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## GIRL CHILD AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*The 'girl child' seem to be living her nightmare of life, as she struggles to exist in a society characterized by violence, somewhat negative cultural practices and poor family background. Like any other person the girl child needs education to survive, prosper and live her dreams. But those factors could not let her be. Inclusive education as an ongoing process aimed at quality education for all regardless of the diversities of the students, their needs or abilities, characteristics or learning expectations of their various communities thereby eliminating all form of consideration and discriminations. The girl child is a vulnerable and endangered specie of the human race, generally believed to be weak and all-life-dependent. She is thus neglected, and had her life endangered by other activities of men. This position paper appraises the efficacy of the inclusive education program towards uplifting the girl-child in general and her education in particular, adopting the facilitation theory of Carl Rogers. The literature reviewed related concepts as self-concept and academic emotions as well as factors that made inclusive education inevitable for the girl child and at the end, this paper came up with among other suggestions that parent as well as the community should change their view and belief on the girl child.*

**Keywords:** *Girl Child, Inclusive, Education, Inclusive, Communities.*

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## CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

### Girl Child

Girl child according to you dictionary online is the female child under the age 18, a person's child or girl friend or a group of women friends. Thus, the girls' child is the opposite of the boy child, she is the future wife and mother; she is today's daughter, sister or girlfriend. She is of the (female) feminine sex.

### **Rights of the Girl Child**

The girl child as every child has her right explicitly set out in the Convention on the Rights of the child, the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history (Pdhie 2018). Every human child should be guaranteed of his or her civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. According to Pdhie 2018, Girl children are particularly vulnerable to certain human right violations and thus require additional protections. The girl child rights are also contained in other documents of human rights like the Universal Declaration, the Covenants, CEDAW as well as other recognized international human treaties and declarations.

The rights among others include:

- a. The right to freedom from discrimination based on gender age, race, colour, language, religion, ethnicity or anyu other status.
- b. The right to a standard of living adequate for her intellectual physical, moral and spiritual wellbeing and development.
- c. Her rights to healthy and safe environment.
- d. Her rights to freedom from cultural practices, customs and traditions harmful to the child.
- e. Her rights to free and compulsory primary education, equal access to readily available form of secondary and higher education as well as freedom against all forms of discrimination at all levels of education.
- f. The human rights to information about her health, sexuality and reproduction.
- g. The human right to protection from all physical or mental abuse.
- h. Her rights to protection from economic and sexual exploitation, prostitution and trafficking.

- i. Her rights to express an opinion about plan or decisions affecting her life (Pdhre, 2018).

## **Education**

Education is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, norms, beliefs and habits, passed from one generation to another with the aim of making the citizens productive members of their various societies. Educational methods include storytelling, discussions, teaching, training as well as direct researches and it often takes place under the guidance of educators (teachers) even though learners (students) may as well educate themselves (Wikipedia, 2018).

Education can either be formal or informal and all such experiences that have direct effects as the way one think, feel or behave are considered as educational. The formal; education which is one of the focal of this research work is acquired in a formal setting called the school and divided under such stages as pre-school (early childhood), primary, secondary, the tertiary level or apprenticeship.

## **Rights to Education**

Every child's right to education has been recognized by governments and the United Nations, it is thus compulsory to certain level (ICESCR Article 13.1, 1966). The girl child rights to education include rights to free and compulsory primary education, equal access to readily available form of secondary and higher education as well as freedom against all forms of discrimination at all levels of education.

According to UNESCO estimates, 132 million girls' are out of school globally. This figure include 34.3 million of primary school age, 30 million of junior-secondary school and another 64.7 million of senior secondary school ages. The projection goes further to state that in countries affected by conflict like Nigeria (where the government is yet to tackle the activities of the Boko Haram as well as kidnappers), girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school than in non-affected countries (World Bank, 2020)

### **Girl Child Education in Nigeria**

Education bestowed on women a disposition for a lifelong acquisition of knowledge, values, attribute competence and skills (Aliu 2001), for the girl child to be educated she has to be in the school alongside the male counterparts. And in order to ensure an unhindered equal access to education by all regardless of any filter, the National Policy on Education states that “access to education is a right for all Nigerian children regardless of gender, religion or disability. This is in conformity with the international covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Article 13 of the United Nations.

