

GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR SECURITY OF WOMAN IN NIGERIA**BY****Akogun, A.K.:** School of Education, Kwara State College of Education, Oro;
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E-mail: fashbc@gmail.com**Abstract**

Education is the assemblage of all available process required to develop selected skills, abilities and good behaviour in an individual in order to enable him to contribute to the family, society and to get rid of ignorance, diseases and poverty. Therefore, the paper used historical method of research to examine the concept of girl-child /women education, concepts of security, status of women in pre-literate society and education as a security to educated women. It is recommended that Government and other stakeholders in education should as a matter of urgency to address the issue of inadequate participation of girl-child and implement laws, bye-laws and other declaration on girl-child education that Nigeria is a signatory without further delay.

Keywords: *Girl-child, Bye-laws and Girl-child education*

Introduction

Education is the greatest legacy that any society can boast of and the most powerful instrument for social change is it in the areas of socio-economic, political, cultural development, scientific and technology development (Abdulkareem, 1990; Akogun, 2004). Education is an assemblage of all available process required to develop selected skills, ability and good behaviour in an individual in order to enable him contribute to the family, society and also means of getting rid of ignorance, diseases, and poverty in the society (Dannmole, 1995) The researchers see education as all the experience that is acquired to bring about permanent and positive change in behaviour in order to earn a living and acceptable in the society to which he live. It could be observed from the above definitions that for a nation to groom patriotic individual and responsible citizens, the education of Girls who are women of tomorrow must not be down-played.

Education of female does not merely mean as Ishaku (2017) described it as the ability to judge and imbibe what is good in the changes that are taking place due to modernization. To be modern means to be educated, efficient and relatively more rational in one's thinking. Girl-child education means the education giving to a female member in the society in order to assist them in their daily activities. This education is tailored towards good upbringing, growth and development of the female for her optimum contribution in the nation building. It is on this note, United Nations is at the fore front of the efforts to facilitate female and girl-child access to education like their male counterparts. These efforts include Jomtien 1990, Declaration and framework for the Action on Basic Education, the Ouagadougou 1992, Pam African Declaration on the Education of Girls and Women, the Dakar world Education Forum in April 2000, in 2007, Education For All (EFA) (Nwigwe, 2005; Akogun, 2013).

Girl-child is a life wire of the entire household hence neglecting her education will be an avoidable risk. This is to say, education prepared women as an individual to participate fully and effectively in the affairs of her society. Most educated women were active and productive member of the society which they belong. This is because education involved women in the skills needed to achieve development and

defend herself in all situations she may find herself. Based on this background, historical research method was used to carry out the study. Therefore, the paper is aimed to examine the following:

1. the Concept of Girl-Child/Woman Education;
2. the Concept of Security;
3. status of Women in Pre-literate society; and
4. education The and security of women.

Concept of Girl-Child and Women Education

Women education Okediji (2019) described it as every forms of education that aims at improving the knowledge, the skills of women. This includes general knowledge in education at schools and colleges, vocational and technical education, professional education, health education and so on. Educated women are capable of bringing socio-economic changes and political changes to the nation. It is in the realization of this that three out of the six goals of EFA focus on children as follows:

1. expanding and improving comprehensive early child care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
2. ensures by 2015, children particularly girls and other children in difficult circumstances including those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory basic education of good quality; and
3. eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary school levels of education by 2005 and achieving gender equality by 2015 with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education. These goals are further stressed in the education components of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (Nwigwe, 2005; Kochiro, 2008; Akogun, 2013).

To achieve these goals before 2015, the Federal Government of Nigeria organized a National Seminar on the education of girl-child in 1994 and inaugurated the National Child Rights Implementation Committee in 2005, another seminar on low enrolment for girl-child and implication for tomorrow's leadership was organized (National Commission for Women and UNICEF, 1994). All the seminars, campaigns and rallies created appreciable level of awareness of the importance benefits of girl-child education (Akogun, 2013). Education of girls and women is an empowerment and progress in general particularly in the developing countries because it and fosters development and faster decreases of population growth (Okediji, 2019).

Status of Women in Pre-Literate Society

The Status of Women in many civilizations was described as being dependent on and subservient to her father, husband and son. This was the situation of women in the ancient Athenian, India and Roman Societies. The situation then denied girls access to any intellectual training and development. In China, women were not given dignified treatment that could enable them strive as human being and fully developed to play their God-assigned roles in the society. Her major function was to take care of the husband and produce many children who were made to work and till the land, and because there was no social security for her, the children acted as old age insurance. The labour of women was therefore very important with in the family and during Pre-illiterate societies; perhaps this necessitated the payment of bride price to compensate the bride's family for the loss of her labour (Amali, 2007).

