EVALUATING GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION AS A VITAL TOOL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Comfort Bukola, KOMOLAFE JOHNSON[1] and Atolagbe Issah, JIMOH[2]

[1]School of Arts and Social Sciences, Christian Religious Department
Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin
Phone No: 08139621480, Email: Comfortbukky1@gmail.com
[2]School of Arts and Social Sciences, Islamic Religious Department
Kwara State College Of Education, Ilorin
Phone No: 08066877255, Email – Jimohissa80@gmail.com

Abstract: Etymologically, the term education came from the Latin word "Educatum" which means the act of teaching or training. A group of educationists say that it has come from another Latin word "Educare" which means bring up or to raise. In every society, education is recognized as the corner stone of development. It is a fulcrum around which the genuine development of economic, political, sociological and human resources of every society revolves.The girl-child education is the education received by the girl-child which makes her functional in the society. It is that type of education that equips the girl-child with knowledge that enable her to carry out different functions which if properly channeled could lead to the actualization of national development. It is the basic tool that should be given to the girl-child in order to fulfill her role as full member of the society. Various cultural and social values have historically contributed to gender disparity in education. According to work done by Denga, one prominent cultural view is that it is better for the girl-child to stay home and learn to tend her family instead of attending school. A study by the University of Ibadan linked the imbalance in boys' and girls' participation in schooling was to the long-held belief in male superiority and female subordination. Development proved difficult in both the political and economic realm. Given the extent of the social challenges, the pace of reform is too slow and economic growth too limited. Many reform projects have been launched but few successfully implemented. It is in line of the above that this paper examines the girl-child education as a vital tool for national development In doing this, the paper used books, journals and existing written materials to stress this. The paper concludes and recommends among others that, changing mind sets, attitudes and behavior of traditional and religious leaders, parents and other community members is needed to promote girl-child education. When the girl-child education is adequately taken care of, a solid foundation would be laid for genuine development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Girl-Child, Education and Development

Introduction

Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Educational institutions have the explicit mandate of the society to socialize the individuals into requisite skills, knowledge, norms, values and attitudes of the society (Martins, 2011). Education has been described as an effective tool in the development of any society in the world. It is seen as a major instrument in moving society forward. It shapes and broadens the horizon of an individual and enables him or her to adapt to any situation and society (Amah & Ezulike, 2005).

Girl-child education in this context of this paper means the type of education given to a female child through the formal schooling system for the realization of her rights and effective participation in national growth and development. It is a fundamental right. Investing in girl-child education has immediate and long-term benefits.

In North-Eastern and North-Western Nigeria, only around 30% of girls attend secondary school. While in the Southern Nigeria over 70% of girls attend secondary school. The difference between the two regions is that Northern Nigeria contains approximately 57% of all poor people who live in Nigeria. Poverty adds to the trouble of girls access to education in Northern Nigeria. Whether it be because of poor infrastructure, costs of secondary school or lack of conveniently located secondary schools (Agile, 2015).

Nigeria is craving for patriotic citizens to develop their potentials politically, economically, socially and technologically. The actualization of these wonderful goals is dependent on the provision of functional education to the citizenry especially the girls who are future mothers, future teachers of children. When the girl-child is given the right type of education, she will contribute her quota to national development. The dangers of not educating the girl-child are numerous; she can grow to become a nuisance to the nation (Ogbadu, 2013).

This paper, therefore attempts to address the issue of Africa's Development from the perspective of girl-child education in Nigeria as a vital tool.

Conceptual Clarifications

Girl-Child: The girl-child is said to be a female child who is below eighteen years of age. This period covers the crèche, nursery or early childhood. During this period, the girl-child is malleable, builds and develops her personality and character. She is very dependent on others, her physical, mental, social and spiritual and emotional development starts and progress to get to thepeak at the young adult age (Adebola, 2011).

Education: Education is a process of total or all round development of an individual. It is a process whereby an individual is trained or nurtured to acquire necessary skills, knowledge, values, attitudes and abilities needed to be responsible and to be able to contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of the society. According to Collins (2011), education is a process of cognitive, effective and psychomotive development of an individual with a view to moulding the individual for a total contribution to the development of the community and the promotion of cultural heritage.

Development: According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, it is making a thorough, a dramatic change in the form, appearance, character etc. It could also mean to give a completely different form or appearance.

