

## **Enrolment, Attrition and Graduation of the Girl Child in Public Junior Secondary Schools in South West Nigeria, 1996-2006**



---

Abari Ayodeji Olasunkanmi\*, Oshun Grace Okaima,  
Lagos State University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational  
Management, Ojo - Lagos, Nigeria

---

### **A B S T R A C T**

*The study examined the enrolment, attrition and graduation of the girl child in Junior Secondary Schools in South West Nigeria from 1999 to 2006 during which five cohorts were produced. This is against the backdrop of the launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1999, a programme that is designed not only to ensure that the child acquires basic skills in life but also to redress the gender imbalance in the Nigerian educational landscape and therefore ensure greater female participation in national development. Relevant data were collected through a Records Observation Format from 72 Junior Secondary Schools purposively selected from the urban and rural areas of the six States that constitute South West Nigeria namely Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oshun and Oyo States. Data collected were subjected to the t-test statistical analysis in consonance with the hypotheses formulated to guide the study. Results indicate no significant difference between enrolment and graduation in both urban and rural areas at 0.05 significant level indicating that the UBE programme is probably on course with respect to participation of the girl child. Among the recommendations are that brilliant but indigent female students be offered bursary and scholarship awards and that gender specific laws be enacted to protect female children from abuse and exploitation in order to ensure and assure their education.*

**KEW WORDS:** *enrolment, attrition, graduation, girl child*

---

\* E-mail: ayodejiabari@yahoo.com

## **Introduction**

The last few decades have witnessed the emancipation of women in terms of access to education and the attainment of positions of authority. In spite of this, it is believed in some quarters that more need to be done to bridge the inequality in all ramifications between men and women to ensure that every citizen contributes meaningfully to national development. Thus, Gupta (2006) points out that although women have made great strides in improving their general educational status, gender gap still persists, particularly in the realm of secondary education. In an EFA Global Monitoring Report by UNESCO (2002), it is stated that gender disparities in primary education is amplified at the secondary level. This, the report claims, is responsible for the lowest levels of secondary enrolment for girls in Central and West Africa. "Generally, women's levels of education are lower than men's and the few girls who are educated are steered towards subjects preparing them for reproductive and domestic life rather than entrepreneurship (Ibeh, 2009). This suggests that the "social role of women predetermines their position in everyday occurrence" (Horvathova, 2009) including education.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian government has set the agenda by formulating the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) where provision is made for all primary school leavers to have access to secondary education irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background. In order to achieve these objectives, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was introduced in 1999. According to Okiy and as cited by Bilesanmi-Awoderu and Kalesanwo (2009), "the introduction to UBE is seen as a catalyst which will result in greater female participation in national development. She went further to opine that the scheme sets specifically to redress the gender imbalance which has been evident in the Nigerian educational landscape". Furthermore, the scheme provides for free and compulsory education for the first nine years of school, that is, up to Junior Secondary School level which is referred to as Basic Nine under the UBE. According to Obanya (2001), UBE is expected to provide the type of education that is terminal since the programme was designed to ensure that a child acquires basic skills by the time he or she completes junior secondary school.

Going by the findings of previous studies, secondary school enrolment usually fall short of the figures of pupils who completed primary

school (Obanya, 2004). Part of the cohort, mostly girls, would have drifted away while others were entering secondary schools seven years later. According to Obanya (2004), “a smaller proportion of girls are able to transit from primary to secondary schooling’. Similarly, Tanbawel, Ugochukwu, Akintomide, Agunwah, Okafor and Dada (2006), state that bias for boys’ enrolment is evident in the South West (Nigeria) as against the South East which displays a bias towards girls’ enrolment.

