

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS IN THE EDUCATION OF THE GIRL-CHILD

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Abstract

The study investigates the challenges encountered by teachers and the society in the area of girl-child education. It discusses key features and methods deployed by skilled educators to support the education of girls and the important roles they play in the advancement of societal gender equality and empowerment of women. It underscores the necessity of engaging culturally right teaching methods such as involvement with local communities, and addressing economic and social hurdles to improve the educational experiences of female students. Furthermore, the study examined the critical nature of compassion and perceptiveness in educational roles and how these attributes foster a nurturing and fair learning climate. Relying on secondary sources of data as existing literature, novels and reputable journal publications from recognized data bases, the study recommended various tactics to aid in the development of such characteristics in teachers through continuous professional development, introspective exercises, and active community participation among others. The study concludes by emphasizing the place of the girl-child in nation building, and the importance of effective teachers to girl-child education and development.

Keywords: Effective Teacher, Girl-Child, Girl-Child Education, Women Empowerment

Introduction

Studies in feminism as a concept, and as a theory has afforded researchers the scholarship to perceive girl-child education, and educational challenges in Africa as emanating mostly from patriarchal conspiracies hinged on traditions and customs since the colonial period. The exclusion of girl children from western education during the colonial era necessitated the writing of their stories by men. While writers like Ousmane Sembene wrote about the capacity of the empowered woman, others like Achebe saw women more from their patriarchal narrative of subjugation.

Mutunda (2009) traced women's underdevelopment and absence from post-colonial politics to the educational deprivation of the girl-child during the colonial era. Ogwude (2013) narrowed this down to Achebe's portrayal of the African woman in his novel *Things Fall Apart* of 1958. Condé (1979) in Mutunda (2009) affirmed also that the reservation of the European schools for boys only went on to create a great gulf between literate men and illiterate women, thereby dividing the sexes.

Yekini (2022) synthesized all of these thus:

Not only were the boys educationally privileged over the girls by the colonial masters, traditions and customs equally prevented the girls from going to school, even when the opportunity eventually presented itself. Again, girls were saddled with domestic duties, while boys were left to pursue western education. Social role assignation also contributes to the lack of education of the girl child.

Gender roles assignation is one of the limiting practices of patriarchy that condemns the girl-child to the kitchen. While society was encumbering the girl-child with domestic chores, the boy-child was busy ascending the stairs of enlightenment and empowerment, thereby becoming the master of his destiny. The girl-child since the colonial era had been in need of tutelage and tutors beyond pots and pans. Egya (2013) in his essay "The New Woman in Nigeria Fiction..." investigated and exposed various feminist agencies employed in checking and countering patriarchal traditions responsible for the lack of growth and progress of the female child in the society.

For there to be a new woman, there must first be a new girl-child. The new girl-child is the one with hopes and dreams as the boy-child, and the one with adequate support and empowerment from the society to achieve them. This informs her need of appropriate and adequate quality education, and the befitting teachers to give it. This new girl-child is the new woman that Adebayo (2015) entreated to surmount patriarchal restrictions and limitations, and break the patriarchal strongholds that have held her captive. The new girl-child desires and seeks equal access to

education, and frees herself from excessive domestic responsibility, and impeding societal expectations.

Going from the statement of the problem to the solution; the thrust of this paper is predicated on the need for quality girl-child teachers, and their necessary characteristics. A historicity of teacher-student relationship since the post-colonial period will reveal not only a plethora of chronicles of teaching and learning challenges, but also unsavoury tales of woes and indecency from both parties.

Nevertheless, this paper focuses on the essentials of a good girl-child teacher. The paper leverages on existing literature to foreground the characteristics of such teachers, and present doable suggestions in the quest for ideal girl-child teachers.

Definition of concepts

Effective Teacher: The absence of a general consensus on what constitutes an effective teacher leads to diverse definitions. Lupascua et al. (2014) posits that "effective teachers have clarity about their educational goals, are conversant with educational and training content, have good communication skills, and continually monitor their students' understanding. They seek to improve and support their teaching methods."

