TOPICAL CHALLENGES TO EDUCATING THE GIRL-CHILD

By:

Professor Malami Umar Tambawal, PEN, MNISEP, MCASSON, CCN, LPCN
Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education &
Extension Services. Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.
Email: umar.malami@udusok.edu.ng / drmalamitambawal@yahoo.com

Presented at the Annual Speech and Prize Giving day
ceremony of Federal Government Girls College Tambuwal on
Saturday, 21st July 2018.
INTRODUCTION

Education may be viewed as the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the society. Education involves the development of ones intellect and moral potentialities as well as provide practical skills for seeking livelihood. The aim of education is therefore to facilitate the balanced growth of total personality of an individual through intellectual and moral training.

Knowledge is considered as food and life of the soul, because through it discipline of the mind and soul are acquired. It allows the performance of correct as against erroneous action, or right as against wrong. It preserve the individual from disgrace. Knowledge is what differentiate man from animal because it gives one ability to think positively.

GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

Education is the fundamental right of all citizens be them male or female, but over the years we have witnessed calls, seminars, workshops and symposia on the challenges facing girl child education in this part of the country. In other parts it is the problem of boy-child education. The problems that are always highlighted ranges from poverty, religious, misconception, early marriages, social cum-cultural values and top most societal perception of the educated women. These issues have been exhaustively discussed and up to this point in time much have not changed especially in our rural areas. A recent UNICEF report indicates that, there is an urgent need of a million plus women in education considering the lack of female nurses, teachers etc.
The question one may want to pose here is, why significant improvement is not recorded in this section? It is not that there are no girls in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions but the required number is not found, where such are available there are challenges facing these girls in terms of staying and completing a certain level of education.

This paper decided to add some dimensions to the earlier hammered on challenges.

First and foremost the education curriculum is not gender sensitive, the provisions therein do not consider the peculiarities of the girl-child for instance in the lower basic level i.e. Primary schools. The curriculum contents for both boys and girls are the same, the concern of girl-child are not taken care of such as life style, vocational skills to make the girl-child productive after because some of them may not proceed to the next level of education. Some parents may feel the need to train the girl-child at home on traditional vocational skills so that when married she would have something to do.

Girls need a safe and supportive environment, free from abuse with separate toilet facilities, safe drinking water, equal attention with boys and gender sensitive curriculum as mentioned earlier. The environment in our primary schools do not take cognizance the peculiarities of physiology and psychological growth of the girl-child they and boys are considered same, not considering the fact that as they grow things changes within them and some of the girls may mature earlier which will require special attention given to them. At the secondary level even where the schools are girls only, you find male teachers dominating the school. Staff not giving the students the assurance they need of being cared for in terms of
personal needs such as menstrual complications, relationships and life skills training. Until the school environment of a girl-child becomes gender friendly a lot of them may drop along the line or completely hate schooling.

Another serious issue facing the education of the girl-child is job placement. A lot of girls have graduated from the various stages of education from secondary to tertiary levels, the parents would have expected them to be gainfully employed but now the reverse is the case these products would be seen roaming the streets in villages and cities from one friend to the other without any specific thing to do. Such happenings are what discourage parents to send the girl child to school because they would reach a situation where they have not married when they should and no job after graduation.

The work place environment for the girl after graduation is not gender sensitive. Considering the peculiar nature of the girl as a mother, a nurse and home keeper, her hours of work are the same with her male counterparts: arrival and departure no distinction without due cognizance that as a mother she has to prepare the children to school, receive them after school, set the house meal ready while the male counterparts only supervise such activities of woman. The provision of toilet facilities and child-care centers for nursing mothers is not considered as such many women may decide to leave the job and take care of their families which make these not already involved not to come seeing what happened to other women.

There are instances where the girl-child may drop out of school either at primary or secondary levels and may wish to continue with her education at a later stage in life but cannot do so due to lack of such schools that
cater for these groups, where such schools exist they may be in state capitals or Local government headquarters and have very limited opportunities which cannot cater for demands. In the case of villages such opportunities are not there so any child that dropped out school have done so for good thus leaving a very large gap to be filled in terms female participation in health care delivery, teaching and other related social services.

The coming up of social media such as facebook, twitter, whatsapp, youtube etc. and many platforms of in sharing social information has helped girls in the city to be influenced by the possibility of dropping out of school or try to copy what they view or read on social media. This has a devastating effect on the girl-child. Also the love stories books in current circulation and Nollywood and Kannywood films have created a very dangerous kind of thinking on the child. Considering the fact that the girl child is always at home after school hours and possibly after participating in house chaos may have nothing doing except either reading the novels or watching films which may have adverse effect on their thinking. The access to social media outlets where phonographic films, crimes etc, are obtained contribute greatly to negative view girl-child may have for going to school. These outlets are not filtered and not controlled which can be accessed by anybody anytime and the contents are not in line with our culture and religion as such will add greatly to moral decadence of the girl-child.

Many teachers of girl-child lack adequate training on the impact of teacher behavior on perpetuating gender stereotypes. Consideration should be given by the teachers on physiological and psychological construct of the girl child in his approach to educating her. The teacher
should be aware of the limited learning times girls have, the burden of household chores which she is expected to carry out and the contextual situation in which her achievements improves.

Lack of direct community participation in the girl-child education is also a factor. Here we find that, the school curriculum designed is always fashioned by people who may completely be outside the culture and religious beliefs of the girl-child as such the provisions may not take due cognizance of the peculiarities of the girl-child in our environment. Greater participation of community representatives in identifying curriculum contents and delivering methodology could contribute towards making such areas as interpersonal relationships, nutrition, sanitation, technology and crafts more relevant to the local situation and in turn more beneficial in improving the quality of life of the communities.

Apart from the curriculum contents which deals with the vocational aspiration of the girl-child, there is the issue of integration of Education that is Islamic/Western education. The contents of western education is viewed by some people as not in conformity with their anticipated norms and values, therefore would not allow their female children attend such schools. If education is to be accepted by generality of our people then it should be able to address the moral, cultural and religious concerns of the populace.
CONCLUSION

The identified challenges if addressed would go a long way to resolve the problems of girl-child education. However all these issues discussed if only addressed within the urban and semi-urban areas leaving the rural areas out then the problem of girl-child education would continue. Therefore the rural areas should also form part of the focus for all campaigns for the education of the girl child.

Thank you for listening.