

CONSTRAINTS FACING GIRLS' SECONDARY EDUCATION IN SOKOTO STATE.

ALH. A.B GIWA (POSTHUMOUS) and IDRIS ABDULMALIK

Abstract

This paper discussed the major constraints facing girls' secondary education in Sokoto State. These are non-compliance with the philosophy of Nigerian education, religious/cultural disposition of the people, government policy, financial problems and parental bias. The paper proved that the philosophy of Nigerian education was not complied with. The paper also proved that Islam emphasizes equality in education for both sexes. However, the paper confirmed that majority of the people in the state favour early marriage of girls and the preference of boy's education to girl's education. At the end, recommendations were proffered to reduce or remove the constraints.

Introduction

The development of any nation hinges on the intellectual development of its citizens, both male and female. In Sokoto State this noble decision is stifled as the girls are facing some major constraints, which this paper has discussed, and the constraints include non-compliance with the Nigerian philosophy of education, Religious/Cultural disposition of the people, government policy, financial problems and parental biases. The writers prefer some recommendations to remove the constraints.

The Philosophy Of Nigerian Education

The N.P.E (1981, Revised) in Section I, sub-section 1, and highlights the philosophy of our educational systems as could be understood in the five main National objectives of Nigeria as follows:

- (i) a free and democratic society;
- (ii) a just and egalitarian society;
- (iii) a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (iv) a great and dynamic economic;
- (v) a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

The second and the fifth of the objectives above are the most important as related to the theme of this paper.

"A just and egalitarian society" cannot be attained unless we give equal attention to both genders in education, employment and other ways.

Similarly, "a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens" will be an illusion if only one gender is given full education and the education of the other gender is limited. The one gender being full educated will be the only one with full opportunities while the other will have only limited opportunities, and the "egalitarian" purpose will be defeated.

The national educational aims and objectives to which the philosophy is linked are four but only two are very much related to the theme of this paper and they are:

"the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society"; and "the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society".

The two aims quoted above cannot be attained unless education is equally given to both sexes. In the two instances "the individual" is mentioned and it refers to both male and female. There should therefore be no favouritism to either of the two. This will ensure the rapid development of the nation.

Religious/Cultural Constraint

Historically, it is said that the general culture of the people which was formerly diverse according to what ethnic group one belonged to has now transformed to one common culture through the embracing of Islam by the inhabitants of Sokoto State after the Jihad of Shehu Usman Danfodio in 1804. It can now be confidently stated that the pronounced culture prevalent in Sokoto State is Islamic culture. This is so as about 99.9% of the people of Sokoto State are Muslims.

At this point it may be necessary to ask the question "Does Islamic cultural practices negate the education of girls?" "A short discussion will bring out the position of Islam on the general education of girls in Islamic societies.

Prophet Mohammed (SAW) said:

"Search for knowledge is a sacred duty (faridah) imposed on every Muslim man and woman" (Asad; 1980.87).

In another instance, Prophet Mohammed (SAW) said that Muslims can seek knowledge even if it will take them to China. From this statement it could be deduced that during the lifetime of the prophet, people in China were not Muslims and more so, China was very far from Arabia. Yet Prophet

Mohammed (SAW) commanded all Muslims that they could go as far as to China to acquire some relevant knowledge. This could mean that it was very likely that in those days China might be more advanced in science and technology, hence he directed that Muslims should take the pains to travel to China to acquire skills in science and technology so that Muslims could benefit from such education.

Let us take recourse to find out the teachings of the two hadiths. The theme of this paper is "Education for girls". The directive of the prophet is that education is compulsory for both men and women and naturally, obedience to the prophet's directives is obligation on all Muslims. As discussed earlier, the search for knowledge, which could take us to far-away China, was definitely not to look for Islamic knowledge. It means therefore that Islam encourages both male and female to acquire modern education so that Muslim Ummah could sustain them without necessarily look forward to others to render assistance to them. The wish of Prophet Mohammed (SAW) is that Muslims should live an independent life – a self-reliant Ummah.

