

Educational Policy and Girl's Child Enrollment in Nigeria: Issues, Prospect and Way forward

Abubakar S. Yushau, Alfakoro, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin, Nigeria

Department of Public Administration

abubakaralfakoro@gmail.com

Yahaya Aliyu Ismaila, Kwara State University, Malete

E-Library Division

ismaila.yahaya@kwasu.edu.ng

Usman Rasheed Taiye, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin, Nigeria

Department of Public Administration

Mayaki2013@gmail.com

Amin AMIN (PhD), Department of Public Administration,

Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin, Nigeria

aminaminolohunoyin@gmail.com

Abstract

Education is the strategy to unlocking many forces rightfully, while Girl-child refer to female child within the range of 6-18 years of age. Overtime, the level of imbalance in the ratio of male to girl child educational enrollment is alarming and has left many questions unanswered. In spite of the human right declaration, free and mandatory government policy on education, and other efforts by both state and foreign donor agencies, girl child education is still dismal in relation to male child educational enrollment in Nigeria. This event has exacerbated a negative impact on girls child; which among includes girls child trafficking, force labour, early marriage, immorality, poverty, among several others. The paper underscores the importance of girl's child educational enrollment on societal development and nation building. The paper adopts the quantitative data sourcing methods while descriptive survey method was the research methodology. The purposive random sampling method was adopted as the sampling techniques method. The result of the research findings indicates that factors such as culture, religion, poverty, access and inadequacy of schools, and parental negative attitudes are some of the militating factors against girl's child educational enrollment in Nigeria. The paper recommends that government should provide more girls only schools, cultural\religious reorientation, and vibrant policies on girl child education in Nigeria.

Keyword: Education, Girl-Child, Policy, Development, Enrollment

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Introduction

Education is a key to problem solving techniques. Its tangibility makes it as an agenda on the exclusive, concurrent and residual list of the federal government of Nigeria. The universality of education is therefore bound and paramount on every gender and age grade. Education is the grates assets and inheritance a parents or nation could give to its young ones in other to life a sustainable and better life. According to Javed et al (2016), they asserted that the greatest investment a nation could venture into that will ensure and promotes the sustainability of their natural endowment is nothing but education. Therefore, education is the parameter to measure a country level of growth and development. Girl-child are important, sensitive, and mainstream of the world teaming populations today. The girl-child are usually model and most important agent of societal development in terms of child upbringing, moral teaching and cultural transfer of ethics, norms, values and economic activities. Girl-child are often referred to as the trainer of many homes and also an important agent of social and economic development. Girl's-child education also helps in the breaking of poverty vicious cycle and abuse of children right. Technically, Girls-child refers to categories of female's gender that are within their most crucial stage of growth to adolescent. According to Muktar (2011) he referred Girl-child to females within the range of 6-18 years. Girls under this age required guidance, motivation and resilience that will prepare them into the larger world. Therefore, girl-child need global attention in relation to their economic and social roles in every societies. The needs to improve this gender therefore begins with female within this age bracket that are referred to as girl-child. One of the most important propeller to achieving this goals is inculcating the habit of learning within the girl-child bracket.

Education is very important to everyone young and old, male and female, poor and rich, able and disable. Every human therefore desire and deserves quality education. Education has been identified as a fundamental strategy for a social's development (Nmadu et al., 2010). The concept education is essential has it serves as the link to achieving developmental goals in every ramification or sphere of life. However, the ratio between the female adult literacy rates stands at 49.7% in relation to that of male which stood at 69.2%. The ratio of imbalance stand at 19.5% as at 2020 (NBS, 2020). The reason for the high level of disparity was attributed to disparity in level of education (CODE, 2017). The fundamentality of child education necessitated it for the United Nation (UN) to declare that primary education is compulsory for every child (UN, 2018). Education is the bridge to earning a good living, and also being a functional and rational member of the society, thereby contributing individual quota to not only regional but national development. It is important to stress out that despite the fundamentality and functionality of girl's child in societal development; there have been a large margin in the ratio to male-child to girl-child education in Nigeria. In the word of Obaji (2005) he asserted that there is present of national gender differences in educational enrolment and completion within the girl-child and male-child education in Nigeria.

