

Full Length Research Paper

A study of girls' enrolment and completion in senior secondary school in Bauchi State, Nigeria

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Having acknowledged the effort of Nigeria Government, the international development partners and non-governmental organizations (NGOS) in getting every child of school age into school particularly the girl-child, the gross enrolment rate (GER) compared to the net attendance/completion rate (NAR) particularly the gender parity is still much to be desired. In view of the above the researchers decided to use some few sampled schools in Bauchi state to find out what the situation is like. Girls who were lucky to have reached senior secondary school level, and were expected to remain in school up to completion time, and if there were withdrawals/dropouts, what could have been the possible causes of these? And what can be done to ensure that these girls at least complete their senior secondary education? At this level, it is believed that they would have been matured enough as well as have acquired some life skills to enable them face the challenges of the today's society. Accordingly, A simple survey of school records (class registers) of students in two sets of two arms each in three (3) selected secondary schools was carried out and a Purposeful sampling of the three schools (two co-education and one single sex school) was used. Furthermore a focus group discussion was held with the vice-principal academy and the class teachers of the sampled classes in each of the schools. Samples of students were also interviewed on their opinions on the possible reasons for students dropped-out from school in each of the schools. Findings clearly show that in some core northern states, of which Bauchi is part, there is still problem with girl-child enrolment versus completion of secondary education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Child, secondary school, enrolment Education.

INTRODUCTION

Education is generally viewed as a positive force with a wide ranging impact on society and human development. This force is more unique for the girl-child who is seen as a child today but who later becomes a woman and also a mother. Educating the girl means educating the whole family. And what is true of families is also true of communities and ultimately the whole nation (UNICEF, 2004). According to Bellamy (2003), there can be no positive significant or sustainable transformation in societies and in fact in poverty reductions until girls receive the quality basic education

they need to take their rightful place as equal partners in development.

It is believed in Africa and of course in some parts of Nigeria that most parents give preferential treatment to boys especially in matters concerning education. It is really sad that up till now in some societies, girls are still made to live in their shadows, denied education and other rights, and socially exploited so much that their rights to attain womanhood before going into child bearing are being aborted and abused. In situations, where they are allowed to attend school, a good number of them are later withdrawn for one reason or another before completing school. This invariably affects their enrolment and completion. For example a 12-year-old girl living in Chanchaga, (a small settlement

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in northern Nigeria), who was the only girl among the four children of her parents, was enrolled in a public school, but was later withdrawn to work as a house-help to a wealthy couple. Investigation into her case revealed that her father decided to withdraw her from school because he didn't want to 'waste' his meager resources in educating a female child who will eventually be given out in marriage. The girl's sad story is, but just one of the typical examples of many girls whose education is truncated by one reason or another (Mamman, 2003).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for gender parity in primary and secondary education was supposed to have been realized in 2010. Accordingly, this study tries to look at trends of girls' enrolment and their final completion in some selected secondary schools in Bauchi town, Bauchi state from 2002 to 2006. That is, students who enrolled in SS1 in September 2007 were expected to have completed their secondary education in July 2010; another set in 2008 to 2011

A brief overview of women education in Nigeria

In Nigeria and in particular the core North, education, some decades ago has been focused mainly on men until recently when some core northern states saw the need to equally provide western education to women. This is evidenced from the fact that a good number of them are now found in all sorts of enterprising occupations such as law, teaching, business, accounts and few in medicine, politics and the armed forces (Undugwomen, 2004), this however is very negligible compared to the percentage of their male counterparts found in these occupations.

It is worth while noting however that the purpose for women education is to enable them contribute to life, adapt to society, develop and broaden their minds and horizons, have all-round development, fill the gaps for those who did not go to school or dropped out of school, prepare young adolescents and adults to be able to cope with domestic work and family life socially, economically, and politically (Uduigwomen, 2004). This is believed to develop their abilities to understand, participate in life and finally to be good and responsible citizens just like their males counter parts. Despite concerted efforts mounted by the governments at various levels to improve female participation in education and redress gender inequalities in education enrolment and retention, a lot is still needed to be done by government, parents and other bodies to see the girls complete their schools, this explains why the need for this study (the girl-child education).

Why the girl-child?

