

ENHANCING ACCESS TO AND RETENTION OF THE GIRL-CHILD IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Education is a social, economic cultural, civil and political right of the girl child. The study is on access to and retention of the girl-child in public primary schools in Delta State. The central focus of this paper was to determine the factors that will enhance the enrolment and retention of girls in public primary schools in Ika Educational zone of Delta State. The study was guided by five research questions. The study is survey design with a sampled population of 280 respondents. Information collected from Ministry of Basic and Secondary education on pupils enrolment in public primary schools and a questionnaire was developed as the main data collection instruction. Data was analysed through descriptive statistics in form of tables and mean deviations. The result of the study shows that boys are still more than girls in primary schools. Findings also revealed that there is increase in girls enrolment. Determinants for enrolment and retention for the girl-child included encouragement through free education and scholarship, provision of adequate facilities and conducive learning enrolment, appropriate bill on girl-child education and enlightenment campaigns for girl child education. It was recommended that for positive enrolment and retention of girls in schools to ensure sustainable development in line with the findings. The government should formulate policies favourable to girl-child education, parents should be encouraged to send the girls child to school through educating them on the benefits of girl-child education among others.

Keywords – Access, enrolment, retention, public primary schools

Introduction

Schools open their doors to girls as well as boys in all Nigerian primary schools. Girls education is not only a fundamental right but also an important catalyst for economic growth and human development (Oxfam 2000). There has been extensive campaigns by both national and international governments and bodies on the need for provision of girl-child education in recent years. The campaigns are on accessibility, to education for all children of school age and especially the girl child. The girl-child is a female child born to the family community, society or nation (Ajudeonu 2008). The girl-child education is not negotiable because of the urgent task facing the global development community of which Nigeria is inclusive. The girl child education can be used for sustainable development in Nigeria and the world at large. Since literacy remains a major impediment in the development and well being of women (UNESCO 2007) Developing reasons for the education of the girl-child for Africa Women Educations (FAWE, 2010) enumerated a number of reasons in favour of educating the girl child.

These are:

- Educating girls is a basis human right
- Educating girls promotes gender equity
- Educating girls is a better investment than boy's education because it has the highest return investment in the developing country. It has multiplier effects and empowers women to bring about other necessary changes like smaller family size, increased income and more market productivity.

- Studies by educationalists had always favoured more benefits on educating girls but more males continue to go to school work coopty their way up in politics and other position in Nigeria. Thus women who constitute half of world population remain about 2/3 of the world's illiterates (USAID 2004). In Africa, 64% of illiterates are women (UNESCO 2007)

Access to education connotes the right to education. Accessibility of the girl-child to education has to deal with the availability, ability and freedom to get the education needed. Though there has been many campaigns for the girl-child accessibility to education by UNESCO, FAWE EFA and UBE at various times but the true is that many girls do not have this access to education. Research has shown that girls do not have access to schools and causes pointed out by Okeke, Nzem and Njoku (2008) included poverty socio-cultural broken home, poverty, child labour girls used as house helps among other factors has implicated the girl-child education. Again those girls who even enrolled in school, many of them do not complete their primary education as shown in some local government area of Delta State Enrolment and retention of the girl child in Delta State primary school according to the record obtained from the Ministry of Education, Asaba of primary (4) four to primary six (6) from 2014/2015 /2015/2016 and 2016/2017 sessions shows that in all the twenty five local Government, the numbers of girls were lower in most LGA and the retention from primary four to primary six were the same. The question is why is it that most girls are not able to finish their primary school education? As already mentioned many researchers has given their opinions on why the girl child do not complete their schooling. Cultural beliefs and poverty conditions of parents and guardians and responsible. It has been an old belief in Nigerian culture that the girl child should be used as a domestic instrument for taking care of the siblings and cooking for the family when the parents and guardians go to farm, trade or work Njoku (2008) identified child labour poverty, and lack of sponsorship, quest for wealth, truancy/ bereavement, broken home, engagement of children (girl child) as house helps as factors or the clog in the wheel of childrens access to education and why many girls who enroll in school do not complete their education. According to World Bank (2003) more than 350 million people, over half Africans population live below the poverty line of one dollar a day. This strongly implies that poverty too excludes children including the girl child from school enrolment and retention to completion of primary school education.

The immediate past Governor of Delta State Dr. Emmanuel Eweta Uduagha declared war on parents who were sending children to hawk wares in motor park and markets during school period with the establishment of "EDUMARSHALL". He prescribed some punishment for any parents that the child is found hawking wares. The story is different today in the state. Many children are out of school due to the economic recession and increase in school fees and school materials.

