

African Research Review

An International *Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia*

Vol. 8 (1), Serial No. 32, January, 2014:134-155

ISSN 1994-9057 (Print)

ISSN 2070--0083 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrrrev.v8i1.11>

Socio-Economic Development and the Girl-Child Education: a Look at Jos North Local Government, Plateau State

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Abstract

The problem of the girl child education in Jos North Local Government Area has some socio-economic aspects. One of the factors which have militated against women's equality in education is the traditional belief that "a women's place is in the kitchen" and that "a woman should be seen and not heard". This work aims to under study girls enrollment in schools and at the work place and address the need for gender disparities and inequalities to be reduced to the barest minimum. Girl-child education in Jos North and Nigeria at large will continue to trail the boy-child education if the necessary policy actions are not put in place. The inability to address the issue will further widen the gender gap in education. Moreover, the desired level of development in Jos North can only be attained when girl-child education is given adequate attention.

Introduction

The quantity and quality of education available to Nigerian girls/women will invariably determine the developmental pace of Nigerian families, and Nigeria nation at large. It should be noted that what Nigerian girls /women are today and what they will be tomorrow depends on what plans Nigeria as a country has for the girl child. According to Oniye (2008), Nigeria is craving for patriotic citizens to develop their potentials politically, economically, socially and technologically. The actualization of these wonderful goals is dependent on the provision of functional education to the citizenry especially the girls who are future mothers, future teachers of children. Thus, unless the mother herself is enlightened, she cannot inculcate in the child the spirit and principle of true patriotism which is a basic requirement for national development. It therefore means that any meaningful development in Jos North depends on the education of the girl-child.

Since it is believed that the right place for women is in the kitchen, some parents and others have considered it not necessary to provide equal educational opportunities to women with their male counterparts. In fact, as far as some parents are concerned, any amount of money they spend on their daughter's education is regarded as a waste. This is because it is believed that they would eventually end up in the kitchen or in somebody's house, while on the other hand, any amount of money spent on a boy's education is regarded as useful investment because it is believed that a boy propagates the family name. This indeed has made many families, (especially in the area under research), feel reluctant to send their girls to school.

Another issue which has contributed to inequality against women in education is early marriage. In Northern Nigeria, for example, some parents withdraw their daughters from school for some economic reasons or because of local customs and religion. Girls who went to school refused early marriage.

There is, therefore, the problem of examining the logical validity for the views particularly advanced against equality of educational opportunities for women as well as providing justification for what can be argued as the appropriate position of women vis-à-vis men in the natural order of things and also what should be the attitude towards female education.

Purpose of the study

The specific purposes of the study are as follows:

- ✓ To determine the extent to which socio-economic factors affect the right, survival, growth, development and participation of the girl-child education in Jos North Social Integration.
- ✓ To determine the cause of gender inequality in educational opportunities.
- ✓ To determine the consequences of gender inequality of education opportunities in the metropolis as it affects the girl-child.
- ✓ To find out solutions to gender inequality in educational opportunities in Jos, so that the girl-child will be seen as useful.

Statement of the problem

The aim of this research is to examine girl child education, and its impact in Jos North Local Government of Plateau State with the view of finding out why few women are educated in Jos North metropolis.

The following questions will guide the work:

- What are the economic consequences of not educating the girl-child?
- Are there solutions to the problem facing the education of the girl-child?
- What are the major factors affecting parents' attitude towards the education of their female wards?

- What is the general perception of parents to education of the girl-child?
- Why are many girls in Nigeria not attending school?

The Concept of education

Offorma (2009) defines education as the process of providing information to an inexperienced person to help him/her develop physically, mentally, socially emotionally, spiritually, politically and economically. According to her, the fact that at graduation ceremonies, one hears the vice-chancellors pronounce the words while awarding degrees to their institutions graduates “you have been found worthy in character and learning” can be attributed to the definition of education as given above. She added that it means that the individual has acquired adequate and appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, known as cognitive, psychomotor and effective behaviours to be able to function optimally as a citizen. These behaviours are the focus of training individuals in institutions of learning.