The girl-child is a female child born to the family, community, society or nation (Udeozor, 2003). The benefits of educating girls are long established. But there is a new understanding as to why educating girls in the most urgent task facing the global development community, Nigeria is not an exception, particularly that girls' education can be used to drive the international effort to achieve the general Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Education is every body's human right. It means that no girl, however poor her family and/or her country is, should be excluded from schooling. Educating girls is its best investment for societal development.

The short and long term benefits of education to girls and the society at large include:

1. Educated girls develop essential life skills, such as: self confidence, the ability to participate effectively in society and protect themselves from HIV/AIDS infection, sexual exploitation and pressure for early marriage and child birth.
2. Educated girls gain the skills and competencies for gainful employment, enabling them to be economically productive members of the society.
3. Educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school, thus promoting continued and lifelong learning.
4. Educated women marry later and have fewer children which they could manage and afford quality education and health.
5. Educated mothers nourish their children better, their children are therefore healthier and child mortality is reduced.
6. Educated women are less likely to die in child birth. (UNICEF, 2003).

These and many more are the benefits of educating the girl -child.

Imagine a ten year old girl hawking in the motor park, in two or three years time she would be married off, in another one year, she is probably going to be a mother. What kind of family would this girl who had been denied right to education raise? Going to school would have transformed her life, it would have offer her learning and expanded sense of her own potentials, increasing her self confidence, her social and negotiation skills, her earning power and her ability to protect herself against violence and ill health. In short, education would have opened the world to her. If the school gates remain shut and barred to young girls like her, the gap between her and the educated woman she could have become, will be widen with every passing day. Once she misses her chance to attend primary school she also loses out on secondary education and beyond. The price of denied

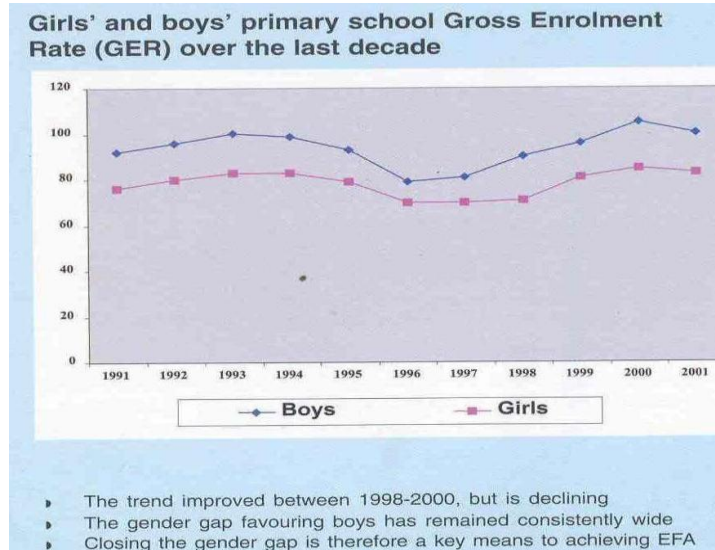


Figure 1. Adapted from UNICEF, (2003).

her education will not be paid only by the girl herself but also by her family, her society and her country.

The negative effect of not attending school are greater for girls than for boys, and impact transfer to the next generation of both boys and girls. Whether educated or not, girls are more at risk than boys to HIV/AIDS, sexual exploitation and child trafficking. Without the knowledge and life skills that school can provide, these risks are multiplied. So it is schooling that provides girls and their families multiple protection and absence of it, means multiple exposures to these risks and threats UNICEF, (2004).

Gender gap in gross enrolment rate in Nigeria

The international community's commitment to universal education was first set down in the 1948 universal declaration of human rights and later reiterated in 1989 convention on the right of the child. At the 1990 world summit for children, world leaders not only re-affirmed their commitments that girls and boys alike should have a quality basic education, they also pledged to place their emphasis on reducing the disparities that had existed between rate of school enrolment for decades. Although international community has committed itself to girls' education as a human rights issue and the benefits of investing in girl's education are clear, it is yet to become a priority for development investments. The reason for this is complex and bring into questions not just education policy but the historically dominant approaches to development that prioritize economic considerations and ignore human rights (UNICEF, 2004).

