

**THE ENROLMENT OF CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BORNO STATE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR ACHIEVING MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS ON EDUCATION.**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the enrolment of children in primary schools in Borno State of Nigeria. The official records for registration and enrolment of primary school pupils in Borno State were derived from National Bureau of Statistics under Social Statistics in Nigeria, 2009. The study was conducted for the period of five years, 2004 to 2008 academic sessions. The proportions of children in primary schools were categorized into male (boys) and female (girls). In Borno State, 568,668 pupils were enrolled in primary schools in 2004, while 585,812 pupils enrolled in 2005. A total number of 535,707 children were registered in 2006 and 523,010 in 2007. In 2008, 496,912 enrollees registered in primary schools in Borno State. Data was analyzed by using simple percentage scores of boys and girls registered in the state. The findings revealed a higher enrolment rates of male children than female. The study found a poor enrolment trend and status of children in primary schools in Borno State. The staggering trend and status of children enrolments in primary schools in the state is critical to the completion rates, gender equality and quality outcomes of their education by the year 2015. Therefore, male and female children should be afforded equal opportunity and access to quality education. Cultural practices, such as early marriages and engagement of the girl-child in economic activities should be discouraged in order to facilitate the completion of quality education by the girl-child.

Keywords: *Enrolment, Children, Primary schools, Millennium Development Goals and Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential ingredient in human and societal development. It strategically occupies very significant position in national planning. It fundamentally enhances the capacity of any society for sustainable development. Stressing the importance of education to human and societal development, Fafuwa (1980), cited by Kolo (2010), states that:

Education in the history of developed nations has always proved a powerful instrument for social reconstruction. Education can make or mar a nation. It is an instrument in human resources and its end product determines the nature and quality of life in the society.

It should be noted that education is vital to the development of intellectual capacity and also stimulates the efficient management of physical resources for sustainable development in a given nation. Similarly, Mundat (2008), describes education as the aggregate of all processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other form of behaviour that have positive values to the society in which he/she lives.

However, despite the fact that education plays a significant role in human and national developments, such benefits may not be realized without adequate enrolment of children in primary schools. Enrolment of children in primary schools in Nigeria forms part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It comprises eight policy statements of the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with 2015 as a target. According to Nigeria Millennium Development Goals 2005 report, the following constitutes the goals.

1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
2. Achieve Universal Primary Education

3. Promote Gender Equity and Empower Women
4. Reduce Child Mortality
5. Improve Maternal Health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability
8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Having itemized the Millennium Development Goals, it is necessary to define enrolment as a concept. Kolo (2010), defines enrolment of children in primary schools as:

The act of officially joining course or school by children in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills within a stipulated period of time.

In spite of the role of education in facilitating human and resource development in Nigeria, some children are deprived of the opportunity of enjoying the benefits of being educated. Denial of some children equal access to education in Borno State is problematic and critical. This raises some basic questions:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- (i) What is the nature of enrolment of pupils into primary schools in Borno State?
- (ii) Are there differences in the enrolment of boys and girls in the primary schools?
- (iii) Which categories of pupils are disadvantaged?
- (iv) What are the factors responsible for the differences?
- (v) What are the implications of such practices on the achievement of Millennium Development Goals on education?

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The Millennium Development Goals on education in Nigeria is a strategic policy aimed at achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015. It is the second goal of the strategic plan for enhancing socio-economic development in Nigeria. According to the Nigeria Millennium Development Goals 2005, report, the following constitutes the goals:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve Universal Primary Education
3. Promote Gender Equity and Empower Women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve Maternal Health
6. Combat HIV/ AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability
8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of Education in Nigeria is in congruence with the principles and philosophical goals of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme initiated by the former President, Olusegun Obasanjo. The UBE was formerly launched in Sokoto on September 30th, 1999 by the Federal Government of Nigeria (Ekoja, 2001).

Agunbiade (2012) summarized the Universal Basic Education Programme as follows.

- (i) Ensure a place for every child in a school, so that no child is deprived of education for lack of teacher, learning materials or adequate space.
- (ii) Consolidate efforts towards the basic education of youths and adults from public and private sources, improving and expanding the literacy and adult education programmes within the context of an integrated strategy of basic education for all people.
- (iii) Eliminate disparities of access to basic education arising from gender, age, income, family, cultural, ethnic, geographical remoteness and linguistic differences

From the above analysis, it is obvious that the Millennium Development Goals on Education and Universal Basic Education programmes have the same strategic policy and objectives.

METHODOLOGY

The official record for registration and enrolment of primary school pupils in Borno State were derived from National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) under Social Statistics in Nigeria, 2009. The study covered the period of five years (2004-2008). The proportion of children in the primary schools were categorized into male (boys) and female (girls) respectively. In Borno State, 568,668 pupils were enrolled in primary schools in 2004, while 585,812 pupils enrolled in 2005. A total number of 535,707 pupils were registered in 2006 and 523,010 in 2007. In 2008, 496,912 children were enrolled in primary schools in Borno State. The data was analyzed by using simple percentage scores of boys and girls registered in the state.

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION

This section revealed the proportion of children enrolled in primary schools in Borno State on the basis of sex (gender). Generally speaking, male enrolment rates are higher than female enrolment in the period under review. The table below shows the enrolment of male and female children in the primary schools in Borno State.

