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MANAGINGGENDEREQUALITY IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS THROUGHINNOVATIVE EDUCATION FOR ATTAINMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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ABSTRACT

Right from time immemorial, gender bias has been and is still being a yardstick for assigning roles at home, the school and the community. This has over the years generated a lot of heated argument in all walks of life world over. It is certain that the potentials of the under rated gender is tarnishing which if given equality would have led to prosperous and sustainable development globally. In the light of the above pronouncement, this paper tries to explore the concept of gender equality, gender disparity at home, school and the community, the importance of gender equality, innovative education, the sustainable developmental goals, managing gender equality to achieve sustainable development goals and the challenges facing gender equality management. Gender equality no doubt accelerates poverty reduction and expunge all forms of child abuse hence stability and peace. Gender equality if effectively and efficiently managed stand to engender the realization of sustainable developmental goals because women's roles are enormous and hinged more on educating the young ones both informally and sometimes formally. It is therefore recommended that enlightenment campaign be aggressively carried out to educate the populace on the need for gender fairness and equity, when this is fulfilled, both male and female will be apt to contribute their own quota towards accomplishing not only national economic growth but also global sustainable development hence global citizenship.

Keywords: Managing, gender, equality, innovative education and sustainable development.

Introduction

Certainly, it is an eminent statement in all nations of the world that education is a panacea for national growth and development, it is for this reason that Sumaina&Awazi (2015) decreed that no nation can upswing directly above the quality of her teacher and educational system. In order to achieve appreciable level of growth and development, education has to be comprehensively displayed to all children irrespective of gender. It then follows that if sustainable development must be achieved, it has to be through education void of gender disparity. It is only this way that holistic education could be instilled to the students for holistic development for the benefit of all.

Education in Nigeria has three main levels which secondary education stands at the centre. It is the level that has its intakes from the first level (primary) and feeds the tertiary level. Each level of education plays significant roles in the life of the recipients as well as the society where he lives. The intermediary nature of secondary education makes it stand out as the crucial level that is best suited for the management of gender equality considering the age group under this cohort which is the adolescents.

The adolescence period is marked with heightened emotionality, over zealousness, moral and personality development subsequently, presents this educational level as being very sensitive and delicate as flaws made at this level in imparting quality, comprehensive, relevant, functional, knowledge, skills, morals and societal norms is bound to have irreversible consequences and therefore very detrimental to the individual

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and the society at large. WHO (2020) laid weight on the above exposition by describing adolescence period as the ripe time to cultivate understanding and abilities, strive to achieve life adjustment mechanisms, combat psychological problems like emotion control and maintain human relationships thus obtain traits and capabilities that will be imperative aimed at appreciating not only adolescence years but also adult live. It is against this background that secondary education level is ideal for management of gender equality through innovative education. Consequently, to make the education at this level free of gender disequilibrium, males and females teachers should be given roles/functions to play in the school without gender bias. This serves as a model to the students. Nevertheless, in most cases there is prominent gender bias been practiced in the school system. The males are often preferred when given tasking roles to play thereby placing the females as weaker or inferior.

Apparently, the genesis of gender discrimination has some biblical under tone. It is entrenched in the creation of man first, later woman was created from the single rib of the man. God gave the woman to the man as a helpmate since then women has been discriminated against in all aspect of life. This has been misconstrued especially in an African context and Nigeria to be specific. In some Nigerian tribes, for instance, the Igbos, specific parts of meat is exclusively meant for men like the spleen and gizzard. There are trees women are forbidden to climb like palm tree or kola nut tree. In fact, women are not expected to even pick the kola nut assuming it fell on its own or break the kola nut for eating in the presence of a male not even a male toddler. Women are solely meant to do house chores and possess some domestic skills for the upkeep of the home.

