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Managing Gender and Youth Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated parents, teachers, and undergraduate students' perception of the relationship between a well-managed gender and youth education and sustainable national development. The study was an ex-post facto research. Stratified sampling was used to select the subjects as follows: 100 parents (50 from each sex), 200 hundred teachers (100 males and 100 females) and 300 final year undergraduates (150 from each gender) making 600 subjects. A 44-item questionnaire was developed and validated by the researchers at 0.71 KR-20 reliability coefficient and construct validity coefficient of 0.68 cronbach Alpha. The data were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment statistics. The results of 0.77(parents), 0.88(teachers) and 0.87(students) at 0.01 level of significance, for the youth education was higher than that of the girl-child education of 0.64(parents), 0.81(students) and 0.85(teachers). Findings showed that religion had been a major barrier to the girl-child education in certain parts of the country. Also the differences between the teachers' and the students' perception of the relationship existing between the girl-child education and sustainable national development can be attributed to the differences in the levels of education and experience. Although the results showed that all respondents agreed that youth education contributes immensely to sustainable national development but most of them equated youth education to boy-child education and are yet to accord the girl-child education the same level of importance. It was thus recommended that governments must be in the vanguard of education provision for all while girl-child education must be accorded the requisite priority. Governments and other stakeholders should be vigorously involved in the provision of quality and holistic education for all irrespective of sex and religion. Those charged with the responsibility of managing the education sector should be given managerial training from time to time, to equip them with modern techniques for optimal performance.

Introduction

Development Specialists and public officials are unanimous in their view that education is vitally important to development (Iwayemi, 2001; Jhingham, 2003; Onimode, 2000; Onuka, 2004; Tamuno, 1997). Education is the only means by which the individual can acquire specialized knowledge and skills and it is thus regarded as a prerequisite for economic development. Furthermore, education has been acclaimed to be the most important instrument for effecting social change and social mobility. (Drucker in Umoru-Onuka, 1996; Tamuno, 1997; Jhingham, 2003). It is also believed that any country which toys with the education of its citizen does so not only with the future of its children, but at the peril of its future (Obemeara, 1995).

Understandably, therefore, it does seem that Nigeria devotes a great deal of attention to developing the education sector, though, insufficiently (Onuka, 2005; 2007). All political party manifestoes in the country during democratic eras as well as military always appear to provide in principle for quantitative and qualitative education.* In putting so much money into education, the government of Nigeria expects to use education as an instrument for the country's national objectives which are as stated in the second national development plan are:-

- 1) *Free and democratic society*
- 2) *Just and egalitarian society*
- 3) *United, strong and self reliant nation*
- 4) *Great and dynamic economy*
- 5) *Land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 2004).*

According to Nigeria's national policy on education: the country's philosophy of education is based on "*the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system*" (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN, 2004]).

It is pertinent to state that an important aim of the educational policy of Nigeria is the development of the country. For any nation to develop, it must possess the requisite manpower. The development of manpower ensures the availability of adequate personnel that will generate ideas, formulate policies and implement them for the purpose of national development. It may be also that there is the need to attach a great importance to growth and development in the quality of human resources. He argued that human resources constitute the basis of the wealth of nation, that capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic, and political organizations and carry out the development of a

nation. He, thus, concludes that a country that is unable to develop the knowledge and skills of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else. Education and research are known to be instruments for sustainable national development. Therefore, these twin instruments of sustainable national development must be sustained by stakeholders led by the government. If human resources are inefficient and ineffective because they are badly managed, then national development will be adversely affected.

Development involves two basic processes namely: improving and refining what is already in existence and adapting it to contemporary requirements; and secondly finding solutions to new challenges or new forms of solutions to old problems. Both imply creative responses to social, political and economic affairs of a nation. For emphasis, sustainable development suggests an enduring, remarkable, non-terminal improvement in the quality of life, standard of living and life chances of the people. Such development must be capable of surviving all generations. It favours a steady progression in human development encompassing enhanced creativity for increased productivity.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Sahel studies (1989) sees sustainable development as involving the maximization of the net benefits of economic development, subject to maintaining or enhancing the service and quality of natural resources over time. This view is problematic in the sense that as important as economic development is to sustainable development, it does constitute but a part of the totality of national development and indeed dependent upon the quality of the nation's human resource base. There are also other non-economic variables involved in the issue of sustainable development which cannot be wished away without dire consequences for the attainment of sustainable development.

