

DISPARITY LEVEL OF THE GIRL-CHILD AND BOY-CHILD ENROLMENT IN THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

According to the Education for All (EFA) Global monitoring Report, in our world today, about 115 million school-aged children are not in school, 56 percent of them are girls. This is clearly reflected in the girl-child and boy-child enrolment level in the Universal Basic Education programme in the country, which forms the-foundation level of the education system. In the light of this, this paper will endeavour to' take a critical look at UBE programme from the gender perspective, and if possible to achieve an , equitable enrolment level.

Introduction

The importance and benefits-of education are well recognized by different scholars. According to Iwuagu, (2002):-

Education *helps* people to become more productive, and to earn more income,' it leads to improvement in health, nutrition and people are empowered to transform their own lives and that of their communities, through acquiring the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as the capacity to utilize knowledge and information. These benefits are even more pronounced in the case of girls. This is reiterated by the popular slogan of a Ghanain scholar Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey that says "you educate a man., you educate an individual, if you educate a woman, you educate a nation." It is further confirmed by World Bank research, which shows that education of girls is the single most-valuable development intervention any country can make. Women with even a few years of basic education have smaller healthier families; are more likely to be able to work their way out poverty; and are more likely to send their own children both boys and girls to school.

It is in light of the importance of education that the federal government of Nigeria tries to ensure that every Nigeria achieve this basic necessity of life. To a large extent, the right of all Nigerians to education has always been provided for in Nigerian constitutions. Specifically, the 200 constitution provides in section 18 that:-,

1. Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.
2. Government shall promote science and technology.
3. Government shall strive to eradicate literacy, and government shall as soon and when practicable provide:
 - a. Free, compulsory and universal primary education;
 - b. Free secondary education;
 - c. Free university education; and
 - d. Free adult literacy programme

This constitutional framework is put in place by the Nigerian government to enable it achieve education for all without discrimination or disparity at whatever level. And that is why the federal government of Nigeria is affiliated to different bodies and activities internationally that have the same objectives that will enable the people of Nigeria to achieve their educational pursuit without gender disparity. Take for instance, the declaration of the World conference on Education for All (WCEFA) which was held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, Article I noted that "every person-child. Youth and Adult-shall be able to benefit from education opportunities designed to meet their basic needs". This declaration was reaffirmed at the World summit for children also held in 1990, which stated that all children should have access to basic education by the year 2000. The world summit for children

placed a lot of emphasis on raising the levels of female literacy. In line with this, the convention on the elimination of all Forms of discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was convened, among others to checkmate the discrimination against women in all ramifications, especially in the education sectors. (UNICEF,2001).

Despite the recognition of the benefits of education and the various measures taken by government to achieve the good goals of education in the country, there are still documented records across the country to show that there are inequalities in educational access and achievement as well as high level of educational deprivation-of both children and adults, with special reference to the girl-child as documented in the universal basic education programme in the country. This they tend to affiliate to the culture and other related factors in the country.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research relies more on the Hartman's views about the Marxist approach towards women activities in the society. According to Hartman (1977), Marxist analysis of the women question has taken three main forms. The first group are the early Marxists, including Marx, Engels and Lenin who argued that capitalism is drawing all women into the wage labour and this process was destroying the sexual division of labour. The second group is the contemporary Marxist who point out that all aspects of women's lives reproduce the housework and its relations to capital, arguing that housework produces surplus for capitalist.

It is clear from the above, that all the approaches attempts to include women in the category of working class and regard women's oppression as another aspect of class oppression. It has been pointed out by scholars that although the above analyses has great analytical power, it does not give a clue to why women are subordinated to men inside and outside the family and why it is not the other way around. Accordingly, they contend that Marxists categories like capital is sex blind. However, Hartman (1997) opines that women question can be adequately explained by examining the concept of patriarchy whether in feudal, capitalist or socialist societies, that a society could undergo transition from capital to socialism and still remain patriarchal. According to Hartman (1997:17) patriarch is:-

' A set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enable them in turn to dominate women labour power. That control is maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality. Men exercise their control in receiving personal service work from women, in not having to do housework or rear children, in having access to women's bodies for sex, and in feeling powerful and being powerful. The crucial elements of patriarchy as we currently experience them are: heterosexual marriage, female child rearing and housework, women's economic dependence on men (enforced by arrangements in the labour, market (the among men-clubs, sports, unions, professions, universities, churches, corporations and aeries.