The education system in Nigeria has not taken into much cognizant the significance of girl-child education. Girl-child has been facing several challenges in addition to gender disparity and imbalance. Among other reasons include cultural and religious inclined problem

depriving many ladies from attending schools usually common in Islamic dominated societies, There are also problem of inadequate infrastructure, poor educational policy, deficit budget, poor communities isolated by geographical or ethnic minorities among other problems. As at 2020, there are 13.2 out of school children among this number the girl-child account for 60% as mentioned by President Muhammed Buhari in his speech. This issue all together prompt the reasons for this research paper. The general objective is to access the issues and challenges of girl-child educational enrollment in Nigeria and to provide solutions. The paper is been segmented into five parts, introduction, conceptual review, issues and challenges and conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Review

The concept of Girl-child just has many other concept in social sciences has diver's views. However, there is still consensus as to what the term girl-child connotes. In the view of Garba (2016) he view the term child to refer to as individual which is below the age of eighteen. Going further he asserts that the term is universal and has general application while referring to human being below the age of 18 irrespective of the gender. So therefore a girl-child refer to female offspring from within the age of 1 to 18 years. Girl child therefore refers to female gender within a growth range of 18 and below. In a similar study, Juliem, (2018) sees the girl-child as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. At this stage, the girl child needs the outermost care, guidance, protection and mentorship from their parents or guardian. It's important to portray here that the level of mentorship, abilities and learning acquired during this age period will no doubt be a strong determinant of how she live the rest of her life. Therefore it is the most delicate and crucial period of a female child.

Education is an essential component in any human endeavor. It's a major determiner to better standard of living. However, the concept of education is etymologically coined from two Latin words "educare" and "educere" (Amaele, Zidexman & Uzorka Et Al 2011:6). The concept connotes to mold, train, and watch or develop. In the view of Grace (2005), the concept education is the act of equipping individual with the necessary mental, physical, social, economic, political, spiritual and emotional information in other to help him develop into an independent person. In this definition the term education is holistic in nature it covers every facet of human endeavors. Going further, Amaele et al (2011:7), posit that education is the general development of individual child in an established way, techniques, and abilities in accordance to his or her capabilities and interest. This countenances individual rightful contribution to the societal development. The term education therefore mean the process of equipping individual with the prerequisite knowledge about the general way of life which allows him to partake and contribute in issues around is societies and it's a process that take place from birth to death.

Left important to state at this juncture that despite the imperative of the girl-child to societal and economic development, and also the impact of education on individual life, there has been a high rate of imbalance between the ratios of girl-child to male-child education in Nigeria. The girl-child education has been highly neglected due to some reasons which are

specifically economic, social and political. Buttressing this, Obaji (2005), started that there is dominance of national gender disparity in education enrolment retention and completion which has been in favor of boy-child at the detriment of the girl-child. In a report by UNESCO (2014), the discovered that two-thirds of the world's 774 million unlearned population are women and this syndrome has continue to dawdle. In another report over 5.5 million girls are out-of-school (UNESCO, 2014). The menace of disparity in girl-child education is more prominent in the Northern part of Nigeria has girl-child are denied access to education; due to early marriage, religious factors, and hawking activities which later cumulated into negative consequences on the individual and the immediate community UNICEF (2007).

In an effort to curb this problem, the Feminist School of thought founded in the 1980s, stressed that, "the increasing acknowledgment of the ways in which girls encounter discrimination and exploitation, coupled with the growing tendency as commercial sexual oppression, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation" (Wareing, 2007). However, Education of girl-child is the number one remedy to all this women stipulated problems. According to Adedokun, & Olufunke (2010), they aver that providing necessary education to Girl-child will no doubt help socialize and redistribute knowledge to her counterparts. When there is the increase in level of Girl-child education, there will be positive sustainable transformation in societies which will in long run reduce the rate of poverty and open greater opportunity to the female gender in contributing to sustainable development (Hadiza, 2017). Going further Bukar (2004) asserted that if this ratio of boy-child to girl-child education is closed, gender imbalance will fade away and consideration of women in schools and employment will be realistic in participating in paid work on equilibrium with men. To Adedokun (2010), female without adequate education suffer from lack of information or are prone to misguided information on how to take necessary first aid on how to prevent diseases which will allow them enjoy and have necessary access to medical facilities and other health care service. In the view of Idoko (2009) he believed that investing in girl-child education is likely to record more success on development indicators by according benefit to individuals, families, and the general society.

Education is imperative to both genders. However, the female contribution to the society is greater in terms of poverty reduction, sympathy, less extra vagrant nature and economic sustainable development (Abdul, 2003). More Opportunity in the education of women will help promote women with higher educational qualifications with more opportunities and good pay than those with only primary certificate (NPC, 2009). In a similar impact of education on female, the British Council has it that 66% of mothers with secondary education give birth in a health facility compared to 11% with no education (British Council, 2012).