Viewing sustainable development in another way is to see it from the perspective of the capacity of the ecosystem to be maintained indefinitely. This implies that the level of available capital or stock must be increased and the products of the ecosystem used at a rate that the ecosystem can cope with, in a steadily increasing manner. This means evolution of a deliberate policy of capital non-depletion or better still, capital renewal and use. What is to be used under this condition is the income flowing from the ecosystem.

The above elucidation tallies with the conceptualization of sustainable development as a process or condition that can be maintained indefinitely without progressive diminution of, valued qualities inside or outside the system. It is in this wise that World Commission on Environment Development's (WCED) (1987) definition of sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future

generations to meet their own needs becomes very germane to the understanding of the issue of sustainable development. Discussions about national developments generally centre on the transformation of the economic and social-cultural structures of a people, leading to an improvement in their living conditions. It encompasses more than growth which is an increase in national income. In the present context, development is seen from the angle of the prevailing notion of sustainable human development. It is what Obanya (2003) regards as a state of well being that focuses on human beings and on empowering the human person to work continuously towards making the world a better place for human creativity, enterprise and quality living standards. Godswill Akpabio, the current governor of Cross River State of Nigeria, on page 31 of *The Nation Newspaper* of September 18, 2008, confirmed the fact that both human capital development and consequent physical, social, economic and all other forms of development are all functions of equity and quality education.

Sustainable development can, therefore, be defined as a deliberate and systematic policy programme of ensuring the survival and continuous improvement of the state in such ways that the social, economic and political necessities that are imperative for the enjoyment of good life and ensuring the greatest good for the greatest numbers are available now without this constituting a denial for the capacity of being able to enjoy the same benefits by generations yet unborn. Put differently, the concept of sustainable development can be viewed as a way by which the society is managed in an effective and efficient manner such that it benefits all and sundry, with enough resources still available for the continuation of the human race. This is achievable through the judicious and careful use of global resources. A necessary adjunct to this notion, therefore, is the imperative of poverty eradication, control of diseases, improvement of the standards of living, good governance and debt reduction, if not the total forgiveness.

The efficient and effective management of education should be first rated priority of governments at all levels- whether local, state, or federal. This is because the manpower required for economic, political and social development of the country will be realized through efficient and effective educational system. In terms of enrolment in schools, the trend has been on a very high demand at the tertiary institutions and the available spaces in the federal and state universities have not been able to match this increasing demand for spaces, hence the continued growth of tertiary institutions particularly universities. Such development has helped in improving the enrolment situation at the tertiary level of the Nigerian educational sector.

The youths constitute the majority of the labour force; they are the country's hope because very huge capital had been expended on educating

them. It is therefore the wish of both the government at various levels, the parents and the entire stakeholders in the education sector that they will be gainfully employed, after spending many years in the schools. The nation currently faces the problem of graduate unemployment such that even engineers, sociologists, lawyers and even doctors roam about the streets without finding employment. The situation has so deteriorated that majority of the graduates from universities and polytechnics are now *okada* riders (commercial motor-cycle riders), taxi drivers, sales girls and boys. Those that felt humiliated by the jobs offered to them have resorted to robbery, hard-drug pushing, hired assassins, political thugs, tools in the hand of drug barons, commercial sex workers etc. This development is shameful because majority of these university graduates are youths. Many of them are now engaged in internet fraud, human trafficking, vandalization of petroleum pipelines and hijacking or are kidnappers especially in the Niger Delta Region, etc. A situation often described as failed generation. Onuka and Emunemu (2007) posit that education is the most potent weapon of youth empowerment and preparation of the youth for leadership in any economy.

