

PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND THE GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The Girl-Child education is a concept that has been engaging scholars over the years. In this paper attempts has been made to examine the concept of education, as a process of acquiring of skills and knowledge that prepares one to develop physically, morally, socially, economically politically and technologically to enable one become a useful member of the society. The Girl-Child education, as the formal education centred on the Girl-Child to make her a powerful instrument for development, why the need for Girl-Child education, is to enable the Girl-Child contributes to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), to national issues, and resolution of conflict within the nation etc. The public library as a gateway to knowledge providing opportunities for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of individuals and social groups. The public library supports the Girl-Child education by providing information services needed to control their lives and influence their societies. The public libraries also serves as a forum for human development of skills knowledge and dissemination of information that has the capacities to accelerate the Girl-Child and women education. Finally, it was recommended that public libraries should stock historical heroes and models for the Girl-Child to emulate, government should provide fund to public libraries to enable the public libraries acquire relevant information resources to enhance the Girl-Child education etc.

KEYWORDS: Education, Girl-Child Education, Public Library

INTRODUCTION

Education is simply the acquisition of skills and knowledge that one needs for economic development and is also as process that prepares one to develop physically morally, socially, politically and technologically to enhance one fixation into the society. A nation that wants to develop its human resources cannot embark on any meaningful educational programme without a well equipped library with textbook, instructional materials and other education resources.

Libraries are one of the paramount educational services that is required, so government must provide fund to manage libraries Aina (2004) described a public library as generally managed, financed and supported by government, local communities and occasionally by non governmental organizations. Girl-Child education is the focus of this paper and how the public libraries can enhance the Girl-Child education. The Girl-Child often are faced with discriminations, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, less education, early marriage and often denial of her fundamental human right. As a result of all these woes that befall the Girl-Child in Nigeria. It is enusaged that if the Girl-Child is properly educated she will be able to empower herself and set herself free from cultural and parental bondage.

Concept of Education

Education according to the united states resolution is the inalienable right of every child irrespective of sex. In Nigeria's National Policy on Education, education is the right of every citizen as well as the instrument for development. Illiteracy is responsible for the inferior status of women in Nigeria. According to Farrant (1976) cited by Olatunji (1999)

regards education as the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the community and as a good citizen.

White (Nd) adds that true education means more than the perusal of a certain course of studies. It is the preparation for the life that one leads now and the joy of greater service in the world beyond.

According to Akale (2000) in the Nigerian context, education is conceived as the process of discovering what the national goals and aspirations are, acquiring expertise and technical know-how, as well as gaining the right attitude for attaining these goals.

Education can also be conceived as a process whereby an individual is able to develop the skills that will enable him earn a living, improve his life and make him to cope with life's problems, increase his level of awareness so that he is able to understand the scientific courses or otherwise of events. Education helps to prepare a person effectively take part in economic development, is also a process that enhances the development of man physically, mentally politically, morally, socially and technologically to assist him/her to function effectively in the society.

The Girl-Child Education

The field of education is very broad and diverse and as a result of this, this paper will concentrate on the formal education with particular reference on the Girl-Child. Asmal (2003). Described education as the powerful instrument of human development, a key to successful living. Offorma (2008) defines the Girl-Child as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen years of age.

According to Akale (2000). Women constitute about half of Nigeria's population hence their productive capabilities must be harnessed to the fullest for sustainable national development. In spite of all the programmes initiated for women and the expansion of educational facilities at all levels, women participation in education is still low.

According to Robert (2006) female education is a catch all term for a complex set of issues and debates surrounding education (primary education, secondary education, tertiary education and health education in particular) for girls and women. Working definition of the Girl-Child as given by UNICEF (1995) reads "any human being below eighteen (18) years".

To further buttress UNICEF (1997) gave another elaborate definition of children as "people below the age of eighteen whose best interest must be taken into consideration in all situation and that a child must be protected at all cost particularly from birth to above eighteen years, singled out that the Girl-Child must be given ample gain over others.

Why Girl-Child Education

Education is recognized as the main vehicle for promoting and improving the standard of living of women. Rowland (1997) wrote that education for girls will increase women's confidence and capacity to be independent as well as becoming aware of their situation. According to Obi (2000) an educated Girl-Child as a professional contributes the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), she also contribute meaningfully to national issues which leads to a healthier nation and also to resolution of conflicts within the nation and bring up her family in a healthier environment. This will also lead to savings both on the part of the family and the nation as less money will be spent on diseases. He stressed further that she is able to reads, write and then specialize in various fields of endeavours as well as being able to take care of the immediate family, thereby contributing to the building of a disciplined society. She is able to take care of herself financially and otherwise instead of being a liability to others.

UNESCO (1998) noted that it has been realized that sustainable human development cannot be effective if half of the human race (women folk) remain ignorant, marginalized and discriminated against while Tahir (1999) reported that women constitute about 50% of Nigerian's population, their level of participation in the educational programmes of the nation is not proportional to their numbers.

The education of the Girl-Child is the empowerment of the women of tomorrow. According to Abdulazeez (2004) in most Nigerian homes women or female are relegated to the background and their male counterparts are given preferential treatment while Bakari (2001) was of the opinion that educating the Girl-Child will raise the consciousness of "tomorrow's women about barriers and issues that are socially and culturally constructed. Women contributions to economic development cannot be quantified.