According to Chidebulu (2010), education is a process of cognitive, effective and psycho motive development of an individual with a view to moulding the individual for a total contribution to the development of the community and the promotion of cultural heritage. This means that if one is educated, he tends to develop himself and become productive in the society, thereby promoting his cultural heritage.

Furthermore, according to Whitehead, “education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge”, that is, education is not just acquiring knowledge but the utilization of knowledge acquired for the benefit of the society (Whitehead Cited in Oladipo, 2007).

To Gowon (2007), education is a process and system of providing information, knowledge, skills and training with an aim of changing a condition and situation. The change expected is usually positive in nature, and the education could be formal or informal. This definition is crucial in the case of Nigerian women whose condition needs to be changed for socio-economic transformation.

The concept of girl child education

The concept of girl-child education incorporates the necessary attitude, cultural and behavioural training which parents give to their daughters at home to enable them become useful, resourceful and respectful citizens of their countries. It also includes the functional teaching or training in skills acquisition which many girls undertake in the shades of seamstress or in computer training centres, weaving/fashion designing centres as well as catering and interior decoration centres, etc. Most importantly, the concept is over specialized and highly controlled trainings acquired in schools, colleges and other institutions of higher learning, (Chidebelu, 2009).

Ejikeme (2000) captured this fact when he said that denying girl-children access to early childhood education makes them socially excluded, creating room for them to grow up to become illiterate women in later life and be classified as disadvantaged candidates for adult education, women empowerment programmes and other women rescue remedial or support programmes that smack off underdevelopment.

Unfortunately, the right of a girl-child to access quality education has been denied and there are consequences. Though some of the challenges are deeply rooted in our traditional background, they have affected the society at large. Mangvwat, (2005) agree with this when she says that operation and discrimination against women and girls have been so deeply ingrained, for so long in virtually every culture.

Concept of gender inequality

According to Mangvwat, (2005) gender disparity in education is the most pervasive violation of human rights. Its forms, according to her, are both subtle and blatant, and its impact on the socio-economic, political and cultural development of the people of a nation is profound. She also said that a number of factors have been identified as being responsible for the low enrolment, poor retention rate, poor

performance and general neglect of the girl-child in early childhood education programme.

Samuel, (2010) in agreement with Mangvwat above highlighted some key challenges of girl-child education. Certain inequalities and segregations, which have been established over the ages and reinforced through female dominated structure, still persist in spite of even the various instruments of the United Nations and the concerted efforts of the Federal Government to alleviating women discrimination (Olakuleim, 2006). The above statement recognized gender disparity in school enrolment as one of the girl-child education.

Benefits of girl-child education

Education has special benefits for girls, both when they are young and later as adult women. The influence on child bearing patterns is one of the most important pathways through which education affects the lives of girls and women. Educated women tend to marry later, have fewer children and are likely to understand what they must do to protect themselves and their families from many diseases. Manvwat and Abama (1992), cited in Mangvwat (2010) observed that there is a link between educated mothers and the survival of their children. An educated mother is most likely to know that she and her children can be safe from such preventable diseases as polio, measles, diphtheria and diarrhea through immunization.

In specific terms, education can lead to many benefits, mortality, improvement of child nutrition and health, lower fertility rates, enhancement of women's domestic role and their participation in the domain of politics, improvement of economic productivity and growth and protection of girls from HIV/AIDs, abuse and exploitation. Investment in girls education most likely will yield some of the highest returns on all development investment by generating both private and social benefits that accrue to individuals, families and society at large (Idoko, 2009).

It has also been established that the benefits of girls-education includes economic productivity, social development, intergenerational education, social equity and sustainability of development effort.

