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RETHINKING THE NIGERIAN PHILOSOPHY OF GIRL CHILD EDUCATION POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION IN CURBING SOCIETAL PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT
This paper aims to analyze the philosophy of girl-child education policies, including those in Nigeria and clarifies some misunderstandings and ambiguities about what it means to educate girls by assessing the policy's strengths and weaknesses as a whole. Before fully examining girl child education in Nigeria, Nigeria's policies on girl child education, factors working against girl child education in Nigeria, and how Nigerian educational policies have helped promote girl child education in Nigeria, it began by outlining the reasons why girl children should be educated. In the northern region of Nigeria, cultural awareness of the value of girl child education has been lost, leaving the general public ignorant of the poor state of education. The paper argues that a country cannot thrive without enabling girls to pursue education. Many factors, including sociocultural and illiteracy issues, have played a role in this. The paper contends that educating women and girls is a crucial step toward improving any country's efficacy and efficiency. They recommend that immediate advocacy for the value of girls' education in Nigeria is required. In conjunction with private businesses, state governments, civil society organizations, leaders of various communities, and international development organizations, advocacy and sensitization are required.

Keywords: Philosophy, Girl Education, Education, Policy Implementation

Introduction

There is no doubt that societal recognition of the value of Girl child education in Nigeria especially Northern part has been displaced paving the way to the ignorance of the people's deplorable condition of education. This situation arose because of many reasons among which are; socio-cultural and ignorance, economic stagnation characterized by pervasive poverty which has virtually weakened all sectors of development particularly the educational sector, and above all, implementation of girl child education policies that would be inefficient and ineffective. These impediments contributed to the low enrollment in schools, especially among girls, who are traditionally not seen as having

a place in the formal educational system in more established social structures. In the last few decades, gender equality in education has gained significant attention in most countries. In Nigeria, the levels of education received by boys and girls are very diverse. Many girls find themselves unable to pursue a basic education after a certain age. Girls in Nigeria face significant obstacles to getting a good education because of the inherent traditional cultural values that prioritize boys over girls. This paper analyses Nigeria's policy concerning the education of girls and policy implementation in curbing societal problems utilizing a philosophically grounded, analytical, speculative, and descriptive method. Does Nigerian Girl child education have a policy? Why parent should a girl child be educated? What kind of philosophy does the Nigerian Government adopt for girls?

Girl Child Education

The girl-child is a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. This is the age before one becomes a young adult. This period covers the crèche, nursery, or early childhood (0-5 years), primary (6-12 years), and secondary school (12-18 years). During this period, the young child is totally under the care of an adult who may be her parents or guardians and older siblings (Ruwah, 2020). It is made up of infancy, childhood, and early and late adolescence stages of development. During this period, the child is malleable and builds and develops her personality and character. She is very dependent on her significant others, those on whom she models her behaviour, through observation, repetition, and imitation. Her physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional developments start and progress to get to the peak at the young adult stage. In education parlance, it means that the individual has acquired adequate and appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, known as cognitive, psychomotor, and affective behaviour to be able to function optimally as a citizen. These behaviours are the focus of training individuals in institutions of learning. The planned and systematic training given in an institution of learning is formal education. The programme is organized, planned, and systematically implemented. In an informal education, there is no plan and the training is haphazard and incidental. Education is the process through which individuals are made functional members of their society (Ocho, 2005 in Ruwah, 2020). It is a process through which the young acquires knowledge and realizes her potentialities and uses them for self-actualization, to be useful to her and others. It is a means of preserving, transmitting, and improving the culture of society. In every society, education connotes the acquisition of something good, something worthwhile. Does the Girl child education policy adequately act in Nigeria? Why disparity between boys' and girls' child education?

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 girls and women. Denying the girl-child access to education implies making her a dysfunctional member of 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 per

cent of these girls in sub-Sahara Africa including Nigeria (UNICEF, 2007).

