



Higher Education Attainment for Sustainable Development: A Study of Ewurum's Sedulous

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ABSTRACT

The quest for better standard of living has led many into crime which have projected the country negatively to the international community. Financial instability among low-income earners with little or no certificate is worrisome and breeds stress to those concerned as they constantly struggle to make ends meet. Therefore, the need to constantly improve on one's status is necessary. Literature as the mirror of the society exposes the challenges individuals face daily in making a living for themselves and their dependents among others. Consequently, attainment of higher education which attracts gainful employment help to cushion the effect, and increase sustainable developments among the workforce. The study analyzes sixty (60) utterances of some of the characters in Ewurum's Sedulous to determine the effects higher education have on their personality and their contributions to their environment afterwards using Goffman (1967) face theory. The paper observes the confidence exhibited by these characters in administering their duties and also the respect accorded them because of their positive outputs in their various fields which stems from their success in their academic and fields of endeavors. The study, therefore, recommends that instructors should ensure that students embark on qualitative research topics that will contribute to sustainability in various fields. Also, collaboration among the government and higher institutions is advised so that recommendations from these researches are implemented.

INTRODUCTION

Many developed countries boast of their giant strides in the world of technology, sciences, medicine, arts and many other fields which contribute greatly to their gross domestic product (GDP) annually. The citizens of these countries and even migrants train and advance themselves a step further in the technical- know- how required of their various fields to be relevant and productive.

Higher education offers people the opportunity to personally develop themselves, specialize and remain relevant in their field of endeavour or area of interest. Education endows on an individual the opportunity to develop cognitively, affectively and in the area of psychomotor. These abilities to enhance their skills, knowledge and productivity according to Pushkar (2001), positively boosts the economy. Omolewa (2006), views education as the primary key to development and financial empowerment. It aims at making an individual independent. As an achievement, education exposes that a worthwhile activity has been intentionally transmitted in an acceptable manner (Sule & Okam 2011).

Higher education acquisition in licensed or educationally approved centres or institutions help one to specialize, develop and improve on his skills as well as expose one to higher employment, higher earning and higher productivity to himself and the society at large. The quest for higher education prompted the establishment of regular, satellite, sandwich, evening, weekend and online programmes to give everyone ample opportunity to improve on himself, age and resources notwithstanding. The watchword here is convenience.

Muhammed, Abudullahi & Isah (2013) citing Tahir (2000) and Akinpelu (2002), assert that continuing education like conventional higher institutions help individuals who dropped out of school for some reasons to cover lost grounds, develop their potentials for the socio-economic and political development of a nation. Furthermore, Osuji (2001) in Muhammed, Abudullahi & Isah (2013) asserts that part-time programmes provide educational activity opportunities for school leavers, the employed and unemployed, illiterates, drop-outs, educationally disadvantaged and different categories of professionals to achieve the satisfaction of fulfilling their dreams and aspirations in life. He sees these remedial programmes as an instrument of equalizing access to education irrespective of age, sex or social stratification.

Ewurum's 'Sedulous' addressed some of the challenges faced by some characters that were erstwhile school dropouts and their lifestyle and contributions to the society after successfully attaining higher education, contributing to sustainable development. The quest for self-actualization is attainable for both the male and female so long as the internal drive for one's creative, intellectual and socio potential goals are activated. The drive to be part of the team that contribute towards sustainable development necessitates the mental shift from where one is and where he wants to be.

Objectives

This study aims at:

1. Assessing to what extent higher education affects productivity rate for sustainable development
2. Examining the responsiveness of the society towards higher education and sustainable development
3. Examine the relationship between higher educational attainment, productivity and peaceful co-existence

Context

The play *Sedulous* by Rose Colette Ewurum exposes the crises, challenges and frustrations experienced by three school drop outs; Uche, Obinna, and Eunice. Though married, the need to live a fulfilled life spurred them into going for higher education. This quest helped them to add value to their life and society; it also made them gain respect and recognition from those who erstwhile insult and deride them. An indicator, that higher education is the key to sustainable development of every functional society.

Conceptual Clarification

The following concepts would be reviewed in this study;

Sustainable Development

Ongari (2015) citing Brundtland report (1987), also known as our common future explains sustainable development as that development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This development entails balancing environment, societal and economic considerations in the pursuit of improved quality of life.

United Nations (2013), citing Ban-Ki-Moon (2007) reiterates that we hold the future in our hands and together we must ensure that our grandchildren will not have to ask why we failed to do the right thing, and let them suffer the consequences. This suggests that sustainable development entails cooperate effort from both the government and individuals that make up the society.

