VOL. 04 NO. 2,
MAY, 2024
E-ISSN 3027-1533
P-ISSN 3026-8648

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of African Innovation & Advanced Studies (JAIAS)

Girl-Child Education in Nigeria: Role of Female Secondary School Teachers

Okenwa-Ojo, M. Ph.D
Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo.
okenwamary1@gmail.com

Abstract

All over the world, children are regarded as the greatest asset any society can possess, hence, they are adored and protected from diverse forms of abuse and neglect. The girl-child, most especially is vulnerable to many societal vices, and she is sometimes denied of the formal education because of some socio-cultural factors which regard the education of the female children as a waste. However, for any country to have a progressive development, the education of the girl-child must be upheld and given a considerable attention, to save the female gender from constant attacks such as physical, physiological, mental and emotional torture and relegation, as a result of the academic oblivion they are made to face. This study therefore seeks to find out how the activities and programmes of the female teachers in the Parent Teachers Association of secondary Schools have been able to impact positively on the girl-child in our Secondary Schools in Nigeria. Bishop Onabanjo High School, Bodija, Ibadan serves as a case-study. A fifteen-item questionnaire is used to answer the two research questions raised. The data collected were analysed in simple percentages. The paper found gender issues in education important, among them are cultural and economic factors. About eight recommendations were made, five of them focus on parents, governments, teachers, media and non-governmental volunteers.

Keywords: Girl-Child, Education, Role, Female Teacher, Secondary School.

Introduction

For so many years, insufficient access to education has been identified as a major obstacle to the course of girls and women in Nigeria. Girl-Child education in Nigeria seems like a dream that cannot be fulfilled, in spite of the various measures undertaken

to enhance it. In Nigeria, the life of the girl-child is pathetic, for her status as a girl-child makes her vulnerable to majority of unimaginable vices such as forced marriage, early marriage, rape, and a host of others. Education is an important tool for the development of a man. Every human society strives to educate its generations in order to pave way for development within the society. Education plays a vital role in establishing equality. It is a powerful instrument in overcoming the barriers that women and girls face.

One can say that education especially girls' education has a direct impact on the goals related to child reproductive health and environmental sustainability. It is basic human right and has been recognised since the 1948 adoption of the universal declaration of human rights. So many human rights treaties have re-affirmed and supported free compulsory education of good quality. For instance, the purpose of education in Nigeria is to bring about unparalleled development of science and its application to industry and technology for better living. It is clearly stated in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria (2004) that education is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. It is an instrument for achieving its national objectives, to make such education relevant to the needs of the individual and its set goals in terms of the kind of society desired and in relation to the environment and realities of the modern world and rapid social changes.

Moreover, girls and women education is an important tool for the elevation of social and economic development of any country. In spite of this, UNESCO (1995, 2005) and 2011 say that women represent over ½ of the worlds' out-of-school population and over 130 million children have no access to basic education. Despite the fact that education empowers every individual, including girls and women to have basic knowledge of their individual and political rights as citizens of a nation and the world as a whole. In Nigeria, an average Nigerian girl or woman is looked at as readily available investment for forced marriage, street hawking, prostitution, tool of wide-trafficking, and unfit in the community. These purported irrelevance associated with the status of a woman in our society has reduced an average woman to a second-class citizen of an inferior value. Nowadays it is not uncommon to have an educated husband putting away his wife for not being able to produce male children. This is unscientific but it is a true practice for they say it is the fault of the wife to produce female children not male children. Hence, rejection, deprivation and lack remains the fate of the girl-child in a patriarchal society like in Nigeria. Thus, this paper seeks to address how gender inequality affects the education of the girl-child and the role of women in the communities in this regard among other things, specifically the role of female teachers in Secondary Schools is looked into.

Concept of Education

To some learned people, the word "Education" has been derived from the Latin term "Education" which means the act of teaching or training. A group of educationists said that it came from another Latin word "Educare" which means "to bring up" or "to ascend". To a few others, the word "Education" has originated from another Latin term "Educere" which means "to lead forth" or "to come out". All these meaning indicate education seeks to nourish the good qualities in man and draw out the best in every individual.

When we educate an individual, we attempt to give him some desirable knowledge, skill, understanding, attitude and critical thinking. That is, he acquires knowledge of history, geography, arithmetic, languages and sciences. He develops understanding about the deeper things in life, the complex human relations, and the cause and effect of relationships etc. He in addition gets some skills in writing, speaking, calculating, drawing and so on. He develops some interests in and attitudes towards social work, democratic living and co-operative management.