The youths could, however, be useful in sports and in the vocations, if training in different skills could be organized for them to acquire the relevant skills and the opportunities for their utilisation made available to them. Education of youths in entrepreneurship and vocations at tertiary level, geared towards self-employment, would enhance the accomplishment of the objectives for establishing programmes as National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) [FRN, 2004] and the efforts of State and Local governments to train and retrain youths for self-employment (Onuka and Emunemu, 2007). With the appropriate level of education, Government still needs to provide finance and the needed support to the youths to enable them set up their own businesses.

Successive West African State Governments have made concerted efforts to establish concrete and purposeful direction aimed at enhancing access of her citizens to education and to translate into action, their philosophy of equality of educational opportunities to all irrespective of gender, class or creed. In a series of international conferences on education between 1975 and 1995, the education of women and girls was identified as a key factor for socio-economic and political empowerment (Osokoya, 2005). The concern for female and girl-child education has a global dimension, though its negative impact is much more pronounced in the third world countries, the West Africa sub-region inclusive.

The United Nations has been at the forefront of efforts to raise the status of women. It declared 1975 as International women year, and the years

1976 to 1985 as the UN Decade for women. In furtherance of this goal, the United Nations organized a series of conferences on women in 1975 (Mexico City), 1980 (Copenhagen), 1985 (Nairobi), and 1995 (Beijing). At the regional level, Africa held similar conferences in 1989 in Abuja, which produced the 'Abuja' Declaration on participation in development titled: 'The Role of Women in Africa in the 1990's'; the pan African conference on the education of girls with its Ouagadougou Declaration in 1993; the conference of the OAU Ministers of culture and education and development 1993 and the pan African conference on youth development 1995. The central focus of all these conferences was the need to raise the status of women and bring them into the development process as equal partners with men. As at today (2008), a wide gulf still exists in enrolment and retention of males and females, even though the set target of achieving access to education by all was the year 2005 as the goal of the Dakar Declaration on education for all (EFA), which aimed at eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education enrolment by 2005 indicated. The goal of achieving gender equality in education at all levels by 2015 in the West African states has also become a mirage as it is obviously not feasible.

It is no longer a matter of debate that female constitute more than 50% of the world's active population. It was noted at Dakar, in 2000 that some 113 million children, 60% of whom are girls, have no access to primary schooling (UNESCO, 2003). Although, African women have been making immense contributions to national development, they still face a substantial number of difficulties which place limit on their potentials in promoting personal and collective development (Assimang, 1990). African scholars' key area of concern is that female and girl-child education in Africa can at best be described as dwindling because it is less than equal to that of their male counterpart (Indabawa, 1988; 1999; Obanya, 2003; UNESCO, 2003). The UNICEF document on The National Report on situation and policy analysis in Nigeria (1993), confirmed that disparity in access to education exists in favour of the male child. Article 28:1 of the convention on the rights of the child (1989) states that 'education is a right, which must be achieved on the basis of equal opportunity'. From the human rights' perspective therefore, girls' education in West African states must remain a top priority as girls constitute a majority of children excluded from school. Various researchers (Cochrane, Ohara and Leslie, 1980; Blumberg, 1989; King, 1990, 1993; Rufai, 2001; Floro and Wolf, 1990; Chamie, 1983; Psacharopoulos, 1985) present compelling economic justification for increased investment in girls' education, which is considered to be among the best investment options available to any society. These researchers observe that high social rates of return accrue from

(GNP) growth rate, increased productivity and labour force participation, decreased infant and maternal mortality as well as improved child health. It may, therefore, be said that a society that shirks the responsibility for its youth and girl child education in particular, denying them tools for advancement aborts its own future.

The argument so far, points to the fact that development in Africa becomes endangered if it is not engendered. The West Africa Sub-region surely needs to engender its development taking the engendering of education as a starting point, in view of the centrality of the human person to all meaningful programmes of development. The youth and girl child education is, therefore, a must for the developing the West Africa Sub-region. An educated woman has the skills, information and self-confidence she needs to be a better parent, worker and citizen. When schools open their doors wider to girls, the benefits to the society multiply. Girls who graduate from schools soon grow into women, are better able to make more independent, personal, political and economic decisions than the others.