Offering both structured and unstructured educational experiences to students assists them in cultivating the understanding, proficiencies, mindsets, and principles necessary for making substantial contributions to a sustainable future. The generation of knowledge through research and its subsequent dissemination to the society will foster economic advancement, societal welfare, and the cultivation of original ideas on a global scale.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organisation (2012), assert that good governance, expanded agricultural development, production and consumption, education, training, research and technology make room for achievable sustainable development.

Supporting this claim, OEDC Insights (2008), state that harnessing and combining the efforts, knowledge, expertise and achievements of professionals in different fields speeds up sustainable development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature for Sustainable Development

Literature connects the reader to his environment and motivates him to take action, advocate for change and become agents for change wherever they find themselves, thereby, promoting sustainable development. Banu & Dogan (2013), assert that literature is a problem-solving technique used to expose social and material inequalities and expedite sustainable development.

Theoretical Clarification

Face Theory

According to Goffman (1967), face pertains to an individual's self-esteem and capacity to advocate for their own actions. It encompasses emotional, physiological, and social sentiments that an individual possesses and anticipates recognition from others.

Goffman's (1967) theory of face delineates two ways in which individuals demonstrate consideration for others' emotions during conversations. Positive face involves the inclination towards being admired, esteemed, and valued, whereas negative face involves the inclination towards evading intrusion, violating personal boundaries, and upholding the right to freedom of speech. When individuals engage in actions such as giving judgments, exerting influence, issuing orders, posing challenges, expressing admiration, or showing appreciation, they utilize language as a means to achieve these actions (Fasold, 2012).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study adopted the descriptive, qualitative method to analyze and discuss Sixty (60) texts randomly selected from Ewurum's *Sedulous* using Goffman (1967) face theory.

Text 1: Adanma: I am not here to exchange pleasantries. You know quite well my reason for being here. I need money for my children's school fees.

Text 2: Uche: Auntie I have told you times without number that we don't...

Text 3: Adanma: (Interrupts her). Squandermania, a wife who doesn't let her husband save a kobo is not fit to be called a wife. Tufia kwa! (spits) You don't have any child, you're still a tenant in your fathers-in-law house, yet, you have no savings (Stares daggers at Uche.)

Text 4: Uche: (Sobbing). Go on, aunty, or are you spent? Go on and remind me of all my misfortunes. You can as well remind me that my precious parents who could have trained me in the college of medicine both died in a motor accident five years ago. Go on, aunty; you can as well tell me...

Text 5: Adanma: Because you are a bad wife who cooks everything your husband amasses in a pot and above all, you are a complete idle house-wife. (*Sedulous* Pp. 3-4)

Violations such as the use of power, intimidation and encroachment on an individual's right lead to low self-esteem in most cases and in others the urge to boost their self-worth so as to stop further abuse is triggered. Adanma violates Uche's positive face, her right to be appreciated and recognized. Name-calling such as squander mania, childless, bad wife, idle-house-wife is a violation of Uche's positive face. The imposition 'I need money for my

children's school fees' is and interrupting her by not allowing her to take her turn violates Uche's negative face. Adanma usurps the asymmetrical relationship that exist between her and Uche negatively. These violations which triggered the need for self-actualisation in Uche could be seen in the next excerpt.

Text 6: Uche: I don't think I can go on with this marriage and extended family palaver any longer.

Text 7: Uzoh: Who then is the source of your unhappiness?

Text 8: Uche: Who else but my sister-in-law? I married into a family where everybody is so inconsiderate and self centered. You know that Obinna is just a mere messenger in the bank. That young man has great ambition which he cannot realize because he is over saddled with responsibilities. (Blowing her nostrils). He too wants to study banking and finance and later train me.

Text 9: Uzor: What do you intend to do?

Text 10: Uche: I intend to go and see one of my maternal uncles. After my parents' death, he and his wife sent for me to go to Ibadan to study my dream course medicine.

Text 11: Uzor: What happened? Why didn't you go?

Text 12: Uche: I was so distraught when my own paternal uncles in their quest for my parents' property rejected me, refused to take me in as if I were an outcast. I refused to listen to them when months later they came to beg me to go back to school. Even last year, they brought the news that I passed JAMB.

Text 13: Uzor: Last year?