Muguti and Maware (2013) present Million (2004) as defining an effective teacher as someone who prefers to focus on effective instruction or best teaching practices, and possessing behaviours and practices which enhance the learning of all students.

In all, the professional standards, competencies, qualifications and trainings matter also when defining effective teachers. In the case of an effective teacher for a girl-child education; a gender-responsive teacher is needed to encourage the female students and give them equal opportunity and motivation in the classroom.

Girl-Child: She is not just a child between the age at birth and the universal adult Suffrage age of 18, as delineated in Lyndsey (2022) and Offorma (2009). She is rather a constantly evolving being needing vital childhood care and education. Interestingly, Jones and Misolo (2024) define the girl child as "...the author of Her own story. The captain of Her own ship." This is in line with the thinking of Egya (2013) on the new woman. Moreso, Jones and Misolo (2024) went on to describe her as "your daughter. She is your sister. She is your mother, your aunt, your grandmother, your friend, your colleague. She is you. She is the woman in the girl, the girl in the woman. She is free of and undefined by centuries upon centuries of diminishing ideology, theology, and traditions that treat being born female as lesser than, unclean, inferior, meant for submission, the cause of evil in the world. As not meant to grow into the full human agency and power of adulthood."

The image of the new girl-child that is rising above patriarchal stereotypes and imposed gender restrictions, is worth projecting. She is worth educating by the best of teachers to guaranty a fulfilled and prosperous future. The outcome of the proper education of the girl-child will include among other positive results; a happy home and a harmonious society.

Girl-Child Education

Omede and Agahiu (2016) see "Girl-child education is a catch-all term for a complex set of issues and debates surrounding (primary education, secondary, and tertiary and health education in particular) for girl and women."

Omede and Agahiu (2016) observing Micheal (2011), described girl-child education by extension as "the most important aspect of human development, a key to a successful living, especially girl-child education." In tandem with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal number 5 on gender equality, Omede and Agahiu (2016) agree that Girl-Child education comprises aspects of gender equality.

Girl-child education also entails new approaches in teaching methodology. Pedagogy of Girl-children needs to be gender-responsive and cognizant of their realities. Educating girls needs to be more inclusive of the peculiarities of the female, as varied to the male, but not lesser in quality.

Characteristics of the Effective Girl-Child Teacher we need

Quality education for girl-children is crucial for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the society. Key to these are competent educators. The following traits are essential in teachers who want to be successful in educating girls:

A Gender Sensitive and aware Teacher

Educators proficient in teaching girls are aware of gender disparities and understand the societal, cultural, and economic hurdles that hinder girls' access to education. Such awareness eases the development of a nurturing and fair educational atmosphere tailored to the needs of female students (Aftab et al., 2023).

A Promoter of Gender Equality

These educators actively foster gender parity within the classroom setting. They challenge existing stereotypes, motivate girls to engage in various activities, and ensure boys and girls have equal opportunities. Furthermore, they champion the cause of girls' education in the community, highlighting the significance of educational access for girls to parents and influential community members (Li et al., 2022).

One Who Establishes a Safe Learning Environment

Considering the safety concerns that girls often face in educational settings, a competent educator makes certain that his/her classroom is a secure environment free from harassment and discrimination. He/she implements stringent policies to handle any incidents of mistreatment and cultivate a culture of respect and inclusivity (Bhatla et al., 2014).

A Protector, Not a Predator

The girl-child teacher should be a safe haven, and not someone who sees her as a potential prey, or a sex-slave. The morality of such a teacher must never be in question. Teachers in some cases

have been implicated in the abduction, child trafficking, and eventual death of girl children. One of the targets of the United Nations' SDG number 5, according to UN Women (2024) is to "Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation." (UN Women, 2024).

An Experienced Confidant, Not A Despised Telltale

A teacher that a girl-child can confide in, when she is challenged or in doubt. When a child faces issues such as body shaming, dropping out of school, child-marriage, child pregnancy, and molestation, a trusted and loyal confidant to the child is needed. In the UNESCO IICBA periodical issue titled "Nigeria: Basic Profile of Early Childbearing", Malé and Wodon (2023) posit that:

In Nigeria, many girls give birth as children (before the age of 18), at a time when they may not yet be physically and emotionally ready to do so. Most child mothers are child brides. By giving birth so early, they are at greater risk of experiencing poor health outcomes, dropping out of school, earning less in adulthood, and living in poverty.

