

The Role of Libraries and Information Centres in Promoting Girl-Child Education and Entrepreneurship Skills

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Abstract

The importance of girl-child education cannot be overemphasised in contemporary society. This is because girl-child education has become a matter of concern to the government, development partners, civil societies, family and the general public as key stakeholders. In Nigeria, girl-child education plays a prominent role in molding the attitude, skills, abilities and knowledge to become responsible and responsive. Hence, this study focuses on the role of library and information centres in contributing to the girl child education as a key to achieving functional education, training and entrepreneurship skills in closing the gaps of girl-child abuse, sexual molestation, illiteracy and idleness. The study is an opinion paper, and it discusses the concept of the girl child, girl child education, education and libraries, entrepreneurship skills and the roles played by the libraries and information centres in achieving the successful girl child entrepreneurship education. The study concludes that while education is generally perceived as key to success and bedrock of any meaningful development in any society. Girl-child education is seen as the right of everyone, including girl child to be enlightened and inform in the society to acquire knowledge and vocational training. The study recommends that library and information centres should be proactive to design programmes to educate, enlighten, aid, support, and empower access to girl child education through awareness, engagement, and information on entrepreneurship skills for innovative, personal development and self-reliance.

Keywords: Education, Entrepreneurship, Girl-child Education, Information Centres, Library

Introduction

Education is the process through which individuals are made functional members of their society (Ocho, 2005). It is a process through which the young acquires knowledge and realises her potentialities and uses them for self-actualisation to be useful to her and others. It is a means of preserving, transmitting and improving the culture of the society. In every society, education connotes acquisition of something good, something worthwhile. Education is one of the fundamental rights of individuals. As stated in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1949 stipulated that: (1) Everyone has the right to education. This shall be free at least in the

elementary and primary stages. (2) Elementary education shall be compulsory, while technical and professional education shall be made generally available. (3) Higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit. (4) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children (Nwangwu, 1976).

Education has been described as the most crucial aspect of human life and survival. It is key to achieving successful living and development, especially girl-child education. Denying the girl-child access to education implies neglect as a member of society. This is because education is viewed as a vital tool for empowerment that allows meaningful contributions to society and nation development (Michael, 2011). However, studies reveal that there is disparity among developing countries. This is because access to health care and education simply means the right to education is still some viewed it as a privilege than a right. Ideally, a girl-child is to be educated on opportunity bases, many governments indeed make provision for the education of their citizens, but the provisions most of the time do not take cognisance of the peculiarities of the girl-child. In that case, the girl-child may not have access or attain to education, which is a fundamental human right. It is, however, a study has shown that millions of girls do not have access to school despite the concerted efforts to push the cause forward. Okeke, Nzewi and Njoku (2008) identified child labour, poverty and lack of sponsorship, the quest for wealth, bereavement, truancy, broken home, engagement of children as house helps, as factors or the clog in the wheel of children's access to education in the most African countries as encapsulated in UNICEF report 2019.

According to the World Bank (2013) reported that more than 350 million people, over half of Africa's population, lives below the poverty line of one dollar a day. This implies that poverty, too, excludes children, including the girl-child, from attaining the school. In West Africa, the girl child is recruited from poor rural families to work as domestic servants in coastal cities or even neighbouring countries.

According to Guttmann, (2013) a UNESCO courier journalist state that, customs, poverty, fear and violence are the reasons why girls still account for 60% of the estimated 113 million out-of-school children, and the majority live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In Uganda, Birungi (2008) stated that the rampant fire disaster in schools as examples of the gaps in the implementation of girl-child education. He noted that the previous year's floods in eastern Uganda left many schools closed. Children's in Bundibugyo district cannot access schools during the raining season, and the government has done nothing to alleviate the problem. In Kenya, girl-child education is elusive. Mwangi, (2009) wrote that a combination of poverty, disease and backward cultural practices continued to deny the girl-child her right to education. Despite the introduction of free primary education in the country which accounted for an increase in enrolment, especially girls, still find themselves out of school owing to several reasons, these reasons are demands for their labour homes assistant taking care of their young siblings, child marriage, house chores, death of a mother, and looking after the sick member of the family.

