

Investing In Girl-Child In Universal Basic Education For All In Nigeria: A Panacea For Poverty Reduction And Sustainable Development

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Abstract:- This paper was an investigation on how investing in girl-child in Universal Basic Education for All in Nigeria will be used as a tool for poverty reduction using primary data. This research was carried out in three local Government areas of Bauchi state of Nigeria, namely Bauchi urban, Alkali and Toro using descriptive survey research design. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. A stratified sample was used to select 180 male and 60 female teachers given a total of 240 teachers. Standard deviation was employed to analyse the research questions and t-test for hypotheses. The findings revealed that teenage pregnancy, among others were the challenges and concluded that girls were not given equal opportunities in Universal Basic education like their male counterparts; recommended that since girls are victims of teenage pregnancy they should be re-integrated back to school after delivery among others.

Key words: *Girl-child, Girl-friendly academic environment, Obnoxious Cultural Practice, Poverty reduction, Teenage Pregnancy and Universal Basic Education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education enables human beings to unlock and realise their full potentials and to be able to live a meaningful life, using the environmental resources in a rational manner. It endows people with entrepreneurial, technical, managerial and organizational capabilities necessary for sustainable living. Absence of these capabilities leads to human poverty. Human poverty manifests itself in high illiteracy rate and poor health. Human poverty exposes people to high vulnerability in adverse environmental situations and economic and financial crisis.

Education is the major instrument that can be used to develop the human person. It is the instrument that transforms the totality of the individual into a functional citizen. Education is a means of societal survival and perfection, which entails processes that support acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills for functional living [1]. But the complex and conflicting nature of education system in Nigeria led to so many trials and errors in the smooth running of schools right, from primary to level largely due to inconsistency and lack of continuity in formulating education policy objectives and the methods employed to realize such objectives. It is an open secret that the education system we have is colonial system of education. Supporting this, view, [2] maintained that strictly speaking what we have is a colonial education system, a diluted brand of western education. It is an educational system tailored to suit the whims and caprices, the need of the colonial masters. It is a system that aimed at suppressing as far as possible critical thinking and who will be useful as clerical officers to solve the problem of the inadequate staff. Universal Basic education came as a solution to Nigerian educational system. Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a new educational programme proposed by federal Government of Nigeria for primary schools education and junior secondary school education [1]. The UBE programme was launched on 30th September, 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo as an innovative educational programme and took off in the 2000/2001 academic year. [4] describes the programme as close articulation of the formal and non-formal approaches to mechanisms for the awakening of all round development of the human potentials. Understandably, UBE programme is free and compulsory for all Nigerian children of school age from primary to junior secondary school (JSS) three years in the secondary schools without any intentional or unintentional disruption within the stipulated period of the education programme. [5] rightly refers to UBE as nine years of continuous free and compulsory schooling in Nigeria.

The critical role of female education in furthering human development emerges forcefully from comparisons between states of the same country. Educational deprivation of women acts as a powerful brake on economic progress for two reasons, it undermines economic growth and it excludes the women from participating in the important post in the society. Education is good for growth, because it enables women to develop the skills needed to innovate and raise productivity. Each additional year of a woman in school is estimated to raise the output of a Nigerian farmer by around 8 percent a year [6]. For households living on the

poverty line, it can mean the difference between being able to afford essential drugs and adequate food and not being able to afford them. Exclusion from educational opportunity excludes women from market opportunity. Progress towards Universal Basic Education would enhance the quality growth, increasing the rate at which it is converted into poverty reduction by increasing the share of national wealth captured by the women through education.

