

GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SECURITY, FAMILY STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The past years have witnessed improved- but not sufficient - enrolment of the female population in both junior and higher education in Nigeria in general and Kogi State in particular. However, a closer analysis of education statistics still reveals the different nature of the problem in different socio-cultural and economic contexts. This paper takes a look at girl-child education and its influence on family stability and development in Kogi State, Nigeria. The paper argues that a number of cultural barriers still exist in Kogi State which seriously impedes women's development as citizens and professionals. Efforts to improve female education in Kogi State needs to go beyond rhetoric and should involve policies and programs with measurable results. The methodology adopted for this paper is the descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey research design describes a given state of affair at a particular time. According to Emaikwu (2008), this type of research design gathers data from a large number of subjects. The purpose is to get information from a representative sample and to infer on a large population. The findings show that Kogi State Government has not placed adequate provision in areas of female education. The paper therefore recommends that Kogi State government should make adequate provision for free and mandatory education for women from primary to tertiary levels to enable them participate adequately in community development. It concludes that the State Government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Mass Media and Churches, should intensify campaigns through talks, seminars/ workshops, film-shows and preaching on the need to abolish all traditional practices and beliefs that impede and stifle the education of women and subsequently affect their participation in family stability and general development.

Keywords: Girl-Child Education, Family Stability, Security Challenges, Sustainable Development, Kogi State.

Introduction

The society today is unlike in the past when it was believed that the place of the girl-child is in her husband's house. The boy-child was considered superior to the girl child in many aspects especially as regards education. It was only the male child that was given opportunity to be educated. Unfortunately, even in the modern days, many parents still hold unto this disparity between the female and male education. They prefer sending their male children to school especially when the family's status is low.

The World Conference on Education for ALL (EFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, made a declaration on the education of women and girls to the effect that all nations should ensure access to basic education for girls and improve the quality of education for girls and women. It enjoined all nations to remove all obstacles that impede the active participation of girls and women in education. In Nigeria today, the need and relevance of girl child education cannot be overemphasized. A survey of the recent census results reveals that women constitute about

50% of the population in the country. By implication, this means that women are not a negligible, few that can be discarded with a wave of the hand. However, in spite of the Jomtien Conference Declaration of 1990 and in spite of their population, there is still low-level educational attainment by women and there exists glaring inequality of educational opportunities between boys and girls in Nigeria.

Indeed, girls and women stand out clearly as an educationally disadvantaged group. Utitili (1999) maintains that girls and women constitute over 49 percent of Nigeria's population. Ironically, however, 61% percent of the total female population are illiterates as against the 37.7 percent illiterate male population (UNICEF, 1993). These statistics on the girl child education have given rise to serious concern on the state of the girl - child education in Nigeria. Since it is universally accepted that the social and technological advancement of a nation is to a large extent, dependent upon the educational development of its women folk, it is imperative for all stakeholders in education to urgently and seriously address the issue of girl child education in the 21st century. This is because, in a fast developing country like Nigeria, the present status of the girl-child education cannot be ignored in view of the strong opinion that to educate a woman means to educate a family and indeed a nation. This paper examines the constraints and challenges of girl child education in the 21st century.

Conscious of their potentialities in and contribution to the task of nation building, Nigerian women today are making frantic efforts to educate themselves so as to fill the gaps and shoulder their responsibilities of building this nation. So far they are succeeding. A good number of them are now found in all sorts of enterprising occupations such as law, teaching, medicine, business, politics, and the armed forces. Some have formed women's rights groups to protect the civil, political and social rights, of women all over the country (Kigotho, 2004).

In recent times, conferences, workshops, seminars, and symposia educational matters has been organized to discuss about the need for girl- child education in the development of the nation. This is based on the belief that education is the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women, and also a fundamental tenet of development strategy. There can be no sustainable development if women remain ignorant, disenfranchised and discriminated against. Improving and widening access to education, especially basic education, is an objective in itself, as well as the conduit to accelerated social and economic development. Education is the process whereby, they foster in the individuals desirable and relevant changes in behaviour and attitude thereby making them useful and functional in the society (Akpakwu, 2012).

