

# 13

## ENHANCING FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION THROUGH GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

'LONGDET, Peace Sorochi and 'MWANTI, Rebecca Sundy.

'Department of English, peacelongdet2011@gmail.com

'Department of General Studies Education.

bekkmwanti@yahoo.com

Federal College of Education Pankshin Plateau State, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the significance of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme and its role in promoting girl-child education in Nigeria. It posits that civic education has the potential to instill a feminist outlook in girls and foster a future where women enjoy freedom and equality alongside men. The study highlights and discusses the major barriers to girl-child education and recommends strategic interventions. These include aggressive awareness campaigns through Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) forums, and the establishment of girls' clubs in all primary and secondary schools to educate them on relevant issues and empower them for national development.*

**Keywords:** Feminist Knowledge, Girl-Child Education

### **Introduction**

Girl-child education has gained global recognition, especially with gender equality and empowerment being central to development goals. Female education plays a crucial role in national development, yet remains significantly underdeveloped in Nigeria, particularly when compared to UNICEF standards.

Governments at all levels have allocated considerable resources to education. However, despite gender-neutral policies, the impact on girls and women remains minimal. Statistics reveal that fewer girls enroll in school and even fewer advance to higher education levels (Safiyanu & Inusa, 2013). The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) affirms the right of every child to equal educational opportunities, yet the reality for many girls, particularly in northern Nigeria, reflects persistent disparities.

Education transforms individuals and communities. An educated girl develops self-confidence, economic potential, and the ability to resist abuse and ill-health. She is empowered to contribute meaningfully to society.

### **Girl-Child Education and Feminist Knowledge Production**

Education, broadly defined, is the acquisition of knowledge and values essential for individual and societal development. According to Okocha (2008) and Lere (2010), education liberates individuals from ignorance and builds capacity for societal contribution.

Girl-child education refers specifically to educating girls to enable them to function effectively at home and in society. It fosters independence, awareness of rights, and social contribution. Lere (2010) asserts that "the greatness of a nation is built in the classroom," emphasizing education as a fundamental tool for national development.

The UBE Girl-Child Education Programme aims to address these gaps. It offers girls the same curriculum as boys, with innovations that foster feminist thinking, especially through subjects like English Language and Literature. These subjects introduce concepts of feminism and challenge gender stereotypes in traditional narratives.

This connection between girl-child education and feminist knowledge is significant. Feminism advocates for women's rights, critiques male-dominated structures, and promotes gender equality. Akorede (2011) and Osita-Oleribe (2007) underline the importance of feminist education in enabling women to understand and challenge their marginalization.

## **The State of Girl-Child Education in Nigeria**

Despite policy frameworks, the implementation of girl-child education in Nigeria is hindered by numerous challenges: rapid population growth, insufficient political will, insecurity, and socio-cultural resistance.

UNDP and UNICEF (2002) reported that female literacy stands at 56% compared to 72% for males. In northern states like Sokoto, female enrollment is alarmingly low, and security concerns further hinder progress. Nigeria ranks among the highest globally for out-of-school children, with girls constituting the majority, particularly in conflict-affected northern regions.

These girls, if educated, would contribute to societal and economic development. The disparity in enrollment between male and female students in primary and secondary schools highlights the urgency of addressing this gap.

### **Barriers to Girl-Child Education and Strategies for Improvement**

Key barriers include:

- **Poverty:** Many families prioritize boys' education, using girls for labor.
- **Early Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy:** These lead to high dropout rates.
- **Cultural and Religious Beliefs:** Girls are often seen as future wives rather than individuals with independent potential.
- **Poor Infrastructure:** Inadequate school facilities and distance deter enrollment.
- **Insecurity:** Violence, especially in the North-East, discourages parents from sending girls to school.

To combat these, the paper recommends:

- Comprehensive awareness campaigns.
- Strengthening school infrastructure.
- Providing scholarships and career guidance through girls' clubs.
- Enforcing laws that mandate girl-child education and protect their rights.

## **Relevance of Girl-Child Education and Feminist Knowledge to National Development**

The National Policy on Education (1981, 2004) highlights goals such as moral training, independent thinking, and mutual respect—goals achievable through girl-child education.

Osita-Oleribe (2001) states that the girl-child has historically been marginalized. Feminist theory addresses these injustices, promoting self-worth and societal development. Educated women serve as nation builders; they raise informed children, contribute economically, and foster healthier communities.

Oleribe (2011) identifies benefits of girl-child education as including mental, physical, financial, spiritual, social, psychological, and intellectual empowerment. It enables women to make informed choices, associate with the right people, and positively influence their families and society.

### **Conclusion**

Educating girls is not just a moral obligation but a practical strategy for national development. An educated girl becomes a catalyst for change. As Annon (2001) affirms, "No development strategy is better than one that involves women as central players." Girl-child education fosters a knowledgeable, empowered, and productive population.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Federal Government should fully implement and enforce UBE laws.
2. Schools must be adequately resourced and made safe for all children.
3. Stakeholders should actively promote female enrollment and retention.
4. Community-based enlightenment campaigns should address cultural biases.
5. Scholarships and awards should motivate girls to pursue higher education.
6. Girls' clubs should be established to support peer learning and mentorship.

## References

- Akorede, Y .O. (2012). Gender theories and dialectics. Divine Oaks Prints, Ibadan Nig.
- Alorede Y.O. (2011). Womnanism and the intra-gender conflict theory. Sonon Press,  
Porto-Novo.
- Annan. K (2001) In Osita –Oleribe, O.E. (2007) Neglect of girl-child education; Bringing the gap. A case study of a Nigerian agrarvan community. International NGO Journal Vol. 2 (2) PP. 030-035 February 2007.
- Ezi G.M(2000) Girl-child education initiative: Opportunities for the private sector, Abuja:  
Federal Ministry of Information.
- Federal Ministry of Education (2004) National Policy on Education (athed) Lagos: NERDC
- Lere, M.M. (2010). Education as an instrument for addressing contemporary attitudinal issues for national development. Pankshin journal of Educational psychology PAJEP vol.
- Okeke-oti, B.A. (2010). They have dignity and worth and therefore need restoration.  
Nsukka: UNN Press.
- UNICEF (2007) Girls enrolment drops in North East schools  
[http://www.punching.com/newgirls-enrolment-drops in North-east-schools](http://www.punching.com/newgirls-enrolment-drops-in-north-east-schools)unicefretreved 15/6/2014.
- World Bank [www. tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/school-enrolment](http://www.tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/school-enrolment) Primary-percent-gross-wb-deta. html. retrieved 16/6/2014.
- UNICEF [www.unicef.org/nigeria/Hirl-Education-info sheet-05-07-06.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/Hirl-Education-info-sheet-05-07-06.pdf). retrieved 16/6/2014.
- World Bank- Poverty has increased considerably in Nigeria"[www.nigeriapoliticsonline.com/poverty-himl](http://www.nigeriapoliticsonline.com/poverty-himl). retrieved 19/6/2014.