Education is an important factor in creating social order founded on the values of socio-economic justice, freedom and equal opportunity, thereby accelerating economic development and technological progress (Mishira, 2005). The citizen of every nation contributes fully to its development. Indeed, if development is to succeed in any country, measures must be taken to improve the status of women starting with girl-child education as the girl of today is the woman of tomorrow.

In the traditional Nigerian society, there exists the belief that women are second class citizens. A woman is considered as a man's property or pleasure object, she is in addition considered as a machine meant for producing children. This situation has however resulted in unfair treatment of women especially with regards to education. A survey reported in The Guardian of Thursday February 27, 2014 carried out by some of the children, a non-governmental agency said that, in all the states of the Federation observed, the North ranked as high as eighty percent of the girl-child population with poverty and inequality. It also reported that, out of Nigeria's 10.5 million out-of-school children, the highest in the world, six million are girls while 70.8 percent of young women aged between 20-29 in the North-West Zone are unable to read and write as a result of poverty. Without any hindrance, we can agree with the popular saying that if you educate a man, you educate a person, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation. Hence, education is the ultimate liberator, empowering people to make personal and social choices in life.

What is Girl-Child Education?

Girl-child education infers the right of a girl to education. It has to do with opportunity provided for the girl-child to have access to free education as stated in the Universal Basic Education. UNISEF (2007) said that girl-child education does not only bring immediate benefit of empowering girls, but it is an investment in a country's development. Hence, education of a girl-child helps to develop essential life skills including self-confidence, the ability to participate effectively in society and protection from preventable diseases, societal abuse and any form of harassment and molestation from male counterparts. Kofi Annan (2011) views girl-child education as a social development policy works. In his opinion, it is a long-term investment that yields exceptionally high return. Currently, girl-child education has resulted in a contemporary matter in Nigeria for its obvious discrimination against women in all works of life.

Amirikpa (2010), defined a girl-child as a female homo sapien of unmarried age that is defined by anatomical and physiology characteristics that set her apart from the male counterparts. As a compound noun, the term connotes the sex and age bracket of the gender under reference.

By Western Tradition, adopted by the United Nation Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC) a child is any person under the age of 18, the child is totally under the care of an adult who may be her Parents, Guardian and other Siblings. At this stage, the girl-child is malleable, she builds and develops her personality and character. She is very dependent on those who model her behaviour, through observation, repetition and imitation. But within the context of education in Nigeria, a girl-child is a child under the age of 15 which is the terminal age of the mandatory 9 years of basic education.

Onyekwelu (2005) sees education as a tool that "teaches someone how to think, what is good and what is bad, how to solve problems, to know what is fair and unfair, rational and irrational…" Isaac (2014) infers that ignorance and illiteracy of parents are also factors that have contributed immensely to the negligence of the girl-child education. Ignorance and illiteracy have been able to prevent some parents from seeing reasons, why the girl-child should be equated to her male counterparts. Researches have shown that traditionally negative and obnoxious practices had effect on the girl-child. To some people, training of girls is regarded as a bad investment (Sarat, 2013). This has led to mass illiteracy, breeding of uniformed minds, vulnerability of the girl-child, dumb females in communication matters, disadvantaged womenfolk in the labour market and invariably poverty stricken-female world. Ningi (2012) stated that some girl-children are withdrawn from school or denied access to higher education because of the belief that the higher the girls' education the lower her chances of getting a suitable husband.

Benefits of Girl-Child Education

From all angles, there are various benefits derived from girl-child education. Some of them are as follows:

- Building up self-confidence and self-esteem of the girl-child.
- Enhance child nutrition and health that would provide opportunity to have chance of a healthier and happy life.
- Acquisition of skills, information and self-confidence needs to be a better citizen, parent and worker.
- Enables the girl-child to contribute to innovation and creativity in various fields of life.
- Reduces mass illiteracy and makes her well equipped to deal with life situations.
- Reduces child and maternal mortality.
- Empowers the girl-child to be self-reliant in national development.
- Widens the girl-child outlook in terms of marriage, child upbringing, home management and relationship in the community.
- Enables women to strengthen their domestic roles and their political participation.
- Lowers birth and child death rates.
- Protect girls from HIV/AIDS, abuse and exploitation.
- Assist in reducing dependency and to some extent help in lifting families out of poverty.

