



Girl Child Education for Sustainable Development Goals in Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses the education of the girl child in Northern Nigeria. It is an attempt to re awaken the minds of humanity on the undisputable importance of girl child education in Northern Nigeria. This paper discusses the concept of education in the northern Nigeria as well as factors militating against the objective of girl child in Northern Nigeria. The paper also makes suggestions and recommendation on how to improve the education of the girl child in the area of focus (Northern Nigeria).

INTRODUCTION

Education all over the world is recognised as the bedrock and cornerstone for any sustainable development, Oyitso and Olamukoro (2012), "Today no nation on earth can boast of any meaningful development without education. Women are at the heart of development as they control most of non-monetary economy and also play an important role in the monetary and nations economy. Education as it refers to the girl/child is a programme which provides ample opportunities for girls to enroll, attend and complete their education without any sense of discrimination.

Everywhere in the world women work both around the home and outside the home, the peace makers the symbol of beauty and the major molder of the character", northern women are not exception.

Education is therefore a crucial resource through which human and natural resources are harnessed for the common good of humanity. Since the world has acknowledged that the current status of girls' education poses a significant barrier to the realization of any sustainable development, it is very possible for northern Nigeria to achieve sustainable development through the effective implementation of gender reform education and empowerment. The Millennium Development Goal (2000), the Daker goals (2000), and education for all (EFA) (2000) emphasize this even more.

Olomukoro (2012) opines that the national policy on women was adopted in Nigeria in the year 2000 and the goal of the policy is the full integration of women into the social and political status as a means of developing the nation's human resources, national and economic development", which the northern Nigerian women are part and parcel; Access for women educational development programs, according to Kogitichaus, Goksen and Gulgoz (2005), is considered as one of the main factors of human empowerment and development, therefore the education for the girl-child/women in the northern Nigeria must be re-emphasized for such development.

It is the purpose of this paper therefore to highlight on the education of the girlchild/women particularly in the northern Nigeria and how to achieve sustainable development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Education

Depending on their points of view, various scholars have defined education in different ways and at different times. Imhabekhai and Olomukoro (2007) consider it as a fundamental tool in social change and modernization; it affects the pace of development and its acquisition, among other things, and either speeds up or slows down the degree of growth. A person's holistic development, including their intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical growth, is referred to as education. That's what Olomukoro (2012) says.

Education is not just the ability to read and write but also the ability to use printed and written information to become useful member of the society, to achieve necessary goal, development, knowledge, and potentials. Education is seen as a powerful agent of socialization, it plays a tremendous role in

socializing individual to render active and useful service both to the family and society in general that will undoubtedly leads to sustainable development which the girl child is inclusive Bolivas (2010) in Cecilia 2018 pointed out that: 'investing on girl child education carries very high returns, it improves livelihood, leads to better child and material health and favours girl's access to education.'

Girl-Child

The girl child as defined by UNICEF (2001) is "a female human being below the age of 18 years. A woman in the other hand is defined as an adult female human being from the age of 18 years and above, could be wife, mother, fiancé or girlfriend.

Girl-Child Education in Nigeria

The federal government of Nigeria acknowledged the fact that girl child education has been neglected for two long that was why in conjunctions with UNICEF developed educational programmes which provides ample opportunities for girls to enroll, attend and complete their education without any sense of discrimination. Therefore their right to education should be the same. With their male counterparts.

The federal government through the ministry of education at a meeting held at Kaduna in 1986 forwarded a proposal to the federal council on education (NCE) on female education, endorsed the following policy objectives

- giving girls greater access to education from elementary school through postsecondary education.

- Making everyone aware that educational possibilities should be made available to all residents, regardless of their gender, age, location, creed, or status.

- Shifting how all women, regardless of age, feel about education.

- Offering basic literacy instruction through skills like knitting, crocheting, baking, cooking, and sewing to literate females (including girls) and early school leavers.

- Raising awareness among all women of the need of cultivating a positive self-image.

- Educating the public and parents to improve perceptions about woman-centered education initiatives.

Encouraging women to pursue careers in science, technology, and math; a campaign was started and special schools for girls were established the same year a blueprint was created. Despite all of this, the proportion of girls enrolled has never topped 48% of all students.

- Abama and Mangvwat (1999). The federal government then vowed to combat illiteracy among its female citizens; this is demonstrated by the fact that Nigeria is a signatory to numerous international agreements that support women's interests and give them their due position in development. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERI) are a few of these agreements. "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)," "Convention Against Discrimination in Education" (CADE), etc.