In other to find solutions to this, it's now expedient for government to formulate policy that will be targeted toward the girl-child education. There are diverse policies of government on educational policy. However, there has been little concern about that of the girl child. Ezeani (2006) as cited in Alfakoro (2021) define policy as the proposed cause of action which governments intend to implement in respect of a given problem or situation

confronting it. The Nigeria government in their effort to provide child education has formulate several policies which include the Universal Basic Education (UBE) enacted in the 1999 constitution, there was also an act established in 2004 to compliment the universal basic education program. Another effort was the child act of 2003 who proposed for a free and compulsory basic education. There was also the national gender policy of 2006 and the Universal Primary Education. In addition to this were other efforts by International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organization to promote education. The irony is that much of the policies are universal it lacks the creation of special packages for the girl-child and also the gender balance policy did not see the light of the day.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the modernization theory. The theory was developed from the ideas of Weber and Parsons but became widely used in the Social Sciences through Walter Rostow's works in the 1960s. Modernization theory assumes that for any society to progress into modernity, sophisticated values and behavioural patterns must replace traditionally established norms, values and behaviours (Goorha, 2017). For modernization theorists, modern societies are more complex, productive and guarantee greater welfare for the members.

Third World societies are by this theory assumed to be "undeveloped", while Western societies are regarded as "developed". In order to be fully developed, traditional societies would have to adopt Western values. This requires getting rid of values and behavioural patterns that do not align with Western culture. In relation to the study, traditional values are changing in favour of those from Western societies. For example, there is inequality and low enrollment policy among girl-child which has resulted into decline in girls child education causing increase in girl child labour, early marriage and unwanted pregnancy. This align with Rostow's theory of preconditions to take off, take off and drive towards maturity. Unbiased education for children regardless of sex is a practice that long existed in civilized societies but is progressing speedily in developing societies. All traditional practices inimical to the growth and development of women and girls are making way for a more gender-friendly approach.

Study Area

Ilorin is located approximately on latitude 8030'N of the equator and longitude 4035'E of the Greenwich Meridian and has a land area of about 100km². Ilorin has been described as one of the fastest growing urban centers in Nigeria, has a population of 40,990 in 1952, 208,546 in 1984 (Oyegun, 1985). By 1991 census the city's population has increased to 552,088 and 777,667 in year 2006 census. Aderamo (2002) pinpoints out some of the rationale behind such growth to include the centrality of Ilorin city, location of institutions of learning, the creation of states in 1967 and 1976, the rapid growth of commerce, industrialization and other social aspects.

Methodology

The research methodology adopted in this research paper was the descriptive survey design. The source of data consist of both primary and secondary source of data that is the questionnaire precisely which serve as primary data and government document, journals, article, and publication serve as secondary sources. The study population for the study is 791 which consists of girls from some selected public and private secondary schools within kwara state. The basic for selection of three local government is that there are three senatorial district in kwara state so therefore each senatorial district were covered. And also eight school were selected, four schools each from both public and private school were selected in other to capture the entire scenario and to increase generalization. The sampling technique consisted of purposively and random sampling method while Kracje and Morgan table was used to determine the sample size of 257, so therefore the sample size for the study is 257 from the population of 791 , while the analysis was presented in simple percentage form.

Population of Study

	Local government	Ownership	Names of Schools	Class	Girls Population
1	Ilorin west	Public	Ansarul Islam Secondary school	SS2 and SS3	251
	Ilorin west	Private	Iqra Collage	SS2 and SS3	88
2	Ilorin South	Private	Excellent International College, Tanke	SS2 and SS3	63
	Ilorin south	Public	Government day secondry school Oke-Aluko	SS2 and SS3	97
3	Moro	Private	Awonga High School Moro	SS2 and SS3	68
	Moro	Public	Government secondary School Moro	SS2 and SS3	84
4	Edu	Private	Success Secondry School Tsaragi	SS2 and SS3	66
	Edu	Public	Government secondary school Lafiagi	SS2 and SS3	74
	Total				791

Data Presentation and Analysis

In the research effort to effectively access the impact of educational policy on girls child enrollment in Nigeria using kwara state Nigeria as study area, girls-child were administered questionnaires in the selected schools. Questions based on Agree (A), Neutral

(N), and Disagree (D) were asked. A total of ten (10) questions were asked to validate their responses based on the social, economic and political basis.