Conceptual Clarifications

Female: Female is that human person that is the opposite of male and most of their roles remains in the kitchen and this has made many people to view it is a waste spending time and resources to educate them. Others suggested that since she will ultimately be married out, it is unreasonable to invest in her education. She is to be given only such training in domestic activities that would enhance her being a good wife and mother as they are can bear or produce eggs, distinguished biologically by the production of gametes (ova) which can be fertilized by male games. What this means is that which is belonging or relating to women, or sex that can give birth to young or produce eggs.

Education: Education is the process of acquiring knowledge. It is a tool for person's development, the single most powerful weapon against poverty, and a fundamental human right to which we all are entitled. It gives people the opportunity to improve on their health, raise productivity and help foster participation in civil society. Education is a process of keeping the world and our society intact and in fostering the development and growth upon which human survival and progress depends.

It the development of process of equipping individuals with knowledge and skills to enable them solve the complex problems of living usefully for themselves, their families and make worthwhile contribution to the overall progress and development of the overall progress and development of the society. "Thus the educational process has been described as the intentional transmission of something worthwhile or desirable in a morally acceptable manner. It is the all-round development of a person physically, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. This implies that education encourages a wholesome development of the individual through participation in the activities of the social group, and that there must be a guide who can direct such education in a way that can result in all round development of a person.

Education is a tool for national development, the single most powerful weapon against poverty, and a fundamental human right to which we all are entitled. It gives people the opportunity to improve health, raise productivity and help foster participation in civil society. Education is a process of keeping the world and our society intact and in fostering the development and growth upon which human survival and progress depends.

Female Education: The current wave of globalization has greatly improved the lives of women worldwide, particularly the lives of women in the developing world. Nevertheless, women remain disadvantaged in many areas of life, including education, employment, health, and civil rights. While many gains have been made with regards to overall level of education worldwide and more children than ever are now attending primary school, there is still not world-wide gender parity in education. In every income bracket, there are more female children than male children who are not attending school. Generally, female education as a concept denote a kind of education that is provided to the girl child which is not based on gender.

Similarly, it is the process through which the female ones acquire knowledge and realizes her potentialities and uses them for self-actualization. Education is described today as the most important aspect of human and a nation's development. It is seen as a key to successful living especially girl-child education. This implies that denying the girl-child access to education will rather make her a dysfunctional member of the society.

Women are recognized the world over as very important element in the development process. It is believed that it is not just because of the number of the womenfolk but the social and economic assignments which they carry out in their societies. In spite of the importance of education to women's contribution to development, available statistics revealed that women lag behind men in all areas of education, science and technology thereby hampering their participation and contribution not just in community but national development.

Development: Development is a concept first associated with humanity and creative energies. It is an improvement in the capacity of the individual and society to control the forces of nature as well as themselves and other individuals and societies for their own benefit and that of humanity at large. It is a process of actualizing people's inherent capacity, greater freedom, self-confidence, creativity, self-discipline and responsibility. It can also be seen as involving the transformation of society through its institutions, organizations, social rules customary usages and attitudes to an extent that makes the society more and more positive and responsive to desired modern changes.

As a concept, it is now geared towards capital accumulation. In recent years however, development whether urban or rural, is hinged on human capacity building. Consequently, improvement in the quality of people as productive agents is the major concern of development policies. As observed, emphasis is now placed on policies needed to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and disease and to provide more diversified employment opportunities, thus reducing income inequalities. Thus, it can be added that it remains a continuous process of positive change in the quality and span of life of a person or group of persons.