Evidently women constitute at least half of the human population in many societies – Sokoto State inclusive. The situation and policy analysis of basic education in Nigeria 1993 report provide clear evidence of the general trend of male and female population where it says, "female comprise about 44.69% (approx 50%) of the total population (Junaidu, 1993). This means that children of school age in most of our towns and villages should be 50 boys and 50 girls. By implication if we have a school with a population of 40 new intakes, we are expected to have 20 girls and 20 boys. The point being stressed here is that both parents and authorities have not made it possible to have this ideal situation.

Parents generally prefer giving out their daughters for marriage at tender age in Sokoto State Junaidu 1995). This cultural practice has negatively affected acquisition of education by girls. Girls in most cases who get married at the tender age of 13 years are already in their husbands' houses while they are expected to be receiving their secondary education. This has caused the lopsidedness of secondary education in favour of boys.

Shehu (1995) asserts that hawking is another cultural practice that has affected girl's secondary education negatively in Sokoto State. Girls are found hawking one way or the other in towns and villages in order to earn enough funds to help their parents in the purchase of materials in readiness for their marriage. This hawking has resulted in the very low population of girls in both primary and secondary schools. Normally, parents claim that their daughters would only attend Koranic schools but the writers have observed that the number of girls in Koranic schools is much lower than the number of boys. This lopsidedness in favour of boys cannot be unconnected with the practice of hawking among girls.

One of the most outstanding reforms within the Hausa Muslim Community during the time of Shehu Usman Danfodio was the education of women. In his book Nur al-Albab he said: "They treat their wives and daughters like household implements which are used until they are broken and thrown on to the rubbish heap. Alas! How can they abandon their wives and daughters in the perpetual darkness of ignorance while they daily impart their knowledge to their students. This is nothing but error because they are instructing their students in this manner out of sheer egotism and hypocrisy". (Fafunwa, 1974).

Danfodio again repeated the need for educating women in his famous work Ihya -al-Sunah: 'If anyone says that a women is generally ignorant of these matters (for example matters relating to business transactions) my reply is that it is incumbent upon her to endeavour to know these (commercial regulations) as it is binding upon her to know about other matters pertaining to her religion like ablutions, fasting and praying.

The above two paragraphs contain two different quotations from the works of Shehu Usman Danfodio which are in obedience to Islamic teachings quoted from Hadith earlier on.

Government Policy

When the writers were teaching in a primary schools in the late 1960's through early 1970's, what they understood as definite policy on admission of pupils in schools was that at the beginning of every year the school headmasters were normally directed to admit 28 boys and 12 girls in a class of 40 pupils. This policy means the admission of 70% boys and 30% girls. Either by design or coincidence, it appears as if this policy runs through to both secondary and tertiary institutions.

Adamu (1987) carried out a survey and the statistics he obtained confirmed the above and showed that only 31.91% of primary school enrolment were girls. Similarly, he discovered that out of 627 students in the then Advanced Teachers' College, Sokoto in 1977/78, only 69 were females, representing 11% while only 16.8% of the total number of students in our secondary schools were girls. In the same academic year (1977/78) it was discovered that only 12.34% of the total number of students in the then Sokoto State College of Arts and Science were girls. Similarly, out of 222 students in the then State Polytechnic, only one student was a female, which indicates 0.45%. These are all lower than the government admission policy referred to above.

From 1999-2004 the Secondary schools enrolment figures for schools under the main Ministry of Education are shown in the table below

Table I: Secondary Schools Enrolment In Sokoto State 1999-2004

YEAR	MALE %		FEMALE %		TOTAL FIGURE	%
1999	39,889	80.7	9537	19.3	49,426	100
2000	44,056	83.5	8700	16.5	52,756	100
2001	49,584	75.1	16,479	24.9	66,063	100
2002	52,556	76.5	16,128	23.5	68,684	100
2003	63,495	76.8	18,909	23.2	82,704	100
2004	59,328	78.4	16,342	21.6	75,670	100

Source: Statistics Department, Ministry of Education, Sokoto.

The above figures are those of schools directly under the main Ministry of Education. Many schools are not included in the figures. Those are schools under parastatals such as Science and Technical Education Board and Araboc and Islamic Education Board.