Ninety- eight percent (100%) of the girls-child agrees that male-child are twice their numbers in their respective classes, while 0% disagreed from their response. 67% of the girls-child agreed that the cost of school fees are not affordable, 20% were neutral while 13% disagree with the notion. On the easy access, proximity, and transportation cost of getting to school 73% of the girls-child agrees that school are far from them and they spend much on transportation especially girls-child habiting rural areas, while 7% are neutral and 10% of respondents disagree. The responses of the girls-child on the shortage of schools, poor infrastructure indicated that more effort is still required as 64% of the girls-child stated that schools and infrastructure are still few compare to their population, while 25% disagree, and 11% were neutral. Regarding the issues of dropping out of girls-child from school 55% of girls-child agrees that there are more drop out among them compared to that of male-Childs, 13% were neutral, while 22% disagreed. 50% of the girls-child disagrees that male teacher syndrome has affected their enrollment, while 21% were neutral and the remaining 29% agrees with the notion of the male teacher syndrome. In relation to early marriage and early pregnancy (60%) of girls-child agrees that this factors hinders girls-child enrollment, 12% were neutral while 28% disagreed. 33% of the girls-child disagreed that religious preaching and ignorance limited the level of enrollment, 22% were neutral, while 45% agrees that religious preaching an ignorance has negative impact on girls-child enrollment. Regarding the issue of domestic work (girls-child labour) and hawking, 70% of girls-child agrees that it negatively affected their level of enrollment, 5% were neutral while 2% disagreed.

Issues and Challenges to Girl- Child Education

Issues and Challenges ravaging the girl-child education in Nigeria are very multifaceted and tenses. However, these issues and challenges can be grouped into three categories every other fall under these groupings they include social, economic and political.

In Nigeria, there has often been deficit budget in the educational sector which in the long run cumulate obstacles in providing quality education. This set of issues are politically inclined. The set of issues include cost of schooling, poor educational facilities, provision of good qualified teachers and providing schools for rural dwellers and taking cognizant of proximity to individual household settlement. For example in a study by Tegint (2011) he discovered that over (61%) of girls walked between 1-3 kilometers before receiving knowledge during school days. The reason behind enlisting education on exclusive, concurrent and residual list is to ensure that every child enjoys and have access to education in Nigeria. However, there has been negligent of the education sector, from poor payment of teacher's salary, poor learning and reading facilities, poor environments and small number of schools.

On the social issues, there are diverse in nature ranging from poor family background, religious factor, majority are of male teachers, insecurity, monthly menstruation, early marriage, and fear of sexual harassment. According to Andrew and Agahiu (2016) sexual

violence fetters the girls from attending school due to fear of sexual violence; most parents deny their girl-children access to school. The conglomeration of this issues made Obanya (2003) asserted that the societal attitude ascribe towards the girl-child resulted in the dismal level of girl child education in Nigeria.

The economic issues inhibiting against girl child education are usually in areas of hawking, housemaid, and similar activities. Most Nigerian parents believes girl-child are helpers to their female in terms of helping them with economic business activities. This activities has deprived many girl-child access to education. In a report by UNICEF, they discover that majority of girl child are given out as house helps or even sent into early marriage because of a huge bride price especially In the eastern and northern part of Nigeria (UNICEF, 2007). The finding indicates that there is inequality in education in Nigeria, several girl-child are not enroll into schools in comparison with male-child. The study discovered that issues such as adequate schoolings, poor educational facilities, lack of provision of good qualified teachers and providing schools for rural dwellers, hawking and house help job deprive many girl-child from attending schools. This short coming are been prescribe by Rostow's under the modernization theory as the reason for poor enrollment in girls-child education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Education is tantamount to societal development. Viewing the expediency and the importance of the female gender in both societal and economic development, there is need to revisit the girl-child education in other to balance it up with the boys-child education. Girl-child are important spectrum in the society the need special attention, care and cognizant in the society as their role cannot be overemphasized. From the above discuss and literature reviews it is now crystal clear about the role of girl – child education in curbing many societal problem and the vehicle towards achieving this goals is the education of the girl-child. The finding indicates that there is inequality in education in Nigeria, several girl-child are not enroll into schools in comparison with male-child. The study discovered that issues such as adequate schoolings, poor educational facilities, lack of provision of good qualified teachers and providing schools for rural dwellers, hawking and house help job deprive many girl-child from attending schools. The study therefore will provide the following remedy.

Recommendations

1. Government should create more special policy on girls- child education and backed up with implementation, monitoring and constant evaluation and allocate more and high political position to female.
2. Government should legislate on the minimum age for marriage and impose a minimum educational qualification for marriage and also employ more female teachers.
3. Government should provide special benefits for girls and stipend for girls in other to motivate them and also provide more security in educational environment.
4. Private individual and Non- governmental organization should lay more focus on girl-child education and provide more scholarship for girls-child.

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