Girl-Child Education in Nigeria: An adage says that when you educate a man you educate an individual, but when a woman is educated, the whole nation is educated. The traditional Nigerian society holds the view that the male child preserves the family names and perpetuates the ancestral lineage. The average rural Nigerian parent would rather invest in the education of the son rather than daughter (Ifijeh and Goodluck, 2011). Based on this view, many families prefer male children to female children. This has led to giving preferential treatment to the male child right from birth, giving him better education, economic and social upliftment opportunities etc.

It is no news to say that women who are educated and have occupied positions of authority at one time or the other perform creditably well compared to even their male counterparts in the same position. These women started their education career from the period when they were girls. In line with the above, some prominent women in Nigeria have championed the course of national development. For examples, Dr. NgoziOkonjoIweala a onetime Minister of Finance in Nigeria. Late Professor Dora Akunyili who rebranded Nigeria image internationally and also repositioned Nigeria's health sector as the Director General, National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Mrs. Esther Nenadi Usman the former Minister of State was raised to become substantive Minister. Late professor Grace Alele-Williams, a distinguished woman mathematician who was the first woman to occupy a chair in the field as a Professor and later became the first female Vice Chancellor of a University in Nigeria (Ogbodo and Nwanen, 2014).

However, there are so many factors responsible for non-education of girl-child in Nigeria. Few are discussed below.

(1) **Poverty**

The poverty rate in Nigeria is so alarming. Women and children are mostly affected because many men who are polygamous leave the

responsibilities of the home to women who have just little resources that are not usually enough to take care of home as a result of the increasing cost of education in Nigeria. The pressure to withdraw the girl-child from school becomes the best alternative for many rural dwellers. These practices do not favour the girl-child (Ogbabu, 2013).

(2) **Teenage Pregnancy**

This factor has dire consequence on the educational pursuit of the girl-child and sometimes can frustrate her entire existence as a human being (Dashen, 2014). It can force the girl-child out of school, because pregnancy is usually against school rules and regulations. Any female student found to be pregnant is not allowed to continue schooling.

(3) **Socio-cultural Factor**

In most African countries and Nigeria among the Yoruba ethnic group to be specific, the boy-child is preferred to the girl-child. These negative notions dictate the attitude to and treatment of the girl-child. There are cultures that allow the girl-child to be given out for marriage irrespective of the girl's prospect.The educational imbalance between girls and boys in Nigeria is due to societal traditions and myths which relegate girl-child education to the background (Ojobo, 2008).

(4) **Early Marriage**

This practice is mainly found in the Northern part of Nigeria where people belief that the chastity of the girl-child is mostly upheld when given out for marriage at teenage age. When a young girl is married out at a tender age, it is usually the end of her education. Girl-child that married at young age often pulled out of school, domestic duties ad child bearing may prevent her from re-enrolling even if she would like to continue her education (Akram, 2015).

(5) **Child Labour and Trafficking**

Most parents are ignorant of the legal implications of juvenile hawking. Nwankwo (2000) states that the age limit (15-18 years) is flagrantly violated by parents whose teenagers engage in labour. Many families pull out girls from school to fill needs at home, supplement income and attend to siblings or even care for aged family members. This dropout rate has exposed the girl-child to prostitution and trafficking.

(6) **Deviant Practices of the Child**

Students are expected to attend classes regularly and prepare to learn and participate in all class activities. When the girl-child plays truancy and refuse to carry out assignments from class and goes to film houses, play games and boycott class, she may not perform well. If these attitudes continue for a long period of time, it may lead to dropping out of school or being expelled by the school management as a result of bad performance. By this, the parents may choose to marry her out.

(7) **Teacher/Student Relationship**

The girl-child has specific needs that when they are met, the motivation for learning is activated. The special need of the girl-child may rage from needs at puberty to boy/girl relationship and good grooming. Most of the girl-child may be shy. However, the efforts of the teacher to deal with the specifics become a source of motivation to make her enjoy school system thereby her desire to remain in school. Where the teacher behaves otherwise, the interest of the girl-child to stay in school is killed ad so may even want to drop out of school.