Looking critically at the figures and percentages above, it will be realized that female enrolment for the seven years shown range from 16.5 - 24.9%. The low female enrolment which starts from primary schools, through secondary to tertiary institution can also be observed in the number of female teachers engaged to teach in secondary school as shown in the table below:

Table II: Teachers By Qualification and Sex 2004

	MALE	%	FEMALE	%	TOTAL
Graduate with Teaching Qualification	204	71.3	82	28.7	286
Graduate without Teaching Qualification					
N.C.E Holders	421	85.6	71	14.4	492
Teacher Grade I	476	79.6	122	20.4	598
HND	18	100	-	-	18
ND	120	88.9	15	11.1	135
	254	95.1	13	4.9	267
TOTAL	1393	81.9	308	18.1	1701

Source: Teachers Service Board, Sokoto.

Table II above, as earlier mentioned shows that female teachers constitute only 18.1% of the total number of teachers in our secondary schools. This is contrary to the situation, which obtains in the developed world such as U.S.A and U.K. where female teachers form the bulk of the manpower in the teaching profession. Since the female enrolment figure in secondary schools is low, number of females entering the professions will equally be low. Hence, the very negligible 18.1% female teachers in the state secondary schools, under the main Ministry of Education.

Financial Constraint

The Honourable Minister of Education, Professor Tunde Adeniran at the launching of the Universal Basic Education Scheme in Sokoto in September, 1999, said "severe budgetary problems have constrained the full implementation of the UPE Scheme" on page 2 of his keynote address. If the Federal Government should face severe budgetary problems it is obvious that State Government would not be left out in facing such severe budgetary problems in financing secondary education.

In this type of situation, parents are expected to assist the government in financing the education of their children. When we look at the financial status of the majority of parents it cannot but expect very low contribution from them since majority are subsistence farmers. However, they give out their daughters for marriage very early on which they spend a lot of money. Such money spent on marriage could have better been used to educate the girls if they are interested in educating their daughters.

The well-to-do among them who could have invested in establishing schools for girls are also not forthcoming since they are uninterested.

Parental Bias

Generally, in this part of the country, most parents prefer to send their sons to school rather daughters. Majority of them believe that boys' intellectual capabilities are better than those of girls. They believe therefore that it is a waste sending girls to school. They prefer to spend the little money they have on their daughters' wedding expenses rather than on the girls' education.

Where families have both boys and girls, the parents prefer to educate the boys whom they conclude will continue with the family name while girls are relegated to the background. This is one of the biases against girls secondary education.

When ladies are always well-dressed, neat, interact with men as co-workers in govt. and non-governmental establishments because of their level of education most people here regard such ladies as being wayward. This is one of main reasons why most parents terminate their daughters' education at primary school level.

In consonance with the above, Kaita (1972) in her work asserted that "A girl may sit for the Common Entrance and get admitted to a secondary school but for parents will decide to prevent her from going for further study". From that point, she will be heading for her marital home. A survey was conducted recently by the writers among male NCE III students in Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto on whether they will allow their daughters to go beyond primary education or not. More than 80% of them disapproved their daughters receiving secondary education.

Conclusions And Recommendations

Conclusion

We have seen that non-compliance with the philosophy of Nigerian Education as contained in the National Policy of Education (1981 Revised), Religious/Cultural Disposition of the people, government policy, financial problems and parental bias are the major constraints militating against girls secondary education in Sokoto State.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations for the removal of all the constraints militating against girls secondary education in the state:-

1. There should be equality in the education of both sexes (male and female). There should be a change of attitude so that both boys and girls should be allowed to enroll in schools on equal basis.
2. The lopsided government admission policy which favours males should be changed so as to give equal chances to boys and girls, especially with the re-launching of the Universal Basic Education Scheme.
3. Since it has been found that fund is the bane of educational development, there is need for more fund to be allocated to education from the three-tiers of government so that educational projects could be adequately catered for. A lot of money is being realized by the government from V.A.T. (Value Added Tax) and the largest proportion of it, at least 75% should be used to develop the educational sector, especially girls secondary education.
4. The bias of parents against girls as regard intelligence does not hold, because some girls have been found to perform better than boys in academic attainment. Public enlightenment campaign is needed to let people know those boys and girls both need to be trained for the future equally.

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