Volume 16 Issue 12
Originally issued as G3

Global Journal of human-social science: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 16 Issue 3 Version 1.0 Year 2016
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

The Implications of Girl-Child Education to Nation Building in the 21st Century in Nigeria

By Omede Andrew A. & Agahiu Grace Etumabo

Kogi State College of Education, Nigeria

Abstract- This paper examines the implications of Girl-child to nation building in the 21st century in Nigeria. The paper began by pointing out the wrong notions that many Nigerians have particularly the rural dwellers about women being consider as properties for man and objects for their pleasure and how this notion restrains them from training their girl-children in schools. The paper further examined the concept of girl-child education to be all inclusive, some hindrances to effective girl-child education such as economic factors, sexual violence and abuse, political factors, the school environmental factors and socio-cultural and religious factors were highlighted. Included in the paper also was the implications that effective girl-child education would have on nation building such as poverty-reducing effects, improves health and nutrition, reduces inequality, reduces women's fertility rates, lowers infant and mortality rates and increases women's labour force participation rates and earnings.

Keywords: girl-child, education, implication, nation, building, 21st century Nigeria.

GJHSS-G Classification : FOR Code: 139999



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2016. Omede Andrew A. & Agahiu Grace Etumabo. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http:// creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

The Implications of Girl-Child Education to Nation Building in the 21st Century in Nigeria

Omede Andrew A. [α] & Agahiu Grace Etumabo [σ]

Abstract- This paper examines the implications of Girl-child to nation building in the 21st century in Nigeria. The paper began by pointing out the wrong notions that many Nigerians have particularly the rural dwellers about women being consider as properties for man and objects for their pleasure and how this notion restrains them from training their girl-children in schools. The paper further examined the concept of girl-child education to be all inclusive, some hindrances to effective girl-child education such as economic factors, sexual violence and abuse, political factors, the school environmental factors and socio-cultural and religious factors were highlighted. Included in the paper also was the implications that effective girl-child education would have on nation building such as poverty-reducing effects, improves health and nutrition, reduces inequality, reduces women's fertility rates, lowers infant and mortality rates and increases women's labour force participation rates and earnings. The paper finally recommended among others that government at all levels should give more attention to girl-child education, well to do individuals can contribute to girl-child education by giving them scholarship to study in higher institution, provision of school facilities and equipment that can ease their learning effectively as it contribute to nation building and the need to create more awareness for parents on sexual violence and abuse and this can be through radio and newspaper jingles and advertisement as well as periodical seminars and conferences.

Keywords: girl-child, education, implication, nation, building, 21st century Nigeria.

I. Introduction

In Africa, women are considered as men's properties or pleasure objects. They are also considered as a 'machine' meant for producing children. These situations have resulted in unfair treatment of women especially with regards to education of the male-child than the female child. In the traditional Nigerian society, there exist the believe that women are second class citizen (Enejere, 1991). The author further averts that gender inequality in Nigeria is promoted by religious and communal customs. Young girls particularly in Northern Nigeria are denied the benefit of education. This has given consequences for both the individual and the society at large.

Obinaju (2014) sees education as inalienable right of all irrespective of the person's circumstance. Education in its general sense is a form of learning which the knowledge, skills, values, benefits and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training or research. Education has been described as the most important aspect of human development, a key to a successful living, especially girl-child education (Micheal, 2011).

Girl-child education is a catch-all term for a complex set of issues and debates surrounding (primary education, secondary, and tertiary and health education in particular) for girl and women. Denying the girl-child access to education implies making her a dysfunctional member of the society. Statistics show that many girls are not enrolled in school. The global figure for out of school children is estimated at 121 million, 65 million are girls with over 80 percent of these girls in sub-sahara Africa including Nigeria (UNICEF, 2007).

The concern of this paper is that despite the campaign by the Federal Government, United Nation Children Education Fund (UNICEF) and stakeholder in education to improve girl-child education in Nigeria, the level of discrimination on girl-child education is still high. Therefore, this paper seeks to redress the challenges that negate the effectiveness of girl-child education in Nigeria.

II. The Concept of Girl-Child Education

Within the context of education, many scholars have defined girl-child education in various ways. The National Child Welfare Policy (1989) as cited by Ada (2007) defines girl-child as a person below 14 years of age. Offorma (2009) defines girl-child as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. This period is made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stage of development. The girl-child is seen as a young female person, who would eventually grow into women and marry. She is conditional to look after the young ones the home and kitchen.

