GENDER INEQUALITY AND GIRL CHILD EDUCATION: A STUDY OF ILORIN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE

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Abstract : *The Nigeria customs have been burdened with traditions that attach the imbalance in male and female children. This is due to the long-held belief in male superiority and female subordination. The situation gave girls no traditional rights to education. The study obtained its figures and data from secondary sources. This paper discussed the effect of gender inequality on education and essentiality of female education. It further discussed the problems faced in educating a female child in Nigeria. It was concluded that ignorance and religious practices are major factors causing gender inequalities on education It was therefore recommended that some certain belief of culture and tradition need to be expunged in order to enhance female education. It also recommended that parents should be sensitized on the benefits accrued to educating a girl-child.*

Introduction

Education is a tool for the sustainable developments of any economy Females in Nigeria have a basic human right to be educated and the right has been recognized since the 1948 adoption of the universal declaration of Human rights as well the males. The essence of establishment of schools in any society according to is to teach social value to the younger generation irrespective of their gender. The education of a girl child in past decades had always been informal.

Studies have shown that education of female children was confined to their mother, grandmothers elder sisters and any other female responsible adult who could train the female children as house wives, mothers and equip them with all type of service related to home management. This practice is more common in the olden days and still partially practiced is more common in the olden days and still partially practiced today since many of these parent have the belief that a girl child education is a waste since she would not be able to carry the family name and would be encourage to get married after her first period. The Nigeria traditions have been explained as traditions that attach the imbalance in girls and boys participation in schooling to the long-held belief in male superiority and female subordination. The situation was further granulated by patriarchal practices which gave girls no traditional rights to succession. Therefore the same patriarchal practices encouraged preference to be given to the education of a boy rather than a girl. This practice is also seen among many families domicile in Ilorin west L.G.A. In most Ilorin communities, the male child is given priority when comes to education. This is prevalent in the since the traditional times till now, although civilization

is gradually reducing this practice. This became an issue to be worried about and also forms a pillar against which the researcher is carrying out this research.

In the education also, gender inequality has been experienced. Girls have been discriminated against in terms of various aspects as compared to their male counterparts. The primary aspect in terms of gender inequality has been experienced in terms of participation because the students are required to participate in number of area in educational institutions. Girls are usually provided with less opportunity to participate as compared to the boys and hence, it led to prevalence of gender inequality.

In rural community, this has been more severe as compared to urban communities. Gender inequality in education is regarded as the major impediment within the course of overall progression of the system of education.

Literature Review

Female Education in Nigeria

Education as defined as the process of training man to fulfill his aim by exercising all faculties to the fullest extent as a member of a society. The introduction of western education in Nigeria dates back to the pre-colonial years and was done by the missionaries. According to Olujuwon (2011), formal education in Nigeria was under the control of Christian missionaries between 1842 and 1881. The girl child is only allowed informal education which is given either by her mother or any other respected female adult in the society. This type of education includes how to do domestic chores, maintaining self-posture, dressing, child bearing and how to take care of her children and children and husband when married

Before 1920, primary and secondary education in Nigeria was within the scope of voluntary Christian organizations. Out of a total of 25 Secondary Schools established by 1920, there were girls only. In 1949 only seven out of a total of 57 secondary schools were exclusively for girls.

These Schools are:

- Methodist Girls High School Lagos (1879).
- St Anne's' School, Molete Ibadan (1896).
- St Theresa's College Ibadan (1932).
- Queen College Lagos (1924).
- Holy Rosary College Enugu (1935).
- Anglican Girls Grammar School Lagos (1945).
- Queen Amina College and Al-huda College Kano.

However, since the independence in 1960 successive Nigerian government have made several effort to reposition Nigerian Education System and to ensure the girl child access to both formal and informal education. These efforts include adoption of several international conventions and instruments. These instruments have always emphasized that member nation put in place all necessary mechanism needed to eliminate gender, ensure equality and human dignity to all men and women (Ciroma 2006).

Some International Conventions Operational in Nigeria Include:

- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW).
- African protocol on people's rights and rights of women (APPRRW).
- Convention to the rights of the child (CRC).
- Millennium development Goal (MDG).

All these programmes are aimed at ensuring that the disparity in education between the male and female child is eradicated.

The Influence of Culture and Traditions on Education

The culture of a people is described as their way of life while tradition describes a group's beliefs and behaviours that are passed down from one generation to another. The culture and traditions of people also act as a factor that influences their choice in educating their children. Browsey and Price (2009) defines culture as codes of attitudes, norms, beliefs, values and the way of thinking which determine how individuals see themselves and the world around them. These cultural path affect how most people perceive societal activities and respond to developmental changes. A part of this cultural belief constitutes the frame work of people's lives and behavioral pattern. Among this cultural belief in Nigeria among parents is the preference of educating the male child to the female child as it is believed that he will carry on the family name while the female gets married into another family, hence the idea that

the girl child is less competent, and less worthy to acquire formal education (Osagiobare,2015).

Early Marriage represents another cultural belief that has undoubtedly affected the intellectual education of the girl child in Nigeria. Tiffin(2012) reaffirms this cultural belief by stating that when a girl starts her first menstruation in her father's house, the second menstruation must be traditionally done in her husband's house. Female education in Nigeria has not typically revolutionized as majority of female children are yet to get formal education. The percentage of literate women in Nigeria aged 15 years is recorded to be 49.7 percent while that of men is 69.2 percent (world fact book 2015) Ezaliosra and Ezeokana (2011), opined that female education is embedded in cultural beliefs, practices and patriarchal systems of gender roles in the nation.

