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## Factors Militating Against the Adoption of ICT as an Innovation for Girl-Child Education

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the factors militating against Girl-child Education through the use of ICT. It discussed the impact of extended education in the form of ICT related knowledge on the competitiveness of the girl-child in the growing globalized world. It focuses on the challenges faced by parental attitude, social-cultural, religious, societal perception of girl-child education in relation to global demand for their skills. It was discovered that level of education has certain role to play in national growth and development, and ICT has proven to be increasingly fundamental for social and economic development. Access to basic ICT infrastructure is a key to increasing the flow of information, communications and by extension increasing possibilities and opportunities. Recommendations on how Government and Agencies involved in educational provisions for girl-child on adoption of ICT educational strategies and programmes content of which are in suit with aspirations and interests of Girl-Child are mentioned.*

It is accepted the world over that education is a potent agent for social change and a powerful tool for the development of human capital. That is why the social and technological advancement of any nation is to a large extent depended on the educational development of her citizens. The education of the girl-child cannot be over emphasized in our society as it does not only improve the health of the family but affects the economic well being of the country, although the girl-child throughout history has been subjected to varying degrees of deprivations and subjugation. She has been stifled mentally, psychologically and physically by the dictates of male-dominated cultures and traditions that cut across virtually all races of the world. The World Bank (2001) stated that "...in no region do women enjoy equal legal, social, and economic rights. Women have fewer resources than men, and more limited economic opportunities and political participation. Women and girls bear the most direct cost of

these inequalities but the harm ultimately extends to everyone ...gender inequalities persist because they are supported by social norms and legal institutions, by the choices and behaviors of households, and by regulations and incentives that affect the way economies function”.

The girl-child is denied an instrument which will empower her to participate in the socio-economic and political life and to make speedy contributions towards sustainable development of her community. This disparity could be attributed to factors such as socio-cultural, economic, religious, early marriage, parent attitudes towards the girl-child education, societal perception of the girl-child e.t.c. Also it is due to lack of education which from all indications, leads to poverty and this restricts access to education. The effect of poverty is so much on access to education that the Minister of Education in Nigeria, Prof. Ruqqaya Rufai in this year International Education Conference held in India request stakeholders especially countries with ***E-Learning*** to help Nigeria in terms of funding. This was broadcasted on Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Network News on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

However, there have been a lot of collaborations between the Federal Government with bodies like UNICEF, UNESCO, and DFID, to promote schemes such as Girl's Education Project (GEP) and Africa Girls Education Initiative (AGEI) among others. GEP focuses on national awareness on girl-child education and increasing political and financial commitment through advocacy and sensitization of policy makers at all levels, parents, schools authorities, other leaders and girls themselves Eze (2008). One of such efforts and collaborations was the effect of the Education Trust Fund (ETF), which was helped in bringing to the fore, once again, the relevance of girl-child education especially in some selected states, such as Kano, Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa, Gombe and others. This intervention has added to the rare-chain of efforts, in the promotion of girl-child education in Nigeria Simeh (2008). Once the issue of education has been settled, the next concern would be the catching up that the girl-child still have to make in order to measure up to her male counterpart and one of such area is that of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

It is apparent that, today's heterogeneity of emerging technological advancement especially in the area of ICT as regards Teaching, Learning and Education system in general has transformed the educational well being of students and teachers, and the Nigeria educational system is not an exception to the current trend. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) refers to the management, dissemination and use of information via computer-based tools. The term is used to include hard ware, software, e-teaching and e-learning. It includes acquiring, processing, storing and distributing information. It is a term used to refer to business applications of computer technology, rather than scientific applications. ICT has proven

to be increasingly fundamental for social and economic development. Access to basic ICT infrastructure is a key to increasing the flow of information and improving communications and by extension increasing possibilities and opportunities.

According to UNESCO (1997:3) it is high time for literacy providers to summon the courage to experiment, tryout new alternatives and renew the assault on illiteracy. Innovations in technologies have been noted to improve literacy programmes and accelerate the speed of literacy. Likewise, promotion of multidisciplinary programmes has enhanced education development. This forges an inevitable link between the use of technology, literacy and various disciplines of education. Information and Communication Technology is a powerful tool to increase every citizen's power to access on information and new forms of education and it can also enrich the learning environment. As the president and chief executive officer of Cisco Systems stated: "There are two fundamental equalizers in life — the Internet and education. E-learning eliminates the barriers of time and distance, creating universal learning-on-demand opportunities for people, companies and countries" Chambers (2000).