According to Goodluck in Mvendaga, Ifeanyichukwu, and Apine (2014), Nigeria has 9 million (37%) out-of-school children, which is more than one-third of its primary school-age children and this is the highest in Africa. Nigeria grapples with an increasing number of out-of-school children annually. This trend varies from zone to zone. For instance, in South Eastern Nigeria, which is dominated by the people of the Igbo ethnic group, there is however low boy-child enrolment in school as compared to girls. This is because the boy-children are sent for apprenticeships in trading which is the dominant occupation of the people. The opposite is the case in Northern Nigeria where there is low girl-child education as compared to boys. Nigeria is among the West African countries that have the highest number of girls that are out of school, and more than 75% of the 3.4 million children out of school are girls (UNICEF, 2007). The National School Census (NSC) (2006), also revealed a net enrolment ratio of 80.6% suggesting that a substantial proportion (19%) of the primary school age population between 6-11years are not enrolled in primary schools nationwide, and this represents about 5million of Nigerian children of the age bracket of 6-11years old that do not have access to primary education.

Girl Child Education in Nigeria: Development and Problems

Education is the process of providing information to an inexperienced person to help him/her develop physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, politically, and economically as well Nigeria is a signatory to the protocol for the promotion of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The right to equal educational opportunities by all, irrespective of gender, sex, socio-economic, socio-cultural, religious, and or political inclinations is one of the basic human rights guaranteed by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights of 1948band the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Since then various efforts are being made by various governments toward the universalization of education with no distinction between boys and girls. This is because the development of any nation is a collective responsibility of both men and women. All nations of the world today have realized that education is the vehicle for promoting and improving the status of girls and women. It has equally been understood that the sustainable development of any nation may not be possible when more than half of its population remains ignorant marginalized, isolated, and insulated. This explains why widening access to education for girls has been a major policy goal of Nigeria for quite a long time now. Conversely failing to invest heavily or adequately in educating girls and women can reduce the potential benefits of educating boys and men. It is pertinent to note that, girls and women still lag far behind boys and men in education in most states in Nigeria. There is no doubt with far-reaching adverse consequences for both individual and national well-being and development.

In recognition of the fact that in many countries in Africa the status of girl child education is significantly worse than that of boys, the world conference on women held in

Beijing, China in 1995 identified the persistent discrimination against the girl child and violation of her right as one of the twelve critical areas requiring urgent attention by governments and the international community. Of course, if the education of girls is neglected, society will be reduced to half. This means that any system that ignores half of its entire population is not ready for social change and development.

There is an urgent need for concerted efforts by the various governments at all levels which include; federal, state, and local government councils in Nigeria to redress the unhealthy development of ignorance and the marginalization of the girl child. It is only if girls and women are equally given the opportunity for education that rapid development can be enhanced in Nigeria. The responsibility for the development of any nation is a collective one, of men and women. In addition, the level of education is a significant predictor of national development.

Nigerian Girl Child Education Policy Implementation in Curbing Societal Problems

Since the nation's independence in 1960, the government of Nigeria has worked diligently to guarantee that its citizens have access to education. But the emphasis on women's education became more significant in the late 1980s. In 1986, both the Blueprint for Women's Education and the Nomadic Education programme was begun. The Blueprint for Women's Education seeks to improve women's educational possibilities. To make sure that women's problems were taken into account while determining the nation's development priorities, the National Commission for Women was founded in 1989. The Universal Basic Education Act was enacted in 2004 as a measure to guarantee free, mandatory education for all children. The Gender Education Programme (GEP) runs many initiatives to reduce gender inequality. Second Chance Centers for girls who have left school have also been established thanks in large part to GEP. In Conformity with the Nigerian Constitution which advocates for social justice and equality; the National Policy of Education, 2004 which highlights education as an instrument for development; the Universal Basic Education Law which advocates for free and compulsory basic education; the National Policy on Women which calls for all Nigerian women to acquire basic education and enjoy the full benefits of contemporary living and contribute meaningfully to the development of the country. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2006), the goal of the gender in basic Education Policy is to ensure equal access to basic education and promote retention, completion, and high performance for all pupils with the required attention and provisions for the particularly disadvantaged children especially (often girls) at the basic education level (i.e. Primary and Junior Secondary School),