Improved access to education, especially for girls has the potential to accelerate progress towards the targets set for reducing the rate of child deaths and maternal mortality. Public investments in female education are among the most cost-effective ways of reducing poverty, boosting economic growth and promoting basic human rights[7]. In Nigeria, the benefits of public spending are reduced by inefficiencies and inequality in spending patterns but government budgets hold the key to improving the coverage and quality of education services available to poor households. These households are less able to finance private expenditure than their wealthier counterparts and more likely to be excluded from private market. Progress towards the goals of universal and free basic education for women therefore requires an enhanced role for public financial services. Feminization of poverty focuses on how women are severally affected by poverty [8]. It shows among others that compared to men, women have high incidence of poverty. Women's poverty is more severe when compared to men; the incidence of poverty among women is increasing. Women's roles in the families, communication and society and in various ways have shown that without education they cannot achieve more progress [9]. There is no gainsaying the fact that huge investment in female education has a long run positive impact on the socio-economic and technological development of a nation. Some third world countries like Malaysia and Thailand have understood this and have excelled tremendously because of their huge investment in the development of their human capital base through education. It is against this background that the researcher feels that the transmission of poverty amongst women can be broken through education.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Education systems play a crucial role in shaping the life of children, especially female to escape poverty, while education has the potential to act as a powerful force for human development. It often reinforces gender-determined disadvantage. Gender is one of the key determinants of the distribution of benefits from education-where women face unequal access to productive resources and services, the scope for realizing the potential gains of education is restricted [10]. The same is true where women earn less than men for doing the same or similar work as they do in most countries, or where men capture a disproportionately large share of higher-paid jobs [11]. Such forms of labour market discrimination are important because they act as a disincentive for parents who train their girls in school. Even where education does generate increased earning power, intra-household arrangements may result in the benefits being transferred to men.

Gender issues and socio-cultural beliefs and practices, inhibits access to education and there are wide disparities in the educational standards and learning. A fuller understanding of poverty should consider it as a social problem created by interrelated inequalities including those of gender, have reciprocal impacts. Gender inequalities for example are not only damaging to the interest of women but also to people's livelihood strategies as a whole [9]. The seeming neglect of women in poverty eradication policies and initiatives does not seem to recognize the crucial roles played by women since the ages. In Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa, women traditionally played significant roles in agricultural activities, and sustaining their families on a subsistence level. Alongside their male counterparts, women played key roles in the creation of wealth [12]. Even in modern times these roles of women have not diminished. Nevertheless, in modern times, the actual contribution of women is neatly subsumed under the home production. National Bureau of statistics (NB) puts the literacy rate for women at 56.8% while that of men is 74.6%. This statistics show the gender imbalance in terms of education and sustainable development. Against this backdrop, [1] concludes that access to education for women remains poor compared to their men counterparts. This certainly is not healthy for a holistic sustainable development. Poverty in its strictest sense refers to inability to meet basic human needs. It is a pronounced state of deprivation of wellbeing. Poverty in the widest sense of it extends to lack of capability to invest or participate in decision making. [13] , opined that poverty cannot be understood merely in term of deprivation of certain measures of welfare but more in term of capacity to invest. To [14] poverty extends to lack of respect and dignity, poor health, high infant and maternal mortality, lack of skills, and low literacy rate amongst adult especially females, lack of access to assets for a secured livelihood, insecurity. Human poverty dimension borders on both lack of access to education and good health, helplessness and lack of freedom of choice. According to [8], poverty among Nigerians especially women is growing so high that the state has seemingly lost control of the menace. Among the crudest consequences of poverty are unequal access to resources, exclusion from decision-making process, erosion of civil rights and cultural identity, environmental degradation and the destruction of life itself [13]. [12] opined that 60.7% of 70 million Nigerians living in extreme poverty are women. They are characterized by illiteracy, ignorance, lack of social amenities, lack of economic infrastructure and preponderance of subsistence among other things.

Conclusively, total national development can be said to be achieved when the entire population of men, women and children are educated, enlightened and are in a position to contribute meaningfully towards national development.

Objectives of the study

1. To establish if Universal Basic Education is really education for all as stated by the Federal Government of Nigeria
2. To ascertain the challenges of national equality in education in Nigeria.
3. To determine the strategies to ensure equitable involvement of girl-child in Universal Basic Education programme for sustainable development.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does Universal Basic Education really serve as education for all the citizens in Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges to national equality in Universal Basic Education?
3. What are the strategies to ensure that girl-child are involved in Universal Basic Education in Nigeria?

III. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Two null hypotheses guided the research.

1. Male and female educators did not differ in their mean responses to the challenges of female education in the UBE.
2. Male and female educator did not differ in their mean responses on the strategies to ensure equitable use of opportunities in Universal Basic Education for girls.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was used to carry out this study. The study was carried out in nine schools in Bauchi state. The area covered included three schools in three Local Government Areas. These are Toro, Alkali and Bauchi Urban. The population of the study was 300. A stratified random sample was used to select 180 male teachers and 60 female teachers given a sum total of 240 respondents. The instrument that was used for this study was questionnaire which was structured in four likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). The data collected were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation based on research questions. Also t-test analysis was used to test the hypotheses and to determine the significance of the difference of the mean of the groups under study.