Girl-child education is a catch-all term for a complexity of issues and debates surrounding education (primary education, secondary education, tertiary education and health education for females (Okernmor, Ndit and Filshak, 2012). Girl-child education also includes areas of gender equality, access to education and it's connection to the alleviation of poverty, good governance, which are major ingredients

Author α: Department of Educational Psychology, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, Kogi State Nigeria.
e-mail: andrewomede@gmail.com
Author σ: Home Economics Department, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, Kogi State Nigeria. e-mail: agahiugrace@yahoo.com

© 2016 Global Journals Inc. (US)

in averting crime against women. Today's girl-child education is for her tomorrow's living. Afebendeugne in Ugwu (2001) defines women education as the education that would make a woman become aware of herself and her capacity to exploit her environment, and involves training in literacy and vocational skills to enable her become functional in the society. When maternal care is adequately provided for the girl-child the aims and objectives of education will be achieved.

However, current efforts including national and global programmes have been to target increased enrollment of the girl-child into the different levels of education in Nigeria. The federal government introduced the Universal Basic Education Programme to provide cheap and affordable education to all and sundry. Most if not all the state governments in Nigeria have also introduced free and compulsory primary and secondary schools for both male and female children in various states. Again most state governments have also passed the child rights and protection acts that will eliminate (or at least reduce) the withdrawal of the girl-child from school and to prevent parents or guardians from using their school age children to hawk or do endless labour activities. This is so important because it promotes girl-child education which chances nation building.

III. Girl-Child Education and Nation Building

Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for Women Education is central to development and improvement of the nation's welfare. It is a powerful 'equalizer', opening doors to all to lift themselves out of poverty. Below are the roles of girl-child education to Nation Building:

- Poverty Reducing Effects: Girl-child education can vitally contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. While two of the goals pertain directly to education, education also helps to reduce poverty, promote gender equality, lower child mortality rate, protect against HIV/AIDS, reduce fertility rates and enhance environmental awareness (Mordi, 2008).
- Improve Health and Nutrition: According to Kiki (2010) education greatly benefits personal health particularly for girl-child, it profoundly affects reproductive health immunization rates. Education may be the single most effective preventive weapon against HIV/AIDS. If the issue of HIV/AIDS is rampart in a particular country, the force and economic growth will be affected. Again through the awareness of girl-child education, the rate of HIV/AIDS will be reduced to the barest minimum and this will have positive impact on Nation Building.
- Reduces Inequality: Education reduces illiteracy that is one of the strongest predictors of poverty. Primary education plays catalytic roles for those most likely to be poor, including girls, ethnic minorities, orphans, disabled people and rural families. By enabling larger members to share in the growth process, education can be the powerful tide that lifts all books (Okeke, Nzewi and Njoku, 2008).
- Reduces Women's Fertility Rates: Women with formal education are much more likely to use reliable family planning methods, delay marriage and child bearing, and have fewer and healthier babies than women with no formal education. This development enhances Nation Building.
- Lower Infant and Child Mortality Rates: According to Ocho (2005), women with some formal education are more likely to seek medical care, ensure their children are immunized, be better informed about their children's nutritional requirements, and adopt improved sanitation practices. As a result, their infants and children have higher survived rates and tend to be healthier and better nourished. If children survive through adequate medical facilities provided by a country, that aspect greatly enhance Nation building.
- Increase Women's Labour Force Participation Rates and Earnings: Girl-child education has been proven to increase income for wage earners and increase productivity for employers, yielding benefits for the community and society.

Despite these contributions to Nation building, women education has always been marginalized due to cultural practices and political decision. The effect of this situation has led to certain deprivations that have hindered women and girl-child in particular from maximizing their capacities in the development process of their communities. In Nigeria, as in other African countries, women are not held in high-esteem, consequently female education is seen as a wasteful venture as people think that the role of women is for procreation and confinement to the kitchen. This is the challenge of girl-child education today.

IV. Hindrances of Girl-Child Education

a) The following are some of the hindrances

- *Economic Factors:* Nigeria as an independent entity is undoubtedly characterized by very harsh economic conditions. This has resulted into scarce resources. As a result of this, choice has to be made between whom to send to school. Most often, it is the girl-child that remains at home. Due to poverty, girls get withdrawn from schools so as to help to supplement family income through hawking, trading or even working on the farm so as to support the family. In some cases, the girls are given out as house helps or even sent into early

© 2016 Global Journals Inc. (US)

marriage because of a huge bride price (UNICEF, 2007).

