

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GENDER EQUALITY IN ENROLMENT AND COMPLETION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL GIRLS IN NIGERIA AND USA

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate gender equality in enrolment and completion of primary school girls. The report in this study constitutes a comprehensive survey of why, despite reaching global parity at primary school enrolment completion rate for girls lag way behind those of boys. The study also feature the post Millennium Development Goal Agenda, setting out recommendations for the education sector at the international, national and local level with the aim of transforming the experiences of girls at school.

This empirical study contains some basic statistics on the level of girls exclusion from education. It presents statistical information on gender equality. This study also involve the multi-faceted strategies necessary to address not only different dimensions of girls and women's lives but understand gendered relationships and structurally entrenched inequalities between women and men, girls and boys. It also analyses the way schools can perpetrate gender stereotypes and investigates how this can be prevented.

It was suggested that post- MDG goals are not sufficient for what need to be done to address girls' and women's education needs, setting the target amount too low and still only in terms of access, not attendance, completion, or quality. This paper discusses some of the key challenges in achieving real gender equality in education providing examples of initiatives in a range of context, including gender-responsive budgeting in primary education and making recommendations for action.

A descriptive survey design was employed. A-9 four point Likert scale researchers questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument consists of (9) items administered on 150 respondents. Data collected were analysed using the mean rating. Each case study ends with conclusion and a set of policy recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigeria and the United States of America Governments, supported by civil society, the donor community, UN agencies, and other partners has made a commitment to the goal of education for all (EFA), and to gender equity and equality in education. UNICEF is facilitating in the process to ensure girls are enrolled, stay in school and have quality education. They also agitated for a child friendly school, with an environment that is fun, healthy and engaging-a place where they can play, be protected from harm, express their views and actively participate in the learning process.

The goal of the Nigeria and the US government is to remove gender disparity. In many countries, expansion of enrolments took place at the expense of the quality of the education that was provided. Children attended school where classes were too large for any learning to take place, teachers not well enough trained and supported, and the provision of learning materials grossly inadequate. Many taken for granted gender inequalities and difficulties in working inclusively in schools meant that girls and children from the poorest families often felt in adequacies in learning provision most sharply. The stress of the MDGs on the expansion of enrolment meant that inadequate attention was given in policy and practice to other key areas of work in education (e.g curriculum teacher development, complimentary programmes) that contribute to progress for

girls. Empowering girls at this level help in achieving the MDGs in that it fosters progress on girl's education.

Looking in to the expansion in provision in education for all children since 2000, and the special attention given to girls, it is difficult to separate out a casual impetus that can be linked to the MDGs, isolated from other contemporaneous initiatives. Some global frameworks that complimented the MDGs are associated with the Education for All (EFA) Dakar Platform of Action, also adopted in 2000, which has six key areas, and provided a perspective on girl's education. The goals for the Dakar platform of Action are:

- The expansion and improvement of early childhood education.
- Access to free compulsory education of good quality for all children.
- All learning to be appropriate for children and life skills included in learning.
- Improvement in levels of adult literacy.
- Gender disparities in Primary and secondary education to be removed.
- All aspects of quality of education, including measurable learning outcomes to be improved. (Dakar Framework, 2000 pp. 5-17)

Thus, the convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) set out protection for children from violence and exploitation, the Beijing Platforms of Action, which linked girls schooling with wider sites of learning for women and approaches to gender mainstreaming.

Table 1 presents UNESCO figures on the decrease in the number of children out of school between 1999 and 2000, and the changing ratio of girls in different regions.

	Children out of school in 1999	% girls out of school in 1999	Children out of school in 2010	% girls out of school in 2010
Arab states	8423	59	5036	61
Central and Eastern Europe	1644	57	931	49
Central Asia	439	52	317	54
East Asia & Pacific	10344	51	6579	44
Latin America/Caribbean	3607	55	2652	50
N. America & West Europe	901	48	1267	45
South & West Asia	40081	64	13261	55
Sub-saharan Africa	42174	54	30641	53
World	107614	58	60684	53

Source: UNESCO, 2012, 354-5

It can be seen that in every region of the world the numbers of children out of school has come down, and only in one region (central Asia) were girls a larger population of children out of school in 2010 than in 1999. Concerted efforts to support girls to go to school have thus seen progress.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to find out the gender inequality in the enrolment and completion of girls in primary school. However, the specific purpose is to analyse comparatively the influence of gender disparity on the enrolment and completion of girl's education in the primary school.

Research Questions

1. What are the differences in the enrolment and completion of male and female students in the primary school in Nigeria and USA?
2. How has the enrolment of female students in the primary schools helped to improve the quality of education provided to the selected few learners in Nigeria/ USA?
3. How has lack of completion in Nigeria and USA contributed to social segregation of male and female students?

METHODOLOGY

In undertaking this study and obtaining an answer to the guiding research questions to be answered, the descriptive survey research design was used. The choice of the descriptive survey was in line with Akuezuilo and Agu(2003), who maintained that is concerned with the gathering of information on people's opinion. The population comprised all primary school girls in Nigeria and USA. 10 primary schools in Nigeria and USA were selected using the purposive sampling techniques. This is line with Research Advisors (2006) table for selecting the sample size. The respondents consist of both male and female teachers. A-9 item four-point-likert scale researchers designed questionnaire was used for eliciting the needed data from the respondents. The questionnaire items were validated by experts in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin to ensure its face and content validity. This is in line with Sambo (2008) who maintained that the best procedure for validating research instrument is to give it to panel of experts. A test-retest reliability method was carried out with a sample of five primary schools within Ilorin metropolis. Two week interval period was given. The scores of the first were correlated with the scores of the second using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and reliability index of 0.68 was obtained. The questionnaire contained two sections. Bio-data of the respondents constituted the first section while the second contained 9 items with 4 points responses

(Strongly Agree = SA, Agree = A, Disagree = D, Strongly Disagree = SD). The questionnaires were administered to the respondents. The data collected was analysed using mean rating with accepted mean score 2.5

RESULTS

The result of the analysis was presented in the tables below.