According to Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls' Education in Nigeria's (SAGEN2003)'s findings, girls' and boys' primary school gross enrolment rate (GER)

between 1991 to 2001 shows that the gender gap favoring boys remained consistently wide, therefore closing the gender gap is a key means to achieving universal primary education in Nigeria, (UNICEF, 2003). See figure 1. The same SAGEN came up with an alarming finding in 2001 when the GER in some states (Anambra, Osun, Kogi, Sokoto, Zamfara and Yobe) shows that in northern states, the gap averages over 30% in favor of boys while in the south Eastern states like Anambra the gap is about 10% in favor of girls. See figure 2.

The challenge is to achieve gender parity whilst ensuring that all children go to school.

The girl-child and the millennium development goals (MDGs)

Traditionally in Africa, the woman is regarded as a house keeper, child bearer, family health care taker, kitchen expert and the man's relaxation tool after a hard day's work. She is seen as being with low intellectual capability, physically weak and sometimes emotionally unstable. Her nature is associated with certain deficiencies and defectiveness (Udeozor, 2003).

This perception affects the level of attention given to the girl-child in terms of her training and preparation for her future life. Often time's emphases are laid on the development of her male counterpart who is seen as a stronger being, endowed with better natural capabilities and potentialities which when tapped have positive implication for accelerated socio-economic development. These erroneous views in some quarters still overt discrimination and determined resistance to the idea of giving girls an equal chance. Many remain uncomfortable with programme that have a specific gender focus and passively fail to implement them.

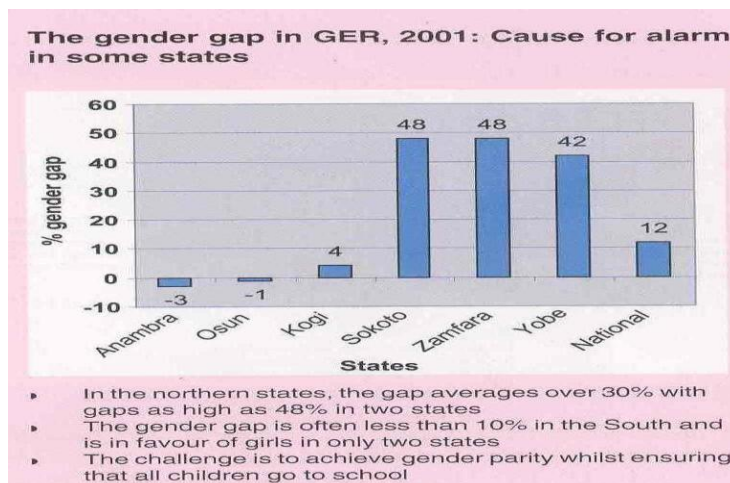


Figure 2. Adapted from UNICEF, (2003).

There is an alternative approach to development that will allow girls their rights to education, meet the commitments of the international community and maximize the multiplier effects of investing in girls' education. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have set a target on this multifaceted human center of development. As one of their principal foundations, the goals link progress on education, health, poverty relief and the environment with girl's right to equality in schooling. This new approach and the goals should hold promise for the lives of girls and the fate of nations (UNICEF 2004).

Research question

"Most of the millennium development goals face a deadline of 2015, but gender parity deadline was set to be achieved in 2005, acknowledging that equal access to education is the foundation for all other development goals. Yet recent statistics show that for every 100 boys out of school, there are still 117 girls in the same situation" (UNICEF, 2004).

Based on the above, the study tries to find out the situation in our secondary school education by finding answer to the following research question:

What is the current situation like in girl-child education in the sampled schools?

METHODOLOGY

A simple survey of school records (class registers) of students in two sets of two arms each in three selected secondary schools in Bauchi Town. Purposeful sampling of the three schools (two co-education and one single sex school) was used.

The survey was based on girls only which were the interest of the researchers to study their enrolment,

retention, dropped out and transferred in from SS1 to their final completion in SS3.

The sample was purposeful for the following reasons:

1. Government Day Secondary School shadawanka Barracks is based in the Barracks which is a unique set up due to the mobility of parents.
2. The second school, Government Girls' Secondary School, a single sex (girls) school and has boarding facilities as well as has provision for married women.
3. The third school, Government Day Comprehensive Secondary School Bauchi is situated within the indigenous (native) people of the state

In each of the schools, two sets of students, those that enrolled in 2007/2008 in SS1 completed their SS3 in 2010 (group A) and another set, enrolled in 2009/2010 completed SS3 in 2010 (group B), however the two arms were randomly selected.