A Nurturer, Not A Destroyer

In certain climes, girl-children's dreams are killed daily, in favour of those of boys their age. There are instances where girl-children's most deadly foes were their stereotypical teachers who told them that they cannot do better than the boys, especially in school subjects needing logic like mathematics and physics, among others. Such teachers underestimate and limit girl-children's capacities. These teachers relate with girl-children according to their biases and patriarchal agenda. Relying on their traditional programming on gender, they tell girls that they cannot be as good as the boys, talk less being better. Teachers with such limiting mentalities, who instead of nurturing the abilities of girl-children, destroy their dreams, are not needed.

Girls are raised as inferior to boys, both at home and in school. Adichie (2014) captures the patriarchal nurturing of the girl-child succinctly in this disturbing quote:

...we do a much greater disservice to girls, because we raise them to cater to the fragile egos of males. We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls: You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man. If you are the breadwinner in your relationship with a man, pretend that you are not, especially in public, otherwise you will emasculate him.

Society needs teachers that are effective in teaching girls that what boys can do, they can do too. Such teachers should aim at nurturing girl-children that are acceptable to the society as equal to male children. Only through these types of nurturing can we create a new world that is void of

gender restrictions and patriarchal limitations. Only through these can there be happier and freer beings, regardless of their sex.

An Enabler, Not A Crippler

The author Maya Angelou in O’Dea (2024) admonishes all, including girl-children to “Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better.” Society needs girl-child teachers that will teach girl-children to do their best until they know better, so they can do better, even than the boys. Moreover, an effective girl-child teacher should be a bridge builder, not a wall raiser. Someone who removes emotional and intellectual obstacles on their way to self-discovery. A person who assists girl-children in discovering their abilities, talents and gifts. In the contemporary world, children need connecting links to their destinies. However, many teachers, in putting and holding girls down, have truncated and altered their fortunes and future. Such a teacher should be a believer, and not a doubter in the abilities of girl-children. Such a teacher should fill the girl children with the possibilities in their capacities, and teaches them to find help safely when help is needed.

Effective teachers provide support and motivation, recognizing and applauding the accomplishments of their female students. This positive reinforcement and encouragement are crucial, especially in disciplines where girls are typically underrepresented, like STEM, to boost their confidence and self-esteem (Granstam, 1986).

A Professional, Not A Mediocre

Society needs intelligent, knowledgeable and well-trained teachers, who would in turn raise intelligent and knowledgeable girl-children. Society does not need teachers who avoid and scoff at pertinent questions from girl-children, while undermining them because they are girls.

Constant training is essential for educators to remain updated on best practices in girl-child education. Workshops and professional development programmes focusing on gender equality, inclusive teaching techniques, and the latest educational innovations are important (Menon et al., 2017).

A Kind Empathiser, Not A Blind Sympathizer

Society needs teachers that will go out of their comfort zone to help a pupil or student in need. Someone who sees himself/herself in the shoes of the child. Empathy is vital for educators who help girls facing unique challenges. These educators take time to understand the distinct situations affecting their students, enabling them to offer personalized support and foster a nurturing learning environment (Abebe et al., 2019).

A Leader, Not A Misleader

Girl-children have often been misled because they trusted in the wrong persons for guidance. An effective girl-child teacher ought to be a refuge from the deceits of society. Such a teacher should be interested only in the safe passage of girl children into their adolescence. He should be a good role model that exemplifies all the good qualities and none of the bad. Teachers have been known

to initiate girl children into vices and bad habits such as drug addiction, and prostitution at an early age. A girl-child teacher should be a beacon of morality and a bastion of hope.

Positive role modeling by teachers, especially female teachers, is influential, highlighting the achievements possible through education and career success. Male educators also contribute significantly by showing respect and equality in dealings with female colleagues and students (Mike & Muhammad, 2020).