In support of the above exposition, Ihebereme & Abiahu (2015) reaffirmed that in the olden days, females' rights and privileges were trampled upon by tradition and lack of education. Similarly, Ezekiel-Hart &Adiele (2010) lucidly posited that gender disparity is evident in school enrolment despite the campaign on reduction of gender gap owing to female illiteracy. This is the reason Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) stipulated that one of the specific goals of education in Nigeria is to ensure and sustain unfettered access and equality of education for total development of individual. She further reiterated her belief as making education compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnicity etc. It is very necessary to ensure that gender should not be the criteria to assign duties to the students so as to achieve the educational objectives as enshrined in the Nigerian philosophy, for Nigeria to achieve the human resource development needed to expand the horizon in the areas of political, socio-cultural, technological and economic development. There is need to bellicosely invest in human resources or human capital which is to develop appropriate types of human skills, abilities, dexterity and acquired knowledge Agabi (2002) which could be exploited extensively from all children gender notwithstanding for adequate and sufficient high level human capital needed in the labour market.

Obviously, women are blessed naturally with the acquisition of innate endowment to nature and nurture hence influence proper upbringing of their offspring right from birth. This distinguished women's duty made it tremendously important that women must possess wisdom, skills, knowledge, morals and values which are expected to be attained and sharpened in the course of education. They cannot meritoriously carry out their duties as therapists, teachers, mothers, advisers and care givers if they are not educationally fortified. In essence, gender equality in education equips them with necessary professional and personal qualities needed for positive change in the society. Gender disparity has done more harm than good because the girls of today are women tomorrow. When they are educated they impart same to the younger generation more than their male colleague endorsing the maxim that when you educate a woman, you educate the whole nation (Igwe, 2006).

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Inversely, when these potentials are left unharnessed on the altar of gender discrimination, the development of the sufficient manpower needs of the nation is shortened which could adversely affect the national productivity. Equal access to education creates an avenue for the nation to explore every aspect of human resource development through innovative education required to boost the nation's economy through high productivity consequently a sustainable development. Gender disparity has some shortcomings as identified by the World Bank (2001) that gender discrimination in developing countries impedes economic progression, escalates poverty level, abates governance thus depresses the standard of living. The reserve is the case when all the human efforts are fully utilized on the platform of gender equality and/or equal access to education.

The Concept of Gender Equality

Gender describes socially designed attitudes of male and females in a given society while sex is biologically inclined. Gender is a learnt behaviour (roles) as the children grow into adult male and female, they are taught girls' roles as women to-be and boys' roles as men to-be. Gender equality can be alleged as the generality of gender in the social, economic and political order where there is consistency in the diverse process that bring about progressive change in the male and female roles. It is the eradication of long existing discrepancy on equal opportunity to male and females that has formed customary laws and traditional practices. To Ezebihe & Chuka (2011) gender is defined as socially constructed roles, relationships and learned behaviours of male and female.

In the light of the above expression, Chikwe & Ekechukwu (2009) proclaimed that gender is quite different from sex and explained that even though the two terms refer to being male or female. Sex refers to the biological aspect of being a male or female, gender infers to the psychological and socio-cultural dimension of being a male or female. The scholars identified two types of gender as gender roles and gender identity. Gender role deals with what each culture feels are appropriate for each sex. Gender role is strictly based on culture and as a result varies from culture to culture. Societal norms and values in form of traditions are transmitted from generation to generation in the process of socialization. Within this period, individuals acquire gender roles which are enforced through social control. However, gender identity deals with the inner feeling of being either a male or a female.

Gender Disparity at Home, School and the Community

Gender bias starts from the home as practiced by the parents. This is carried out when the child is growing up the girls are made to focus on the house chores like cleaning, sweeping, arranging the house, cooking and taking to after the mothers' roles while the boys are made to do harder jobs thereby adhering to the fathers' role. For the fact that the girl child is trained to take to be ready to manage a home of her own in future schooling opportunities are directed more to the boys who would one day inherit their fathers' property and as a result should be more equipped. This is further carried on in the school as assigning roles also is based on the gender. In a mixed school for instance, the senior prefect is solely the prerogative of the boys. Some challenging subjects are also pushed to the boys. While the boys cut grasses, the girls sweep the classes. In the communities the girls traditional are given what to do and what not to do. There is gender disparity in every aspect of life.