Despite the apparent state of underdevelopment and infrastructure challenges in Nigeria, tremendous opportunities exist for posterity for those who know how to turn problems into

opportunities. Nigeria has a fast-growing and youthful population in the face rising unemployment, and the focus should, therefore shift towards entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is the acquisition of skills and ideas for the sake of creating employment for one's self and others; this skill includes the development based creativity, personal empowerment and development which is a necessary pursuit for every individual and youths' advancement (Okonkwo, 2017). This skill can be acquired mostly through entrepreneurship education; entrepreneurship education is a programme that prepares individuals to undertake the formulation and operation of small scale business enterprise. It is a programme of instruction that enables the beneficiary to be adequately equipped to establish and operate a profit-oriented business venture in technology and vocational education skills. It seeks to prepare people, especially youth and girl child, to responsible for enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers (Okonkwo 2017 cited Oduma).

Nations that have access to information have the most economical, political power and prestige. Information in the library is a public good which everybody must have access to regardless of age, race, colour, socio-economic status or political affiliation. Libraries exist to enhance the acquisition of knowledge by their users through accessed of reading materials both print, non-print and electronic information for teaching, learning and research. Traditionally libraries acquire books and serials, but nowadays they are giving ways to electronic information such as e-books, e-journals, e-theses, and e-reports, and the like. Now libraries are key and heart of the education enterprise. The world cannot make lasting progress if girls child in the 21st century is denied their rights to education. Historically in Nigeria, cultural factors constituted a series of a problem for the development of girl child those cultures have continued to affect their development and prominence of (girl child who are mothers of tomorrow) in their roles in Politics, Health, Education, and Economic. Traditions and cultures regard girl child (women) as attachments or subordinates to men even where women have excelled in education, ability or performance.

Concept of Girl-Child

The physiological patterns of a girl child have become concerns to every individual in our societies now a day. It is for this reason that authors and scholars have given more priorities to girl-child as a prominent perspective in social, political and economic discourse. For example, Offorma (2009) referred to a girl child "is a female biological offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. This is the age before one becomes young adult, the period covers the crèche, nursery or early childhood (0-5years), primary (6-12years) and the secondary school (12-18years). During this period, the young child is totally under the care of an adult who may be her parents or guardians and the older siblings. The stages of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stages of development, during this period, the girl child is malleable, builds and develops her personality and character.

Therefore, Offorma (2009) described girl-child "is a female biological offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. This is the age before one becomes young adult, the period covers the crèche, nursery or early childhood (0-5years), primary (6-12years) and the secondary

school (12-18years). The girl child is an integral part of every economy, and they need information on new developments in areas of health, agriculture, social life, political power, science and technologies for self-advancement and better living (Oyinkepreye, Ebiere, and Endouware, 2015). Recently, girl child education has been the significant issue of concern in most of the developing countries, especially in sub-Sahara Africa, where a large number of girls' child is not able to attend formal school (Mvendaga, Amaka and Apine, 2014). However, in contrast globally developed countries like the United States of America, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, China and Sweden and the like continue to place great emphasis on the girl child education is an important phenomenon to foster sustainable nation-building.

Educating a girl child with entrepreneurship education can empower by promoting her social living politically and economically advancement more they can be aware of access to healthcare education in order to address issues related to maternal mortality, children's malnutrition and others sexual transmission diseases (S.T.D.) among other health concern and improve access to quality education.

Girl-Child Education

Over the years, girl-child education has contributed to the social, economic and political transformation of modern societies. Girl child education serves as tools for an integrative force in imparting values and inspiring individual to foster excellence, social cohesion and national development. Girl child education does not only bring the immediate benefit of empowering girls but is seen as the best investment in the country.

Education is seen as the bedrock of any meaningful societal development and one of the fundamental rights of individuals. It is seen as the process through which individuals are made functional members of their society. Also, it is a process through which the young acquires knowledge and realises potentials and uses them for self-actualisation, to be useful to him/her and others. Moreover is a means of preserving, transmitting and improving the culture of the society (Ocho, 2005). Education helps girls to develop essential life skills, including self-confidence, the ability to participate effectively in society and protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and other sexual exploitations. Girl's education also helps in cutting children's and maternal mortality rates, contributing to national wealth and controlling disease and health status. Children of educated women are more likely to go to school. Consequently, this has exponential positive effects on education and poverty eradication for generations to come. One fundamental aim of every family is to raise healthy and productive individuals who will contribute meaningfully to society (Goodluck and Odaro, 2011).

