

LEVEL OF AWARENESS, EXTENT OF INVOLVEMENT AND OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL GENDER POLICY ON BASIC EDUCATION IN SOKOTO STATE

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the level of awareness, extent of involvement and probable obstacles to the effective implementation of the national gender policy on basic education in Sokoto State. A sample of 180 teachers was drawn from the population of teachers at the Junior Secondary School level in Sokoto State through a stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire tagged Teachers Awareness and Involvement Questionnaire (TAIQ) was used to obtain information from the teachers. Results of the study shows that teachers in the state are not aware of the existence of the National Gender Policy in basic education, they are also not involved in the implementation of the policy. The most important obstacle to the successful implementation of the policy being teachers' insufficient knowledge of the various aspects of the policy. It was recommended among others that teachers should be given adequate training and orientation for the implementation of the policy considering the fact that teachers are the cornerstone of the implementation of any education policy.

Introduction

Development is considered in a number of interrelated dimensions including out-put and income, conditions of production, level of living i.e nutrition, housing, health and education. The objectives of such development as identified by Ndukwe (2005:131) are to increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health and protection. Justice demands that the effects of development should be

felt by all citizens of the country, men and women, boys and girls.

The presumption that education is the key factor to all forms of development entails that provision of qualitative education to all citizens is inevitable to government across the globe. This has resulted in the formulation of policies aimed at universalization of access to education.

Nigeria has long recognized the need for giving equal education opportunities to all citizens. This

realization is evident in the national policy on education which stipulated that "education is the birth right of every Nigerian child". Specifically the following declarations are found in NPE (2004 revised).

There is need for equality of educational opportunities to all Nigerian children irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his/her ability.

Education activities shall be centred on the learner for maximum self development and self-fulfillment.

However, a lot of literature have reported disparity in the educational opportunities to Nigeria citizens (Mukhtar 2001, Ali 2007). According to Ali (2007) "there is national gender disparity in enrolment, retention and completion of education among girls". Trends and developments in the global scene resulted in the realization that the world stand to loose if part of it is left behind educationally. Thus the emphasis on the universalization of access to basic education. Several strategies have been adopted by the Nigerian government for the acceleration of girl's education. Among these is the universal basic education programme.

The universal basic education programme is an attempt to uphold and renew Nigerian's commitment to

the various world conventions and protocols to which she is a signatory. These include –

The Jomtien (1990) declaration and frame work for action on basic education for all.

The New Delhi (1991) Declaration and follow-up conference in Beijing 2001 which required stringent effort by E-9 countries (nine countries of the world with the largest concentration of illiterates) to drastically reduce illiteracy within the shortest possible time.

The Ouagadugu (1992) Pan-African Declaration on the education of girls and women.

The Amman Re-affirmation (1995) calling for forceful pursuit of the jomtien recommendations on basic education for all.

The Durbah (1998) statement of commitment to the promotion of education for all.

The OAU decade of education in Africa (1997-2006) on inter-African cooperation on education with strong emphasis on the vigorous pursuit of basic education.

Dakar world education forum (2000) which set an agenda for education in the 21st century.

Nigeria in addition to all these is also a signatory to EFA, MDGS, common wealth plan of action on all goals on gender equity. However, Nigeria is being identified as one of the twenty-five countries lagging behind in the attainment of the millennium development goal number two and EFA goal three of ensuring that "all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling". Nigeria is also far from achieving the goal on gender parity and women empowerment MDG 3 (Ali, 2007).

Sokoto State is often referred to as one of the educationally disadvantaged states of the federation as far as achievement in western education is concerned. The lack of highly skilled manpower especially on the part of the women has continues to impede the successful accomplishment of development plans. This has serious economic implication for the state. The low participation of women in education can be attributed to a number of factors among which are poor quality of teaching staff, gender insensitive school curriculum, lack of equipment and facilities, lack of role models and erroneous interpretation of religious teaching etc.

The National Policy on Gender in Basic Education

The national policy on gender in basic education is a policy aimed at balancing the imbalance in the education system. It is expected to act as a vehicle for the attainment of the MDGs and EFA goals by 2015.

Irrespective of types policies are formulated to perform two major functions. These are –

They help to correct defects in the operation of the system

They are guides for future development.

The national policy on gender in basic education is a specific policy that seeks to integrate gender issues in basic education with the view to complementing other policies. Specifically it is expected to achieve the following objectives –

To promote equal access and participation in basic education through enrolment of all girls and boys by the year 2015.

To promote high level of retention, completion and performance in basic education by the year 2015.

To advocate the support of all key stakeholders (all levels of government, international partners,

private sector etc) in resource mobilization and partnership.

To create a favourable environment in support of planning, management, implementation and actualization of gender policy in basic education.

The above objectives are expected to form the basis of gender policy on basic education throughout the states of the federation. The objectives are broad and general, the task therefore is to translate these objectives into measurable, meaningful and more manageable behavioural objectives. This task will require the concerted efforts of the best of experts in the educative community.

Government's commitment to the pursuance of the objectives of the policy is ambitiously enumerated throughout the policy document, some of the strategies recommended include, advocacy and sensitization, free and compulsory basic education, child-friendly school principles, integration and mainstreaming issues, capacity building, gender-mainstreaming in the basic education sector, gender-sensitive education budget, training and supply of female teachers to schools in rural areas, incentives for girls and gender-responsive curriculum.

Statement of the problem

The problem of this study was to find out the level of awareness, extent of involvement and probable obstacles to effective implementation of the national gender policy on basic education in Sokoto State.

