

Skill Development, Gender Alignment and Regional Development In Nigeria: A Structural Functional Perspective

Iyanuoluwa Adetayo Aluko

Department of Social Science Education, Ajayi Crowther University Oyo, Nigeria

ia.aluko@acu.edu.ng

Received 04 August 2025; revised 19 August 2025; accepted 01 September 2025

Abstract

Human beings are unique from other mammals. They are in two genders, the male and the female. Both genders have both general and specific roles in the society. Environment is a major determinant of role play. However, in recent times both genders to perform most roles. The objective of the paper is to ascertain the best way for national investment and development; aligning genders to skill development or skill development to genders? How does aligning gender to skill development instead of skill development to gender leads to national development? The structural functional theory is utilized to explain the effect of the structure on the function of a policy or an institution. Data are collected through qualitative methods and documentary analysis used. The finding shows that whenever gender ascribed role is allowed, the outcome is usually efficient and if another gender is placed out of the role, the outcome becomes inefficient. Therefore, national and regional development will be attained when government policies aligned both genders to skills development instead of allowing environmental factors to condition skill development.

Keywords: Economy, Development, Gender alignment, Policy, Skill acquisition

1. Introduction

Human beings are unique in functions and actions. They are higher being who have versatile human faculties to reason and think critically, solve problem with high level of precision and highly developed in-depth analysis of events. They have high level of adaptation and great imaginative power to conquer nature and their environment. They are in two genders, the male and the female.

Both genders have general and specific roles in the society. General roles are the actions human being performs together without hesitation and segregation such as administrative roles, educative roles, and governance roles among others (Belabbes, Rakaa, and Alaoui, 2025). Specific roles on the other hand are the roles humans perform based on gender. The roles male perform may differ from that of the female and vice versa. These include job description, skill acquisition, religious roles and other social functions among others. Environment in many cases are critical determinant of role play in skill acquisition and development. A particular job or skill development may be popular with a certain gender such as iron welder, carpenter or shoe maker popular with the male gender due to the environment factor around the skill.

However, the world as a global village has downplayed this phenomenon to allow both genders to play most roles. Regardless of the environment, the roles common with either gender have been diffused over a

period of time to permit anyone to acquire the skill for human development. Communities in developed countries encourages both male and female to participate in many skill suitable to them for regional or national development (Iyer, and Rao, 2024; Aluko and Mawere, 2018). Many developing countries had taken up these non-environmental determined roles to allow all interested persons in the country to participate in national development enterprises.

Nevertheless, whenever a gender ascribed role is allowed to play its role the outcome is usually efficient and effective and if another gender is placed out of the role, the outcome becomes less impressive. This is because such skill has a natural environment that may suit a particular gender to fit into with less adjustment (Aluko, 2025; Ruiz, Amorós, and Guerrero, 2023; Ogujiuba, Olamide, Agholor, and Boshoff, 2021). The other gender may fit into it but with a bit of stressful accommodation and adjustments. This will easily result in efficiency in outcome or outputs and effectiveness in service delivery. Less effectiveness, efficiency or productivity is often perceived when skill acquisitions are out of gender role accommodation.

Therefore, this paper addresses the question of which approach is most effective for national development and investment; aligning genders to skill development or skill development to genders? This implies that should all gender be allowed to acquire all skills as it appeal to them by public policy regulation regardless of the environmental factors? Or skill acquisition should be selected based on gender of individual and environmental acceptance? Content analysis from policy documents and cases studies of gender alignment and skill development are undertaken establish the trend in most developed countries.

The structural functionalism theory is utilized to explain the maximum national development benefits a country will derive from aligning gender to skill development instead of skill development to gender. However, for maximum political economic benefit, it is opined that national and regional development will be attained when government policies aligned both genders to skills development instead of allowing environmental factors to condition skill development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual clarifications

2.1.1 Gender Alignment

Gender alignment is a concept that implies the process of requiring a gender to conform to a practice, learn a skill or do what it would not have done naturally. It is the bending and blending of a particular gender to fit into the society, to adapt to a way of life and generally to learn or incline another gender unique work skill (for example; female to learn iron bending-welder skill often common to male) rather than itself so as to ensure a common front and general development. It is a form of gender conformity with a trend that is not popular with the said gender but willing to pick up the trend so as to show solidarity, encouragement and common good (Bridges, Bamerry, Wulff and Krivokapic-Skoko, 2022).