Like Igbuzor (2001) rightly pointed out, it is clear that the genesis of women's movement is often closely intertwined with broader movements for social change. In line with this, Basu (1995:9) puts it that;

Women's movement have often been closely connected with working class . struggles... women have been a major force in movement's opposing state repression and seeking to democratize civil society... Nations that have been ruled by authoritarian conditions for women's activism is often a catalyst to women's resistance, in part because of the ways it impinges on families... what initially motivates many women to organize is not necessarily a belief in the-distinctive nature of their problems but rather a sense of shared oppression with other groups that have been denied their rights. '

Like Igbuzor (2001), we quite agree that there are some other approaches to the study of women question in the societies; but we feel that the utilization of patriarchy acting in compliance with the dominant socio-economic formation to ensure the subordination of women within the country, especially as it affects the education sector of the country, represents an accurate analysis of the women

question in the education sector of the country.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study was the Desk Study, Participatory Learning for Action (PLA) of focus group discussion methods that was carried out through the key informal Interview (KII)'strategy, based on unstructured questionnaire manner. This approach was chosen for many reason, first, this gives the different stakeholders in the UBE programme to either confirm or reject most of the statistics data gotten from our Desk study. Secondary, this we fell will make for voncrete and reliable statistical data to be gotten and recorded for future planning in this sector of the economy, this is because accurate and credible statistics are necessary for policy choices in Nigeria.

Girl-Child And Boy-Child Enrolment In The Ube Programme In Nigeria

From our study we were able to discover, that apart from the South-Eastern state of Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi, in Nigeria, it is only in Akwa Ibom and Lagos states that we had more of girl-child enrolment numbers more than that of boy-child enrolment figures in the UBE programme. As clearly shown by 1997 to 2002 National summary of primary and Junior Post-primary Schools enrolment Statistics in Table 1, with little variation in the current figures, though not officially yet, still in favour of the boy-child.

Table 1

**National Summary of Primary School Enrolment, According to State, Statistics- Federal
Republic of Nigeria 1997-2002**

State	1997		1998	1999			2000		2001	2002		
	Total Male Enrol.	Total Female Enrol		Total Male Enrol	Total Female Enrol	Total Male Enrol	Total Female Enrol	Total Male Enrol			Total Female Enrol	
ABIA	172298	168061	174326	159441	336954	340284	324995	328478	362442	369169	333467	338128
ADAMAWA	274223	198575	313748	200899	288522	197804	301938	211045	263678	188025	434	321
AKWAIBOM	350886	350704	370998	31969	295308	302113	320216	331410	357447	370399	496455	515144
ANAMBRA	172925	174069	310585	151340	155053	158936	167234	171514	159233	167550	198045	204902
BAUCHI	195953	129794	256303	143157	397711	253703	476422	301319	581168	368406	368406	254416
BAYELSA	173451	168423	160164	144695	180036	166022	202132	188915	194670	186040	136718	135599
BENUE	408945	337222	425202	339792	307342	249474	318907	265445	311147	260191	373761	316482
BORNO	461806	319403	464733	275688	340894	22502	307376	214379	287577	194182	340713	232214
CROSSRIVER	108203	109863	126071	109588	189038	184191	212094	206409	205436	203783	246077	240317
DELTA	130447	126994	145644	119335	292387	281887	302897	287086	284781	276795	322580	319746
FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY	166465	152211	167465	15221	166743	163238	183535	177937	183052	182255	172332	174497
GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY	160865	158571	160865	158571	327199	324601	362838	355648	369283	361441	234508	230802
KITI	108212	114025	137377	132383	161545	180871	179072	205887	220237	242689	215663	241528
NIGER	128007	121067	181904	156571	146143	139659	142137	136730	118458	115533	1151849	144755
OSUN	143647	105713	208375	133526	327317	220484	373882	265642	437558	309100	291437	198611
OGUN	217984	186259	217984	186259	266006	255954	307756	298714	307984	299974	302327	286626
OGUN	243289	126293	243289	126293	320178	174702	314007	174023	296609	162659	277941	155698
LAGOS	375681	271324	405920	271368	283478	197672	306188	216233	367205	264815	601441	388710
LAGOS	539783	325575	681657	421725	706628	476376	779116	503984	729789	461165	737507	491794
LAGOS	282736	127203	302100	135949	417170	202516	421862	216581	430360	219920	419942	215308
LAGOS	167880	87715	167880	87715	145345	72060	158807	80049	159283	81843	181012	95944
LAGOS	268531	257191	268531	257191	290326	266792	323097	303557	325639	310940	354810	321310
LAGOS	153335	138964	153335	138964	164628	139769	169987	144395	154158	131599	195130	161981
LAGOS	227319	229560	261228	249946	255904	264880	245663	254930	196911	205531	264622	273696
LAGOS	175888	111847	245806	130755	208067	131898	223964	142985	205376	135653	202921	136969
LAGOS	277019	153146	277019	153146	233285	128025	251530	137164	241033	135110	274539	156989
LAGOS	256776	243266	260156	222256	234193	221523	235475	221962	198686	188846	224004	217908
LAGOS	136990	148235	170835	155443	237735	241994	260248	266200	257316	264027	265008	274425
LAGOS	256773	263242	256773	263242	220368	224234	226152	231320	197325	202102	257818	251766
LAGOS	376608	366609	404014	369206	399175	391430	494474	405422	350791	351836	388417	385986
LAGOS	235881	205874	283724	235643	258065	225871	270434	239698	282367	249190	320498	283622
LAGOS	98854	102500	185583	167975	186817	185515	206534	211159	227141	230293	260525	266364
LAGOS	172189	59368	166701	57898	363535	115061	432773	133891	437963	150216	517366	173760

Though the girl-child enrolment level is still higher than that of the boy-child in some of the above mentioned states, generally the disparity level between the girl-child and boy-child enrolment is still very much in favour of the boy-child in the UBE programme in the country as can be seen in tables II and IH as mentioned above. This is despite the mobilization put in place to checkmate the disparity between the girl-child and boy-child enrolment level in the UBE programme.