Gender gap in gross enrolment rate in Nigeria had be glaring both in the North and South. As reported by the strategy for the acceleration of girls education in Nigeria (SAGEN, Ballemy (2003)'s findings, girls and boy's primary school Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) between 1991 to 2001 shows that the gender gap favouring boys remained consistently wide. Therefore closing gap is the key to achieving universal primary education in Nigeria. There were alarming observation as observed by UNICEF (2003) in the finding of Bellam (2003) who GER in some states (Anambra, Osun, Kogi, Sokoto, Zangara and Yobe) In northern states, the gap averages over 30% in favours of boys while in the south Eastern states like Anambra, the gap is about 10% in four of girls The challenge remain the achievement of gender parity ensuring that the girl child enrolls, and complete primary school education in Delta State.

The roles of females in the society are crucial determinants of girls staying in the school. Mulupa (2000) asserted that sex roles, expectations of the African society of the role of the girl child

initiated sex imbalance in school and careers since girls roles was defined such that she would only be a mother, house wife and home keeper. He confirms this assertion by stating that sexual decision of labour meet that mothers had to rely on their daughters' labour for household duties. The opportunity cost of sending a daughter to school is very high. Since gender role for girls are many and continuous, girls have to work longer hours as their mothers, as opposed to boys who have fewer related roles. This therefore results in lower enrolment for girls in primary school especially for primary four to primary six. This fact limits the opportunity of girls to access and complete their primary school education as compared with boys (Onyango 2003)

Positive attitude towards attaining education by females/girl child is not widespread in Africa countries and so as Nigerian states and especially in some local government areas of Delta State studies have revealed that rate of schooling of girls were lower than of boys – as shown in table 3.1 and figure (1). This has serious implications for girls educational development and the suitability of National development. The girl-child's nature is associated with certain deficiencies and defectiveness Onyango (2003). This perception affects the level of attainment of education of the girl child and her remaining in school to complete her primary education. As opined by Saleh and Kwade (2012). This erroneous views in some quarters still overt discrimination and determined resistance to the idea of giving girls equal chances to completing their schooling. But thanks to Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) that have set a target in this multifaceted human center of development. As one of their principal foundations, the goals link progress on education, health, poverty relief and the environment with girls' right to equality in schooling (UNICEF 2004). This new approach and the goals should hold promise for the lives of girls and the fate of nations.

This study is aimed at assessing the status of girl child enrolment in Delta State primary schools and strategies to enhance enrolment and retention of the girl child in primary schools. It is expected that the result of this study will have implications for the effective ways of enhancing girl-child enrolment and retention in primary schools. Therefore this study is guided by the following research questions.

1. What is the current status of Girl-child enrolment in public primary schools in Delta State?
2. What is the level of enrolment of the girl-child in the public primary schools?
3. What are the strategies for enhancing girl-child enrolment in public primary schools?
4. What are the strategies for enhancing girl-child retention in public primary schools?
5. What are the problems associated with girl-child enrolment and retention in public primary schools?

Method

The survey research design was adopted for this study. This design is adopted to allow for easy administration of the questionnaire by the researcher to may respondents to interpret the existing prevailing condition. This is in consonance with Nworgu (1991) that survey research design as one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people or it as considered to be representative of the entire group. The population of this study consisted of all pupils in primary school in Delta State in all the twenty-five (25) local education Authority. The two local government areas were selected for this study that is All public primary schools in Ika North East and Ika South Local Government Areas. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select 280 respondents made of 140 teachers from two local Government areas respectively as shown on table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Showing the sample for the study

S/N	LGA	No of school	No of sampled school	No of subject in each school	Total no of sample
1	Ika North East	57	14	10	140
2	Ika	53	14	10	140
Grand total	3	110	28	20	280

The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The four-likert scale questionnaire was constructed and administered by the researcher. The questionnaire were disturbed and retrieved by the researchers with help of research assistants. The reliability of the instrument was established by the Cronbachs reliability co-efficient and reliability co-efficient of alpha level of .826 was obtained. To establish the validity of the final copy of the questionnaire for this study, the instrument was validated by some senior lecturers in the school of Education, College of Education, Agbor.

Data on primary school was collected at the Delta State Universal Basic Education Board, Asaba. At the various schools for the administration of the questionnaires of the schools heads and teachers assisted the researchers in the administration of the questionnaires. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages for item distribution and research questions answered by item means and standard deviation.

Results

The results are shown on tables 3-6

Research question one: What is the current status of Girl-child enrolment in public primary schools in Delta State?