Yet a 2001 UNICEF project on the situation assessment and analysis (SAA) of children and women in Nigeria carried out in collaboration with the National Planning Commission (NPC), discover that there is still a number of cultural, societal and economic barriers to girls' education in Nigeria. These barriers loom large especially in many states and communities. Cultural inhibitions are sometimes closely tied to religious affiliations and traditional practices. For instance, in many of the predominantly Muslims states where gender gap is markedly high (e.g. Sokoto, Zamfara), girls are traditionally prevented from having access to formal school environments as a consequence of erroneous interpretation of religious injunctions.

However, enhanced access to qualitative and functional educational opportunity for all boys and girls is perhaps the most effective means to combat poverty, reduce misunderstanding and religious intolerance as well as promote respect for one another. If these could be achieved, then major causes of frictions, revolts and intermittent civil wars in this W.A. sub-region will be minimized or totally eliminated. Female and girl-child education would not only move Nigeria and indeed the rest of West Africa forward economically, politically and technologically. And such development would go a long way to liberate the women folk from their natural state of dependency, inferiority, superstition and other shackles that impede national development.

It seems, therefore, obvious that there is gender imbalance in the provision of education in Nigeria. For instance, in the northern part of the country there is higher enrolment of males in schools than the females whereas in the east, more females go to school than their male counterparts.

However, there seem to be a fair balance in enrolment between the male and female gender in the western part of the country. On the balance girl-child seems to be disadvantaged in educational opportunities in Nigeria. The Nigerian federal government is, however, trying to ensure that there is gender-balance in terms of educational and job opportunities.

As Onuka (2006) points out development, if it is to be successful and achieves its set objective, it must be properly managed. He further states that management entails accurate forecasting, systematic planning, budgeting, organizing, implementing and evaluating for improvement and sustenance. Jedo (2007) concurs, when he posits that management of education provision must be planned, organized and religiously executed in order to achieve the desired results. Hence, the necessity to plan, budget for, organize and execute programme for gender and youth education. The question that thus arises is: Are the educational programmes in Nigeria effectively managed to achieve these laudable goals of giving equal educational opportunities to all irrespective of gender, religion, class or creed?

Invariably, the existing gender imbalance in educational opportunities and the high rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria have become sources of concern to every right-thinking Nigerian. Thus, this study investigated how parents, teachers and undergraduate students perceive the relationship between a well-managed gender and youth education can be managed for sustainable national development.

Research Questions

This study, therefore, sought answers to the following research questions.

- 1.) Is there any relationship between properly-managed gender education and sustainable national development?
- 2.) Is there any relationship between properly- managed youth education and sustainable national development?

Procedure

The study was an ex post facto research and parents, teachers and students were the subjects in the study. The target population was stratified into three and selection of the subjects made as follows: One hundred parents (50 males and 50 females), 200 hundred teachers (100 males, 100 females, and 300 Nigerian final undergraduate students (150 males and 150 females) in Ibadan, Oyo State were randomly selected as samples for the investigation, making a sample of a total of 600 subjects.

Essentially, a 44-item questionnaire used in the study was pre-tested by the researchers at 0.71 KR-20 reliability co-

instrument contains 2-biographical items, 12 items on well- managed gender education, 12 items on well-managed youth education, 7 items on parents' participation in provision for both the girl-child, and youth education and 10 items on sustainable development as they relate to education, making a total of 44 items.

Data was collected by administering the instrument on the various subjects.

The data collected were collated, the SA and A responses were then collapsed together, and then aggregated as percentage of total responses for sections A and B, A and C as a unit each and the resultant figures were correlated with corresponding aggregate of Section D for each of the three sample subsets as one sample using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Statistic.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Correlation Coefficient of the Relationship between Gender Education and sustainable National Development as perceived by the three spectra of Respondents

	R	Sig.
Parents	0.64	*
Teachers	0.85	*
Students	0.81	*

Table 1 gives the correlations perceived relationship between gender education and sustainable national development by parents, teachers and university students. Each group of respondents agreed that there was high positive relationship between the two variables of concern in question; in ascending order as follows: Parents (0.64), students (0.81) and teachers (0.85) respectively at 0.01 significance level. These results show that all three sample-sets namely parents, teachers and students are agreed that there is a positive relationship between gender education and sustainable national development. Therefore, implying that both the female and male population can contribute equally to national development provided they are given the same level of opportunities both educationally and employment wise.