Droste (2000) advocates the use of technology to reduce global inequalities through such vehicles as Internet-based distance learning, interactive video and educational television. In areas where electricity and telephone lines are available, such approaches to learning may contribute significantly to improve the quality of educational processes. Outside of areas with relatively developed infrastructure, there are some innovations that use technologies to support priority content and outcome goals such as basic literacy. These include the use of low earth orbiting satellites to send and receive email; the use of CD-ROMs to disseminate Internet downloads where connectivity does not exist, and the use of handheld computers for tasks which were previously confined to desktop computers. Using Internet technologies to assign teachers where they are needed is an innovation that could be explored further in developing countries.

In Nigeria, the present status of the girl-child education through the use of ICT cannot be ignored because there is a strong opinion that to educate a woman means to educate a family and indeed a nation. It is discovered that despite the government policies to educate males and females equally, last three decades have not experience improvement in girl-child opportunities for education. Research have proved that girls opportunities for schooling lags behind that of the boys by 20% at the primary level also drops again at the secondary and tertiary levels (UNICEF 1992, 2003, and Mangyvat 1995). The World Bank 1992 World Development Report on the environment concluded that investment in education is one of the higher investments in environmental protection that developing countries can make. Therefore girl-child

### *The Intuition*

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education through the use of ICT is a tool for economic survival and increases the effectiveness of all transactions made by the individual in her economic environment and globally due to the fact that the impact of ICT in education cannot be over emphasized. Technology has enhanced the speed of teaching and learning and the level of accessibility between the teacher and the student.

The National Policy on Education (1995) provides Education opportunity for all irrespective of the sex, tribe and status. Study of the recent results reveals that less number of the girl-child than boys go to school; this is a clear gender disparity nationwide especially in the Northern part of the country where literacy rate is the lowest, due to the practice of purdah. The Universal Basic Education to all Nigerian children to fast-track education intervention at the primary and junior secondary levels has taking off; but gradual access to formal school by girls' stills remains a hurdle to cross. Statistics available reveals that about 7.5 million children, 60 percent of which are girls, are not in school. The problem of drop outs is more pronounced at grade six level, where more than 17 percent children drop out of school yearly Eze (2008).

There is no way ICT can be totally separated from education. It is discovered that the higher the education level, the more ICT becomes a necessity. Many developing countries are beginning to understand the beneficial role ICTs plays in reducing high rates of poverty in both rural and urban areas. The use of ICTs to create small and medium enterprises has resulted in numerous Internet cafes, phone shops and community radio stations. However, these small and medium enterprises are largely owned and operated by men due to the fact that most girl-child are not introduced and educated on the use of the technology. It is pertinent to know that ICTs education increases learning opportunities for the girl-child, countries like India have been able to successfully empower the poor (who are basically women and children) through increased ICT use. As a result of implementing ICT at all levels of the Indian government, citizens now enjoy increased incomes, enhanced health care, improved education and training, also better access to job opportunities.

### **Factors Militating against the Adoption of ICT as an Innovation for Girl-Child Education Include**

- i. Socio-cultural factor
- ii. Economic factor
- iii. Parental attitude and Societal perception towards the girl-child education
- iv. Community and Historical factors

### **Socio-cultural Factor**

The act of people believing that investment in the girl-child education is an avenue to enrich her husband is a socio-cultural factor which has been a challenge to their education. Some societies still regard the kitchen as the proper place for the woman, also priority is been given to the girl's role as a wife and mother, not only by family but also by the girl herself. This wrong perception, that her place is in the home, and some cultural and traditional practices such as early marriage, food taboos, age group initiation and circumcision affects the academic performance of the girl-child leading to distractions like absenteeism from class and eventually drop out from school. Opined by Danladi Mamman, quoted by Eze (2008) that “their rights to attain womanhood before going into childbearing are being aborted and abused”.

### **Economic Factor**

Cultural beliefs and practices play leading roles in relegating the girl-child in relation to her male counterpart. However, what most effectively ensures that she continues to play this second fiddle role and also bar her from certain socio-economic activities is non other than chronic poverty. Lack of education, from all indications leads to poverty and poverty on the other hand restricts access to education. Many poor parents see their girl-child as sources of income and domestic labors. Some of them hire out their daughter as housemaids in turn for monthly pay or at the end of the year. They are placed on the street to sell items for their family upkeep and denied access to education due to lack of resources.

Mangywat and Abama (1999) opined that in Nigeria as a developing country, the cost of education is still out of many parents, especially in the rural areas where the annual income per capita is very low. From the Universal Basic Education (UBE) enacted by the federal government, a nine year free and compulsory education to all Nigerian children was provided. However, the girl-child is in need of learning materials which the poor family finds difficult to provide. The children in most families are seen as a means of generating income, they are involved in activities such as hawking, free domestic services e.t.c all due to the harsh economic climate of the country.