Education and economic development

Most economists probably agreed that it is the human resource of a nation, not its capital nor its material resources that ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development. A representative version of this position has been expounded by *Professor Frederick Harbison* who argues that:

Human resources constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nation. Capital and natural resources are passive factor of production, human being are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national develop the skills and political organizations, and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the economy will be unable to develop anything else.

Therefore, the principal institutional mechanism for developing human skills and knowledge is the formal education and development. It is appropriate to have a proper grasp of what development itself connotes; in the words of Dennis Goult, “It matters little how much information we possess about development if we have not grasped its inner meanings” (In Todaro, 1992).

At this juncture however, it is well to note that the concept of development in all-encompassing phenomenon since it touches on various disciplines; but the core issue in development is economic that involves education which forms the core of this study. In most civilized countries of the world, the most important instrument for achieving a sustainable national development is education. This view

is also true of Nigeria in relation to the pursuit of national development as it is documented in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1981 Revised) which states in point thus:

...The Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education on an instrument per excellent affecting national development....

In catalyzing national development, formal education has multiple functions to perform. The most important among these functions is that it creates well-educated people who will bring their talents, knowledge, skills, and experiences to bear as they function in various capacities in the economic and social development of the nation (Ukeje, 1986). In his further analysis, he posited that all the types and levels of formal education are rightly considered as “a form of investment in the infrastructure of the changing society and economy”. Through schools, pupils also acquire attitude for vocational efficiency and consequently, for economic development. He also stressed that the ultimate goal of economic development is the welfare of the individuals and the society at large. In our society, one cannot really succeed in achieving the welfare of the individuals without first giving the right type and amount of education to the individual. As reiterated earlier in the study, education is the means of developing the array of skills, attitude and knowledge necessary for overall development. So a great and dynamic economy is not possible devoid of education.

Male and female school enrolments in Jos North local government

In spite of efforts to create awareness about equal access to education for both boys and girls, not much has been achieved. Statistics and records obtained from the relevant agencies in the local government still paint a gloomy picture of girl-child education, and access to education for girls is a mirage. From the table below, it can be seen that the percentage of girls to boys for each year average maximally 40%. That was in 2010 when girls accounted for 9,565 out of a total

enrolment of 25,187 which represented 40%. This means that on average, about 65% of students are boys.

Table 1: Jos North Local Government Summary School Statistics for Ten years (2001 – 2010)

Year	No. of Schools	Total Enrolment	Male	%	Female	%
2001	93	22,321	17,102	76.6%	5,219	23.4%
2002	98	22,452	17,213	76.7%	5,239	23.4%
2003	101	22,942	15,100	65.8%	7,842	34.2%
2004	101	22,001	15,320	66.6%	7,681	33.4%
2005	101	23,100	15,412	66.7%	7,688	33.4%
2006	102	23,201	15,461	66.6%	7,740	33.3%
2007	104	23,400	15,511	66.3%	7,889	33.4%
2008	104	23,482	15,561	66.3%	7,921	33.7%
2009	108	24,113	18,109	75.1%	6,109	24.9%
2010	110	25,187	15,622	60.0%	9,565	40.0%

Source: Jos North Local Government Primary School Education Board, 2011.

Disparity between boys and girls school enrolment in Jos North

Gender inequality has been identified by many as a major problem in Jos North and this has created a very wide disparity in the enrolment between boys and girls in various academic institutions in the locality. The problem is not only limited to Jos North local government alone but rather it affects all parts of the country. Inter-Gender (2005), noted that the federal government of Nigeria (FGN) reported in 2003 that an estimate of 7million (about 35% of the total number) of Nigeria's children of primary school age are not enrolled in primary school, out of this 62% are girls. The 2005 national school census (NSC) reveal a net primary enrolment ratio of 83.71% suggesting that a substantial proportion of 16% of the primary school age population (6-11 years) are not enrolled in the primary schools. The picture is worse in the secondary schools with female enrolment rate of 44%. The ratio revealed the way the girl-child in most part of the country including

Jos North local government are being denied access to western education in the country, (Inter- Gender Office Jos, 2005).

