

A REVIEW OF IGWEBUIKE AS A COMPLEMENTARY APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

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While education for development has been a growing trend in many African societies spurred by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other national and international policies on education, the education of the girl-child has lagged behind in relation to the opposite gender. In some sections of the African society, noticeable improvements have been recorded within the past two decades while some are still negligent of the education of the girl-child. For example, the female adult literacy rate from the early 2000's to the middle of the decade spiraled to nearly 80 percent. Yet this growth was not evenly distributed across the various ethnic regions of the African society. Northern Nigerian women, for example, still had a ratio of 47 percent of women educated or in education as opposed to 67 percent of men. Even where women find educational opportunities, gender stereotyping often limit the potential areas of study they could pursue. Poverty, early marriage, and emphasis on the domestic role of women have been suggested as factors militating against the education of the girl-child. In addition, Kanu observes that:

At the heart of this is the traditional role society has assigned to the woman: producing and raising babies, cultivation of crops and playing a docile role in the society. However, with the evolution of modern stratification in society, the concept of the role of the woman has been broadened. Education is one of the basic instruments to empower a woman for the realization of her full potentials. However, this is impeded by a retinue of factors hence a huge number of women still are uneducated. (p. 15).

This paper posits the African Philosophy of *Igwebuike* as a panacea for correcting the imbalance and gender-stereotyping prevalent in the education of the African girl-child. Raised into a philosophy of education, *Igwebuike*, which is based on the idea of solidarity and complementarity views education as a tool for the development of the entire society and the human persons inhabiting it, among whom are members of the female gender. In order to enhance a healthier society and socio-economic mobility, the paper argues that it is essential for women who form a large percentage of the population and are often directly engaged with the education of the

younger members of the society to become themselves educated. Kanu asserts that:

Protection from HIV/AIDS and the enhancement of environmental awareness is linked to education. And more so, through education the chances of women earning higher income becomes more possible, and through this, they are able to raise their household out of poverty. Being a caring group of humans, educated women are more able to extend care to their children through education and provision of healthcare, and thus child mortality is reduced to a significant level. Children of educated mothers are twice as likely to survive past the age of five. (p. 17).

He writes further that:

Women with some formal education are more likely to seek medical care, ensure their children are immunized, be better informed about their children's nutritional requirements, and adopt improved sanitation practices. As a result, their infants and children have higher survival rates and tend to be healthier and better nourished. (p. 17).

By so doing, they are made real participators in the life of their community and have less proclivities to be coopted for nefarious activities, such as prostitution and suicide-bombing. Kanu also links girl-child education to economic development:

The education of the girl-child has consequences on the economy of the country or state, as it can lead to greater economic growth. Infact, the Gross domestic product, better known as GDP, soars when both girls and boys are being offered equal educational opportunities. Being educated, women are able to make their peculiar contributions towards the growth of the economy. (p. 18).

Whereas Kanu advances Igwebuike as a complementary approach and basis for the girl-child education, the paper could further develop this thesis and clarify how the approach plans to reduce the disparity in the education of girls and boys. Kanu presented various consequences of girl-child illiteracy. One is left to ponder whether Igwebuike could indeed resolve the enumerated negative impact of lack of education and the prevailing

situation of the African girl-child? While I believe that the proposed philosophy of education—Igwebuike, would help to bridge the gap created by the imbalance, it is important to look at other factors militating against the African girl-child education. Indeed, Igwebuike was presented as a complementary approach to the issue of girl-child education, which calls for and is open to other approaches to the same issue of girl-child education.

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