The inequality of man and woman was demonstrated by the fact that in most societies, women could not inherit anything from their fathers' estates and could not own property. For instance, in ancient Athenian society, women were allowed to participate only in business transactions that involved a value not more than what was needed to feed her family for five or six days. A woman was not allowed to carry out any economic transaction without the approval of a male guardian. The only thing she was allowed to do was to buy groceries, but she was allowed to have slaves, clothes, furniture and jewelries but she could not sell them or give them a way or use them anyway she pleased without the consent of her husband, father or male guardian. This is because Athenian woman as all their philosophers except plato would have us to

believe “had weak minds and strong emotions” (Imbecillias or levitassexus). The Athenian woman’s occupations were to bear legitimate children and take care of her home except when attending funerals, and festivals that concerned women. The only women seen outside their homes, outside these situations were assumed to be slaves, prostitutes, concubines or those who had to work because they were too poor. Woman were categorized as “a particularly stupid group of people with whom no man would want to spend his time” (Seguino, 2000; Amali, 2007).

In ancient Rome, women had the same status as in Athens. In the early days of the republic, women could not hold office, and were not even allowed to make suggestion. Equity was a foreign concept in ancient Rome. Romans considered their women as a sub-man. One man was considered to be equal to three women, the status of women in ancient Rome is summarily described in the Roman law of inheritance and Guardianship thus: Women, even though they are of full age, because of their levity of mind shall be under the guardian except vestal virgins (those that dedicated their lives to worship in the temple, not to be under the control of male compensate for giving up; their lives to serve in the temple). It was believed that women needed to be protected from themselves and from other people. Therefore, every woman needed a male guardian (Amali, 2007).

In the pre-Islamic Arabia, the prevalent Arab custom subjected women to discrimination, neglect and in human treatment. Deprivation suffered by women during the “Jahiliyya” (period of ignorance) has been described in several places in the Glorious Quran. For instance, Quran 16:58-59 reads thus, when the newof (the birth of) a female child is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark, and he is aggrieved because of the evil of about what he has been informed. Shall he keep her with dishonour or bury her in the earth. In African tradition, a woman is to be trained as a good wife and mother. Her duty is to bring up children with value and behaviour patterns of the community. Malomi,(1992),Amali (2007) and Akogun (2013) described an extreme status of African women as thus: Africans woman ... which name suits me best? I am the family plough. I plough the land which I don’t own yet my beloved husband reaps what I sow ... I bear children every year, I plough for them every year I feed them every year, I dress them every year yet they are not mine, my beloved husband claimed them ... I am the source of water for the family ... source of firewood for the family... source of food for the family yet I own nothing ... my husband owns everything. African woman ... what name suits me best? I am the bed for my husband, I am the pillow for my husband, because he bought me so he owes me. African woman ... which name suits me best? ... is this a good quality of life women should have? Men, let women reap what they sow.

From the above African women lack the power to take decision and in their poverty. However, all these social injustices and evils against African woman could only be eliminated through the education of girl child if truly educational opportunities and educational development are instrumental in eliminating social injustice, education of girl child is necessary to free the women from their status of bondage in Africa. Shekarau (1994) submitted that, the status of the female child in a traditional setting as a member of the society whose rights and duties are restricted to the home, having no final say in the family decision. The implications, girls grow up with the belief that a man is superior and never to be challenged. The girl-child is trained to have a narrow and pulse attitude to life. She is conditioned to think and see herself as most useful at home and grow up to accept her second fiddle position without questioning. She tries very hard not to violate rules and break bounds while growing up to accept traditional duties like procreation, rearing children, and maintaining the welfare of the family.

In traditional Nigerian society, the place of female is in the kitchen or at home where she cares for the old and the sick. She is trained to keep the home, raise children and attend to the needs of the husband and the society and her major role is that of child bearing. It is the belief of many that an educated woman does not make a “good mother” (Williams, 1996; Bolrin, 2006).

Education and Security of Women in Nigeria

Education is the most factors used by men and women to conquer their environment and chart the counsel of their destiny. Therefore, girls equally need to be allowed to participate fully in education in Nigeria because education is a means to transform the whole nation to a place worthy of living for all, women education must take a central position, an educated woman has the skills, the information and self-confidence needed to be a better parent, worker and citizen. Educated women would be well informed to make more independent personal, political and economic decisions (Osokoya, 2005; Jekayinfa, 2006). Women education would not only move Nigeria forward economically, politically and technologically, but also go a long way to liberate the women folk from their natural state of dependency, inferiority, superstition and other shackles that impeded national development.