In affirmation of the aforementioned contention, Ezebuihe&Chuka (2011) observed that men and women play different roles at home and in society based on the gendered social and cultural norms which define the relationships between men and women. Gender norms, relations and behaviours vary from society to society and change over time. Gender based norms and practices favour boys and men over women and girls in granting access to resources, opportunities in public sphere. Accordingly, Ebong, (2006) posited

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that women in the third world were not given the opportunity to access education when compared with the male folk due to cultural affiliation and poor financial status. This incident is predominant in African as a continent which Nigeria belong. In his own submission, Igwe (2006) laid credence the above expression when the scholar espoused that marginalization of girls education in African context is dominant among parents, organizations and even governments thereby subjecting female gender as inferior and/or weaker sex.

Managing Secondary Education Through Innovative Education

In managing secondary education, there is need to have a serene environment to ensure proper and effectives educational delivery process to aid the accomplishment of the educational objectives. Given that necessary educational resources are made available in the school setting, there in need for efficient management so as to ensure optimal utilization for goal attainment. Educational resources are both human and non-human materials needed in the school system to function well. Human resources involves all the human elements in the school like the students, the teachers and other ancillary staff that work in harmony to produce an educated individual. The material resources on the other hand entail the facilities like, curriculum content, furniture, laboratories, libraries and other school equipment. Management in education involves planning, organizing, directing, staffing, coordinating and directing the human and material resources for the optima goal achievement (Amirinze, 2000).

Innovation is the method of effecting changes by gradually unfreezing the status quo, instituting the modifications and refreezing the new ideals. Innovative education is therefore the process of involving students actively in educational delivery process through researches, creative participatory class activities and projects which encourage team work thereby fostering creative ingenuity, thought provoking and problem solving tendencies in students. The concept of gender equality is a new trend which has to be instilled to the students through proactive creative reasoning that enables them to communicate effectively come out with something new or different from the previous ways. In consonance with the above proclamation, Northwest (2018) stressed that innovation in education is a tool that assists teachers and students explore and research to divulge new ways of approaching issues, this is expected to imbue with the students problem solving initiative for creativity.

The management of education should start from assigning roles the students irrespective of gender. It should also be seen in the allocation and maintenance of school plants so as to eradicate from the students the feeling of gender disparity which they have hitherto been fed with at home and communities. The assigning of leadership roles should also be carried out without gender bias. The distribution of the school facilities should also be carried out without prejudice. The male and female teachers should be accorded equal respect. In the like manner, the teachers should do same for the students. Let them know they have equal ability and can complement each other.

They should be encouraged to do team work and group assignment where they make use of their skills, knowledge and creativity to make contributions or discover new ideas that would inspire them to be more studies, explore and make more discoveries. The use of brain storming approach to teaching could also go a long way in ensuring that the boys and girls share ideas and come out with critical answers for difficult programmes/tasks. This approach exposes their innate ability and capabilities in such a way that they appreciate each other's power of reasoning and conclude for themselves that gender disparity is an archaic idea.

The Concept of Sustainable Development

According to Osaat (2011), sustainable development dwelt richly on conquering

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environmental problems using advanced means that leads to economic emancipation geared towards making the earth a better place to live in. It involves affordable clean drinkable water, good sanitation, poverty reduction, energy and all that makes life worth living. The scholar went on to enunciate the principles of sustainable development to include;

a) The inhabitants should be able to harmonise health, productive life and nature.
b) The level of development attainted currently should not underscore the developmental and environmental needs of the up-coming generation.
c) Every nation reserved the right to exhaust the natural resources within their enclave without causing harm to the environment.
d) Gender equality; this is because an educated woman educates her children among others.