The National Policy on Education was created in 2004 and revised in 2007. It was revised to include early childhood education which is a key tool for improving the quality of education for both girls and boys. The National Gender Policy, created in 2006 aims to recognize the differences between men and women.

Barriers to Girl Child Education in Nigeria

The significant barriers to girl child education are poverty, poor infrastructure, women's low social status, mothers' lack of education, civil conflict, natural disasters, and violence. Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for Women or girl children Education is central to the development and improvement of the nation's welfare. It is a powerful 'equalizer', opening doors for all to lift themselves out of poverty. The reasons for educating girl-child are as follows: Poverty Reducing Effects; Improve Health and Nutrition; Reduces Inequality; Reduces Women's Fertility Rates; Lower Infant and Child Mortality Rates; Increase Women's Labour Force Participation Rates and Earnings. Education for girls has been shown to boost wage earners' income and employers' productivity, resulting in communal and societal advantages. Despite these contributions to educating girls and women, cultural practices and political decisions have always devalued women's education. As a result of this circumstance, women and girls, in particular, have been deprived of opportunities to participate fully in the development process of their communities. Women are not regarded in high regard in Nigeria, as they are in other African countries, and as a result, female education is seen as a waste of time by those who believe that women's purpose is to procreate and limit them to the kitchen. Today's girl-child education dilemma is this. Furthermore, the following are some of the barriers to girl child education in Nigeria:

- ✓ Girl child education is seen as an optional extra aim to be pursued when other more urgent needs are attained and satisfied.
- ✓ The burden of debts and structural adjustment programmes in Nigeria has pushed education down the development agenda and poverty is holding back education.
- ✓ The unspoken fear factor of the power that girls, who are the future women, will have through education.
- ✓ The fear people had to lose their cultural identity.

It is important to remind ourselves that social discrimination, financial obstacles, and sometimes in remote villages, schools that are unsafe and too distant are some of the manmade barriers that deny girls their fundamental right to education. However, other factors that stand to be constraints to girl child education include:

- ✓ Religious misconception about the position of western Education.
- ✓ Early marriage, leads to the forced withdrawal of girls from school for marriage by some parents.
- ✓ Cultural factors (conservative attitude) that are opposed to social change and modernization and consider western education as alien to their culture.
- ✓ Lack of enlightenment and adequate sensitization, many governments do not give proper and adequate sensitization on the value of education.

It is not out of place to state that because of the relevance of girls and women's education in the development of nations, international bodies and Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

such as UNESCO, UNICEF, the world bank and forum of African Women in Education (FAWA) work to promote girls education in Nigeria by supporting through advocacy policy reforms and by providing fund to achieve gender equity in education. How Have Nigerian Educational Policies Helped Promote Girl Child Education in Nigeria?

Education and Training the Girl-Child

Access simply means the right to education. It is also the opportunity provided for the girl-child to be educated. Access deals with the availability, convenience, and ability to be educated. Many governments indeed make provisions for the education of their citizens, but the provisions most of the time do not take cognizance of the peculiarities of the girl-child. In that case, the girl-child may not have access to education, which is a fundamental human right. According to Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), reports the enrolment in Sokoto state by classes in Early Care Day (ECD) centres or preprimary for the 2010/2011 session with a total number of schools of 377. The Nursery one enrolled is male 29,833 and female 20,587, nursery two pupils admitted are male 22,863 and female is 19,287 and also nursery three male; 22,107 and female; 19,304. The total pupils' enrolment for males is 74,803 (55.83%) and for females is 59,178 (44.17%), and the total number of enrolments for both of them is 133,981. The total number of primary schools in Sokoto was 1890 enrolment by gender male: 481, 531 (63.84%) and female: 273,050 (31.16), the sum of male and female was 754,203. The UBEC further indicates that in the 2010/2011 session of Junior Secondary Schools enrolment in the state were for the male was 46,757 (68.68%) and female was also 21,313 (31.32%) which makes a total of 68,070 for that session and number of schools 110.