It is on this note that reference would be made to the sayings of Chinese philosopher, Kuan Tzu as quoted in Bedung, Dung and Azumi, (1998) thus “if you plan for a year, plant rice, if you plan for a decade, plant trees, if you plan for a life time educate a woman”. The low percentage of Nigerian women in schools is a major set-back to the female social emancipation and economic empowerment. This situation is responsible for the preponderance of women in low-paid jobs. They are found predominantly in such occupations like small scale food processing, secretarial duties, notes counting in banks; cleaner’s and middle level professional occupations (Oladunni, 1990). Effect of this is that majority of women are poor, impoverished and affected by a number of debilitating diseases such as vesico vaginal fistula (vvhf), sexually transmitted diseases and maternal mortality (Shekarau, 1998).

Education equips one with marketable skills for poverty alleviation and learns good health habits, principles and practices which promote healthy living and longevity. The high percentage of illiterate women prevent them from acquiring the power with which they can significantly influence public policies and that is why they have remained marginalized and exploited (Agbakwuru, 2002). Kanno (2006) and Akogun (2013) have claimed that education particularly that of girls who is to be women of tomorrow greatly enhanced the abilities of families to manage their homes in the area of household chores, health management, improved nutrition and economic development. They have also claimed that girls who do not complete secondary school education end up as illiterates who were subjected to all manners of abuse. This includes street hawking, house helps, early marriage, sexual harassment, child labour and so on. Educated women’s role in building health condition of the home vis-à-vis the nation is one of the factors that determine the life span of all the people in the society. The life span of the citizens is one of the parameter that determines the level of development. A healthy nation has been linked to a wealthy nation.

The education of women is closely related to rising healthy generation that would be empowered to contribute in no small ways to national development. For instance, knowledge gained at regular or periodic programme organized to trained women in the medic care and issues related the welfare of their children, household members and society. This is to say pregnant women were trained by medical experts, were most, women, on antenatal clinics, nursing mother postnatal clinics. Seminars on hygiene, environment sanitation, how to organized sickness on diseases and use of correct dosage of drugs are knowledge acquired by educated women to assist themselves and their households, it served as a protection for their family. Educated women in the society are mostly known for their cleanliness and have the strength of building a health nation (Nasiru, 2017).

Gbenro (2010) and Okediji (2017) opined that women education is a security to the women because women would not be depended on anybody but on themselves. Education alleviates poverty and it is a pre-requisite to eliminate burden of the massive poverty in the society. Educated women perform better in bargaining, self-employment, and this resulting in the reduction of the financial burden on husband, relations and the government. In furtherance of their submission, educated women help to produce self-reliant citizens that encourage technological advancement that promotes security of lives and property. Education makes women relevant in the areas of socio-cultural, health and encourages building of useful

relationship and promotes peace, equity, unity, self-fulfilled and happiness within a nation. Summarily, education of women increases women participation in labour force. It helps to increase women contribution to household and national income.

Educated women contributed to socio-economic development of the society because educated woman, she is in herself a school. Yusuf (2007) and Akogun (2013) opined that, the fundamental and significant aspect of the result that good focused and well balance education could provide in a girl child goes thus “A well-educated woman is the bed rock of growth like a plant, whenever it is watered with noble water, stand on virtuous footing... pay attention, as it will yield fruits better like children put under the custody of a well-educated mother who is in herself a school... the conduct of a child is often compared with the conduct of the mother. A child brought up by a virtuous and educated woman cannot be compared with the conduct of the one brought up by an unscrupulous and ignorant woman” Education enhanced women economic status who were well informed to make some independent personal political and economic decisions, provides women with high profile jobs thereby reduces the number of female in low-paid jobs such as “Alaru” in Yoruba, “maikaya” or “Dandoko” in Hausa, Ndi Ovulor Ndi Na Ebu Ibu in Igbo and in Nupe “Epo-laci”, bread seller, cigarettes & kola-nut sellers, cleaner and so on. The nature of jobs involved in by uneducated women made them to be subjected to all forms of sexual abuses, Unscrupulous men could easily use money to lure these categories of women to un-holy activities such as pre-mature and extra marital sexual activities. The implication of this, diseases contracted may eventually be transmitted to the husband and other family members or close relations.