These findings of significant positive relationship between the education of the girl-child and sustainable national development confirm the conclusions of (Cochrane, Ohara and Leslie, 1980; Blumberg, 1989; King, 1990, 1993; Rufai, 2001; Floro and Wolf, 1990; Chamie, 1983; Psacharopoulos, 1985) that there is economic justification for an increased investment in girls' education, which they all considered to be among the best

investment options for any society. This they also observe could result in high social rates of returns that accrue such ventures involving female education that might improve Gross National Product (GNP) growth rate, increase national productivity and labour force participation as well as bring about a decrease in infant and maternal mortality and improved child health.

The differences in the magnitude of the correlation coefficients can be attributed to the differentials in the level of education of the various respondents used in the study.

Invariably, some of the parents possibly as a result of the level of their education and/or religion could not have as high a value to the girl education as do the teachers and final year undergraduate students, thus confirming the finding of UNICEF's education sector situation analysis carried out in conjunction with the National Planning Commission that religion had been a major barrier to the girl-child education in certain part of the country. However, the difference between the teachers' and the students' perception of the relationship existing between the girl-child and sustainable national development can be attributed to the differences in the levels of education and experience between the two groups of respondents. The need for a rigorous campaign for the girl-child must be continuous to ensure that every child irrespective of sex is given the appropriate level of education. The government must be in the vanguard of education provision for all including the girl-child.

Table 2: Correlation Coefficient of the Relationship between Youth Education and sustainable National Development as perceived by the three spectra of Respondents

	R	Sig.
Parents	0.77	*
Teachers	0.88	*
Students	0.87	*

Table 2 above depicts the findings of the perception by parents, teachers and students respectively of the kind of relationship that exist between youth education and sustainable national development, which they all perceived to be highly positive at significance level of 0.01. The correlation coefficients of 0.77 (parents), 0.88 (teachers) and 0.87 (students) respectively are higher than those for the girl-child education, which shows that some people still do not attach much value to the girl-child education as they do the boy-child's as it can be inferred that some of the respondents might have interpreted youth education to mean the education of the boy-child.

More importantly, the results show that all categories of respondents are agreed that youth education contributes immensely to sustainable national development.

These findings confirm the conclusion of Onuka and Emunemu (2008) that appropriate level of education of the youth as the leader of tomorrow will definitely arrest youth restiveness in several parts of the country particularly the Niger Delta and Kogi Central areas. They also corroborate the observations of Jedo (2007) and Onuka (2004 & 2007) that properly managed and well-funded education at all levels would engender the necessary and anticipated results and the consequent and requisite national development. The results equally agree with the assertion of Godswill Akpabio, the governor of Cross River State of Nigeria, who, on page 31 of the *Nation Newspaper* of September 18, 2008, opines that both human capital development and consequent physical, social, economic and all other forms of development are all functions of equity and quality education as well as confirm the fact that the greatest of national index of national development is the human capital index.

The implication of the findings is for stakeholders in the education industry to come together and invest heavily in the sector, while government must devise and enact policies that will ensure that every youth in the country is given one type of education or another that will make him or her employable either in the formal or informal sector of the economy. It also implies that parents must be encouraged to educate their young children irrespective of their sexes and be assisted to do so where they are unable to provide necessary education for their children as a result of their social status if youth restiveness must be checked and social vices minimized.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

A careful perusal of the background of this study through the findings to the discussion will lead to the conclusion that no matter who is viewing the import of the education industry vis-à-vis national development are interdependent as the greatest index of national development is the quality of its human capital. Thus, this study reveals that both well-planned, budgeted for, organized, implemented and constantly evaluated education of the girl-child in particular and the youth in general would contribute immensely to sustainable national development as agreed by all respondents in the study viz: the parents, teachers and final year undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Furthermore, it can be inferred and thus be concluded that Nigerians are yet to accord the girl-child education the same level of importance as they

have accorded the boy-child as the respondents seem to have equated youth education to that of the boy-child as the differences in responses to the items on the two forms of persons' education have revealed. Indicating less premiums is placed on the education of the girl vis-à-vis her male counterpart. This portends the need to accelerate the provision of education for the Nigerian female children and the youth generally if the Nigerian national development were to be sustained.