METHODOLOGY

This research method uses qualitative research methods. focuses the education of the girl child in Northern Nigeria . for analysis the the minds of humanity on the undisputable importance of girl child education in Northern Nigeria. This research discusses the concept of education in the northern Nigeria as well as factors militating against the objective of girl child in Northern Nigeria.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Girl-Child/Women Education in Northern Nigeria

The girls in Northern Nigerian are left behind in terms of access to modern education and vocational skills placing priority to Islamic education at periphery level when compared to their southern and eastern counterparts, therefore the first step towards empowering the girl-child in the northern Nigerian towards achieving her dreams and aspiration lies in the hands of the government (i.e its commitments and preparedness to bring about change through deliberate policies and legislation).

According to Maiyanga (2004) "policies in one sense are discourses, values, practices, and ways that shape consciousness and practice social identities". The federal government has acknowledged the fact that the Northern states especially the northwest have the country's worst girl-child education and health indices. A group of non-governmental researchers claims that the states of Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Jigawa, and Yobe are the worst affected. Since the north of the country was thought to be educationally backward, the then-president Jonathan launched the girl child education (school) program in Northern Nigeria to make education accessible and affordable for the less fortunate. His administration also paid special attention to reducing illiteracy in the region. The Nigeria Tribune of September 14, 2011, reported that the then-minister of Education was overheard stating, "The federal government has decided to give priority attention to the education of the girl child". If then we expect a bright and prosperous future for northern Nigeria, we must prepare to lay a solid foundation for the girl's child, because despite all efforts so far put into the education for the girl/child, more boys are enroll into primary schools than girls (Cecilia, 2018). Onyukwa (2011) added that, "the girl's who are enrolled into primary in Northern Nigeria less than 45% of them make it to the secondary school" less than 30% to tertiary levels. This just shows that the current situation the girl child finds herself in Northern Nigeria is quite dismal.

On the 18th of August 2016, The Northern state governors wives association advocating for the girl child education extended its canmpaign to Bauchi, Kebbi and Taraba states. The wives of Bauchi and Kaduna states governors flawed at the unfortunate situation of the girl- child education in the

region. They spoke on the importance of the girl-child education and promised to play their roles in no small measure to improve the situation.

The sultan of Sokoto and five northern states governors under the aegis of Northern Governors forum met the visiting united states secretary of state Mr. John Kerry at the presidential villa on Tuesday 23th August 2016, seeking assistance for the region to overcome its numerous problems among which was the problem of girl child education. He was informed of the plan by the sultanate council to establish an all women university. In his response he said "girls, woman, children and other vulnerable groups must be educated, given jobs and opportunities to explore their potentials" (Nigeria Tribune, Wednesday 24 August, 2016) He is also seen with some Nigerian girls in the meeting at the US embassy at Abuja shown at the front page of Daily Sun of 25 August.

Unfortunately despite all efforts there are many factors still militating agents girl child/women education in Northern Nigeria.

Factors Militating Against Girl-Child Education in Northern Nigeria

The independent policy group (2003) and the UNICEF (2005) have made interesting studies and have identified several constraints and impediment which have effectively shifted the social economic educational growth and development of the girl child in Northern Nigeria, according to Bawa (2010) as follows:

- Socioeconomic challenges: Here's where parents have to decide which of their daughters and sons to send to school; naturally, the boys will be given preference.

- Cultural challenges: Some parents worry that if girls don't get married soon, they might become promiscuous.

The education of girls is being impacted by the disparities between rural and urban communities. Children residing in rural areas frequently have to walk or travel considerable distances for school every day.

- Inferiority complex: A girl youngster may psychologically believe that she is incapable of enduring the demanding nature of education.

- Lack of community support-Meagre community resource are often devoted into other sectors, thereby turning a blind eye on the whole schooling system.

- Religious reasoning: Some parents feel that sending their girls to a Quranic school rather than a traditional one is more "Western."

While Cecilia (2018) lists a number of factors, including child labor, that work against girls' education in Northern Nigeria. Financial difficulty, religious restrictions, early girl marriages, high opportunity costs, the way society views women, the distance between schools, a lack of community support, religious prejudice, and cultural bias

Empowering the Northern Nigerian Girl-Child for Sustainable Development

Akintayo and Eghenekohwo (2004) defined development as "a process of economic, social, political, and cultural change engineered in a given society by the effort of all stake holders both internal and external." Sustainable

development is the idea of meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet its own needs. Development has been viewed from different angles by different people. It is a program put in place to address the current issue for sustaining the life of the people in a given society or nation. It generally means that development depicts positive change and development in socio-economic and political conditions or situations in the society also enhances competence to analyse and solve problems of day to day living.