From the above benefits one can infer that it is very relevant to say that, it is through education that the girl-child acquires the relevant skills and experience needed to get empowered in order to realise their potentials and how to utilise the demand for it. When they are empowered with education, their destiny can be realised. It is education that can shape and transform a girl-child to participate and contribute to national development. Adebiyi & Hassan (2002) noted that the contributions of educated Nigerian women who had left their footprints on the sand of time had made Nigerian proud. They include Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, Oyinkan Abayomi, and in recent times we have women like Mrs. Farida Waziri, Prof. Ngozi Iweala, Prof. Dora Akunyili and so on. Many women are directors, commissioners and even ministers. The contributions of these women attested to the view that educated girl-children are integral factor in propelling or bringing about concrete national development.

The girl-child also needs to be educated to acquire knowledge and skills needed to advance her status for social interactions, self-improvement and status advancement. Education equally prepares the girl-child to face reality in the society and teaches her to be a good wife and mother. With the education of the girl-child it would help her to develop civil sense and learn to respect and love her fellow human beings and to be patriotic citizens.

Statement of the Problem

The girl-child and women are of immense value to every society. Their functions are keeping the home, bringing up children and also contributing to national development. This cannot be underestimated. It shows that education of the girl-child should be of great importance to all stake-holders in education sector. It should be given the pride of place it deserves both nationally and internationally.

Gender inequality, however is a global social problem, which transcends religious, social, racial as well as geographical boundaries, manifesting itself at every level of human existence. The girl-child is maltreated on all sides as against her male counterpart.

This study hence, seeks to find out how education can better the lot of the girl-child, empower her to face the challenges of womanhood and to brace her up to walk shoulder-high without fear of intimidation from the opposite sex.

Research Questions

This research has the following research questions:

- Does the moral behaviour of female students reflect efforts of their teachers?
- Do female students' self perception change as a result of female members of Bishop Onabanjo High School Parents Teacher Association Programme?

Significant of the Study

This study is considered significant because of the undoubted importance of women in any society. If the girl-child is properly trained, well nurtured and educated, she becomes the backbone of the family and most importantly of the society. With correct sense of self-worth and high sense of woman dignity, she has all the potentials of being as successful as her male counterparts. Her hope and aspiration of living a fulfilled life is rekindled and actualised by

the tool of education, which has been universally accepted as a potent weapon against poverty, ignorance, lack, deprivation and all such vices that hall-mark ignorance.

Scope of the Study

This study has its population from all the female teachers and female parents of Bishop Onabanjo High School, Bodija, Ibadan.

Research Design

The researcher used survey design, purposive and convenience sampling techniques for this study. The instrument was administered to female teachers and female parents who were present at the floor of a general meeting of the Parents Teachers Association of the school.

Population

The researcher utilised as her population all the female teachers and female parents of the Bishop Onabanjo High School, Bodija, Ibadan.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Female teachers and female parents available for questionnaire administration at the floor of the Parents Teachers Association meeting served as the study sample. Hence, the convenience sampling technique was used.

Instrumentation

A twelve-item questionnaire was administered to 50 female teachers and female parents of the Bishop Onabanjo High School, Bodija, Ibadan. Items on the questionnaire were tailored towards achieving the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1: Do moral behaviours of female students reflect efforts of female members of the Bishop Onabanjo Parents Teachers Association?

Six items on the questionnaire were used to elicit information concerning this and cumulative average of the responses are as stated below:

Table 1

Items	Agreed	Disagreed
Items 1-6 on the questionnaire	61%	39%

Note: Agreed and strongly agreed responses were merged together ditto disagreed and strongly disagreed. Majority of the respondents agreed that moral behaviour of female students reflects efforts of female members of the Bishop Onabanjo High School Parents Teachers Association.

Research Question 2: Do female students self perception change as a result of the female members of Bishop Onabanjo High School Parents Teachers Association programmes?

Table 2

Items	Agreed	Disagreed
Items 7-12 on the questionnaire	65%	35%

Majority of the respondents agreed that female students' self perception change as a result of the female members' programme of the Bishop Onabanjo High School, Bodija, Ibadan, while minority disagreed.

Discussion of the Findings

In the cause of the research, the researcher found out that the female members of the Parents Teachers association of the Bishop Onabanjo High School Bodija, Ibadan plays a significant role in the education of the girl-child, that is, female students, in their school. This also applies to all secondary schools in Oyo State and Nigeria. This is in agreement with the findings of Musa-Atinuke (2014) when she says that an educated girl is bound to be assertive in her opinions and take decisions that can help her to achieve her goals in life. In addition to this, the researchers found out that teachers' role in the education of the girl-child cannot be overemphasized. The teachers has enlightened them that as much as the girl-child is discriminated against, nature and posterity has so much endowed them with special qualities that make a society incapable of surviving without them. Moreover, without the females' inherent calming ability to raise up younger ones, a society faces the threat of out-right extinction.