Recommendations

As a consequence of the above findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

- ❖ The government should inspire other stakeholders in the education industry to provide quality and holistic education to the youth and the girl-child in particular.
- ❖ Parents must be encouraged to educate their females at all levels of education.
- ❖ Government should as a matter of urgency put policies that give the youth and the girl well-planned and practical education as well as put the appropriate implementation and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place.
- ❖ Scholarship and bursary schemes should be set up to cater for the education of the indigent youths and girl children in every part of the country.
- ❖ Corporate bodies should be encouraged to set up foundations for the education of the youths and girl- children from the lower socio-economic stratum, so that no children by act of commission or omission left out of the provision of education.
- ❖ Donor agencies should be encouraged to channel their efforts with regard to the education of the youths and the girl-child towards the less privileged of the Nigerian society.
- ❖ Those charged with the responsibility of managing the education sector should be given managerial training from time to time to equip them with modern techniques to properly manage both the girl-child and youth education for sustainable national development.
- ❖ Government should evolve a mechanism by which, together with the private sector, it will expand available opportunities for educated youth and girl-child in order to sustain national development.

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Appendix 1

Gender and Youth Education Management for Sustainable Development Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

Kindly respond to the items of this questionnaire by indicating the extent of your agreement or otherwise with statement by ticking SA (strongly agreed), A (agreed), D (disagreed), or SD (strongly disagreed) in section A through section D. Be assured that information arising from this research work is purely academic exercise and so will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thanks

The Researchers.

Preliminary Section

Please indicate which is applicable to you in this preliminary section.

Gender: Male/Female

Status: Parent/Teacher/Student

Section A Description	SA	A	D	SD
There is equity in gender enrolment				
There is balance in gender enrolment				
There is deliberate national gender enrolment equity policy				
There is no discrimination in trusting both gender with leadership positions				
Both gender have equal opportunities to organize school Programmes				

Both participate equally in extra-curricula activities				
Females are specially encouraged in the provision of education				
There is no gender discrimination in science education				
There is no gender discrimination in technology education provision				
There is no gender discrimination in ICT education				
There is gender discrimination in practical/industrial education				
Both gender are monitored to ensure effective learning				
Section B				
There is deliberate national youth education policy				
There is articulated plan of youth leadership preparation education				
There is youth leadership mentoring education				
There is youth practical/industrial education in all disciplines				
There is youth equal educational opportunities policy				
There is no discrimination in youth education on the basis of class				
All Youths are fully engaged in educational activities				
Youths are provided ICT education				
Youths are provided technology education				
Youths participate in extra-curricula activities				
Youths are not discriminated against on the basis of sex				
Parents provide equally of their children irrespective of sex				
Section C				
Parents give necessary support to their male child as well as the girl child				
Parents provide equal opportunities for children of both sexes				
Parents encourage their young adult female children to pursue education to the highest level				
Parents encourage their young adult to pursue education to the highest level				
Parents partner with government to ensure provision of quality education for the girl child				
Parents partner with government to ensure provision of quality education for their young adult				
Section D				

Education of the girl and children is the foundation of sustainable development in terms of economic and industrial as well as infrastructural continuous growth				
Practical education relates positively to sustainable national development in terms of industrial continuous growth				
Quality Education provision prepares the ground for sustainable development in terms of employability and employment opportunities				
Equity in education provision prepares the youth and the girl child for sustainable development in terms of infrastructural provision				
Continuous quality and equity education aid sustainable development in terms of productivity				
Youth and gender education provision and utilization enhances standard of living of the people				
Education of the youth and gender promotes national security				
Girl child and youth education promotes peace, harmony and national unity				
Education of the youth and girl child promotes equity, fairness and justice				
Education of the girl child and the youth promotes intellectualism				

Thanks once again for painstakingly responding to this questionnaire. God bless you.

The Researchers