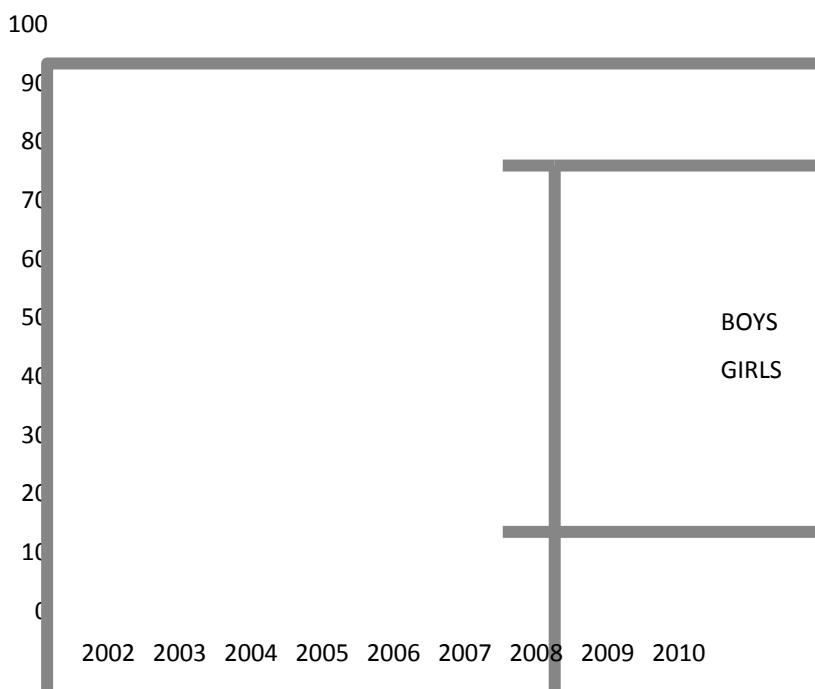
In Jos North Local Government, for instance, the situation is high; the gap between boys and girls is wide. The table below shows the total number of primary school enrolment between boys and girls in L.G.E.A primary school Tudun Wada, Jos from 2002-2010.

Table 2: Tudun Wada Central Primary School of Jos North L.G.A. Plateau State enrolment by Sex (2002-2010)

YEAR	TOTAL	BOYS	%	GIRLS	%
2002	124	70	56.5	54	43.5
2003	128	72	56.2	56	43.8
2004	135	77	57.0	58	43.0
2005	144	83	57.6	61	42.4
2006	146	85	58.2	61	41.8
2007	149	86	57.7	63	42.3
2008	152	88	57.9	64	42.1
2009	163	90	55.2	73	44.8
2010	168	92	54.8	76	45.2

Source: Central Primary School Tudun Wada Jos.

Figure 1: Tudun Wada Central Primary School Jos North LGA Enrolments by Sex



Source: Tudun Wada Central Primary School pupils register (2002-2010)

The situation is more critical in the secondary schools for the period 2002 to 2010 when women enrolment with their male counterparts is compared.

Table 3: Student Enrolment in Secondary Schools of Jos North LGA of Plateau State from JSS1-SSS3 by Sex (2001-2010).

YEAR	TOTAL	MALE	%	FEMALE	%
2001	21,538	10,737	49.85	10,801	50.15
2002	20,396	10,477	51.37	9,919	48.63
2003	20,889	11,597	55.51	9,292	44.49
2004	22,077	11,458	51.90	10,619	48.10
2005	24,740	12,571	50.81	12,169	49.19
2006	31,063	15,955	51.36	15,108	48.64
2007	32,472	16,256	50.06	16,216	49.94
2008	27,699	14,463	51.49	13,436	48.51
2009	28,260	14,373	50.22	14,247	49.78
2010	30,522	15,461	50.66	15,061	49.34

Source: Plateau State Ministry of Education, Jos Secondary School Enrolment list from 2001-2010.