This study propounded three forms of gender alignment, the forceful gender alignment (FGA), willing gender alignment (WGA) and purposeful gender alignment (PGA). The forceful gender alignment is the form of alignment that coerce a gender to learn a new philosophy of work, cultural ethics and skills that is not peculiar to such gender as ascribed by the society or the environment. This is usually done by forceful implementation of a public policy with punitive measures if such gender did not conform.

The willing gender alignment is the type of alignment that allows the gender to freely choose when, how and to what extent of change they are willing to make in adjusting to a new reality without external pressure. The alignment comes naturally without any form of sensitization or public policy maneuverings. The government's policies are made to align a gender role play in the society for conformation but the genders are left to choose the extent of their conformity and adaptability. The purposeful gender alignment on the other hand is the combination of the forceful gender alignment and willing gender alignment. It centers on the emphasis placed on the need of a skill, job or a role play by the gender to conform rather than the use

of force. The policies are formulated and sensitizations are carried out to make sure that people are aware rather than natural grafting towards the skill or job role.

2.1.2 Skill Development

Skill is a component of prime performance that requires improvement through practice, training, and experience rather than relying only on an individual's fundamental, unconditioned ability. While learning is the primary determinant of skill, performance economy and efficiency are also considered. According to Abiodun, Ireferin, and Olaposi (2015), talent is the capacity to perform a specific activity and accomplish a specified goal through acquired reactions, frequently as a result of specialized training. According to Etoneyaku (2018), skill is the capacity of an individual to carry out a task with desired certainty and precision. Practical knowledge combined with clarity, expertise, dexterity, and the capacity to carry out a task are all components of skill, which can be learned at training facilities or in schools through education and experience.

The technical know-how and abilities required to manage a business, handle a work process, or bring value to work are known as skills acquisitions. According to Dias, Alves and Amorim, (2024), skill acquisition is the process and capacity to produce something new and valuable by investing the required time and energy, taking on the associated financial, psychological, and social risks, and reaping the benefits of financial and personal fulfillment as well as independence. Skills acquisition is the abilities that a person has to acquire in order to succeed in a real-world or virtual learning environment. Skills must be acquired through appropriate education in order to contribute to genuine advancement and enriching company efforts that benefit the entrepreneurs' communities and individuals (Agu, Chiaha, and Ikeme, 2013; Ojo, and Okwilagwe, 2024). According to Passalacqua, Pellerin, Yahia, Magnani, Rosin, Joblot, and Léger, (2025), skill acquisition is the capacity of an individual to take advantage of an idea and establish a little or large business, not only for personal benefit but also for the advancement of society, the country, and the world. According to Salgado-banda (2005), skill acquisition is the capacity for self-belief, bravery, persistence, passion, empathy, readiness to accept professional guidance, desire for instant results, vision, and opportunity recognition.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Structural Functionalism Theory

Structural functionalism identified two types of functions in a political economic or social system. i. manifest functions and ii. latent functions. Manifest functions are consequences that are intended out of a particular function or action (Merton 1968). For instance, the government is expected to equip the police, military and other security institutions to be in-charge of the security of the community, if they lag behind the trend of events, the society will be insecure for all to live and exist. This explains actions and reactions that are equal and opposite. For instance, only male were given access to a major technical skill acquisition in a society, therefore, the female will become redundant and the economy development processes will be largely dependent on the male's productivity.

Latent functions on the other hand are consequences that are unintended and often hidden. For instance, when only male were given access to a major technical skill acquisition in a society, the consequence is hidden yet it is not intended for female to become redundant but the economy development processes will largely depend on the male's productivity. This structure lay down by the government and policy actors have unintended consequences functions but turn out to become negative.