### **Parental Attitude and Societal Perception of the Girl-child Education**

The education of the girl-child has had a much lesser value in the eyes of the parents, leaders and the society at large. This was more as a result of long standing and internalized social stratification culture, an opinion strongly supported by Alumanah (2005), stating that discrimination and neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong downward spiral of deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream in the girl-child.

Akinmade (1997) also opined that in most African countries including Nigeria, girls are discriminated against right from their first day of birth. It is discovered from recent research that the acquisition of education is only a means to expose and strengthen the intellectual and psychological resolve of the recipient, where this fails to happen, inferiority complex and an obvious inability to tackle challenges sets in, this limiting the ability to elevate oneself beyond the marginal economic and social relevance line. This, to some extent, aptly describes the situation of collective psyche of most educated women today in Nigeria society which affects the upcoming ones.

### **Community and Historical Factors**

From historical perspective, some educationists like (Awe 1991, Fafunwa 1976), as cited in (Mangvwat and Abama, 1999) linked the problem of the girl-child education to the colonial period and the advent in the 1850s of missionaries for whom western education was a mere tool for evangelization. It was proved that while the western part of the country embraced western education, religious and socio-cultural factors denied the girl-child in the north access to it. Some group of people in the north refused to send their girls to school due to suspicious act towards western education. Like misapprehension that girls trained become useful to other families as they end up getting married also that educated girls will not be submissive to their husbands. This led to a setback, and some areas are yet to catch up.

### **Impact of ICT on the Girl-child Education**

- 1 ICT helps a lot in over hauling of Non-Formal Education by facilitating in reaching out to the unreached school age population of the girl-child who can not be reached through print materials, due to its nature of turning the whole world to a global village.
- 2 Technology serves as educators' tools in finding creative ways that encourage students to self-test, self-question, and in helping them to create solutions to complex problems. Hereby taking more responsibility for their learning.
- 3 It creates an avenue of making learning to be self-directed and a lifelong process. That is, providing means for learners to exhibit functional literacy.
- 4 The girl-child becomes an active learner, working to effectively acquire new skills as they solve problems.
- 5 ICT empowers the girl-child in contributing positively to the comfort of her family and community.
- 6 E-Learning helps to reach the Girl-Child outside the classroom. That is the four walls of the classroom is not really necessary before learning can take place. Example is the Northern part of the country where PURDAH is been practice; this can be use as a channel of communication.

## **Conclusion**

The advent of globalization is to a large extent predicated on the emergence and continuous development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICT is referred to as “The inevitable wave of the economic future of the world...from which no nation, poor or rich, big or small, could realistically opt out of”. Thus, there is need for active government participation and funding of ICT as a means of education through e-learning. Education is not only important for human development but also national development. The girl-child education is of a great importance to economic and social development of a nation of which adoption of ICT as an innovation will be of great advantage. The education of a girl-child serves as a pacesetter in the education of the next generation of both men and women which is pertinent to national growth and development.

Thus for the future of the girl-child, adoption of ICT would naturally include enlightenment, training and education, possessing the ingredients necessary for actual transformation of her psyche and self estimation. This will help actualize the girl-child’s self esteem, and make progress and positive social and economic growth and sustainable development, achievable features of her society.

## **Recommendations**

- 1 The value of the girl-child education should be emphasized as this will help in improving the adoption of ICT as a means of learning.
- 2 Federal government should introduce ICT (*e-learning*) as a major part of the educational curriculum in the entire education sector.
- 3 Campaign teams to enlighten the society on the importance of ICT as a means of reducing poverty rate via small and medium enterprises like internet cafes, phone shops e.t.c should be encourage by the ministry of education and ministry of science and technology.
- 4 There should be provision for scholarship schemes for the education of the girl-child by the three tiers of the government, as this will help to alleviate financial burdens of parents. Also parents should be encouraged to participate in Poverty Alleviation Programme which will help in improving their standard of living.
- 5 Career guidance programmes should be introduced to all educational institutions involving women with notable career as the major participants in counseling and guidance programmes., especially those involve in ICT.
- 6 The government should involve stakeholders like local community, P.T.A, private sectors and other Non-Government Organizations. Also international donors like UNICEF, UNESCO, DFID, USAID, UNDP, World Bank etc for sponsorship of some educational projects.
- 7 Policies and laws regarding the equal right to education by both sexes should be enforced by the federal government. Also laws that will prevent and punish

parents that withdraw or refuse to enroll their girl-child in school should be enacted and enforced by the government.

- 8 Libraries, resource room, museums and cultural centers, should be equipped with e-learning facilities to help them in their historical researches.

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