Importance of Gender Equality

A number of factors are responsible for gender equality in the society among them is improper education, tradition and culture, universal notion, religion and a host of others. Be it as it may, gender equality has some far-reaching effect as listed underneath;

a) It promotes sustainable economic development hence a peaceful co-existence.
b) Gender equality results to valuing of all human being and increase in productivity.
c) Promotes the individual's earning power leading to progressive society.
d) It leads to high productivity through involvement in the work force.
e) Gender inequality leads to waste in labour force which tantamount to wastage of economic resources (Legit, 2018).
f) Women in their motherly care impacts the knowledge so gained in education to nurture the younger ones thereby educating the whole nation.
g) Girls' education fosters enhanced quality of life and promotes development by increasing economic production rates, improved hygiene and nutritional values, reduction in child and maternal mortality rate.

Factors Responsible for Gender Bias

A lot of factors were responsible for gender bias and disparity leading to incessant drop out of girl child in school, these include;

1. One of the factors that hinder equality is gender stereotyping. This involves assigning roles in certain fields of study to professions by the society or persons of one gender at the expense of the other gender, is perpetuated by the society through the home, school, peer group, and mass media (Ebong, 2006).
2. Patrilineal Character of the Nigerian Society; this is a situation whereby a male child is regarded as the heir to the thrown of his father or the supreme head of the family older female siblings are neglected despite their age and status. This explains why the male folk are highly considered in terms of education.
3. General level of poverty; this is another factor that results to inequality of access to education based on gender. There is apparently stagnant poverty over the years in that many families hardly have three square meals a day and as such cannot foot the private cost of education of their children and on this premise, the male gender are considered to the detriment of their female folk.
4. Traditional beliefs and values; It is traditionally believed that the girls education ends in the kitchen and for this reason, parents prefer to use them for house chores and other domestic skills instead of wasting time and money schooling.

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5. Early marriage; many parents resorted to giving out their girl child early in marriage so as enable her assist or rather give way for the younger ones to be trained (Igwe, 2006).

Strategies to Combat the Challenges

a) Teachers should take time to educate the female students on the best way to take care of themselves especially during puberty and still fit in their academic work.
b) Some of the recommended textbooks in use are gender bias and the teacher is expected to unfreeze such ideology from the students through carefully explaining to them that the era has gone.
c) The curriculum planners, policy analyst and other agencies that prescribe textbooks should as a matter of fact encourage authors who champion the worth, strength, wisdom, skills and versatility of women in the past instead of always showing their in capabilities at the expense of their male counterparts.
d) Teachers should always tell stories of women who have at one time or the other welded power like queen Amina of Sokoto, Prof. Ngozi Okonjo Iwuala, Dr. Oby Ezekwesiri, Prof, Dora Akunyiri and other women of substance in Nigerian polity.
e) The school counsellors should also encourage the girls to go into any profession of their choice without prejudice.

Conclusion

Gender equality entails given equal recognition to both male and female alike in all walks of life starting from allocation of roles in the society as well as equal education and job allocation. Societal allocation of difficult and energetic roles to males in the society has biblical undertone and has persisted over time. Suffice to say that both the individuals and the society have suffered low productivity, abject poverty and poor standard of living due the wasting of potential from the female gender which could have enhanced the nation's standard of living which in essence is the sustainable development. It therefore becomes very imperative to inculcate to the students through innovative education on the need to shun gender dis-equilibrium so as to ascertain greater productivity thus national growth and development for sustainability.

Suggestion

In view of the above pronouncements, the following suggestions were outlined as understated:

1. The government or her appropriate agency should accelerate action and organize workshops, seminar, conferences and symposiums should intermittently be organized for teachers on the adverse effect of gender bias and to motivate girls to participate in all activities which prior to this time a prerogative of boys like football, effecting minor repairs in the school etc.
2. The school authority should also deem it fit to diversify leadership positions evenly between genders like appointment of senior prefects or labour prefects in mix school.
3. The school players should be reprimanded on the use of derogatory or biased utterances concerning gender disparity in the school.
4. During educational delivery process, teachers should stagger their questions and contributions without concentrating on a particular gender.
5. There should be awareness campaign for parents and guardians in respect of gender sensitivity and gender parity. This is to enlighten them on the need for educating all their children regardless of gender hence be useful to themselves as well as make up the labour force for sustainable development.

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