This implies that a definite societal structure; political, social or economic structures have definite functions and unintended functions. If the government aligns gender to skill acquisition and development, such policy's structural functions shows the traits that promote equity, fairness, rapid development, poverty reduction, and economic growth among both male and the female (Ogundana, Simba, Dana, and Liguori, 2021). The unintended functions will also show positive traits with the capacity to produce

continuous regional and national development because no one is limited in skill acquisition between the genders.

4. Methodology

The study employed a content review research design. This approach was employed, taken into consideration the theme, the dependent, independent and the intervening variables in the study in order to make inference to gender alignment and skill development. Secondary sources of data which include journal papers from Scopus, Science direct and Google scholar database among others spanning a period of 2010 to 2025 were used.

Subsequently, qualitative content analysis was used which include several stages such as selecting relevant texts, familiarization, coding was done manually. Themes were generated and identified within the coding framework which include; economy, development, gender alignment, policy and skill acquisition. Also, the same process of content analysis and coding were employed to analyze the propounded three gender alignment forms; the forceful gender alignment (FGA), willing gender alignment (WGA) and purposeful gender alignment (PGA).

Also, aligning gender to skill development, three levels are selected. These include high or total level, middle or partial level and lower or sub-partial level. The factors affecting gender alignment in skill development that includes the political, economic, social and environmental factors. Consequently, the themes identified were then interpreted in the context of the study aided by a deductive approach, specifically, conceptual analysis. The findings were compared to the reviewed literature where inferences or conclusions of the study were drawn.

5. Discussion of Findings

5.1 Aligning Gender to Skill Development

Gender alignment to skill development is a way of making skills to be a constant factor while the gender are made to get familiar and integrated with them. It is a system where both male and female are given the opportunity to learn any skill for personal and national economic development without any restrictions. Aligning gender to skills is like imposing the male or female on skills available in the society without limitations (Nkechinyere, Ifenyenwa, and Nwamaka, 2024). Therefore, there are no special or peculiar skills reserved for the male while another set for the female. Both the male and the female are granted the opportunity to acquire any skill for national or regional development (Ruiz, Amorós, and Guerrero, 2023).

The level of alignment of gender to skill attained is the level of personal or regional development that can be attained. There are three levels of gender alignment to skill development. These include high or total level, middle or partial level and lower or sub-partial level.

5.1.1 The high or total level

The high or total level is when the government by reason of policy enforces and compels all male and female in the society to learn a particular skill for national development (Rotnitsky, Ukrop, Yavich, and Davidovitch, 2024). Therefore, people regardless of their gender acquire the skill and ensure national economic development from it. This level usually produces maximum regional and national development because the numbers of people involved are many and maximum impacts will be generated.

5.1.2 The middle or partial level

The middle or partial level of alignment of gender to skill is the situation whereby the society rather than the government encourages people to acquire a skill for both personal and national development. Any of the gender is persuaded to acquire a skill as a necessity so as to be able to perform economic or political functions effectively in the society. It is seen as the medium of apportioning goodness and test of fitness in the society. Therefore, people within the society are compelled to acquire a skill because the society needs it and not because the government has an impending sanction attached to this. This level usually produces

maximum regional and partly national development because the society encourages all rather than the national policy.

5.1.3 The lower or sub-partial level

The lower or sub-partial level of alignment of gender to skill is the scenario whereby people out of their free volition acquire a skill. They are enlightened by reasoning of need or necessity to acquire the skill for both personal and regional development. This level of skill acquisition only allows any gender to participate without enforcement or restriction. This results in gradual development at the individual level (Mayombe, 2024). This level usually produces minimum regional and partly or no national development because the number of people involved are small.

Therefore, which way is the best for national development; aligning genders to skill development or skill development to genders and at what level? Both genders must be trained to acquire the best skills that generate regional and national maximum benefit instead of allowing nature of skill development and the environmental perception to determine gender accessibility. Allowing nature of skill development and the environmental perception to determine gender accessibility will limit the number of people to engage in productive national development. It will also skew economic wealth, political and regional relevance to the favorable gender rather than both genders.