Table 2: Current status of the Girl-child enrolment in public primary schools in Delta State Ministry of basic and secondary education

Summary of pupils enr9oment in public primary school 2016/2017 academic session					
S/N	LGA	No of schools	Grand total		
			M	F	T
1	Aniocha North	36	3901	3830	7731
2	Aniocha South	54	5327	4918	10275
3	Bomadi	14	2687	2602	5289
4	Burutu	65	10921	11146	22067
5	Ethiope East	62	7263	6889	14152
6	Ethiope West	47	9646	9351	18997
7	Ika North West	57	5749	6196	11945
8	Ika South	53	12052	11782	23834
9	Osko North	41	6654	6535	13189
10	Isoko South	48	5560	5650	11210
11	Ndokwa East	70	4555	4314	8869
12	Ndokwa West	49	7434	7160	14594
13	Okpe	40	5342	4974	10316
14	Oshimili North	31	4782	4309	9091
15	Oshimili South	23	7740	8334	16074
16	Patani	19	2695	2666	5361
17	Sapele	42	8228	8076	16304
18	Udu	41	6917	6722	13639
19	Ughelli North	72	13625	16402	32727
20	Ughelli South	62	9223	7381	16604
21	Ukwuani	32	5198	4839	10077
22	Uvwie	25	5545	5416	10961
23	Warri North	45	4523	4201	8724
24	Warrith South	37	7761	7598	15359
25	Warri South West	44	4154	3876	8030
	Total	1113	170182	165237	335419

Source: Ministry of Basic and secondary Education Asaba

The table shows 2016/2017 academic session summary of pupils enrolment in public primary schools in Delta State in all the twenty-five (25) local Government areas. The grand total for the public primary schools was 335,419 total for boys was 170,182, while that of girls was 165,237. With a different of 4,945 less than boys' enrolment.

Again out of the twenty-five Local government Area only in five (5) LGAS were girls enrolment greater than those of boys.

Research question two: What is the level of enrolment of the girl-child in the public primary schools.

Table 3: level of Girl-child enrolment in public primary schools

S/No	Items	No	Mean	S.D
1	The enrolment of girls in my school is increasing	280	2.96	0.46
2	The enrolment of girls in my school is decreasing	280	2.10	1.90
3	Only female children for wealthy families are enrolled in my school	280	2.20	1.78
4	Female from all socio economic background are enrolled in school	280	3.32	0.26
5	The boys/Girls ratio is equal/almost equal	280	2.68	0.25

Computed from field work

The above table revealed the responses of all the respondents on the level of enrolment of the girl child in public primary schools. It shows there increase in enrolment of the girl child since the mean response of increasing enrolment is 2.96 while the mean response of decreasing girl-child enrolment in public school is 2.10 below the accepted mean of 2.50 decision line. The respondents disagreed that only females from wealthy families enroll in public primary schools with a mean of 2.20 while agreeing girl-child from all socio-economic background are enrolled in school. With a mean of 2.68, the respondents agreed that the ration of Boy/girls are almost equal.

Research question three: What are the strategies for enhancing girl-child enrolment in public primary schools.

Table 4: strategies for enhancing girl-child enrolment in public primary schools

S/No	Items	No	Mean	S.D
1	Legislation should put to enhance girl-child enrolment	2.80	2.66	0.27
2	Girls should be given free scholarship to encourage their enrolment	2.80	3.68	0.11
3	Girls should have separate schools to improve their enrolment	2.80	2.64	0.27
4	Parents should be sensitized on the importance of girl child education to chance enrolment	2.80	3.00	0.47
5	Parents should be educated on the role of education in the life of the girl-child in the society and in job placement	2.80	3.32	0.10

Computed from field work.

Table 5 shows respondents perception on the strategies to enhancing girl-child enrolment in public primary schools. The respondents generally agreed on the strategies for enhancing girl child enrolment in public primary schools. The respondents generally agreed on the strategies for enhancing girl child enrolment in public primary schools since their mean responses were greater than 2.50 which was taken as the minimum significant means score. The strategies for enhancing

girl-child enrolment in the primary schools in Delta State include putting a legislation to encourage girl child enrolment, giving scholarship and building separate girl-schools. Also parents sensitization of the importance of girl-child education and the role girl-child education play in the life of the child and in the society at large.

Research question four: What are the strategies of enhancing girl child retention in public primary schools.

Table5: Strategies for girl-child retention in public primary schools.

S/No	Items	No	Mean	S.D
1	Adequate funding by both Government and NGOs and donation from agencies to girls should will encourage retention	280	3.64	0.22
2	Application and implementation of 35% representation of women in Nigeria political appointment	280	3.29	0.26
3	Law prohibiting girl child labour – using girls as house help will assist retention	280	3.62	0.27
4	Well equipped and conducive school environment with adequate security will encourage girl-child retention	280	2.91	0.54
5	Using well trained female teachers to teach girls will encourage their retention in school	280	3.04	0.45

Computed from field work

According to table 5 on the strategies of retention the girl-child in schools, the best strategy to be adopted is adequate funding of education by both governments, NGOs and agencies with a mean of 3.64 respondents also agreed with identified strategies of implementation of 35% women representation in Nigeria politician appointment with a mean of 3.29 mean of 3.62 while well equipped and conducive school environment with adequate security and the idea of using well trained females teachers with means of 2.91 and 3.04 all agreed encouraging the retention of the girl-child in the public primary schools.