The phenomenon of a girl enrolling in school and dropping out before the set time for completing her course of study is attributable to a number of factors. At the secondary school level, girls drop out due to such factors as early and unwanted pregnancy, early marriage, sexual harassment by male teachers, lack of encouragement by teachers, administrators, parents, and the wider society, inability of parents to provide learning materials, absence of a role model, tiredness when the child has been over-laboured, being forced to look after sick relations or siblings and having to walk long distance from home to school. This view is in consonance with that of Obanya (2004) who postulates that environmental hazards such as early marriage, unwanted pregnancies, gender insensitive education environment, teaching methods among others are responsible for drop-out among adolescent girls. Gupta (2006) notes that, in China, drop out is often attributed to boredom or dissatisfaction with school. UNICEF (2004) reports that the rate of female attrition is very high and the increasing number of drop-out has also complicated the problem associated with rising single parent families”. Moreover, Hallman, Peracca, Cationo and Ruiz (2007) conclude that the most critical age for dropout among girls is 12. This they state is the period when a girl transits from primary to secondary school.

Apart from girls who drop out of school, there are some who have to repeat the same class, thereby constituting themselves into a waste to the system. According to UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report (2002), it is not in common to have the level of repetition by girls as being above 15%. The reasons adduced are the need to attend to domestic and other chores; low expectation of girls’ performance in school by parents and society, and curriculum and pedagogical biases. Added to the above are deep emotional problems which some girls find difficult to discuss with their parents. Rather, they speak to their friends and classmates who may misinform them.

The need to stay in school and complete her education at every level of the education system is very essential to the girl child. Graduation at the end of a set course of study is dependent to a very large extent on school attendance, diligence and the ability to obtain good grades. Bolarin (2005) asserts that at the secondary school level, female participation dwindles and only a small percentage of girls complete secondary education. The government, parents and teachers have important roles to play to ensure that a girl who has been enrolled in school remains within the school, benefits from the instructions and graduates.

The government sets the tone of the school through the school administrators. It performs the role of providing infrastructural facilities, instructional materials, laboratories and other facilities to facilitate the teaching and learning process. The parents need to prepare the girl child psychologically for school. She has to be made to understand the importance of education and be provided the learning materials. All her other needs have to be met by parents to prevent her from being influenced by negative forces which may make her drop out of school. The teacher is said to be in loco-parentis to his students. The teacher, therefore, has to play the role of a parent as well as that of a counsellor. The teacher needs to encourage the girl child to work hard, guide her in career choice and help to boost her self-confidence in order to succeed.

In spite of the foregoing, to what extent then, has the UBE Policy and Programme achieved its ends particularly in ensuring the girl child education and, therefore, in ensuring the enrolment and graduation of the girl child at the Junior Secondary School level since the policy was launched in 1999 and up till 2006? What specifically was then the status of enrolment, attrition and graduation of the girl child in urban and rural public Junior Secondary Schools in South West Nigeria from 1999 to 2006? And is there any significant difference between enrolment and graduation in these schools during the period under study?

## **Methodology**

The study population comprised all public junior secondary schools in the six states that constitute the South-Western geo-political zone of Nigeria namely Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo States. The study sample was drawn from six public junior secondary schools in urban areas and six public junior secondary schools in rural areas from each of the six

states in the zone. The schools were selected through purposive sampling technique and in such a way that, as much as possible, no two schools were selected from the same local government in the states. This produced a total of 72 sample schools.

A Records Observation format on Girl-Child Enrolment Attrition and Graduation which serves as a primary source of data collection was administered on the sample junior secondary schools' principals. The format was used to seek information on statistics of school enrolment, attrition and graduation from 1999 to 2006. During this period (1999 to 2006), five cohorts were produced.

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference between enrolment and graduation of the girl child in urban public junior secondary schools in South West Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference between enrolment and graduation of the girl child in rural public junior secondary schools in South West Nigeria.

The hypotheses were subjected to the t-test statistical analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected from the sample schools were collated and the means of the girl-child's enrolment, graduation and attrition derived. These were processed into frequencies and percentages in order to present a quantitative analysis of each of the cohorts in all the sample public junior secondary schools in all the states in South West Nigeria.