Education and Library

Education and library are two inseparable, indivisible concepts, both being fundamentally and synchronically related to and co-existent with each other. One cannot be separated from the other. None of them is an end in itself; instead, both of them work together as a means to an ultimate end. One dies as soon as the other perishes. One survives as long as the other exists. This inter-relation, co-existence, the dependence of one upon the other, have been since the birth

of human civilisation. Thus, the library can be seen as an extension of education (Oyekanmi, 2012). Educating a girl child is educating the world; this means that educating girl child indeed, to every educable human being. No nation can afford to toy with the education of her citizens, especially the girl child who will be the mother of tomorrow. Educating a girl child who is the mother of tomorrow children aim at improving the family and the society members to raise healthy and productive individuals who are physically, psychologically, socially, and mentally well developed (Offorma, 2009). However, education is a vital tool for empowerment that allows meaningful development to society. Now through education girl child develops essential entrepreneurship skills that would bring immediate benefits for healthy and self-reliant after school or graduation.

Entrepreneurship Skills

The idea of infusing entrepreneurship into education has spurred much enthusiasm in the last few decades. A myriad of effects has been stated to results in decreasing unemployment rate and realisation of this, such as economic growth, job creation and increased societal resilience. Entrepreneurship is a vital facet of any nation's economy, and it is a crucial driver for employment and economic development. Nevertheless, entrepreneurship in education differs significantly. Some mean that students, especially the girl child, should be encouraged to start up their own small scale business or company. Entrepreneurship viewed as stating a business. Others mean that it is not all about starting new business or organisations; however, entrepreneurship is relevant to education has so far primary been viewed from economic points of view (Gautam and Sunil, 2015).

Now a day's entrepreneurship embedded itself in the field of education, education plays an essential role in shaping attitudes, skills, and culture from the primary level up. Entrepreneurship in education provides a mix of creativity, experiential learning, skills building and most importantly, a shift in mindset. Indeed, entrepreneurship skills foster girl child independent thinking, encourages them to identify opportunities, discover their abilities and goals. Thus, the aim in primary and secondary schools education is students develop competencies and skills such as creativity, initiative, inventiveness, responsibility and resilience, these personal qualities and skills are a necessity of today in order to satisfy the demands of the 21st century (Edward, 2019). Through, practical levels innovation and entrepreneurship in education, the school becomes a place for experimenting, a place to develop and participate in project-based learning environments, a place where entrepreneurship is part of the organisational and educational culture.

Entrepreneurship in this context can be seen as any pursuit opportunity regardless of resources currently controlled. Entrepreneurship skills are a creative and innovative response to the environment that can take place in any area of human endeavour that possesses high potential for creating new jobs, wealth, increasing output and improving the general standard of living. However, entrepreneurship skills require an opportunity has to be identified; have to add labour before harvesting the fruits of one your labour. In this regards, entrepreneurship education is fostering entrepreneurial attitude, skills, managerial attributes and influencing individuals

attitudes, behaviour, values, or intentions towards enhancing the living standard of the common man in the society (Gautam and Sunil, 2015).

However, library and information entrepreneurship education are intended to make individuals especially the girl child to be self-employed, self-reliant, and even employer of labour. These entrepreneurship skills can lead individuals, especially the girl child into becoming book vendors, internet consultants, information brokers and indexers (Ekoja, 2012).

The Role of Libraries and Information Centres in Girl child Education and Entrepreneurship

Libraries are agents of social change; they are vehicles which help to bridge the awareness gap among members of the society. Libraries are established to provide and create access to information to all members of its community and beyond irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity and religious affiliation. Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in socio-economic development and in meeting life's challenges. Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide girl-child with knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. It focuses on the realisation of opportunities, promotion of innovation, or the creation of services designed to support increased productivity or improved social wellbeing. Entrepreneurship education is training and learning directed towards developing in young people especially girl child those skills, competencies, understandings, and attributes which equip them to be innovative; and to identify, create, initiate, and successfully manage personal and community business, and work opportunities, including working for themselves (Aliu, 2015).