Instruments

The study was concerned with the students' enrolment and final completion, hence, school records (secondary data) was compiled using self designed table where the researchers visited the selected schools and used the students' attendance registers from SS1 to completion in SS3.

A focus group discussion was held with the vice principal academy and some of the class teachers of the sampled classes in each school. Samples of students were also interviewed on their opinions on the possible reasons for students dropped-out from school in each of the schools.

Data analysis

Having collected all the necessary data based on school records which included the students' enrolment

Table 1. Students' Attendance Register 2006-2010.

SCHOOL 1	Enrolment	Drop-out	Transfer- in	Completion
Group A 2002-2005	118	-3	+11	126
Group B 2003-2006	168	-7	+7	168
Total	286	-10	+18	294

Adapted from GGSS Bauchi (July 2006)

Tables 2. Students' Attendance Register 2006-2010

SCHOOL 2	Enrolment	Drop- out	Transfer- in	Completion
Group A 2002-2005	129	-14	+13	128
Group B 2003-2006	83	-23	+6	66
Total	212	-37	+19	194

Adapted from GDSS Shadawanka Barracks Bauchi (July, 2006)

Tables 3. Students' Attendance Register 2006-2010

SCHOOL 3	Enrolment	Dropped- out	Transferred- in	completion
Group A 2002-2005	85	-10	+12	87
Group B 2003-2006	94	-25	+11	80
Total	179	-35	+23	167

Adapted from GCSS Bauchi (July 2011)

Table 4. Aggregates of the three sampled schools

	Enrolment	Dropped-out	Transferred-in	completion
SCHOOL 1	286	-10	+18	294
SCHOOL 2	212	-37	+19	194
SCHOOL 3	179	-35	+23	167
Total	677	-82	+60	655

in SS1 till their final completion in SS3, those that could not complete for one reason or the other (dropped-out), and also those that were transferred-in.

The two arms from each school were summed up to make up the enrolment in each school as well as the dropped-out and transferred-in. Tables 1-4 give the data description.

FINDINGS /RESULTS

Referring to the research question which is, what is the situation likened to in the Girl-child enrolment and completion in the sampled Schools? From, tables 1-4, it is clear from table 1 that there is more transfer-in than drop-out, this means more girls completed their senior secondary education. This may be attributed to the school having provision for married girls. While in table 2 and 3, there are more drops-out than transfer-in, this means that the number of girls that completed their senior secondary education was less than the enrolled number. The likely reason is that both schools do not

have provision for married girls.

From table 4, one can see that, on the aggregate, retention and/or completion in the sampled schools is less compared to the enrolment in senior secondary education for the period under study, this is in-line with discussion held with some of the teachers, students and the school management.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, it is clear that in some core northern states of Nigeria, of which Bauchi is part, there is still problem with girl-child enrolment versus completion of secondary education in Nigeria. This may be contributed to some of the following factors:

1. Early marriages,
2. Poverty,
3. Unfriendly school environment,
4. Social, cultural or religious beliefs.

Based on these, the following are hereby suggested or recommended, so as to improve on girl-child education

in the state and beyond.

1. The Free and universal basic education (UBE) introduced by government should be taken seriously by all and sundry, this means Non-governmental organizations having grassroots contact and which have been supporting and promoting the education of marginalized groups should be assisted morally or otherwise by other well-meaning individuals, parents and aid agencies.
2. Young Nigerian girls in rural areas should be made to disregard the wrong notion that their education ends in the kitchen. Gone are the days when an African woman is believed to remain only in the kitchen. The girl-child needs education that will empower her to face the challenges of the today, tomorrow and the future in general.
3. Government should enact and implement appropriate bill that forbids early marriage of school-age girls and also other forms of violence against girls
4. Already in Sokoto State, July 19, 2006 (NAN) Goronyo local government inaugurated a 20-member committee on the girl-child education, and according to its chairman, Alhaji Abdullahi Goronyo, the committee is to sensitize the people on the issue of girl child

education in the area. This is a recommended effort and we suggest that other core Northern states should do the same.

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