The result of this is that the male child is trained for career in technical and scientific fields while the females are trained in home economics. Ofoha (2013) asserted that in Nigeria as soon as a child is born to the world, a gender role takes it place. Osondun and Omole (2016) argues that when a female decides to climb the ladder to graduate degree in formal education in Nigeria, there is possibility that people may frown at the move due to cultural belief and age limit as it constraints women especially when they are in their 30's. Furthermore, smith (2007) reiterated that in Nigeria culture, marriage is an important status. Otite (2006) also butters that an individual who attained the age of marriage and prolong getting marriage is frowned at while remaining unmarried is disapproved and assumed to be a prostitute.

The cultural belief that promote marriage as the first goal for female adult coupled with the rule under patriarchy and hyper gamy, a rule that indicates men dominance and women marrying up remain an obstacle to the female gender in the acquisition of more degrees in education.

The Need for Female Education

Girls have the same right as boys. Educated girls can make informed choices and form and a far better range of option. Educating girls saves lives and build stronger families, communities and economics. An educated female population increases a country's productivity and fuels economic growth. Some countries loose more than 1 billion a year by failing to educate girls to the same level as boys. Despite this, girls and young women in many part of the world miss out on school age and 29 million of lower secondary school age.

Often, girls are marginalized and are out of school simply because they are girls and it is not cultural norms. Every child has a right to learn and get a good quality education regardless of gender, where they live or their circumstances. Because educated girls can make informed choice from a far better range of option educating girl's saves life and build stronger families communities and economics. With education, girls will know their rights, have s sense of belonging, know what is needed to support their health and wellbeing and have greater opportunities to be employed in a fulfilling way therefore assisting them in achieving their full potentials. This means that a woman with an education can get a better job with higher wages and the effect of addressing gender imbalance in the labour force. Increased levels of education have a greater positive on women wages. In international labour organization report, educating girls have proven to be one of the most important ways of breaking poverty cycles and is likely to have significant impact on access to formal jobs in longer term.

The Effect of Gender Inequality on Education

The effect of gender inequality in education depend on the size of the differential and disadvantaged sex involved at any level of education, which according to research is the female gender. The society will be richer in high level man power the more women have access to education, because, educating a female (a girl child) is educating the nation. Nations where women are denied access to education will continue to wallow in poverty and poor health because a female who is not educated will lack knowledge of what a healthy family entails and she will not be able to contribute her ideal into her family and the society at large. It takes education to imbibe healthy culture and good sanitization. These illiterate mothers will continue to perpetuate their ignoramus to their children both male and female.

Iloegbunam (2006) saw education as a weapon for social development, equality and justice. Providing women with equal opportunity for education would foster the reposition of women

socially economically and even politically since women are mothers of tomorrow's nation.

Problem Faced in Educating Female Child in Nigeria

Education is believed to be an instrument of state and national development which could be employed to achieve political, economic and social development. Education is the key to ending poverty. Offorma(2008) confirmed that disparity in educational attainment is more in the Northern part of the country in favor of the male children. A Girl child education is facing serious obstacle in Nigeria. Below are some of the problems according to Maduewesi (2005):

Peer influence: Some of the girls due to peer influence will miss their attack as they will imitate their mates in negative things. Some will keep away from school from flimsy excuses and engage in other dubious act. They will make them to be performing **Unfriendly situation of school:** The school might be far from home, this means that they will have to be trekking every day to school. This can discourage the parents because she will not be meeting up with house chores and school work at the same time. More so, a school is child friendly when it is safe for every child.

Effects of social media: Some of the girls have been deceived by what they see and hear from social media. Some will want to practicalize what they see and get into serious trouble. The social media have also affected the girl child negatively when they are freely exposed to sex act and this has a negative impact on the emotions of the girl child.

Preference for male child education: Funds also is a factor and this means the parents will prefer to send their male child to school as they believed they will take over from them in fending for the family as the girl child is married off into another family.

- Low level of understanding sex education: due to the fact that some of them don't have proper education on psychosocial skill-they fall victims of a number of vices which disrupt their education.
- Violence against girl child: The girl child is the most endangered being as they face lot of molestation and violence. These are in form of rape, murder for ritual purpose e.t.c. A situation where a girl is raped by her father, uncle, teacher, and houseboy is becoming rampant. This leaves the girl child at risk of sexually transmitted disease, pregnancy, trauma and most times withdrawn from the society.

Conclusion

Educating a girl child is still contested today as the African society gives less value to an educated female. Ignorance, culture, tradition and religious practices are major factors of gender inequalities in the educational system that contributed to the choice of educating the male to the female child.

Recommendations

1. The preservation of culture and tradition is good but the culture and traditions that tend to oppress women/girls and reduce them in value, or just housewives, puppets properties should be expunged and done away with.
2. All stakeholders who have anything to do with the education of the girl child should mount pressure on the parents holding back their female children from being educated and educate the populace on the need of educating the girl child.
3. Federal Government should revisit the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme with the mind to properly implement their intensions about this programme, follow up the implementation, enact laws for this purpose and these problems tackled immediately.
4. Parents should be sensitized on the benefits accrued to the educating a girl child.
5. Illiteracy does not give room for expansion neither will it understand and accept a new concept. Therefore interpreters are needed to properly explain and convince the illiterate parents of the need for their girl child to get educated so that their next generation will be literate.

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