Factors such as the historical, cultural and religious beliefs still play major roles in causing the disparity in this sector of the economy. To a large extent, this can be traced to the colonial period. Before the coming of the colonial masters, women in Nigeria society were not all that discriminated against in the society, especially in the economic sector where women were seen to be responsible for their various economic activities in the country, to the extent that some of these women were even bread winners in their respective family circles. (Onuwani - 1991) Thus to a large extent, it spreads to some other sectors of the society. But with the coming of the colonial masters, the whole concept of seeing women as partners in progress started changing to the situation where women became relegated to the background. This was because of the concept of the common law in England and the Victorian concept of Women as seen and used in United States of America. This established the subjugating and dependent role of women on their male counterpart, especially female folks in the society. Thereby defining the nature of jobs and activities that women are supposed to be involved in. Like Slein (1997) puts it, the Victorian concept of women was manifested by a supreme court decision:

In 1873, the Supreme Court in Illinois upheld an Illinois state court decision, that denied a woman the right to practice Law-Justice Bradley in accepting the above opinion, said that 'man is or should be women's protector and defender.. The constitution of the family organization, which is founded on divine ordinance, as well..as in the nature of things indicates the domestic sphere as that which properly belongs to the domain and functions of womanhood. The paramount destiny and mission of women are to fulfill the whole offices of wives and mother. This is the law of the creator.

This notion about the women which was introduced by the colonial masters, has been imbibed by most Nigerians. Coupled with this, the colonial masters deliberately introduced various educational policies in Nigeria society that were meant to relegate the women to play the second fiddle in whatever aspect that they 'find themselves in Nigerian society. For the colonial administration, women are regarded by both law and practice in Nigeria as inferior. According to the British law, by then, women were over protected and their capabilities minimized, they were bound to play the second fiddle and subservient to the men, especially if they are married. This attitude was reflected in the educational system which forbade women to participate in certain fields of study. Like Uchendu.(1995), noted, the independence of women was compromised during the colonial period, as women from higher social classes began to give their freedom, as an idea of women inferiority was reinforced, women of outstanding ability began to accept intellectual inferiority to men and believed that it is natural.

This inferiority posture was highly pursued by the colonial masters in the educational sectors, especially since the colonial missionaries were in control of the administration of this sector of the society. They established only boys schools and discouraged co-education; which was to a large extent to the disadvantage of women. Like Slein (1977) pointed out;

This early of equal educational opportunity to women gave men an advantage over in the economy, which, is the deciding factor active and political (and other participation in Nigerian society).

This to a large extent, is still being maintained in Nigerian society till the present day. This structure of relationship between the women and their male counterpart is still being reaffirmed in the society through the patriarchy structure, that sees the male folk as the superior pattern and who is in charge of taking care of the different activities of the society on behalf of their female counterpart. And because of this, the men see themselves as protectors, custodians and controllers of the different activities of the society, be it social, economic, political and otherwise. This advantageous position, the men use in the society to lord it over the female folks in Nigeria society, which helps, to a large extent, to compound the disparity level of the boy-child and girl-child enrolment in the UBE programme in

Nigeria.

Though the educational system has changed to some extent, it is still noticed, that the inferiority status carved out for the women in the colonial era, coupled with the patriarchal structure of the society, which is to the advantage of men in the society, the disparity in the enrolment level between the girl-child and the boy-child in the UBE programme is still very much noticed in the country. This is at the advantage of the boy-child.

Conclusion

So far, we have been able to point out that there is disparity between the girl-child and the boy-child enrolment level in the UBE programme in Nigeria. In the process we have been able to advance reasons why this disparity that exist between the girl-child and boy-child is taking place in the country at the advantage of the boy-child, with special reference to the patriarchal structure of the society, coupled with colonial incursion, social and cultural believes and so on. In line with the above, we therefore suggest that:-

That deliberate educational policies should be put in place to encourage increment of the girl-child enrolment in the UBE programme, such as award of scholarships to the female child; Secondly, whatever belief, be it cultural, religious, social and otherwise towards achieving a satisfactory level of educational attainment between the girl-child and boy-child enrolment in the UBE programme must be discouraged;

And finally, section 2(2) of the free Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 imposing some sanctions on parents that contravenes the act should be fully implemented in addition to any parent that discriminate among the girl-child and the boy-child in this exercise.

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