Okeke (1989) and King (1996) drew attention to some of the myths and negative stereotypes raised to discourage the education of females in Nigeria. They include.

- Educated women make bad wives and are not respectful to their husbands.
- Educated women are irreligious and do not encourage their children to be religious.
- Educated women do not dress up to reflect the culture.
- Educated women are unruly and bossy
- Educated women cause psychological instability in homes
- Educated women tend to be morally corrupt and promiscuous.

As a result of the above myths and negative stereotypes where parents and society at large believed in such myths and stereotypes, they find it difficult to provide girls and boys equal access to education.

To break these myths and stereotypes to provide equal access to education for girls, the public libraries have significant roles to play in order to achieve this objective. Therefore, this paper will examine the public libraries and how the public libraries can enhance girl-child education.

Concept of Public Library

The public library according to Oyegade, Masarawa and Makogwu (2008) is the people's university, the local gateway to knowledge, providing opportunities for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of individuals and social groups. Public libraries provide access to knowledge, information and works of imagination through a wide range of resources and services making it equally available to all members of the community irrespective of age, race, gender, nationality, religion, language, disability, economic employment status and educational attainment.

Ogbonna (2011) described public libraries in Nigeria as service oriented. Mostly established and funded by state government and local government authorities, they are usually classified as non-income generating establishments.

They are seen as institutions through which government provides free educational and social services to the people. Public libraries are the agencies structured by the government to provide information resources to promote education without gender bias.

According to Omotosho and Olatokunbo (2012), the public library is the teacher of teachers, the mentor of the down trodden and the veritable link between the government and the governed especially the rural community; it is also endowed with the features that can affect the needed transformation, as well as the capacity to accommodate any programme of government and the governed.

In the 21st century information is a powerful development tool that supports advancements. Access to information must be a priority of any development initiatives and the public library is the custodian of information and is universal in service delivery. Its fundamental responsibility is to acquire and preserve information resources and knowledge to be accessed by all generation of users. Mbashir, Ehoniyan, Audu and Adebisi (2010) remarked that public libraries are established for the purpose of serving the generality of the society through tax, support and they are without bias, to sex, age, race and religion. They further stressed that the materials acquired in the public libraries are to meet the general requirement of every profession and activity in the society.

How Public Libraries Can Enhance the Girl-Child Education

According to Bello (2004) library plays an important role in making education objectives achievable. Supported by Ibe (2011) that through different forms of information services, the un-informed are informed, the illiterates receive education, on topics of interest, the unskilled become skilled and member of the community becomes empowered irrespective of gender, location and social status.

The public library has many roles to play in the development of a nation. Ibe, Uzoegbunam and Aher (2013) stated that library serves as a centre for promotion of cultural heritage is a respected place where women can gather to support each other and have their questions answered. The library is a reliable and secure place for woman and girls, they can obtain information services needed to take control of their lives and influence their societies. Ologunleko (2001) sees the public library as libraries established and funded with tax-payers money for the free and unrestricted provision of books and related materials to member of the public for study purposes and for vocational, cultural and recreational use. The public library serve as the forum for human development of skills, knowledge and dissemination information, especially through its various information services and which have the capacities to accelerate the attainment of the millennium development goals in which gender and women empowerment is inclusive.

Alokun (1998) discovers in his study that public libraries have significant roles to play in the implementation of mass literacy, adult and non-formal education programmes. Ogbomah (1998) stated that the establishment of public library is premised on the need to assist people to cater for their information needs which cover a wide area of lifelong education political economic and cultural etc.

According to Aina (2004) the public library is the centre of activity in a community, he summoned up a follows the characteristics of a public library.

- Provision Of Free Service To All
- Support for the civic and cultural activities of a community
- Meeting the informational needs of all the individuals in the community.
- Provision of information sources for continuing education, vocational education and adult education, thereby facilitating informal education of all those interested in informal education.
- Provision of education sources that will enrich and further formal education.

- Encouragement of users to be involved in recreational activities.
- Provision of library and information services to all, whether in urban or rural areas.
- Provision of rental facilities to members of the public, such as halls for events like wedding receptions, lectures and symposia and also rooms for meetings etc.

CONCLUSIONS

From the paper it can be seen that the public library has a lot of roles to play in enhancing the girl-child education by making information materials available that will make them acquire skill and knowledge that will make them fit into the society and as an enablement to compete with their male counterpart. The public library also solve the problem of the girl –child by encouraging and introducing reading habits to her.

The role of the public library in assisting in realizing educational programmes cannot be over emphasized in the area of information bearing resources and information delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The public libraries should identify and stock resources like historical heroes and models that the girl-child can emulate and aspire to be like. The public libraries as a matter of urgency should have branches in all the local government areas of the state, so that at the grass root information can be utilized to enhance skill acquisition and knowledge by the girl-child. The government, local, state and federal should adequately fund public libraries so that they can acquire relevant information resources that supports the girl-child education which is one of the millennium development goals.

The public libraries should be provided with functional information communication technologies so that they can effectively and efficiently discharge their services to match the modern trend in the delivery of library services.

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