TABLE ON ENROLMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN BORNO STATE (2004 - 2008)

YEAR	SEX				TOTAL	
	MALE		FEMALE			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
2004	361,640	63.6	207,028	36.4	568,668	100
2005	367,372	62.7	217,440	37.1	585,812	100
2006	335,053	62.5	200,654	37.5	535,707	100
2007	319,723	61.1	203,287	38.8	523,010	100
2008	292,404	58.8	204,508	41.2	496,912	100

SOURCE: National Bureau of Statistics- Social Statistics in Nigeria, 2009

There are clear differences between the enrolment of boys and girls in primary schools in Borno State. The disparity cut across the period under review. It is a fact that male enrolments from 2004 to 2008 in the state are higher than female enrolments. In Borno State, most cultures encourage and support the education of male children than their female counterparts. It is believed that girls are temporary members of the family. Therefore, cultural practices encourage early marriage, gender stereotyping and low self-esteem of women. Social constraints like early marriage also affect the girl-child. As a result, little attention and support are given to the enrolment and provision of educational materials to girls than boys.

The information in the table on enrolment of children in primary schools in Borno State confirms the above statement. In 2004, 361,640 (63.6%) boys were enrolled in contrast to 207,028(36.4%) of girls. Although in 2005, there was an improvement in the enrolment of girls in primary schools in the state, the above table shows that a higher proportion of boys were registered the same year.

The information on the enrolment of children in primary schools in Borno State shows a staggering picture. However, the situation is more worrisome considering the proportion of girls registered in primary schools in the state. For instance, in 2006, a higher proportion of boys (62.5%) were enrolled, while a lower proportion of girls (37.5%) were registered. Similarly, in 2007, more male children (61.1%) were enrolled in primary schools in the state than females

(38.8%). The situation of high enrolment of boys than girls in primary schools in Borno State remains the same in 2008.

The above information are highly revealing and critical to physical and educational development of the girl- child. The situation in Borno State is similar to the situation in Ghana in which female education has low rate of enrolment. For example, Mensah (1979) in Kolo (2010), shows that in all regions in Ghana, fewer girls than boys attend schools at all and considerably fewer are found in school at the age of fifteen. Cultural and socio- economic factors like migration, which make the girls go into domestic services rather than school are responsible. Also, the belief of many communities that education was not worth their taking were responsible for this.

In Nigeria, there are large disparities between the education that boys and girls receive. Many girls do not have access to adequate education past a certain age. Currently, the female adult literacy rate (ages 15 and above) for the country was 59.4% in comparison o the male child adult literacy rate of 74.4%. It is differences in education that have led to this gap in literacy (<http://en.wikipedia.org>, 2012).

Wikipedia (2012), reported that the gender gap in literacy rates in Nigeria at the rural level between boys and girls was 18.3% percent in favour of the boys. However, in the age group 6-9 years (primary school ages), it was 3.9 percent in favour of boys. This indicates that there is a gender dimension to educational attainment and development in Nigeria. Across various geo-political delineations in Nigeria, a greater percentage of school age girls are needlessly out of school, compared with the ratio applicable to boys of same age grouping (Wikipedia, 2012).

In Nigeria, studies have shown that the problem of female dropout rate is alarming and it could be found in other states in the country. For instance, Makarfi (1984), states that despite large population of girls in Makarfi District of Kaduna State, only 24.8% of enrolment were girls and these girls do not all graduate because of early marriage and poverty. Anaso (2006), studied the effects of cultural practices on girls education in Zaria and found that 86.4% of the respondents reported cultural practices such as early marriage a factor preventing girls from remaining and completing their schooling.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ACHIEVING MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS ON EDUCATION

In any nation, the enrolment of children or pupils in schools determine the rate and proportion of citizens who acquire basic knowledge, values and skills for harnessing human and material resources which enhance socio- economic development. Therefore, if a higher proportion of the people are educated and trained in any nation, such a nation has the advantage of building a resourceful and versatile workforce. Thus, enhancing productive and efficient socio- economic activities. In addition, such situation may create favourable economic environment for achieving economic development and standard of living of the populace. However, the reverse will be the case if a nation has lower enrolment rate of children and pupils in her schools (Kolo, 2012).

Enrolment of primary school children in Nigeria is the proportion of children of official school age based on the International Standard Classification of Education 1997 who are enrolled in school to the population of the corresponding official school age. Primary education provides children with basic reading, writing and mathematics skills along with an elementary understanding of such subjects as history, geography, natural science, social studies, art and music (<File:///E:/school-enrolment-primary-percent-net-wb-data.html/2009>).

The result of this study shows a very higher disparity in the enrolment of children in primary schools which favour only male children. It implies that female children are disadvantaged and are not given equal access like their male counterparts. Therefore, it negates the achievement of Universal Education Strategic Plan. Similarly, the consistent staggering of children enrolment trend and status in Borno State in the period under review is critical to the completion rates, gender equality and quality learning outcomes of the education of children in the state by the year 2015.

CONCLUSION

The completion of the second Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target i.e 'education for all' by 2015 is at risk after having missed the initial deadline of 2005. In Nigeria, educational facilities are generally believed to be inadequate and access is limited for many, especially girls and women. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (2005), Nigeria was classified as a low development country in respect to equality in educational accessibility.

Enrolment of children in schools is the avenue for acquisition of basic knowledge and skills. Such opportunities build the intellectual capacity and ingenuity of children in the society. The study shows poor enrolment trend and status of children in primary schools in the state. It also revealed that the sharp dichotomy in the enrolment of primary school pupils favours boys than girls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to accelerate and actualize the achievement of Millennium Development Goals on education in Nigeria.

1. The situation in which male children are enrolled in schools more than girls is unacceptable and should be discouraged. Male and female children should have equal access to education in the country.
2. Cultural practices such as early marriage and engagement of the girl- child in economic activities should be discouraged, so as to enhance the quality of education of the girl- child.
3. Parents should be mobilized to encourage their daughters to complete primary education and indeed education at all levels in order to enhance the quality of life of the girl - child in Nigeria.

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