Mabogunge (1991) identifies eight cardinal elements of sustainable development as they affect girl child education, health, culture, politics, economy, agriculture, enhanced environment quality and peaceful co-existence. Since the level of literacy of women mostly determines the upbringing of children in the family, performance in schools, home caring, participation in nation building, etc. Therefore every hand must be on deck for proper functional literacy of women. There should be strong motivation in the part of the women and they should be made to see the inherent gain of taking pains to read and write, there must be reward such as increased in prestige, confidence and enhancement of employment opportunity lies on self reliance on the part of the women. According to Tahir (1999)

“Although women constitute about 50% of Nigeria population, their level of participation in the socioeconomic, political and educational programmes of the nation is not proportional to their size in the total population. It is also said that in Northern Nigeria the population of women is more than 60% of the total population. It is obvious that functional education of the girl-child can break these chains and turn our women to builders of their region. Onsaye (1993) characterized the literate women as having ability to read and write letters, exercising her voting right, traveling with purchased tickets, recovering her monetary transaction, reading news papers and other reading materials, and the ability to participate actively in politics

Therefore for northern Nigeria women to sustain development in the region they must be educated and such women will apply the knowledge got to their families and the region in general. A popular adage says that “When you educate a man, you educate an individual, but when you educate a woman you educate the nation” sounds very relevant in this context because the woman is responsible for the training of every child given to her, the child first learns to speak language for the mother, no wonder the first language the child speaks is called “mother tongue”. All the initial training of the child is done by the mother. Thus naturally born teacher, a girl or woman who is well educated usually commands respect and also serves as a role model she can mingle with any kind of people boldly and full of confidence, go to places and her voice will be heard as she contributes especially on matters affecting her community. When women can read it helps her to be current in life, to solve many psychological problems for herself, her family and the society at large

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the level of literacy of women mostly determines the upbringing of the children in the family, performance in schools, home caring, participation in society, nation building, fulfillment of life in general. Therefore every hand must be on deck for proper functional literacy for the Northern girl children. The higher the level of women educational status, the more developed the society.

Therefore government, international development partners, civil society, nongovernmental organization, community should ensure that the program of women education towards sustainable development in the Northern Nigeria is given higher priority attention, because for any educational enterprise to succeed there must be strong motivation on the part of the woman and the government.

A mass literacy campaign should be re-launched and given necessary boost to sensitize the society to the need for women education.

Parents in the Northern Nigeria have no excuse now not to send their daughters to school since the federal government has integrated Qur'anic school to the western education school.

Education formal or non formal, is the foremost agent of empowerment, if girls to obtain sound education. Today our society will be better tomorrow and our development will be sustained. Akubue (2001) in Ezegebe and Akubre (2012) asserts that "any society that rejects women in her human resources cannot achieve any meaningful development". It is in line with this that the paper puts across several recommendations which will play a great role in realization of the goal of women in sustainable development through Education as follows :

- Government must remove any obstacle or impediment against the smooth implementation of girl-child education,
- Policies and programmes in the Northern Nigeria especially in the North western states where statistic have clearly indicated that girls and women from these states are the least educated in the country.
- This may require stiff penalties meted on parents and guardians who either refuse to send their daughters to school or who pre-maturely withdraw their daughters from school.
- Special media outfit should be established mainly for gender sensitization in northern Nigeria, for examples T.V stations, FM radio station and public announcements.
- Peasant families living in rural settlement should be motivated to send their daughter to school and government should consider giving such families cash and material assistance as incentives.
- For women to rekindle their optimism and faith in the system's ability to create avenues for development for its people regardless of sex, age, ability, or religious inclination, the northern state government must play a critical role in creating an enabling atmosphere.
- In order for women to actively and freely engage in national issues, particularly at the political and economic levels, the northern state owes it to the

women folk to eliminate those erroneous and educational restrictions based on religion.

- Northern educated women should put in a lot of effort to make sure that they use social awareness to support a lot of rural women through successful education programs that boost their self-esteem; they should also make a concerted effort to be seen, heard, and experienced.

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