*Table 1: Enrolment, Attrition and Graduation of Girl Child in Public Junior Secondary Schools in South West Nigeria from 1999-2006*

	Urban			Rural		
	Enrolment	Attrition	Graduation	Enrolment	Attrition	Graduation
Ekiti	4,457	475	3,982	3,364	560	2,804
Lagos	12,769	687	11,082	8,983	1,241	7,742
Ogun	6,277	459	5,818	2,808	108	2,628
Ondo	3,835	474	3,361	2,577	557	2,020
Osun	4,555	265	4,190	3,518	205	3,313
Oyo	3,578	358	3,220	3,700	221	3,479

Source: Fieldwork

Table 1 gives a picture of enrolment, attrition and graduation during the period 1999-2006, which was covered by the study. Lagos State has the highest figures for enrolment and graduation as well as attrition both in the urban and rural secondary schools. Attrition is high in rural schools in Ondo State in spite of the fact that it has low enrolment compared with other states.

### Test of Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between enrolment and graduation of the girl child in urban public Junior Secondary Schools in South West Nigeria. In testing this hypothesis, the paired student t-test was used.

*Table 2: Summary of t-test Analysis of Difference Between Enrolment and Graduation of the Girl Child in Urban Public Junior Secondary Schools.*

Source	Mean	SD	N	df	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Enrolment	085.3	2395	36	70	0.1849	1.67	H <sub>0</sub>
Graduation	879.3	2112.86					

Table 2 reveals that there is no significant difference between the enrolment and graduation of the girl-child in urban public junior secondary schools. (t-cal 0.1849 < t-table 1.67; df= 70; p < .05). Hence, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between enrolment and graduation figures of the girl child in urban junior secondary schools is accepted.

### Test of Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between enrolment and graduation figures of the girl-child in rural public junior secondary schools.

*Table 3: Summary of that t-test Analysis of Difference Between Enrolment and Gradation of the Girl Child in Rural Public Junior Secondary Schools*

Source	Mean	SD	N	df	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Enrolment	720.2	1654.9	36	70	0.3242	1.67	H <sub>0</sub>
Graduation	599.6	1454.8					

Table 3 shows the t-test analysis and it is discovered that there is no significant difference between enrolment and graduation of the girl-child in rural public junior secondary schools.  $t\text{-cal} = 0.3242 < t\text{-tab} = 1.684$ ;  $df = 71$ ,  $p < .05$ . It therefore means that a similar number of female students who enroll into junior secondary schools in the rural areas graduate. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between enrolment and graduation figures of the girl-child in rural public secondary schools is not rejected.

## **Discussion**

The results obtained from this study show a steady increase in enrolment over the years in both urban and rural public junior secondary schools in South West Nigeria. This could be due to the fact that the region south west of Nigeria where the study was conducted has, for the most part, experienced free education for more than five decades. It is an area in which the right to education of the girl child has long been established and entrenched into the culture and psyche of the people.

The willingness of parents to educate the girl child therefore led to a steady increase in school population over the years, perhaps, as the entire population increased. Adebola (2008) lend credence to this by stating that the region is particularly known for its thirsty quest and drive for the acquisition of education and knowledge. People there have come to the realization that the education of the girl child is a vehicle for social change as well as employment opportunity and mobilization. This is more so as the six South West states under investigation have free education programmes which means that they are non-fee paying. The parents only take responsibility for girls' uniforms, books and other school materials. Another factor that may be responsible for the result may be the relatively 'small' family sizes due to family planning campaign and the down-turn in the economy of the country. This would really enable the education of all the children, including the girls.

Again, the number of schools in urban areas is so many that the fear of the distance the girl child has to cover before getting to school is eliminated. Parents therefore have the confidence to send their daughters to school as there is always one nearby. All these factors may have accounted for the high enrolment in urban centres.

In a previous research in rural India by Yuan (2007), it was reported that distance from home was a problem and that the closest school for girls was 10 kilometers (6 Miles) away from home. Parents feared for the safety of their daughters and keep them at home instead of allowing them to trek several kilometers to get to school. That problem does not arise in the South West of Nigeria as efforts have been made to build schools as close to the settlements as possible since 1955 when the Free Education Programme was introduced, thereby giving parents the opportunity to enroll their daughters in nearby schools.