One of the potent tools for development is education, whether formal or non-formal. Considering the recent studies on significance of human capital in the process of development, the education of every unit of the human resource of a nation cannot be down played in the path to development. However, it is still argued that women even now, face numerous restrictions which hamper their acquiring formal education. Several studies and reports shows that it is common knowledge that the female sex in many parts of our society are victims of educational inequalities, leading to their absence in the upper echelons of the economy and the political arena.

Insecurity and Female Education

Joda and Abdulrasheed (2015), in their study on the effects of the insurgence on girls' education in most of the affected states in Nigeria, provide a gory picture. The study reveals that the insurgent attacks have affected these girls' education through mindless attacks on their schools.

It also maintains that frequent abduction of school girls in their dormitory, occasional kidnapping of school girls on their way to school have reduce their attendance in schools drastically (more than 1,000 female students have thus been kidnapped). Most teachers and school heads in the region are among the internally displaced persons.

According to them, female teachers and school girls were traumatized, and afraid of going to their schools on fear of attacks from insurgents. Educational planners and inspectors of girls' education programme cannot conduct periodic checking on schools as most education officers in the region were currently out of their states.

The resultant closure of schools has exacerbated the previous poor rating of the region in terms of access to education. For instance, existing data revealed that the region has Nigeria's worst girl-child education (Ovuorie, 2015). National Population Commission (2014) documented that the Northeast region rates among the lowest on almost all the formal

education indicators. Its rates of attendance, from pre-primary school to junior secondary school (JSS), are very low; female primary completion and literacy rates are also much lower than the national average. As at 2014, existing evidence revealed that 70% of Northerners are illiterates, while ten million Nigerian children are currently out of school (Atiku Abubakar, 2015; Gbajabiamila, 2014). As a result of insecurity, school enrolment in the region has gone down by 28 percent more than any other region in the country (Bwala, 2012). According to the Nigerian Education Data Survey (NEDS, as cited in Saleh, 2011), constant attacks makes it even harder for teachers and other stakeholders to persuade parents to allow their children stay on at school. The insurgency has been observed to undermine the educational progress of Northern Nigeria (Ogbebo, 2014; Garba, 2015).

The effects of the insurgence in Northeastern Nigeria have been recorded in terms of over one millions people that have been displaced (NEMA, 2015); children that now live in perpetual fears (Olugbode, 2015); high incidence of children dropping out of school (Abdullahi & Terhemba, 2014), and congestion in classrooms where schools open. Obiajuru (2015) reported a case of 2,000 students crammed inside two classrooms in Bauchi. Borno State Ministry of Education (BSMOE, 2015) documented that many basic schools in Borno State had experienced several attacks from the insurgent group, and that some basic schools, especially in Baga towns in northern part of the State, have been closed down for 2 years.

According to the figures released by the Amnesty International (2014), education is under attack in Northeast Nigeria: many teachers and over 1,000 school children have been killed or wounded; about 50 schools have either been burned or seriously damaged and more than 60 others have been forced to close. Since the beginning of 2012, about 70 Thousands of children have been forced out of schools across communities in Yobe, Kaduna, Adamawa and Borno States. Many teachers have been forced to flee for their safety to other states. The highest number of attacks was in Borno State in the Northeast. According to the Nigeria teachers' union, more than 1000 teachers have been forced to flee from areas in the north since 2012.

UNICEF (2015) reports paints a gory picture of the negative consequences of the Boko Haram insurgence on females' education in Northeastern Nigeria. In the report, it is documented that because of the security challenges, numerous children currently have no access to education in parts of the north, particularly in the northeast. The document emphasizes that schools have been closed for security reasons, and where schools in the affected areas still function, children and teachers are often afraid to attend. In comparatively safe areas in the northeast, schools are often overcrowded, understaffed and have insufficient teaching materials; and that because of the violence, many parents are unwilling to enroll their daughters or are withdrawing those already in school.

The resultant effects of the Boko Haram insurgences on females' education in the region is that females' education in the area that have consistently been far below the nation's average has now nose-dived for worse. With the insurgents targeting females for kidnapping to use as human shields and ready tools to carry out their heinous criminal suicide bombs, females in the region might be educationally handicapped in contributing their maximum quota to the nation's development.