Akogun (2017) summarized the contribution of educated women in the area of socio-economic development in the following ways:

- i. Educated women may earn more money than their husband and use part of her earning to augment children school fees and for other maintenance in the home. This monetary support rendered at home assist the family to send the children to school, it also reduced the number of school age going children roaming the streets and later become street or garage boys and girls. Garage or street boys and girls usually leads to pick pocket, stealing thugs, perhaps armed robber that later served as a serious threat to the society.
- ii. Association of educated women like federation of Muslim women and “Alasalutu” groups among the Muslim and Association of Christian Women Fellowship and so on. These associations built socio economic and religious centers. This include establishment of schools, worshipping centers, petrol stations. This establishment provided job to people. At worshipping centers, different sermons were delivered against evil deeds, some of the harden criminals that listen to the sermons, their minds became soften and may eventual stop or renounced their evil deeds. Many unemployed youths have gainfully employed in the investment of educated women for example, BOVAS petrol station, Taheed Nursing Primary and Secondary Schools in Ilorin. People were offered employment opportunities to some youths. Perhaps if not employed they might become nuisance and constitute threat to the society.
- iii. Educated women have helped to reduce the rate of divorce among married couples. Researches have shown that, reported case in the number of divorce among educated women is lower than that of uneducated women. In most contact marriages, children from the marriage were usually brought up in a proper and dignify ways, good manners with right values were inculcated into the minds of these children. These children could be described as paragon of excellence in character and persons, that is, they stay clear of any act that could tarnish their image, integrity and that of their families, while children in separated homes were likely to be subjected to ill treatments at home. These types of students may be starved off food or non- payment of school fees at the right time, if at all it is paid. Children that was ill-treated at home, perhaps from the hands of their step mothers. The child may be forced out and ran away from home. This type of child may grow up to become roughs and became threat to the society. When it becomes necessary that educated women involved in divorce, they do not allow their children to be subjected to all manners of ill treatment. They always cross checked the wellbeing of their children and be sure, they were cared for and enrolled in to schools. If the divorced

husband refused to take responsibility of the children, educated woman knows where to iron out the issue. She either takes him to Ministry of social welfare or end in the court of competency jurisdiction. Majority of educated women have less number of children because they have the knowledge of family planning they have learnt right from when they were in school.

Olumakaiye (2006) submitted that empowerment of women is one of the most effective tools for improving the lives of families, communities and the nations all over the world (FAO) (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations 2003). Women who are highly educated consumed a wide varieties of food (balance diet) Eating of balanced diet reduced malnutrition in the family and resulted in the reduction in child sickness in our various homes that is, health security, reduced maternal mortality, early marriage and early pregnancy. Education allowed women to know their rights and limit, now reported most cases of ill treatment meted on them. Presently, there is Association of Female Lawyers that stand up to defend the dignity and honour of women in law courts. No man dare mess- up with women because they are well informed, know their rights and fight for justice. This has reduced violence and injustice against women, such as forced labour, forced prostitution, forced child marriage and female feticides.

Conclusion

Women education is the best investment for all nations particularly developing countries of the world to save them from the predicament of poverty, oppression, backwardness, failure, insecurity, dishonesty insurgency and so on, because, the mother is the first teacher to a child, whatever early knowledge cultivated in the minds of children would remained permanently throughout their life span. You could not give what you do not have this is the reason it is said, the conduct of a child is often compared to the conduct of the mother. Children put under the custody of a well-educated mother would grow up to yield good fruits than the conduct of the child that was brought up by unscrupulous woman.

Recommendations

1. Government and other stakeholders in education should as a matter of urgently to address the issue of the inadequate participation of girls in education laws, by laws and other declaration on girl-child education that Nigeria is a signatory should be implemented in order to create full access of girls to education.
2. Government at all levels should make adequate provision for instructional materials/aids, skill acquisition equipment and laboratory be well equipped in all women institutions and other training centres throughout the states. This will motive women to be interested in education.
3. Women should be given scholarship or free education as the situation may demanded female graduates should be granted adequate appointment into positions and better consideration for them in the scheme of empowerment. Parents who are well informed in the society should encourage other parents to send their daughters to school.
4. Parents should understand that what a boy child could do a girl could also do better because creative minds are sexless. All children are gift from God to parents and they are put in their trust by God. Children should be treated alike. Parents should also prevent early marriage of their daughters and other forms of child abuse. Parent should show adequate love to their daughters just like the same way to the male children.

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