Text 14: Uche: Yes! I sat for it again and still passed. I refused to listen to them because I was simply in a state of lassitude. I married Obinna because we loved each other and I needed a home. But now, I'm simply fed up. You see, I've come to realize that pettiness endangers potentials because it causes boredom and drains life of enthusiasm wonderment, risk and even expansion. The only cure for my boredom now is going back in pursuit of learning and knowledge. Before my mother gave up the ghost, she said to me, "Please Uchem, (Eyes misting, blows her nostrils). Make sure you study medicine as you had dreamt."

Text 15: Uzor: I understand how you feel. (Take Uche's right hand). An unrealized ambition also hunts and disquieting one. It makes one restless. Just last night, you were the centre of my discussion with my husband. I told him how you won several awards in our alma mater as the best student in academics. I commend your courage; I am willing to support you in any way I can. You are still young and intelligent. (Sedulous Pp 8-10).

Uche, dispirited by the insults hurled at her by Adanma, decides to improve on her self-worth. This move for self-actualization is in tandem to Maslow (1968) needs theory which includes self-actualization. Actualising her dream of becoming a medical doctor is the perlocutionary effect of aunty Adanma's words on Uche. This is evident in her discussion with her friend Uzor in texts 6-15 above.

Text 16: Uche: Why are you here? What do you want?

Text 17: Obinna: (Ignores her insult). What was it I heard in the village about you getting remarried?

Text 18: Uche: Yes, you heard them correctly. I've decided to settle down with Dr KC.

Text 19: Obinna: I see doctor versus doctor.

Text 20: Uche: Oh yes! Better than a doctor with a truck pusher. I shall repay you every kobo you spent on me in life!

Text 21: Obinna: I don't need your money any longer.

Text 22: Uche: But you actually need it now. At least you can use it and stand on your feet once more and quit the degrading truck pushing business.

Text 23: Obinna: (Interrupting her). Go on. You've really changed and I think I love you better. Look at yourself, your dressing, manner of speaking; you can't even stand me now because I'm a truck pusher.

Text 24: Uche: Obii, there's nothing that cannot be mended now. You can still go back to school and acquire your degree

Text 25: Obinna: And if I refuse to accept to be trained by a woman?

Text 26: Uche: Forget what I said. It wasn't what you're thinking. See, I felt you were being cowardly. The Obinna I married was full of ambitions and hopes for the future. The truck pushing thing struck me as being cowardly- a defeatist attitude. I expected you to enrol for evening programmes and get your dreamed degree.

Text 27: Obinna: Considering the fact that you left because of that, I decided to resign from the bank job that paid me next to nothing because I had no qualification. I started truck pushing thing just to distract them and it actually worked like magic. Then, I met a friend who gave me an overseas connection and even lent me some money to start off with.

Text 28: Uche: You?

Text 29: Obinna: In your anger, you didn't even notice that I'm not distressed like a truck pusher.

Text 30: Uche: I thought Dozie must have lent you the wears.

Text 31: Obinna: (Ignores her comment and continue). I just disappeared without telling anybody about it. I did good business and in addition I now have a Master's degree in Business Administration.

Text 32: Uche: Obii you do?

Text 33: Obinna: Yes, my love, and our car is parked out there. When you started your course, I knew it would be ridiculous to live with you as a medical doctor and I (pointing at his chest) a mere truck pusher. So, you see, your man isn't as cowardly as you thought. (Sedulous Pp.85-89)

Uche went back to school, studied medicine, qualified as a medical doctor and planned to settle down in marriage with her colleague Dr KC, then Obinna, the husband resurfaced. This explains that age or marriage is not a barrier to accomplishing one's life pursuit especially academics. The only thing required is self-determination. Education offers an individual a broad opportunity to choose his acquaintances even in marriage.

Uche disapproves of Obinna truck pushing business, she referred to Obinna as a coward because she felt he ought to know the value of education

instead of succumbing to such a degrading job. According to Obinna, marriage between a doctor and another doctor is more promising and honourable than the marriage between a doctor and a truck-pusher and decided to take his leave. These words "I thought Dozie must have lent you the wears', truck-pusher and coward is an attack on Obinna's positive face which means that he cannot afford basic comforts without assistance.

Uche was elated afterwards when Obinna told her that he now has a master's degree in business administration and also the car parked outside. From the excerpt above, we could observe that good education with its corresponding financial benefits bring confidence to both genders. It fosters joy, peace, comfort and harmony in the family as undue financial pressure is removed. Both Uche and Obinna speak with confidence because they are no longer liabilities but assets to their society. They are no longer cowards and cannot be intimidated. This explains that higher education inculcates boldness and confidence in individuals and make them resourceful.

Text 34: Chief Emenike: This woman, are you going crazy or something?