Female Education, Family Stability and National Development

Women are recognized the world over including Kogi State as very important element in the development process. Oyebamiji and Adekola (2006) claimed that it is not just because of the number of the womenfolk but the social and economic assignments which they carry out in their societies. In spite of the importance of education to women's contribution to development, available statistics revealed that women lag behind men in all areas of education, science and technology thereby hampering their participation and contribution not just in community but national development. This is corroborated by Eweama (2009) who reports an employment rate of 68.72% for men as against 31.28% for women in Nigeria. Adebosoye-Makinwa (1991) stressed that the education of women has the ability to revive and strengthen traditional skills and build confidence in women in their pursuit for upliftment. She blames traditional barriers and burden of family as constraints to women attaining education and participating and contributing optimally to national development. Women education therefore, according to Suara (1999) has "salutary spin-off" on the pace of economic growth and development. Much work has been done by women development scholars on women education and national.

At present, the forces which combine to hamper women education, family stability and sustainable development in Kogi State could be viewed broadly to include denial of equitable access to and participation to functional education, early marriage, confinement to solitary living, subjugation by culture to accept choices forced by men on women, discrimination and harassment at work, political disenfranchisement from elective and political appointment and exposure to cruel mourning rites upon the death of their husband (Oniye, 2000). These cultural barriers and environmental manipulation create inferiority complex in many Nigerian women. Oniye (2010) further ascertained that through the traditional socialization process of our cultural society, women tend to accept negative self-fulfilling prophecy, stereotyping and stigmatization. All these predispositions transmit negatively on the family role and responsibilities, which invariably interplay adversely in the national agenda. Women and development rather than women in development becomes an apparatus for gender issues.

Contrary to the current trend, intensive efforts to foster a gender-inclusive culture from the family level through education, across the board up to higher education, in order to promote sustainable human development need to be vigorously pursued. The legislative arm of government must be precise on the principle of gender equality in education by creating viable channels to the legal rights of women.

Generally speaking, improving access to and the quality of education is the most rewarding investment any nation can make. Investing in female education will accelerate Nigeria's economic and social development by enhancing human capital, slowing population growth, and alleviating poverty. According to Agbakwuru (2002) education equips one with marketable skills thereby lifting the possessor up from the poverty arena. Essentially, through education, the individual learns good health habits, principles and practices which promote healthy living and longevity as well as acquire marketable skills that confer economic power on the educated.

Conclusion

The recent past years, Kogi State under Governor Yahaya Bello has witnessed improved- but not sufficient - enrolment of the female population in higher education. However, a closer

analysis of higher education statistics reveals the different nature of the problem in different socio-cultural and economic contexts. A number of cultural barriers still exist in some parts of Kogi State which seriously impedes women's development as citizens and professionals. Efforts to improve female education in Kogi State needs to go beyond rhetoric and should involve policies and programs with measurable results. Efforts to ensure that education is made accessible to low-income families and rural populations, with special attention and sensitivity to women/girls is paramount if family stability and in turn overall development is desirable in Kogi State in particular, and Nigeria at large. Consequently, the study concludes that female education has significant influence on political emancipation and economic empowerment of Kogi State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Kogi State government should make provision for free and mandatory education for women from primary to tertiary levels to enable them participates adequately in community development.
2. The Government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Mass Media and Churches, should intensify campaigns through talks, seminars/ workshops, film-shows and preaching on the need to abolish every traditional practices and beliefs that impede and stifle the education of women and subsequently affects their participation in community development.
3. Government should make provision for educational materials, school meals, uniforms, to make free education truly free to girls from poor homes so as to help increase women active participation in politics.
4. Parents and guardians should give their female children education and stop the imposition of early marriage on them so that the girls will also have active role to play as regards the economic growth of the State.

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