Research Question 1: What are the differences in the enrolment and completion of male and female students in primary schools in Nigeria and USA?

Table 2: Responses on the differences in the enrolment of male and female students in primary schools in Nigeria and USA

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN NIGERIA	MEAN USA
1	The composition of boys are more than girls in primary schools enrolment in Nigeria and USA	130	142	30	11	3.21	3.24
2	Primary schools in Nigeria and USA have more girls dropping out of school than boys.	221	93	37	10	3.31	3.49
3	More attention is being paid to boys than girls in the classroom in the teaching and learning process.	230	88	24	15	3.56	3.42

The above table shows the mean value of the respondents ranging from 3.2 to 3.4 which is greater than accepted mean value of 2.5. This is an indication that the enrolment of boys in the prima-

ry schools in Nigeria and USA are more than that of girls. The result also showed that more attention is being paid to boys than girls and that girls dropped out of school than boys either due to poverty or pregnancy.

Research Question 2: How has lack of primary school completion of girls contributed to social segregation in Nigeria and USA?

Table 3: Responses on how lack of primary school completion of girls contributed to social segregation in Nigeria and USA

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN NIGERIA	MEAN USA
1	Most girls do not complete their primary education	160	177	10	10	3.55	3.66
2	Females students find it very difficult to learn from their male counterparts	300	50	6	2	3.74	3.61
3	The population which most primary schools accommodates does population in the society not give adequate representation of the larger	260	90	4	9	3.84	3.72

Table 3 reveals that the mean value of the respondents from 3.6-3.8, meaning that the fact that most girls do not complete their primary school education does not mean that the girl child is being discriminated against or segregated.

Research Question 3: How has the enrolment of female students in the primary schools helped to improve the quality of education provided to the selected few learners in Nigeria and USA?

Table 4: Responses on the quality of education provided for the girl-child in Nigeria and USA

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN NIGERIA	MEAN USA
1	Primary schools in Nigeria and USA restricts boys and girls exposure	300	40	12	5	3.90	3.86
2	Boys are provided with educational quality superior to girls	200	79	60	32	3.61	3.12
3	Adequate freedom is given to the boy-child to learn at his own pace than the girl-child	260	50	30	17	3.74	3.42

Table 4 shows the mean value of respondent's assessment of the quality of education provided to the girl-child ranging from 3.1 to 3.8; this is greater than the accepted mean value of 2.5. This is clearly showing that there is difference in the quality of education offered to the boy child than the girl-child.

DISCUSSION

For education to be prioritized in the post 2015 agenda, the UN High Level Panel (HLP) report must be commended. The HLP report gives particular attention to gender in that it identifies addressing girls and women as an important aspect of cross cutting concerns with inequalities. It also stresses the need to attend the regional and socio-economic inequalities; hence girls and women must be empowered to achieve gender equality. Violence against the girl-child must be eliminated; ending child marriage, ensuring women can own property, engage in financial transactions and participate in the public sphere politically and economically.

It was discovered in this study that the duty bearers-parents and teachers deny the girl-child her rights. For instance, parents withdraw the girls if they cannot afford school fees for their son or sons. Some parents have the money but instead, they spend on other things like bride price, compensation payments, elections e.t.c. They also keep their daughters at home to assist in domestic chores. Parents also keep their daughters at home to work for money. The teachers also publicize the names of girls whose parents have not paid school fees, embarrassing them. The teachers and the male students harass the girls.

In addition, some parents cannot buy their uniforms, most girls only have one set of uniform, hence making the girls to go to school "in rough" or "rugged" clothes.

Also, textbooks are shared by two or three students. When the girls share the books with a boy, the boys intimidates the girls and gets to take the books home. The girls end up not being able to read the lessons and do the assignment resulting to poor performance in school.

The researchers also discovered that the prevailing attitude of parents that need to be overcome is the bride price and early marriages among girls. The parents tends to marry off their daughters at the onset of the girls monthly period in exchange for the "bride price" this is a cultural practice prevalent in Africa.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, the following recommendations are made;

- I. The government should ensure that girl-child education is given utmost priority and that our education policies are well regulated to promote gender equality.
- II. Parents and community should acknowledge and uphold the right of all children to receive a basic education.
- III. There should be school plan to accelerate girl's education and there should be door to door/ village to village awareness on girl's education.
- IV. There should be the establishment of girls clubs, girls' school captain e.t.c.
- V. There should be monitoring of students absenteeism, performance, behavior and health. Girls that have left school should be encouraged by providing them a second chance to return and counseling session should be provided in schools.
- VI. It is also recommended that Primary schools should have a master list of school-age girls this will enable the community leaders and advocates of girl's education to easily identify and educate parents and guardians to send their daughters to school.

CONCLUSION

In all, it was concluded that gender inequality exist amidst nations especially as it relates to girl-education according to the UNESCO report. Educational administrators and policy makers have also device means of educating the girl-child in all facets of life in order to avoid gender disparity and segregation among boys and girls in primary schools. As such, for the achieving of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particular attention must be placed on girl-child and women education all over the world.

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