Libraries and information centres must invest and promote entrepreneurship as a means to create employment opportunities, wealth, reduce poverty, and promote adequate food for the communities. Hence, libraries and information centres have a necessary step towards inculcating the right attitudes, values, and understanding competencies, skills, leadership, scholarship, leadership, cooperation and citizenship needed for entry into the job market or enterprise. The following roles can be observed as provided:-

- i. Libraries should provide necessary library services to girl child for them to feel safe, reliable and the public libraries are affordable places that are staffed with the Librarians who can train them to use computers and navigate and surfing the internet.
- ii. Libraries and information centres organise and display children's and girl's child library book week and conference especially during school vacation for skills acquisition.
- iii. Printing and distribution of pamphlets and illustrative flyers on the importance to sensitise the public on the need for girl-child education. The pamphlets and flyers could also be produced in local dialects and interpreted for the sake of the illiterates.
- iv. Stock library with reading resources relevant to information for leisure, recreation and fun such as novels, storybooks, books with village themes, local languages materials all meant for girls' child development.

- v. Libraries and information centres could organise public rallies in various communities, speaking to the indigenes in their local dialects on the need to send their girl child to school. This may also involve inviting influential personalities and role models to address both parents and children in the community on the importance of education.
- vi. Libraries and information centres provide personal mentoring and self-expression services of the girl child, through, awareness campaigns to schools, addressing girls 'child on the need to shun early marriage and teenage pregnancy in order to remain and attain their school.
- vii. Libraries and information centres organise sensitisation, an awareness campaign for educating the mass people of the immediate community on the importance of taking girl child to school, rather than frustrating them with early marriage or engaging them in street hawking of selling packed water and food items and however sensitising teachers through workshops and seminars on gender issues and steps to be taken by the teachers in girl's child participation in classroom and co-curricular activities in a bid to ensure equity in educational attainment.
- viii. Libraries and information centres create special collections comprising of books, journals, newspapers, databases, brochures, flyers, posters, radio/television interview and documentaries as well as other audio-visual materials, for exhibition and display, seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings in the conference halls or conference rooms of libraries to address girl child issues.
- ix. Libraries and organise educative and entertaining film shows and documentaries on issues related to ills of illiteracy and lack of education, as well as the benefits of having a good education and inviting female celebrities who may serve as role models to talk to the girl child.
- x. Libraries should consider the mobile library programme for sustaining the activities of community library services for the girl child this will go a long way with the current information era (Amekuede and Adamu, 2013, Oyekanmi, 2012 and Goodluck, &Odaro, 2011).

Conclusion

In conclusion, while education is seen as key to any success and bedrock of any meaningful development in any society, girl child education is viewed as a pivot in which nation depends to progress socially, economically, morally and politically. This is because girl-child education is the excellent builder of children's future, especially when they are educated through attaining vocational and technical skills. They also hold the future as potentials mothers of tomorrow leaders. Thus, educating the girl child is educating the nation. Library and information centres play an active role in designing a program and project support and empower access of girl child to acquire information for training in technical and entrepreneurship skills.

The Way Forward

Based on the situation of education and entrepreneurship skills of girl-child, the study provides the following as a way forward to improve the education and entrepreneurship skills of girl-child:

1. That government should design and implement relevant entrepreneurship education for the girl child. By doing so, they can improve and serve as pillars of their future families.
2. There is a need for the library and information centres to strengthen collaborative programs for educating and enlightening the girl child to acquire the necessary information on capacity building and practical approach towards *entrepreneurship* skills and innovative for self-reliant and to secure better future for herself job and wealth creation.
3. Libraries and information centres should also collaborate with government, non-governmental organisations, religious leaders, and traditional rulers to launch a campaign for awareness, enlightenment and information on the importance of girl child education to bridge the gaps in various cultural and religious misconceptions that have militated against girl child education in Nigeria.

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