Conclusion

Investing in girls' education delivers real return, not just for individuals but for a whole society, education of women and girls in particular should be placed at no limitation, rather it should be seen and adopted as a continuous process. Educating the girl-child should be a matter of concern to all stakeholders, parents, governments, teachers, societies and so on. The challenges facing the girl-child are not insurmountable, given the appropriate attention needed. Creating the consciousness and habit for a continued self-development programme is essential to achieving learning deliveries, such as safety and empowerment. Education of girls is a blessing in that it helps to raise the integrity and status of women in the society. It is known that educated girls and women are less likely to be victims of domestic and sexual harassment in their families. As they become more educated, they are less likely to support militancy and terrorism than similarly educated men. Educated women have a greater chance of accepting poverty, living healthier and more productive lives, and raising a good standard of living for their children, families and communities. These and various more valuable reasons why we should support education for girls.

Recommendations

The consequences of the neglect of girl-child education are so many that they can hardly be exhausted in one study. Hence the following recommendation could be followed:

- The Child Right Act should be strengthened and efforts ensured that it is implemented in all the states of the federation. This will help to curb indiscriminate child abuse and gender disparity.
- Governments at all levels and parents should see education of the girl-child as a right, obligation and moral imperative, since it is an undisputed tool of development.
- Erring parents should be sanctioned for giving out their girl-child in marriage at an early age.
- Teachers should not relent in their efforts at educating the girl-child, efforts of the teachers should extend beyond our schools to the society, market places and so on, to create general awareness for the need to educate the girl-child.
- Non-governmental volunteers are needed in the literacy campaign to be a forceful advocate and credible voice for the girl-child education. The campaign could take place at the market places, work places, homes and so on.
- The radio, television and the daily newspapers and the internet are needed to further increase in the campaign for the girl-child education. This is to enable those residing in urban and rural areas to recognise the need for girl-child education.
- Female role models should be employed in schools as teachers, clerks and so on to groom the girl child. This should be followed by campaign for gender equality and sex education should be given in order to instil and develop self-knowledge.
- Generally, parents, especially the illiterate ones, should be particularly encouraged to send their children to school.

References

Adebiyi, O. & Hassan, E. (2002). Improving Female participation in the teaching profession at NCE Level: A case study of Katsina State. A paper presented at the National Conference, F.C.E Katsina.

Adebiyi, S. & Hassan A. (2002). Improving female participation in the teaching profession at NCE Level. A case of Katsina State. A paper presented at the National Conference, FCE Katsina.

Amirvapa, O. (2010). Girl-Education and Nigeria's development: Literacy perspectives. Retrieved from http://www.afrovjo.net on 9/3/2014 12:20pm.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education, 4th Edition.

Isaac, W. (2014). Girl-child education: Importance for National Development. The Daily Independent.

Kofi Annam (2011). "Building a Partnership for Girls Education, World Education Forum" Darkar 26th April, 2001. Culled from www.wasc.com

Musa-Atinuke, M. (2014). Enhancing rural development through eradication of human trafficking: Girl-child education as a tool. In Journal of Cultural Studies, 4(1).

Mushira, R.C (2005). Encyclopaedia of Education, Vol. 11, Women Education, New Delhi APH Publishing Corporation.

Ningi, A.I. (2012). Girl-child education: Challenges for sustainable development in the Northern Nigeria. Unilorin M.A. Thesis.

Onyekwelu, M (2005). Youth Empowerment. Solutions to the problems of youth. Macmena and Rose International Ltd.

Sarat, A. (2013). On girl-child education in Nigeria. Accessed on 17/2/2014 at www.girlchildeducation

The Guardian Thursday, February 27, (2014). "Makoko gets world attention with floating School" Vol. 30 page 12-13.

UNESCO (1995). Human development report. New York, United Nations Development Programme.

UNESCO (2011). Education for all global monitoring report 2011: The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education. Paris, France: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

UNESCO Report (2005). Quality Education. File: 11f:unescoeducation.

United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) Fact Sheet (2007) http://www.unicef.org/WCARO Nigeria Factsheets Girls Education. pdf