Girl child education goes beyond getting the girls into school. It is about ensuring that the girl learn and feel safe while in school; that the girl child get the opportunity to compete with the boys and complete all levels of education; that the she should learn the socio-emotional and life skills necessary to navigate and adapt to a changing world; that she should be able to make decisions about her life as well as contribute her own quota towards the development of her community.

### **Inclusive Education**

This refers to the model where in special needs students spend most of all of their time with non-special (general education) needs students. It arises in the context of special education with an individualized educational design or program (Wikipedia 2018).

Inclusive education is when all students regardless of any challenges they may be having are placed in age appropriate general education classes available in their neighborhood schools to receive high quality instruction, interventions as well as support which enhances their success in the core curriculum (Bui, Quirk, Almazan & Valenti 2010, Alquraini and Gut 2012). The schools and classrooms operate on the assumption that students with disabilities are equally competent as other normal students (without disability), they learn in the least restrictive environment (LRE) which means, that the special need students will be with their normal peers to the maximum degree possible, with general education being the top priority

for all students (Alquraini & Gut 2010). Successful inclusive education according to McManis 2017 primarily through accepting, understanding and attending to student differences and their diversities which may include the physical cognitive, academic, social and emotional being. Fully inclusive schools which are few in most cases do not separate general education and special education need programs, instead the school is restructured so that student learn together (Scheyer et al, 1996).

### **Theoretical frame work**

This research work adopted the facilitation theory of Carl Roger (1902-1987) which was built on the basic premise that learning will occur with the teacher acting as a facilitator, thereby establishing an atmosphere in which learners feel free and comfortable to consider new ideas and are not threatened by external factors. They also believed that human being have a natural eagerness to learn and that there is resistance to unpleasant situation or consequences all of which are key in the inclusive education program. Wherein it was believed to be an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all white respecting diversities and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the student and communities by eliminating all forms of discrimination (UNESCO – IBE 2008:3) and that teachers do have relevant knowledge and understanding as well as much of the skills required to work with all learners.

### **FACTORS AFFECTING GIRL CHILD EDUCATION**

The educational needs of pupils or students suffering from any physical disabilities, medical conditions, and intellectual difficult or emotional problems, students with such require inclusive education programs. The girl children have had to contend with emotional instabilities and crises resulting from certain practices and beliefs. These factors have helped to push the girl child to the background limiting her exploits and achievements in education and life in general. Because when a child has limits as to what it can in achieve in school, such limits may also extend to her achievement outside the school. The factors include:

**a. Cultural Bias**

The most frequently mentioned barrier to education to the girl child is the cultural bias against women leading to preferential treatment, allocation of more resources and opportunities to the male child at the detriment of the girl child. Education is deemed less important for girls who are expected to become wives and mothers in future with investments in their training seen as fruitless and waste of resources. Rather boys who are seen and considered as destined breadwinners are given priorities in schooling (Rousso).

**b. Poverty**

This is one of the most important factors which determines 'girls' fate as to whether she get access to or even complete her education. Girls from a low income family background; those living in remote places; those with any form of disability or belong to minority ethnic group are farthest left behind in terms of access to and completion of their education. Their families would prefer sending the girl child to hawk and help raise the family income as well as provide means of retaining the boys in school.

**c. Violence and Safety**

Another factor which hampers the girl child exploits in education is violence which has proven to be a key barrier. The abduction of the Chibok school girls in April 2014 and the 2018 abduction of Dapchi girls gave a clear clue and insight on the vulnerability of the girl child to violence and safety, thus presenting them as endangered species. Families live in constant fears of what will befall their subjects while in school. The activities of kidnappers in the northwest region of the country is also another big challenge. This has greatly affected the morale of the girl child and even the parent who were hitherto willing to allow their girls go into schooling. Cases of assaults and abuses by teachers, fellow students and even the community are enough to cause emotional trauma, instability and affect performances.