The girl child attrition in schools may be due partly to the glamour and attractions in the city. Many parents are so busy that they are unaware of what their children get up to. Some parents leave home very early in the morning and return late at night. Their assumption would be that their daughter had been to school for that day, whereas, she skipped school. After making a habit of playing truancy, the girl fails her examination and decides she is not going back to school to repeat the class she failed. In some cases, the girl is made to repeat the class and this constitutes a waste to the educational system.

Also, poverty has been identified as a major cause of attrition among girls. When money is in short supply, the girl is asked by the parents to withdraw from school to enable her brother continue schooling. This is attributable to the value the Nigerian society, as in many other societies, place on the boy over the girl child. The World Bank (2008) asserts that inequality between men and women tends to be more pronounced among the poor.

Furthermore, the attrition may be due to the challenges faced by public schools, one of which is incessant strikes by teachers. Moreover, the study area, the south-west geo-political zone of Nigeria is occupied predominantly by the Yoruba ethnic group and trading is quite prominent among them. Many children join their parents in the buying and selling business at a tender age. The profit the girls among these groups of children make could be a distraction which in turn tempts them to drop out of school.

Anukan (2001) argues that most parents withdraw their children from school out of ignorance. Lack of sponsorship is the reason why some children are unable to graduate as they are unable to provide school materials. Some lose their parents while they are still in school and no relative is willing to take on the responsibility for educating them, so they



withdraw from school. Suryadarma, Suryahadi and Sumarto (2006) refer to a study in Indonesia where it was discovered that parental death is twice more likely to make a child drop out than other factors.

In the rural areas, the girls probably work alongside their parents on the farm and may have to skip school when it is time to harvest. Gradually, the habit catches on and dropping out of school is no longer difficult. Also, whenever the crops fail, she and her parents may have to endure whatever hardship and lack of finance, she may offer to drop out. Parents may even suggest that a girl should get married if the finance to educate her is not readily available. Whenever she agrees to marry, it could mean the end of her education. Hypothesis one which states that “there is no significant difference between enrolment and graduation in urban public junior secondary schools in South West Nigeria” was accepted. A student is expected to be in junior secondary school for three years after which she graduates. The number which graduates is low in relation to the number that had been enrolled. Even though some dropped out, others transfer to the schools from other schools thereby swelling the number who actually graduate. Considering the level of enlightenment of the people of the south west, a large number of girls actually graduated from public junior secondary school. Even though some drop out, others manage to reach the final class, which is junior secondary, and graduate.

With regard to hypothesis two, it was revealed that there is no significant difference between enrolment and graduation of the girl-child in rural areas public junior secondary schools. The hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between enrolment and graduation in the rural area was therefore not rejected. The result is in consonance with that of Suryadarma, Suryahadi and Sumarto (2006) who assert that in Indonesia “nearly all those who enrolled in rural senior secondary schools finished”. Most villages and rural areas are small and the population homogeneous to the extent that most people know one another. Many are related one way or the other; if not by blood, then by marriage, friendship or membership of age grade associations.

In this type of close-knit community, it is difficult for a girl to be a truant unlike the city where there is anonymity. Since the chances of skipping school are narrow, girls stay on in school, study hard and graduate. However, though attrition may be low in the rural junior secondary schools, the few that left schools during the course of their study are not replaced to any appreciable degree as there is little or no migration

into the rural areas as there is into the urban areas. This probably accounts for the non-significant difference between enrolment and graduation in these rural area schools.

## **Conclusion**

Enrolment of the girl child into urban and rural public Junior Secondary Schools in South West Nigeria seems not a problem. The challenge that is being faced is retention of the girls in school so they can graduate. Therefore more needs to be done to ensure that the girl child's right to education is achieved with more vigour more so that the overriding objective of having an egalitarian society with political stability, technological advancement and economic self-sufficiency can be accomplished largely through the socializing influence of education on the girl child. After all, adequate provision of the necessities of life by an educated mother is expected to help in reducing the incidence of miscreants, hoodlums and street children who commit crimes for survival. Also, security, peaceful co-existence, and national development can be assured and achieved in an environment where there is equality and equity.