Research question five: What are the problems associated with girl-child enrolment and retention in public schools in public primary schools?

Table 7: Problems associated with Girl child enrolment and retention in public primary school.

S/No	Items	No	Mean	S.D
1	Lack of education background of parents	280	3.64	.027
2	Poverty of parents is a detriment to girl child education	280	3.68	0.11
3	Exorbitant school fees force girls out of school within completion	280	3.64	0.22
4	Traditional beliefs that boys are more importance than girls	280	3.06	0.47
5	Some cultural sentiments that girls are useful as mother and women at home than workers in government or other palatals	280	3.43	0.25
6	Girls are withdrawn from schools for each marriages/early pregnancies	280	3.29	0.45
7	Girls are withdrawn for school to help with socio-economic activities uke-termining trading, hose-help	280	3.36	0.54
8	Lack of employment after completion of school discourages girls enrolment	280	2.91	0.54
9	Unconducive school environment cause girls to withdraw from school	280	3.62	0.27
10	Lack of good teacher example in lifestyle and welfare discourages girls child school enrolment/retention	280	2.36	0.21

The above table revealed respondents opinion on the problems associated with enrolment and retention of the girl children in the primary school. According to them all the stated problems were accepted as hindering the girl child enrolment except lack of good teacher example lifestyle and welfare which had a mean of 2.36 below the significant minimum mean of 2.50 score.

Discussion

The findings revealed that the girl-child status in public primary school is below the boys enrolment since in twenty local government areas of boys enrolment was higher than the girls. Only in five local government the girls enrolment exceeded that of boys. This finding confirmed the study conducted by UNESCO (1986) that there is disparity in male and female enrolment in primary schools Oywa (2011) stated that girl child enrolment in many Districts in Kenya were poor which was attributed to challenges of early marriages and HIV/AIDS and lack of regards for girls education.

Findings on the enrolment of girl child in public primary schools, the ratio of girls to boys enrolment is almost equal and the respondents believe that these is increase in girls enrolment.

On the strategies for enhancing, the girl-child enrolment in public primary schools parents are to be sensitized on the importance of girl-child education as revealed by the findings also free education and scholarship should be given to girls to encourage their enrolment. This findings is in line with who studied the factors militating against the enrolment and retention of girl child in Kaduna state. Findings of strategies for the retention of girl-child in public primary schools agrees with the report of UNICEF (2008) that a focus on retention of girls in school will mean breaking barriers that keep girls out of school and promoting factors for retentionsuch as adequate funding, with well equipped facilities, conducive environment and security. This is confirmed by Owan (2011) and a Abungu (2010) on their on factors influencing the retention of girls in schools in Kenya.

Also the findings on the problems associated with enrolment and retention of girls in primary school agree with UNICEF (2001) Chinew 2008 on the aspect of enrolment strategies. It revealed that girls are often denied by the system due to parents in Africa give preferential treatments to boys enrolments But it disagreed with Msheda (1971), he revealed in BIU local government area of Gongola state parents have liberal attitude towards girl-child education; they believed western education improved social status of girls.

The findings revealed that some traditional beliefs and practices cultural sentiments and socio-economic background were barriers in girls enrolment and retention in school. This finding is in line with Owan (2011 Chinew (2008), Oywa 2011 and Gorba (2010) (pdf).

Conclusion

Given the needed opportunities and the requirements for learning the girl child will excel in education and contribute to the sustainable development of Nigeria. Enhancing female enrolment and retention in primary school is very crucial to the development of the nation as the girl-child remain a mother in many factors of life including nation building and sustainable development.

Recommendations

To ensure positive enrolment and retention of the girl-child in public primary schools in Delta State for sustainable development in Nigeria, the following are, hereby recommended in line with the findings of this study:

1. Government should formulate policies favourable to female learners in particular to enhance retention rates in public schools through the provision of necessary learning facilities in public primary schools.
2. Serious campaigns should be done to encourage the enrolment of the girl child in primary school which is the foundation all educational system if the nation development must be sustained. Delta State government should a matter of agency return the "EDUMARSHALL" back to motor parks and markets to discourage hawkings among primary school age pupils

3. The government in Liason with parents and school administration should provide a conducive learning environment with adequate security for the girl- child.
4. Government should enact and implement appropriate bill that encourage compulsory primary school attendance by all children especially the girl-child.
5. Young Nigeria girls in rural areas should be made to disregard the wrong notion that their education ends in the kitchen. Gone are the days when an African woman is believed to remain only in the kitchen. The girl child needs education that will empower her to face the challenges of today, tomorrow and be able to contribute top sustainability of development in the Nation.

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