A Collaborator, Not A Loner

Successful educators develop strong connections with parents and community members to enhance girls' educational experiences. They often communicate with parents about their daughters' progress and work collaboratively to overcome obstacles to education. Community engagement is key to changing beliefs and garnering support for educating girls (Oswald, 2023).

A shift in paradigm is observed in the way men are relating to girl-children and boy-children nowadays. Fathers are changing their orientation gradually, and are beginning to perceive female children as equally beneficial as boys, whom they erstwhile thought were more important than girls.

This new development is worthy of research in the sense that men as products of patriarchal societies are wont to think that male children are more important than female children. However, experientially, men are observing otherwise; that since the burden of patriarchy has encumbered the male children and prevented them from performing their responsibilities to their parents, the female children end up taking care of their parents-therefore eliciting more endearment. This trend is becoming the new reality that is increasingly affecting the way female children are currently being viewed (Anushka, 2022; Brown-Worsham, 2013). It is in fact surreptitiously modifying the perception of patriarchy of the female children, vis-à-vis the male. Over time, male teachers will be nurtured from birth as gender-responsive.

Suggestions

By adopting these suggestions, educational bodies and policymakers can foster an environment that enhances girl-child education, ultimately contributing to a fairer and more prosperous society:

2. **Improve Teacher Training Programmes:** Include comprehensive sections on gender awareness, inclusive educational tactics, and cultural familiarity in training programmes for educators.
3. **Advance Continuous Professional Development:** Offer ongoing workshops and training for current teachers to refine their abilities in gender-sensitive teaching and modern educational technologies.

3. **Encourage Community Involvement:** Design initiatives that engage families, local leaders, and community groups in supporting the education of girls, overcoming cultural obstacles, and enhancing the perceived value of educational achievements for girls.
4. **Expand Technology Use:** Allocate resources to and use educational technologies that broaden the reach and improve the quality of education for girls, especially those in isolated or underprivileged areas.
5. **Launch Mentorship Initiatives:** Set up organized mentorship programmes that pair girls with accomplished women across various professions, offering guidance and role models.
6. **End Socio-Economic Barriers:** Develop strategies and policies that offer financial aid, scholarships, and resources to poor girls to keep their access to education.
7. **Establish Safe Educational Spaces:** Create comprehensive policies to combat discrimination, harassment, and bullying in schools to ensure a supportive and safe environment for girls.
8. **Promote STEM Education for Girls:** Support the participation of girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics through specialized programmes and campaigns.
9. **Develop Gender-Fair Curricula:** Continuously review and adjust educational content to end gender biases and incorporate positive depictions of women and girls.
10. **Cultivate Critical Thinking and Leadership:** Introduce teaching methods that motivate girls to engage in critical thinking, voice their views, and cultivate leadership abilities.
11. **Conduct Periodic Evaluations:** Set up a system for regular review of the effectiveness of initiatives targeting girl education and apply adjustments based on empirical data.
12. **Engage in Global Collaboration:** Take part in international partnerships and exchanges to embrace global best practices in educating girls.

Conclusion

Educating girls is pivotal for achieving gender equity and advancing society overall development. This study has underscored how crucial passionate and effective educators are to girl-child education. Beyond just understanding their subject matter, these educators must show gender awareness and responsiveness, empathy, and a dedication to fostering environments that welcome all students. Such educators play a key role in change by dismantling stereotypes, promoting analytical thought, and enabling girls to realize their potential.

Adopting teaching methods that resonate with local culture, along with involving the community and mitigating socioeconomic hurdles, has proven to substantially improve educational results for girls. Additionally, it is vital that continuous upskilling for educators is prioritized to enhance their empathy, understand gender nuances, and deepen their ability in their subjects.

The study has also highlighted the essential roles of technology in education, the establishment of secure educational environments, and effective mentorship in the educational paths of girls. By embracing these holistic strategies, educators can provide meaningful support to girl education, thereby aiding in achieving wider gender equity and societal strengthening.

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