**d. Academic Emotions**

Academic emotions are those feelings that are directly related to learning, classroom situations, as well academic performance (Goetz, Pekrun, Hall and Hang as cited in Okwara-Kalu, 2015:299). So also, Okwara-Kalu cited Yu-Guoling (2007) to have defined academic emotions as students' achievement emotions experienced in schools and university setting and that the domain of the academic emotions does not only cover the students' achievement emotions relating to successes and failures of such students but also such emotions relating to instruction or the process of studying. Pekrun (2000) in (Ibid: 299) posited that such emotions that occur within the confines of the school are so capable of enhancing and promote or alter and scuttle the teaching and learning process. To him, academic emotions have two (2) antecedents namely control and values, the appraisal of which triggers emotional experiences by an individual. The control antecedent refers to an individual's way of appraising circumstances and situations while the values antecedent is the interest, goal as well as such individuals' attitude in relation to a situation. The girl child needs the support of all and sundry to overcome such academic emotions as well as to succeed in her educational carrier.

**e. Self-Concept**

People often ask themselves questions about their person (themselves) with a view to discovering their true sense of identity. These question are the complicated psychological concepts of self-image (Salawu and Isah: 63) as cited in Dahiru (2017:5). To them (Ibid:63) man is not born human but he instead develops humanity within the framework of social interaction with others and that the basic and very significant aspect of humanity is self-awareness and the ability to contemplate our images of selves as if looking at another person.

The girl child needs the environmental support to discover her true potentials and concept of self. Living in a discriminating environment that

put her at the back will greatly affect her thinking and belief in her ability so negatively and this could have adverse effect on the society itself.

### Why inclusive education for the girl child?

- i- **Equitable Educational Opportunities:** The provision of the inclusive education program will provide the girl child the opportunity to enroll and study alongside the male counterparts, thereby exercising her right to unhindered education, because of her sex status. She should be given equal access to sound education and the chance to excel in her chosen career. Being born a female is not a spell, as she could do if not better than what the male child does. Many women (hitherto girl-child) have excelled in their careers both locally and internationally, this was made possible only by the quality of education they received. Thus, today's girl child could be tomorrow's messiah if properly educated.
- ii- **To Reduce Over Dependence on Male-Child:** When the girl child is educated, and is able to secure a job, it will improve her economic fortunes as such she could cater and take care of herself and even the household with the earnings, thereby supporting her husband in providing for the family.
- iii- **Enhance Positive Emotions Towards Education:** As it is presently most girls are prone to have negative dispositions toward education. The feeling of male-prioritization, discrimination and societal attitudes towards their education could trigger in them anxiety, fear and identity crises which could all affect their performances in particular and lives in general. Inclusive education will help in enhancing the girl-child self-confidence and esteem when she sees herself learning and competing with her male counterparts in a free manner characterized by mutual respect, friendliness and this will further bring out the best in her.
- iv- **To Bridge the Gap in Education:** Inclusive education could serve as a catalyst for bridging the widening gap between the girl-child



and the male child in enrolment, retention as well as graduation from schools at all levels. This will translate into more girl child doctors and nurses, teachers and care givers, professionals in other fields etc.

- v- **Education for the Future:** The future of all nations is dependent on the quality of education its girl child receives (Nussbaum, 2003). She is the first teacher to every child, his care giver as a sister and mother, a wife to the father and the custodian of moral values. Who else deserve such consideration in education more than the girl-child? All of us live to tap from what the girl child has learnt as such her education is for our future. [She](#) will employ her knowledge and skills to better her family, community and humanity.

### Conclusion

The girl child like any other child deserves an unhindered access to quality education for the important role she performs in our homes and the society as a daughter, wife and mother. She deserves no less than the best. For in her lies the future. Imagine a world without the girl child as such the globe will be better off with her educated.

### Suggestion:

Inclusive education will be so vital, key and important to better the life of the girl child, it is in that light, that, the researcher wishes to suggest as follows:

- 1- That parents, family members as well as the society, change their negative views and perceptions about the girl child and instead understand that she could as well be what the male child can be and could achieve even more if given equal chance and access to education.
- 2- The government should formulate laws banning all forms of discriminations against the girl child especially as it relates to her education.

- 3- The government provides free and accessible education to the girl child at all levels to encourage parents to send their girl wards to school.
- 4- The male child should see the girl child as a partner in progress and not a rival. Her education is key to his progress and development as her illiteracy could have adverse effects.

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