The UBEC also revealed that the total for the 2011/2012 session in preprimary schools with several schools or centres is 377 and by gender male; 14709 (62.84%) and female: 8697 (37.16%) the total enrolment is 23,406. The number of primary schools is 1890 and enrolled 527,109 (64.43%) male and 291,455 (35.57%). The enrolment of Junior Secondary schools male; 46,893 (73.23%) female: 17,135 (26.77%) and the total number of enrolment for JSS is 64,028.

In the 2013/2014 academic session for basic education pupils' enrolment in Early Childhood Care Development centres/ preprimary ECCDE in Sokoto state with some schools is 355. The Nursery one; male12,325, females; 8,461 and Nursery two: the male is 7,582 and females were 5,142, there is no admission for Nursery three sessions, which turns to a total of 19,907 (59.5%) for males and also 13,603 (40.5%) for females. The number of Primary schools in 1990 from primary one to six male is 427,348 (63.4) and female 246612(36.6) the number JSS is 177 pupils enrolled male: 54,300 (70.4%) and female: 22,724 (29.6%).

The paper indicates the 2015/2015 session with a concerned enrolment of both public and private schools in the state where the total number of schools is 2086 comprises male: 442,232 (61.9%) and female: 272,199 (38.1%), the total enrolment for public and private: 714,431. In the same vein, the admission into primary schools (public and private) for the 2015/2016 session male is 414,849 which is equivalent to 61.28%, and females 262,044 ie 38.72%. the total of both schools was 676,893 with the total number of registered schools being 2146. For the 2015/2016 session number of public schools in Sokoto state: 2011 and male and female were 401,657 (61.6) and 250,774 (38.4%) respectively. From the above data, boys outnumbered girls in most Early childhood care centres, primary schools, and JSS in rural areas.

Supporting girl's education, (Kofi Annan, 2001) stated:

No development strategy is better than one that involves women as central players. It has immediate benefits for nutrition, health, savings, and reinvestments at the family, community, and ultimately, country level. In other words, educating girls is a social development policy that works. It is a long-term investment that yields exceptionally high returns.

In the education and training of the girl-child, the World Education programmes have evaluated thus: a significant increase in girls' enrolment and retention in schools will enhance development; proactive communities are created through the involvement of strengthened parent-teacher associations as school management committees; teachers supported by gender awareness tools employ gender equitable methodologies in the classroom; gender-sensitive education officials employ gender equitable policies (World Education, 2007).

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations, General Assembly in December 1949 stipulated that:

- Everyone has the right to education. This shall be free at least in the elementary and primary stages.
- Elementary education shall be compulsory while technical and professional education shall be made generally available.
- Higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit.
- Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children (Nwangwu, 1976 cited in Ruwah, 2020).

Why should everyone have the right to education? The answers to this question are given thus:

The child is born helpless and has to rely entirely on parents and other older members of society to survive and satisfy her growth needs in all their ramifications. The degree and quality of participation in the life of society depend to a large extent on the degree and quality of her education. This will enable her to perform her political and other citizenship duties and exercise the rights pertaining thereto effectively. Since every citizen benefits from the result of the education of her fellow citizen and since

every generation receives its education from an older generation, every generation has to reciprocate by educating the generation that comes after it. (Ocho, 1988 in Offorma, 2009).