V. RESULTS

Research question 1: To what extent does Universal Basic Education really serve as education for all the citizens in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean response on gender equality on the extent UBE had served as a tool for poverty reduction.

Sn	Items	Mean (X)	SD	Decision
1	Equality in enrolment of boys and girls in UBE Programme	3.55	1.20	Accepted
2	Making UBE resources available to boys and girls in all schools	2.22	1.80	Rejected
3	Cancelation of obnoxious cultural practices	2.41	1.67	Rejected
4	Motivating parents to send to school	2.01	1.96	Rejected
5	Encouraging girls to delve in science areas that are dominated by boys	2.05	1.79	Rejected
6	Providing girl- friendly environment	2.45	1.82	Rejected
7	Prohibiting laws that will inhibit girls from being withdrawn from schools.	2.15	1.77	Rejected
8	Ensuring completion of school by boys and girls after enrolment	2.38	1.83	Rejected
9	Re-orienting parents idea towards girls education	2.46	1.81	Rejected
10	Promulgating laws against early Marriage	2.33	1.75	Rejected
11	Integrating girls with special needs in school	2.48	1.69	Rejected

Source: (author's field work, 2015)

Result from table 1 indicates that Universal Basic Education is not for all, the items above were rejected except item 1.

Research question 2: What are the challenges to national equality in Universal Basic Education?

Table 2: Mean responses of male and female on the challenges to gender equality in UBE.

Sn	Items	Mean (X)	SD	Decision
1	Parents notion that as soon as the girls are married off to their husbands money spent on school fees becomes wasteful	3.13	1.94	Accepted
2	Teenage pregnancy deprived girls of the opportunity of going to school	2.99	1.98	Accepted
3	Religious practices like purdah deprives girls of going to school	3.00	1.76	Accepted
4	Vicious circle of poverty prevents parents from sending their girl child to school	3.05	1.73	Accepted
5	Prostitution prevents girls from going to school	2.65	1.80	Accepted
6	Helping parents to provide means of survival encourages school dropout	3.11	1.77	Accepted
7	Lack of value re-orientation encourages school dropout	2.97	1.94	Accepted
8	Lack of knowledge & importance of education on the part of parents	3.01	1.79	Accepted
9	Cultural beliefs that girls are seen and not heard	3.12	1.91	Accepted
10	Early death of parents forces the girls to act as nannies to their siblings or to their grannies	3.03	1.92	Accepted
11	Preference of male children over female children	3.06	1.88	Accepted

Source: (author's field work, 2015)

Result from Table 2 indicates that the respondents accepted the items on the table and all the items have their mean rating above 2.50, which is an indication that the challenges are high.

Research question 3: What are the measures to ensure that girl-child are involved in Universal Basic Education in Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean responses on strategies to ensure women involvement in Universal Basic Education in Nigeria.

Sn	Items	Mean (X)	SD	Decision
1	Government should go beyond mere rhetoric and ensure equal access to UBE	3.11	0.78	Accepted
2	Special grant/free education should be made available to girls	2.75	1.21	Accepted
3	Appropriate legislations should be put in place to guarantee the rights of girls in UBE	3.28	0.71	Accepted
4	The concept of gender should be mainstreamed into our development policies	3.17	0.89	Accepted
5	Ensuring compulsory retention of girls in school	3.42	0.68	Accepted
6	Parents should be encouraged to own lucrative business to enable them train	2.90	1.46	Accepted

	their daughters in schools			
7	Ensuring a friendly academic girl environment	3.01	1.03	Accepted
8	Religious groups should be encouraged to reach illiterate women through seminars, workshops, conferences and advertisement	3.21	0.86	Accepted
9	Using existing organizations in the rural and urban areas can easily be used as platforms to educate parents on the importance of girls education	3.25	0.74	Accepted

Source: (author’s field work, 2015)

Data in table 3 above revealed that all the respondents accepted the strategies mentioned above as a means of ensuring equality in Universal Basic Education.

Table 4 t-test on Male and Female Educators responses to challenges to female education in UBE

Gender	N	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	P>0.05
Female	50	0.71				
Male	85	0.92	133	1.54	1.96	Accepted

Source: (author’s field work, 2015)

Data in Table 4 revealed that the calculated t-value of 1.54 was lower than the critical value of t.1.96 at 0.05 level of significance; hence the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that female educators agreed that there is no significant difference between male and female educators on the challenges to gender equality in Universal Basic Education. This also shows that the overall calculated t-value is 1.54 with 1096 degree of freedom at (p<0.05) level of significance.