Fig. 2: Student Enrolment in Secondary Schools of Jos North L.G.A. of Plateau State from JSS1-SSS3 by Sex (2001-2010).



From the above figure 2, the chart shows the enrolment total of Secondary School students in Jos North L.G.A. from JSS1 – SSS3 by sex (2001-2010). The number of female and enrolments with their respective percentages for each year, for instance, in 2002, while the female enrolment was 9,919 (48.68%) that of boys was 10,477 (51.37%) of the overall total of 20,396 enrolment of students.

Economic contributions of women in Jos North L.G.A

Women all over the world, including Nigeria and most especially Jos North Local Government Area of plateau state have made important contributions to their L.G.A in various ways, especially in the field of agriculture, human development (as wives, mothers, and home makers) and in training activities. It seems that the contribution of women can be compared to the iceberg; the part that is revealed to the world gives little indications of the massive forces that move below, shaping and moulding a given society. Economically, it has become axiomatic that the strength of a nation is limited to the status of its women; that there is a real correlation between progressive tendencies and prosperity of a nation and the freedom and respect accorded to its women (Hassu, 1996).

According to Ibrahim (2004), effective duties of women at home enable men to perform better in the offices because if there is anxiety in the home, the man may not perform efficiently in the office and this will affect production, output and hence the economy at large. Women represent at least half of the society. Conversely, as women affect society, so does the society in which they live affects them. The real impact of women on societal development is very difficult to assess. The household work, long taken for granted, is been acknowledged as a central contribution to the society's wealth. However women in Jos North local government contributes to the growth of the locality in many senses and areas of specialization such as agriculture, banking, trade, public office and private sectors, as such earns income to assist their families and also perform their feminine role in more modern ways.

Table 4: Shows the Labour Force in Jos North Local Government Area.

S/NO	DEPARTMENTS	MALE STAFF	FEMALE STAFF	TOTAL
1	Personnel	201	157	358
2	Social services	102	76	178
3	Agriculture and natural resources	115	57	172
4	Works and survey	233	32	265
5	Finance and supply	219	142	361
6	Primary health care	110	646	756
	GRAND TOTAL	980	1110	2090

Source: *Jos North Local Government Staff Disposition List Department of Planning.*

From the table above the number of male staff is more than the female staff in some departments but the number of female staff is encouraging because women were not allowed into such departments in the past but education has helped to improve empowerment economically especially in the Primary Health Care Department.

Table 5: Summary of factors inhibiting girls' education in Jos North L.G.A

Supply Driven factors	Demand Driven factors
<p>Policy, planning and management Related barrier. Insufficient public support for the poor. Political instability Inconsistency in educational policy Ill-adaptation of educational system to local learning needs. Lack of clear strategies for women/girls education. Low motivation of teachers. Lack of tracking and mentoring of girls not in school.</p> <p>Factors linked to school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited study time due to frequent closure. - Limited schools /class room space. - High school fees. - Paucity of qualified female teachers. - Non-girl-friendly school environment. - Teachers not sensitize on gender issues. - School curricular and organisation in conflict with traditional culture. - Sexual harassment and insecurity. 	<p>Cultural barriers Low self esteem by girls. Early marriage and pregnancy. Sceptical attitudes towards the benefits and outcome of educating girls. Erroneous interpretation of religious injunctions.</p> <p>Cost related barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hidden cost of education. - high demand for girl-child labour for household and agricultural work -poverty of parents, guardians. -limited employment opportunities and remunerations for women. -perception of high opportunity cost and low rate of returns.