There is an adage that says "educate a man, you educate an individual, but educate a woman, you educate a nation" The above summarizes the essence of education to the girl-child and indeed, to every educable human being, and so calls for special attention to be focused on education of the girl-child. No nation can afford to toy with the education of its citizens, especially, the child, who will be the father or mother of tomorrow, because education is the bedrock of all facets of development.

Reflection and Rethinking Philosophy of Girl Child Education towards Curbing Societal Problems

According to the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 40% of Nigerian children aged 6 to 11 did not attend any primary school in 2015, with the Northern region of the country having the lowest school attendance rate, particularly for girls. Despite recent increases in net enrolment rates in the country, around 4.7 million children of primary school age are anticipated to be out of school. Many youngsters do not complete the primary cycle even after enrolling in school. UNICEF also estimates that 30% of Nigerian primary school students drop out, with only 54% progressing to junior secondary schools. Child labour, economic hardship, early marriage for females, and political instability in the northeastern section of the country are all factors in this minuscule completion rate. Furthermore, the primary school completion rate in 2013 was 82 per cent, an increase of 9 per cent from 1993. In 1914, Nigeria had roughly 25 secondary schools, with about 22 of them for boys and the remainder for girls. By the 1970s, more males than girls were enrolled in primary school. The local traditional concept that a woman's place is at home has been one of the primary justifications.

Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for women education is central to the development and improvement of their welfare. It is a powerful equalizer opening door for all to lift themselves out of poverty. The prospects associated with Girls' Child Education are as follows:

It plays a vital role in managing resources and enhances the economic development of society. It helps to increase productivity and self-employment in the informal sector. Enhancement of quality of living like housing, health, clothing, communication, and so on. It creates job opportunities. Despite these contributions to society women's education has always been relegated due to religion religious and cultural practices and also political decisions. The effect of this situation has led to certain deprivations that have hindered women and girl children from maximizing their capacities in the development process of the communities. Consequently, female education is seen as a wasteful venture as people think that the role of women is procreation and confinement to the kitchen. This is the challenge of girl child education today.

There is an urgent to rethinking Nigerian girl-child education affects the economic well-

being of the country. A girl child with a basic education could easily gain employment in the formal labour force and therefore contribute not only to her family income but the National GDP. When girls are gainfully employed, they provide financial support to their families, especially during economic recession hence an educated woman with a good earning power can help reduce the financial problems of the family and thus avert frustration and other financial problems. To put it exactly, "Philosophy of Girl Child education is a comprehensive activity that is undertaken mainly because of the unyielding desire to search for the truth and equally an effort to know the hidden realities truths about themselves". Women in Education who are engaged in a pursuit of asking, answering, and resolving problems traceable to any of the curbing societal.

Conclusion

Women's education is one of the most important advancements that improve a country's effectiveness and efficiency. However, no country can develop without allowing women to attend school, as education is one of the cornerstones of progress. It has been said that educating a woman is equivalent to teaching the entire globe. The majority of the efforts made by the Nigerian government to achieve optimum education for its girl-child have been described in this paper. Although much work remains to be done to guarantee that girls are enrolled in the Nigerian school system in a timely and efficient manner. The importance of education to a child and also for the 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 potential and play productive in Curbing Societal Problems. 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, socioeconomic, and technological transformation of the country.

Recommendations

To reduce to a minimal level, the challenges of girl child education in curbing societal problems in Nigeria the following recommendations are put forward:

- There is a need for campaigning on the importance of girls' education in Nigeria. There is a need for advocacy and sensitization in collaboration with International Development Agencies, Civil Society Organizations, Local Leaders, the Private Sector, and State Governments.
- The Federal Government of Nigeria should mount an advocacy campaign sensitizing communities on the importance of girls' education and also traditional and religious leaders will mainly be targeted for them to take a leading role in the campaign.
- Well-to-do individuals should assist poor parents in providing uniforms, writing materials, and reading materials for the girl children.

- Community negative attitudes towards gird child education should be discarded completely.

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