Text 35: Eunice: Chief, I'm not crazy. I'm only begging you to grant me my heart's desire.

Text 36: Chief Emenike: Look at yourself. How old are you?

Text 37: Eunice: Chief I am forty-five years old.

Text 38: Chief Emenike: Yes! Forty-five years old and you are still talking about going to school. What will you achieve?

Text 39: Eunice: A lot, Chief.

Text 40: Chief Emenike: Oya, name them.

Text 41: Eunice: Chief in the first place, I shall be alive again...See Chief, if I go to school, I will accomplish self-actualization if I achieve nothing else. (Sedulous, Pp.31)

The excerpts are about Eunice, whose rich husband, Chief Emenike vehemently refused to allow her further her education but her doggedness and the support of her son inspired her to achieve her dreams. According to her, education would make her to be alive again. This explains that most unaccomplished people feel frustrated, because their potentials are untapped, dead and buried.

Text 42: Chief Emenike: Well, gentlemen, how did it go? Were you able to get a real genius for the post of deputy director of Emenike and sons holdings?

Text 43: George: Yes Chief.

Text 44: Daniel: She was wonderful in the interview.

Text 45: Chief Emenike: A she?

Text 46: Bufo: Chief, she is a real genius. She answered all the questions and what really thrilled and fascinated us was her comportment.

Text 47: Chief Emelike: Can you call her in?

Text 48: Bufo: Of course, chief. (He goes out and calls out). Eunice Obialika! Come in. The MD wants a discussion with you.

Text 49: Eunice: Yes sir. (Comes into the office majestically in her suit).

Text 50: Chief Emenike: What? (Rubs his eyes). Eunice! What pranks are you playing on me, gentlemen? (Angry). I asked you to conduct an interview and take a good deputy director and you called in this fluent stark illiterate.

Text 51: Bufo: Far from that Chief. Her papers are here and she passed the tests. (Handing her papers to chief).

Text 52: Eunice: Sorry to surprise you Chief. I am no more affluent illiterate but a first-degree holder in business administration with a second-class upper honour.

Text 53: Chief Emenike: Thief whose certificate did you steal. Eunice? You will kill me one day!

Text 54: Eunice: No, Chief, you are wrong. When you didn't grant me the permission to start schooling, I planned with my sons and started. All the time I told you I was going to visit your daughter, Vivian, I was actually going to take my exams in Uniboko's main campus. And now, Chief, here is the proof (She produces her original certificate). I have disproved you age is no barrier to academic pursuit.

Text 55: Chief Emenike: Well, I feel this is a big challenge to me. I have been dreaming of being a lawyer all my life but I kept on feeling that age is my handicap.

Text 56: George: But now you have seen that age is no real barrier to academic pursuit. You can still enrol for evening law so long as you have sound credits in your G.C.E.

Text 57: Chief Emenike: Yes, yes. I will start. I have my papers. Bufo, give Eunice the appointment letter. Eunice, in addition, I have permitted you this day to continue with your education to any level you want to reach.

Text 58: Eunice: Even to PhD, Chief?

Text 59: Chief Emenike: Even to professorship, whatsoever.

Text 60: Eunice: Oh! Chief, you are great. (Getting up and embracing him). (Sedulous Pp. 49-50)

After graduation, Eunice applied for the position of deputy director in Emenike and Sons Holdings. Her excellent performance during the interview earned her the respected position. Surprised and angry with the company panels choice of candidate, Chief Emenike berated his staff and accused them of compromise, but after viewing Eunice's certificate and listening to her success story, he had a rethink over his abandoned dream of becoming a lawyer and decided to improve on his education as well. Eunice bold steps and achievement attracted her husband's support to further her education to any level of her choice. This explains that achievers are respected in their society because of their values and contributions towards sustainable development. Her positive face was appreciated and projected.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study explores the advantages of higher education to individuals and society at large within the framework of promoting long-lasting development. The individuals examined in our selected text, Sedulous, demonstrated the capacity to attend to their own needs as well as those of

others, while also being able to effectively navigate crucial and delicate roles within their society to serve the greater good. This presupposes that higher education is one of the determiners of sustainable development as it addresses the needs of both the present and future generations. The study, therefore, recommends that

1. In order to cultivate autonomy among students, instructors must integrate pedagogical approaches that is student centred which prioritizes project-based learning
2. It should be mandatory for students in higher education to embark on qualitative research topics that contribute to sustainability in various fields.
3. The government and institutions of higher education should foster collaboration to ensure that the recommendations derived from research endeavours across different domains are put into practice.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so further research is still needed on this topic.

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