I the event that the above mentioned social ill are not eliminated, no meaningful education can be given to the girl-child in Nigeria. If this is so, the vital role expected to play by the girl-child is a national development is at stake

Conclusion

Suffice to say that education is generally regarded as a necessary pre-requisite for national development. Hence, it is the best investment any society can make on its citizenry. It is one of the most powerful weapon which can be used to change Nigeria and set it on the course of development

Girl-child education in Nigeria will continue to trail the boy education if the necessary policy actions are not put in place. The inability to address the issue will further widen the gender gap in education. Moreover, the desired level of development in this nation can be attained when girl-child education is given adequate attention.

Recommendations

Adequate and sustained advocacy for the girl-child by female organizations and women in leadership will help in bridging the gap in girl-child education

The self-esteem of the girl-child should be boosted to allow for optimized potentials particularly in the Northern part of the country.

Early marriages which rob the girl-child of any academic pursuits must be discouraged.

Gender disparities should be reduced to the minimum through gender budgeting, which involves budgeting to maximize programmes that have an impact on the girl-child.

Parents should be encouraged to have positive perception towards girl-child education with emphasis on the benefits derivable from parenting educated daughters. This could be done through workshops and enlightenment campaigns.

Government should ensure that they create equal access to formal education for both male and female citizens.

Incentives to attract the girl-child and make her want to stay in school should be provided by the government e. g. provision of uniform and pocket money.

There should an effective coordination and control of all viable sources of funds to female education because as without such resources, it would be difficult for the education sector to carry out their social and academic responsibilities through schools.

Government should pass legislation compelling parents to send the girl-child to school because many parents question the intellectual capabilities of females. This can be achieved through sensitization programmes to parents in order to eliminate the traditional beliefs of parents that females are the backbone of the local economy to be retained at home.

Female students should enjoy free education at all levels. This exercise could serves as a great motivation that will give better opportunities for learning in our society. This will spur the females at to be molded for embracing challenges and treating them intelligently for a better nation.

Funding

(TETFund/DESS/COE/ILORIN/ARJ)

"TETFund Projects 2017-2020"

REFERENCES

Adebola, O. G. (2011). *The Girl-child Education: A sine qua non to Actualizing vision 20-20-20.* In Journal of Women in Colleges of Education (JOWICE) Abuja, Vo.15. P 72-75.

Agile (2015). *Fight for Girls Access to Education in Northern Nigeria. Archived 2015: retreat 30th May, 2022.* www.borgenmagazine.com/agile-fight.

Akram, (2015). *What Drives Child Marriage in the Arab World and How the World is combating the problem. Archived 2015: retreat 30th May, 2022. http://scholarship-shu.edu/student_scholarship.*

Amah, A. and Ezulike, D. U. (2005). *Language and Education in the Democratic Nigeria.* In Journal of Contemporary Thaigents, Vol 2 1.P 80-85.

Collins, E.N.O. (2004). *Socio-economic Development and the Girl-child Education.* A look at Jos North Local Government, Plateau State in an International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethopia Vol. 8.1.

Dashen, A. N. and Dashen, P. N. (2014). *Girl-child Education as an Imperative for Women.* In JOWICE Vol. I. 24-30.

Dimka, S.Y.S &Mangvwat, S.E (2004). *Women Education in Nigeria: Key to the attainment of Leadership position.* In JOWICE, Abuja, Vol. 8, P 338-342.

Ifijah, G. I. and Osayande, O. (2011*). Issues in Girl-child Education in Nigeria. Implications for Library and Information.* In Journal of Gender and Behaviour, Vol. 7. 2.

Inarigu, G.O. (2014). Nigeria at 100: *Towards Educational Attainment for Women and Youths.* In JOWICE, Abuja, Vol. 19. P 289

Martins, B. A. (2011). *Socialization in Fundamental Issues in Sociological Studies.*

Nwankwo, J. N. (2000). *House help, A Latent Child Abuse*. An unpublished Conference Paper, Delivered at the 5th Annual Lecture on Society and Government, University of Lagos.

Ogbadu, R. A. (2013*). Promoting the right of the Girl-child through Education for Peace and Security in Nigeria.* In JOWICE,Abuja, Vol. 17. 2. 473 – 476.

Ogbodo, B. C. and Nawneri, S. I. (2014). *Education and Women participation in Politics in Nigeria*. In JOWICE. Vol. 19. 24.

Ojobo, J. (2008). Education: *A catalyst for Women Empowerment in Nigeria*,Ethip. I. Edu& CC. 93-108.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1996). New York

Taiwo, M. B. et al (2013*). History of Education in Nigeria*. Ilorin. 1 – 2.