Purpose of the study

It is the purpose of this study was to find out the level of awareness, extent of involvement and probable obstacles to effective implementation of the national gender policy in basic education in Sokoto State. It is hoped that findings of this study may help officials of the state universal basic education board, school administrators, parents, teachers and other stakeholders in the attainment of the major goal of the national gender policy in basic education which is to ensure equal access to basic education and promotion of retention, completion and high performance of all pupils.

Research Questions

The following questions were asked to guide this study:

Are teachers in Sokoto state aware of the existence of the national gender policy in basic education?

Are teachers in Sokoto State involved in the integration of gender issues in basic education?

Are there factors that could impede the successful implementation of the policy in the state?

Methodology

A survey design was adopted for this study. It explored the opinion of secondary school teachers in Sokoto State on their level of awareness, extent of involvement and probable obstacles to the successful implementation of the national gender policy on basic education.

Sample and Sampling Technique

One hundred and eighty (180) teachers at the basic education level were selected through stratified random sampling techniques for this study. There are six zonal education offices in the state, these formed the basis for stratification. Three (3) schools were selected from each zone and ten (10) teachers were selected randomly from each school

to give a total sample size of 180 teachers.

Instrument for data collection

A self designed questionnaire tagged Teachers Awareness and Involvement (TAIQ) questionnaire was used to collect data for the study after the validity and reliability of the instrument were found suitable by experts in test and measurements. The instrument was of the Likert scale format and contained 20 items.

Data Analysis

Simple frequency counts, percentages and mean rating were used to answer the three research questions of the study. A mean rating of two or less means disagreement while a mean rating of three and above means agreement.

Results

Results of this study are represented in tables 1-3.

Table 1: Teachers awareness of the existence of the national gender policy on basic education

S/N	Statement	Mean rating
1.	Teachers in the state are not aware of the existence of the national gender policy on basic education	3.40
2.	Teachers do not know the objectives of the policy	3.00
3.	Teachers in the state have not attended any seminar, workshop or conference to discuss the national gender policy on basic education.	3.16
4.	There is gender-imbalance in education in the state.	3.49
5.	Teachers in the state do not know how to create gender-fair situations in their classrooms.	2.15

Table I displays teachers awareness on the existence of the national gender policy on basic education in Sokoto State. From the table it could be deduced that teachers in the state

are not aware of the existence of the national gender policy on basic education as they indicated their agreement with four out of the 5 statements.

Table 2: Teachers involvement in the integration of gender issues in basic education

S/N	Statement	Mean rating
1.	Teachers in the state are given some training to acquire more skills and competence to be able to implement the policy efficiently	1.05
2.	Changes were made in the school curriculum to cater for strategic gender needs	1.28
3.	Attendance to primary and junior secondary schools in the state is free and compulsory	2.05
4.	PTA meetings are regularly held to discuss gender issues in basic education.	1.91
5.	Provisions are made to make schools gender-sensitive and child-friendly	1.69

It is shown on table 2 that teachers in Sokoto state are not involved in the integration of gender issues in basic education. The mean rating on all the

options presented figures which indicated disagreement with the statements.

Table 3: Probable obstacles to successful implementation of the national gender policy on basic education in Sokoto State

S/N	Factors	Response Category		
		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1.	Low academic and professional qualification of the teachers.	142 (78%)	28 (16%)	10 (06%)
2.	Insufficient knowledge of the various aspects of the policy	168 (93%)	10 (05%)	02 (1.1%)
3.	Lack of clear norms and standard regarding the implementation of the policy	144 (80%)	23 (13%)	03 (1.6%)
4.	Lack of relevant training and development of the teachers	160 (88%)	10 (05%)	10 (05%)
5.	Low level of commitment on the part of the teachers	98 (54%)	70 (38%)	12 (06%)
6.	Poor working environment	111 (62%)	48 (27%)	21 (11%)
7.	Lack of Supervision	104 (58%)	53 (29%)	23 (13%)
8.	Lack of public awareness on the role of the community in the implementation of the policy	160 (88%)	14 (07%)	06 (3.3%)
9.	Lack of enthusiasm from the community to support government programmes.	159 (88%)	10 (05%)	11 (6.1%)
10.	Inadequate support by the government to educational plans.	165 (92%)	15 (08%)	-

Table 3 shows that 93% of the respondents agreed that insufficient knowledge of the various aspects of the policy is a major obstacle to its successful implementation. This is followed by inadequate support by

the government (92%) lack of relevant training and development of the teachers, (88%) and lack of public awareness on the role of the community in the implementation of the policy (88%).

Discussion

This study has shown that teachers in Sokoto State are not aware of the existence of the national gender policy on basic education and they have not been involved in the integration of gender issues in basic education. It has also shown that the most important obstacles to the implementation of the policy include teachers insufficient knowledge of the various aspects of the policy (93%) inadequate support by the government on educational plans (92%), lack of relevant training and lack of public awareness on the role of the community in the implementation of the policy accounting for (88%) of the responses. This is in line with Ukeje (2000) which emphasized that it is the teacher that holds the key to the door to modernization and progress. That we cannot educate without the teacher as such teacher's active involvement in the implementation of any education policy is of paramount importance.

Recommendations

Successful implementation of any educational policy depend on the extent of participation of the teachers which will depend on their academic qualification and professional training. Teachers in the state must be given adequate training and

orientation to be acquainted with the rationale for the implementation of the policy.

Good school-community relationship need to be established to enable government and the community full their resources together for successful implementation of educational plans. This could be done by involving members of the community through the PTA.

Government should show more commitment to implementation of educational plans.

Schools should be made gender-sensitive and child-friendly to accommodate all categories of learners.

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