Table 5: t-test on Male and Female Educator’s Responses to the measures to ensure that girls are involved in Universal Basic Education

Gender	N	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	P>0.05
Female	50	0.74				
Male	8.5	0.77	133	1.61	1.96	Accepted

Source: (author’s field work, 2015)

Table 5 revealed that the calculated t-value of 1.62 is lower than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance; hence the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that the respondents strongly agree that there is no significant difference between male and female on the measures to ensure that women are involved in education. The data on this table shows that the calculated t-value is 1.61 with 1.96 degree of freedom at (p<0.05) level of significance.

VI. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

In spite of all the efforts made by the government to conform with the universal Declaration of Education for All. Inequality still exists as we still have more boys than girls in schools in Bauchi state of Nigeria. Data on table 1, shows that out of eleven items on universal basic education as poverty reduction. Item one accepted Universal Basic Education For All as a tool for poverty reduction while items two to eleven rejected Universal Basic Education For All as a tool for poverty reduction. The finding is in line as most of the things that hinders female education include early marriage, cultural beliefs, lack of resources, obnoxious cultural practices, lack of fund, non-conducive academic environment and education policies that are gender bias. Finally, the finding of research question is in line with [5], who defines education as a process through which human beings become useful to themselves and the society. Hence the implication of this is that the Millennium Development Goal has not been achieved neither has appropriate steps taken to ensure that girl-child will be catered for in the UBE Programme. Data on table 2 shows that out of the eleven items on this table all the items were accepted. This finding is in line with [14], who listed impediments to girl child education as a cultural issue among other things. The responses from the items in table 2 shows that factors such as teenage pregnancy, religious practices, vicious circle of poverty, prostitution, lack of value orientation, illiteracy on the part of the parents, death of

parents and girls being used as care givers are detrimental to girl-child education, hence if female education should be used as a panacea for poverty reduction, something urgent has to be done. From the finding on research question three. The responses from the data revealed that items one to eleven were all accepted. These show that all the ways that were applied will ensure that women will be educated and that women go a long way to reduce poverty. The finding of this research question is in line with [15], he sees education as a sum total of all the processes by which an individual develops ability, special skills, attributes and other forms of behaviour which are inherently cherished by the society by which the individual lives.

VII. CONCLUSION

We have seen that the attempts to reduce if not eradicate poverty in Nigeria will continue to be unserious until women are specifically targeted as agents of development. Abenga in [16] opined that women are so important to the national development and if development is to be real instead of being superficial, women have to be developed along with their male counterparts and be provided with educational opportunities and prepared for gainful employment as well. In spite of the disadvantage position of women in many spheres of the Nigerian economy, they play active roles in society as producers, processors and home managers, bearers of children, mothers and wives. In fact women have been said to be the invisible work-force and the unacknowledged backbone of the family and National economy. Finally, until these concerns of girl-child are genuinely addressed, since they are faced with several constraints that are cultural, economic local political and most importantly educational constraint. These constraints limit women's opportunities and access to society's cherished values. The situation is even worse for female Headed Households. The prevailing gender inequality in Nigeria exacerbates the poverty problem and increases the gender poverty gaps.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The national policy document on education as well as other vital areas should be gender sensitive and friendly. By so doing, equal opportunity and access to provision and facilities would be greatly enhanced.
2. Advocacy groups should be encouraged to reach illiterate parents through seminars, workshops, conferences and advertisements.
3. Girls that are victims of teenage pregnancy should be re-integrated back to school after delivery.
4. Appropriate legislation should be put in place to address the issue of early marriage and the use of girls as a source of earning income for the family
5. Obnoxious cultural practices that hinders on girls progress should be abolished.
6. Academic environment should be made conducive and girl-friendly.
7. Promulgating laws against withdrawal of girls from schools and prostitution should be encouraged.
8. Government should provide all the necessary materials needed for UBE programs.
9. Girls with special needs should be mainstreamed into normal school.
10. Government should ensure completion of studies for girl child after enrolment.
11. Government must encourage new partner with civil societies particularly women groups to address the poverty issues. They must ensure sufficient support both in funds and other resources to help these groups participate meaningfully in the drive to eradicate poverty in Nigeria.

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