- *Sexual Violence and Abuse:* This also hampers the girls from going to school due to this fear of sexual violence, most parents deny their girl-children access to school.
- *Political Factors:* Despite the fact that Nigeria is signatory to various international conventions on the right of children, so far very little has been achieved in respecting children rights. The situation remains pathetic and serious. For instance, at the formation of the United Nations which is almost six (6) decades old, the precarious situation of the children worldwide became so obvious that it became necessary to establish UNICEF with special focus on the needs of the children around the world.
- *The School Environmental Factors:* Often most parents are scared of sending their female children to school in distance places and would rather keep them at home. According to Obinaju (2014), curricular, textbooks and other materials are usually gender-biased. She opines that right from childhood, girls are channeled into stereotyped traditional carrier in form of textbooks illustrations and stories consequently leading to the development of poor self image at a tender age. Also sexual harassment during educational pursuit create serious emotional and psychological strain on the girl-child.
- *Socio-Cultural and Religious Factors:* In most African societies, especially in Nigeria, the role of the girl as a wife and mother is conceived as the utmost priority not only by her parents, but also by the girl-child herself. However, in the Nigeria context, gender discrepancy in education is sustained by cultural factors. The wrong notion that her place is in the kitchen, to be seen and not to be heard have had very serious implications on the girl-child's ability at self-actualization. Obinaju (2014), notes that out of the 130 million children in LCDs without access to education, 81 million are girls. Also certain cultural and traditional practices like female circumcision, early marriages etc are to say the least unprogressive because they lead not only to absenteeism distraction, but also to eventual dropout of girls. Moreso, the ethnic and values of some religions do not help matters, as they are often perceived with tremendous suspicions.

V. Conclusion

The importance of education to a child and also for overall development of a nation cannot be over emphasized particularly the girl-child. Therefore, education is the right of every girl-child, a key to transforming her life and making her a responsible member of society. Without education, girls are denied the opportunity to develop their full potentials and play productive role in Nation Building. Although some efforts have been made to improve girl-child education in Nigeria, much still needs to be done if women must realize their potential and fully contribute to the political, socio-economic and technological transformation of the country.

VI. Recommendations

In order to overcome the challenges of girl-child education in Nigeria, the following recommendations are put forward:

- Government at all levels should give more attention to girl-child education. This is because if they are well educated, they will have chances of contributing to nation building.
- Well to do individuals can contribute to girl-child education by giving them scholarship to study in higher institutions, provision of school facilities and equipment that can ease their learning effectively as it contributes to nation building.
- The need to create more awareness for parent on sexual violence and abuse is imperative. This can be through radio and newspaper jingles and advertisement; as well as periodical seminars and conferences. More so, government should enforce law as regard to sexual violence and abuse in order to deter others from terrorizing the girl-child while in the school as it contribute to nation building.
- Nigeria negative attitude towards girl-child education should be discarded completely.
- UNICEF policies on equal rights to education should be strictly followed by government at all levels in Nigeria for the enhancement of Nation building.
- Government and non-government agencies should establish more boarding schools for girl-children to discourage parents from the notion of geographical distance, environmental hazards vis-à-vis the vulnerability of the girl-children.
- Nigeria society should not use socio-cultural and religious factors as yardsticks to relegate the girl-child to the kitchen. The education of the girl-child should be as important as that of the boy-child if not more important as peoples' opinion assert that when a woman is educated, a nation is educated.

References Références Referencias

1. Ada, N.A (2007). Gender power and politics in Nigeria. Markurdi: Aboki Publishers, P. 314.
2. Enejere, .E. (1991). Women and Political Education in D. O. Chizea and J. Njoku (eds). Nigerian Women and the Challenges of overtime, Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd, P. 44-51.

© 2016 Global Journals Inc. (US)

3. Kiki (2010). Girl-child Education in Nigeria: Why not? Accessed on 1/11/2010 at http://www.amplifv-vourvoice.orglu/kiki/2010/3/10/girl/education in Nigeria why-not.
4. Michael, I. (2011). Emir Harps on Girl-child Education. Nigerian Tribune, No. 15, 107 5th January, P. 31.
5. Mordi, (2008). Founding Education in Nigeria: Surviving on a shoestring Budget. TELL Magazine, No. 44, November 3, p. 32-34.
6. Obinaju, Q.I. (2014). Gender Issues in teaching as profession, in E.N. Okpara (EN) Gender Issues in Education and Development. A Book of Reading (Vol. 8, pp 204-212) Enugu. University Trust Publishers.
7. Ocho, L.O. (2005). Issues and Concerns in Education and Life. Enugu: Institute of Development Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka P.24.
8. Offorma, G.C. (2009). Girl-child Education in Africa in Africa. Keynote Address presented at the Conference of University WOMWNE of Africa Held in Lagos, Nigeria, 16th – 19th July.
9. Okeke, E.A., Nzewi, U.M. and Ujoku, z (2008). Tracking School Age Children's Education Status in UNICEF A-Field States. Enugu UNICEF, P. 31.
10. Okenmor, G.A, Ndit, J.N. and Filshok, M.A (2012). The role of women education in conflict resolution and peace building in the present political dispensation in Nigeria Journal of Women in Colleges of Education 16 (2) p 71-77.
11. Ugwu, A.B.C (2001). Education for Special Target Groups Emene, Enugu: Fred-Ogah Publishers.
12. United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) Factors Sheet (2007). Accessed on 1/11/2010 at http.//www.unicef.org/wcaro/wcaro Nigeria Fact Sheets Girl Education pdf.

© 2016 Global Journals Inc. (US)