It is therefore opined that maximum outcome for both national and regional development will be attained when both genders are aligned to acquire skills instead of allowing environmental factors to condition skill development. The high or total level of alignment of gender to skill is most suitable for national development because government and other financial agencies by reason of public policy enforce compliance and large numbers of people are involved.

5.2 Factors Affecting Gender Alignment in Skill development

There are certain factors that affect the extent of gender alignment to skills. These include political, economic, social and environmental factors.

5.2.1 Political factors

Political factors are restrictions or propellers that stem from government policies towards skill acquisition. Whenever government policies on skill acquisition are enforced on all citizens regardless of the gender, the outcome are massive participation and maximum outcome on development (Ojo and Okwilagwe, 2024). However, if a gender is restricted from participating in the skill acquisition by the instrumentalities of government policies, the lacunae will lead to reduce national development.

5.2.2 Economic factors

Economic factors are restriction or forces of positive attraction driven by personal need, community need and national need that propels any of the gender to acquire a skill. The economic factors are usually gaps that when properly harnessed, it will promote economic growth and development. These economic factors and needs must be high enough to compel and drive both genders to acquire certain skills without segregation (Belabbes, Rakaa, and Alaoui, 2025). The government can as well create an economic niche or lacunae that will stimulate interest of people for empowerment in any works of life or area for both genders. This will subject both male and female to the skill acquisition process and lead to improve national development. However, if such areas are not created, the drive and motivation for skill acquisition will be low and poorly impacted on national development.

5.2.3 Social factors

Social factors or restriction are purely societal and personal driven factors. This could be religiously inclined; ethnic inclined or gender inclined restrictions. The limitation that the society places on a gender in acquiring a skill will eventually be the unintentional functional limitation of the gender (Iyer, and Rao, 2024). For instance, if the society limits the female from acquiring a skill but ascribe the role to the male,

it becomes an economic limitation or gap for such gender to fill so that they can as well maximally participate in the growth and development of the country.

5.2.4 Environmental factors

Environmental factors or restrictions are issues or situation or practices acceptable or rejected across the local space, regional space, national space and international space. The notion placed on a skill acquisition in a locality or in the national or international level will affect the level of gender participation (Ogujiuba, Olamide, Agholor, and Boshoff, 2021). Environmental role ascription on genders in the society also places limitation or universality on the genders. An environmental ascribed limited role to a gender will limit their skill acquisition towards the skill that depicts their limited sphere of activities. If this is much, the effect on national development will be grossly affected.

6. Conclusion

Genders in the society must be allowed to actively participate in the acquisition of skills applicable to them. At the same time, the government must ensure that good atmosphere is created for any gender to strive in acquiring any skill for his or her personal economic enhancement. Government policies are important in ensuring that genders are allowed to actively acquire skills needed for national development.

Some skills with limited national values can be less emphasized by the government but those with regional and national prosperity values can be enforced on all gender so as to evenly distribute wealth and limit the dominance of a gender over the other. The knowledge of the three gender alignment forms; the forceful gender alignment (FGA), willing gender alignment (WGA) and purposeful gender alignment (PGA) must be utilized by policy actors for the best national development outcomes.

Structural functional theory as utilized in this study shows that the structure of a policy, society or an environment affect the functions of the people in such system. Therefore, gender alignment to skill acquisition for national development can be attained when proper government policies are put in place to break the barriers of both genders participation in skill acquisition. Educational values of such skills can be enhanced when government recognized certifications are issued at the end of the skill acquisition.

Furthermore, the more the number of people within the lucrative skill trade in a region, the more the personal, regional and national wealth, growth and development that will be attained. Therefore, all manners of limitations such as political barriers, economic limitations, social factors and environmental limitations must be minimized or removed from both genders skill acquisition quest.

Therefore, the best, effective and efficient way to go for regional and national development is aligning genders to skill development and not skill development to genders. Both genders must be empowered to acquire the maximum skills to propel regional and national growth and development instead of allowing the type or nature of a skill to be acquired to determine gender accessibility. The best outcome for both national and regional development will be attained when both genders are aligned to acquire skills instead of allowing environmental factors to condition skill development.

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