Implication of poor girl-child education on socio-economic development in Jos North and Nigeria at large

One implication of poor girl child/women education is that their lower access to education automatically denies them the opportunity and power influencing significantly public policy and programmes unlike their male counterparts. It thus implies that they will continue to play second fiddle in the socio-political and economic scheme of things; they will remain marginalized and exploited. It can thus be said that poor educational opportunity for Nigerian girls/women rob of two things; the ability to positively affect their children's educational development and the opportunity to make meaningful contribution to their socialization process and by extension, the overall national development of the country (Oniye 2008). In line with the above, some prominent women in Nigeria have championed the course of national development, for example in November 2005, during the tenure Dr Ngozi Okonjo Iweala as Nigeria's Minister of Finance, she negotiated and Nigerian government won Paris club approval for a debt relief deal that eliminated \$18 billion of debt in exchange for \$12 billion in payment. This discharged \$30 billion of Nigerian total 37 billion dollars external debt. Again, in April 2006, Nigeria became the first African country to fully pay off its debts (estimated at \$30 billion) owed to the Paris club (Nigeria settles Paris club debt BBC 2006-04-21 retrieved 2012-05-11).

Another wonderful achievement by a woman in Nigeria is the case of Professor Dora Akunyili. The image of Nigeria at the international level or scene has been lamentably discouraging. It was against this backdrop that the idea of rebranding Nigeria arose. The rebranding Nigeria campaign was launched in 2009 by none other than the then Minister of Information and Communication, Professor Dora Akunyili; her effort was to project the image of Nigeria as a country on a positive note particularly at the international level or scene (Agbese, 2009). It should be noted that Akunyili also repositioned the Nigeria's health sector as the Director General, National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC). These

contributions are actually fruits of education. It therefore means that if the girl-child is educated, Nigeria will be more developed than it is now. From the foregoing however, if girl-child education in Jos North is intensified, then credible women could come from Jos North to represent not only Jos North Local Government but the Nation at large just as the women mentioned above.

The consequences of poor girl child education does not rest on the female gender alone but the males as well and the nation which will be deprived of gains of girl child/women education. This idea was clearly captured by Ejikeme (2000) when he said;

Denying girl-children accesses to early childhood education makes to grow up to become illiterate women in later life and classified as disadvantaged candidates for adult education, women empowerment programmes and other women rescue, remedial or support programs that smack off Underdevelopment (page 12).

This assertion thus paints the consequences of neglecting the girl-child education in Jos North and Nigeria at large.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the need to encourage and intensify efforts to improve girl-child education, particularly in Jos North LGA:

- Government at all levels should take appropriate, legislative, budgetary and other necessary measures towards the full realization of the right of every child to free quality education, especially the girl-child.
- Government and non-governmental organization(s) should immediately commence a child-seeking mapping exercise with communities and schools participating to seek out children out of school, determine why they are out of school and bring them back to school.

- Much more than just implementing laws and policies to encourage girl-child education, provision for greater option by investing in girls and supporting their families.
- Gender disparities should be reduced to the barest minimum through gender budgeting, which involves budgeting to maximize programmes' that have an impact on girls/women.
- The Government must intensify efforts to discourage child-labour through education.
- Early marriages which rob the girl-child of any academic pursuits must be discouraged.
- The self-esteem of the girl-child should be boosted to allow for optimized potentials particularly within the Jos North LGA.
- Adequate and sustained advocacy for the girl-child by female organizations and women in leadership will help in bridging the gap in girl-child education.
- Constructive engagement of community leaders, town criers and urban elites who have very close contact with the gender groups should be intensified.

Conclusion

Girl-child education in Jos North and Nigeria at large will continue to trail the boy-child education if the necessary policy actions are not put in place. The inability to address the issue will further widen the gender gap in education. Moreover, the desired level of development in Jos North can only be attained when girl-child education is given adequate attention. In this respect, policies, programmes and strategies that can enhance the participation of girl-child in formal education should be pursued with vigour. Girl-child education is of great importance.

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