

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

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The most striking part of Kanu's work is his prolific ability at relating the "Igwebuiké" concept to varied scholarly perspectives. "Igwebuiké" is an Igbo word which means "number is strength" or "number is power" (Kanu 2017). Kanu is an ardent believer in the philosophy of complementarity which Igwebuiké denotes.

It is an established fact that it's important for girls to have access and support to education because of their enormous contributions to family and national development. It is often said that to train a girl-child is to empower a nation. Traditionally, the place and role of women in the Nigerian society has been a huge barrier to the girl-child as against the boy-child. It has placed the girl-child at disadvantage thereby creating disparity between the two genders. The boy-child is valued more and seen as the would-be "money earner" for the family in the future. Consequently, to educate a girl-child is seen as a waste of resources as all she needs is preparations to be a suitable mate for the man in marriage.

However, in this 21st century the value system have changed. Boys and girls are seen as equally important and responsible for the development of the family units and the nation at large. In this discourse, Kanu presents the situational analysis of the girl-child education in Nigeria which does not stand at par with that of the boy-child.

He establishes that girl-child education is a fundamental right and not a privilege which can be enhanced through the complementarity principle of 'Igwebuiké'.

"Igwebuiké as a complementary approach to the issue of girl-child education" mirrors a sociological dimension to understanding and solving the disparity between the boy-child and the girl-child education in Nigeria. According to Berger, P. (2019), the basic insight of sociology is that human beings are shaped by the groups to which they belong and interact with. People tend to accept their social world unquestioningly, as something natural. However, he submitted that the sociological perspective enables us to see the society as a temporary social product, created by human beings and capable of being changed by them as well. Kanu, from the sociological point of view opines that the factors militating against the girl-child

education are society based and include: early marriage, early pregnancy, family preferences for the male child which make education of the girl-child secondary to that of the boys. Others include religious inhibitions, gender stereotyping of school curriculum which continues to limit the aspirations and learning achievements of the girl (Joel 2003 as cited in Kanu 2019). It is also within the jurisprudence of society to make amends by reforming the value system in the positive for the girl-child

Even though Kanu reported that there has been improvement in the efforts to narrow the gap between the inequality in the education and other experiences of the girl-child and the boy-child. There is a lot more to be done considering the fact that education is a fundamental right of the girl-child. He presents Igwebuiké complementarity philosophy as a plausible basis upon which the girl-child education can be fostered.

According to Kanu (2017), the “Igwebuiké philosophy sees the other as part of me, and together, in our peculiarities, we make up the whole. And if together we make up the whole, it then means that the other is part of me and what affects the other affects me. To alienate the other is to alienate myself.” It therefore, follows that the girl-child is an integral and important part of the social system and so must not be delimited and disadvantaged in any form. This philosophy is contrary to the degrading traditional value or worth system on women which merely relegated them to the background. “As a result the women in Nigeria are shadows of the men” (Kanu, 2017).

Applying the Igwebuiké principle of wholism and complementarity, Kanu posits that the enforcement and realization of the right of the girl-child to education is a responsibility for government, the family unit, religious institutions, schools and every member of the society. For there is “power in number”.

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