance of allowing their wives to benefit from the training programme
- More women organisation should be given recognition to enable them perform effectively
- The local government should assist in enlightening the women on the importance of skill acquisition on empowerment to enable them participate on equal basis with men folks
- Government should effect proper machinery for coordination and supervision of all women activities.

## References

- Azikiwe, U. (1990). *Women education and empowerment*. Nsukka: Fulda Publishing Company
- Bhasin, K. (1992). Challenges for women development and education in Africa: *Adult Education and Development*, 28, 20-28
- Falade, J.O. (2012). The influence of skill acquisition programmes for women empowerment in OJo local government Area of Lagos State. (Unpublished M.Ed Dissertation) Department of Adult and Non-formal Education, University of Benin.
- Frontline magazine (2007). Women and 2007 Elections. [www.frontline.women.org](http://www.frontline.women.org)
- Gender equality and empowerment of women through ICT. [www.org/womenwatch/2000-2009](http://www.org/womenwatch/2000-2009)
- Oduaran, A.B. (1997). Women education development: Implications for Management: *CARESON Journal of Research and Development* 1 (1) 20-25
- Okeke, A. (1995). *Handbook for Nigeria social workers*, University of Ibadan: Printed by Daybis Ltd. Pg 248.
- Omoruyi, F.E.O, and Egbadon, M.O. (2000). Effectiveness of Practicum Supervision in Adult Education as Perceived by the Pre-Service Adult Educators. *Benin Journal of Educational Studies*, (11) 1 and 2, 60-70.
- Skill acquisition, key to grassroots Empowerment: [www.aw/project.org](http://www.aw/project.org) United Nations 2005. The millennium development goals report. Avail <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mi/pdf/MDG/20> Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> Oct
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (2000). Progress of United Nations: New York Available at <http://www.uniform.undp.org/progress> September (2006).