## **Recommendations**

1. Brilliant, but indigent female pupils should be given bursary awards and scholarship to enable them study without the burden of having to work to raise funds for their school needs or simply drop out because they cannot afford the cost of school materials.
2. Efforts should be made to ensure that the Universal Basic Education policy is implemented to the letter.
3. Enlightenment programme should be mounted and intensified to educate parents on the merits of educating the girl child.
4. Teachers should encourage girls to be hard working in order to make headway in life.
5. Penalty awaits any parent or guardian who refuses to send his or her child to school, but there is no sanction against a child who refuses to go to school. By the same token, sanctions should be imposed on any child who refuses to go to school. They could be sent to home and closely supervised.

6. Gender specific laws to protect female children from abuse and exploitation should be put in place at all levels of governance.

## References

- [1] Adebola, S. A. (2008). Plight of the disadvantaged groups in access to education and completion rate in Nigerian Universities. Lead Paper Presented at a workshop of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities on 29<sup>th</sup> February, 2008 at the University of Lagos.
- [2] Anukan, I. K. (2001). Investigating factors influence primary school pupils' learning achievement in Imo State. In N. A. Nwagu, E. T. Ehiamezor, M. A. Ogunu, and M. Nwadiani (Eds.) *Current Issues in Educational Management*. Benin City: Nigerian Association of Educational Administration and Planning.
- [3] Bilesanmi-Awoderu, J. B. and Kalesanwo, O. O. (2009). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme and Women Entrepreneurship in Science and Technology: a catalyst for enhancing female participation in National Development. *Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship and Education*, Institute of Economic Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia. 1 – 2; 72 – 87.
- [4] Bolarin, T. A. (2005). Women participation in higher education in Nigeria. In B. B. Oderinde, and O. E. Ekpo, (Eds.) *Value Education*. Lagos: The Nigeria Academy of Education.
- [5] Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education –4<sup>th</sup> Ed.* Lagos: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council.
- [6] Gupta, G. R (2006). Unlocking the power of women: Is education the key? Washington D. C. International Centre for Research on Women. Retrieved January 5, 2008, from <http://www.icrw.com>.
- [7] Hallman, K., Peracca, S., Catino, J. and Ruiz, M. J. (2007). Assessing the multiple disadvantages of Mayan girls: The effects of gender, ethnicity, poverty and residence on education in Guatemala-brief No. 16.
- [8] Horvathova, L. (2009). Position of women in Public Administration in Slovak Republic in the case of Municipal Officers. *Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship and Education*, Institute of Economic Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia. 3 – 4; 35 – 41.
- [9] Ibeh, E. (2009). Factors affecting performance of women entrepreneurs. *Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship and Education*, Institute of Economic Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia. 1 – 2; 39 – 50.
- [10] Obanya, P. A. I. (2001). Financing the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme. In Maduewesi (Ed.) *Financing Education in Nigeria Year Book No 3*. Ibadan: Nigeria Academy of Education.
- [11] Obanya, P. A. I. (2004). *Education for the knowledge economy*. Ibadan: Mosoro Publishers.
- [12] Suryadarma, D., Suryahadi, A., Sumarto, S (2006). Causes of low secondary school enrolment in Indonesia. Retrieved May 3, 2008 from [www.smeru.or.id](http://www.smeru.or.id)

- [13] Tanbawel, Ugochukwu, Akintomide, Agunwah, Okafor and Dada (Eds. (2006) *Basic and Senior Secondary Education 2004-2005*. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education
- [14] United Nations Children's Emergency Funds (2007). Unicef scores Nigeria low on poverty eradication and human capital development. Retrieved August 7, 2007, from [www.voiceofnigeria.org/unicef](http://www.voiceofnigeria.org/unicef)
- [15] United Nations Children's Fund (2005). *The state of the world's children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*. New York: UNICEF. Worldbank (2008). *Engendering Education: Why do girls drop out in Developing countries*. Retrieved May 16, 2008, from [www.youthink.worldbank.com/issues](http://www.youthink.worldbank.com/issues)
- [16] Yuan (2007). For a girl in rural India, education is a difficult pursuit. Retrieved On May 3, 2008, from <http://www.cnn.com>

Article history: Received: 17 July 2010

Accepted: 3 October 2010