Girl-Child Inclusive Mindset Change Education in Uganda: The Impact of National Curricular Design

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Girl-Child Inclusive Mindset Change   Education in   Uganda: The Impact of National Curricular Design

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Abstract: *The study aimed to analyze the impact of national curricular design on girl-child inclusive mindset change education in Uganda. The study was guided by two main objectives namely: To discuss the global girl-child inclusive mindset education changes, and to analyze the Ugandan case of girl-child inclusive attitude transformation education programmes. The study was guided by a qualitative research design involving a secondary data review. Review of data followed case study design. Data collection procedures included a review of textbooks, journal articles and government reports. Data analysis was done through categorization of documents that were grouped into subthemes. The findings were that some cultural norms continue to make it difficult for society and parents to support girl-child education in the same way that they do boy-child education. It is recommended that Uganda should create an enabling environment for girls by addressing harmful social norms and financial barriers that prevent girls from accessing education to advance the effects of girls' education towards gender equality.*

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1. Introduction

A crucial challenge for global development is ensuring everyone has access to high-quality basic education. However, increasing girls' access to basic education has remained an elusive aim despite the efforts being made by governments and education partners(Asare-danso, 2017 & Meier,2019). The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are quite clear about the need for all children to have access to high-quality education on a global scale. For instance, the third MDG aims to advance women's empowerment and gender equality (Sachs,2019). Only until women are provided access to high-quality education at the top of the educational ladder will this crucial aim be realized. Therefore, the bottom line is access to education. Indeed, education enables girls to challenge traditional gender roles, advocate for their rights, and contribute to a more equitable society. Both boy and girl education boosts productivity and supports economic growth. Women do not participate in the official job market as much as males do globally, although numerous studies indicate that allowing women to work would have economic advantages. The International Labor Organization report noted that educating girls has proven to be one of the most important ways of breaking poverty cycles and is likely to have significant impacts on access to formal jobs in the longer term (Maul,2020 & Lybbert,2018).

The forces of tradition and custom, religion, and family orientation and influence have greatly contributed to the victimization of the girl child as a victim of gender

discrimination and stereotyping in Uganda. These obstacles still prevent them from developing into fully responsible individuals who could make a significant and constructive contribution to Uganda's national and sustainable development. The introduction of inclusive education in Uganda's national curriculum resulted in the production of a developmental strategy that was intended to address the learning requirements of all students with an emphasis on those who are particularly susceptible to marginalization and exclusion, such as girls (Hayes,2017). The plan was designed to enhance students' academic performance, social skills, and personal growth as a means of creating institutions that cater to the needs of underrepresented groups, such as the education of girls. However, despite the national curriculum's attempts, girls continued to be at a disadvantage because some of the courses they could choose from were seen as belonging to a particularly masculine or feminine group (Muhwezi,2023). This in turn influenced girl-child selection of subjects and later courses taken affecting their future career choices. This hindered the attainment of inclusive national development and further undermined the progress toward achieving inclusive sustainable development for all people of Uganda (Eron,2017). And yet when girls fail to meet the needs of their career passion and paths they could resort to early school dropout, domestic and sexual violence, child labour and exploitation, and early marriages, among others that deter their prospects of contributing to national development. This paper focused on reviewing secondary literature to analyse the impact of National curricular design in facilitating girl-child inclusive mind change in Uganda. Particular attention was put on the extent of mindset change impact that the current curricular interventions have impacted on the girl child to achieve this goal.

In light of the above, to achieve a holistic inclusive national development goal, a developmental strategy was created as a result of the inclusion of inclusive education in Uganda's national curriculum to meet the learning needs of all students, with a focus on those who are more likely to be marginalized and excluded, such as girls (Ross,2022). The plan also aimed at developing institutions that would serve the requirements of underrepresented groups, such as the education of girls, through fostering students' academic success, social development, and personal improvement. However, despite the national curriculum's attempts, girls continue to be at a disadvantage because some of the courses they can choose from are still seen as belonging to a particularly masculine or feminine group (Nagami,2019). This has in turn influenced girl-child selection of subjects and later courses taken affecting their future career choices. This has indeed hindered the attainment of inclusive national development and further undermined

the progress toward achieving inclusive sustainable development for all people of Uganda (Ouma,2017).

2. Literature Review

This part discusses successful case studies of girl-child inclusive mindset change education.

2.1 Global girl-child inclusive mindset changes education

Young girls have been dominating boys in terms of educational performance across the globe. Indeed the late 20th century has seen a gender reversal change in education in the form of girls' outperformance and boys' underachievement(Ullah & Ullah, 2019 & Mackatiani,2020). This is a very interesting and remarkable shift observed in the global north as well as in the global south. Globally, Taiwan had the highest female literacy rate in 2021 at 99.99%(Vickers,2022s). Taiwan is among countries that have been under the influence of Chinese cultures and traditions rooted in China's political and economic influence over the country. Even though Taiwan has its specific historical, social, economic, political, and cultural contexts, it shares these patriarchal features with other so-called Confucian societies, such as Japan and Korea (Lin,2011 & Yeh,2017). The country embarked on a comprehensive education reform agenda. Citizens from the age of six to 15 are legally required to receive education. Education in Taiwan is a 6-3-3-4 system composed of six years of elementary, three years of lower-secondary, three years of upper-secondary, and four years of college education. The compulsory education is divided into two stages — the first six years at the elementary school level and the latter three in junior high school. In Taiwan, employment prospects for women significantly affect their aspirations for higher education. Women's aspirations for post-collegiate education, particularly doctoral education, are closely associated with their family background, notably economic conditions. Taiwan highlighted the purposeful way it viewed female child education as a critical component of its economic development in its national curriculum reform measures. This has had a big impact on her plans for inclusive education.

Further another successful case study of girl-child inclusive mindset change education in the world is Estonia. The country had the second-highest female literacy rate in the world in 2021 standing at 99.98% (Soler,2021). In Estonia, requirements of education are determined by the national curriculum for basic schools and upper secondary schools, first adopted in 1996 and slightly adjusted in 2002. Based on the national curriculum, schools compile their curricula. The

educational system could be described as follows: Preschool childcare institutions include crèches (until the age of 3) and nursery schools (3–7 years), which are maintained either publicly or privately. Preschool education is followed by the 9-year basic school, which in turn can be divided into three stages: 1st stage (7–9/10 years), 2nd stage (10–12/13 years) and 3rd stage (13–15/16) (Rasku-Puttonen et al., 2011). The first two stages are often referred to as primary school. After basic school, there are two pathways: the 3-year secondary school or the (at least) 3-year vocational school. Secondary-school leavers can also go on to a vocational secondary 35 school for one or two years, or to a university or an applied higher education establishment. During the population and housing census in 2021, information on the highest level of education attained by inhabitants of Estonia was also gathered and data were compared with that of other countries. It was established further that Estonian women are still among the most highly educated in Europe, and overall Estonia ranks seventh in terms of the share of people with higher education. The same census revealed that in Estonia, women were much more likely to pursue higher education than men. The findings were that in the 25–64 age group, 53% of women and 34% of men have higher education(Republic of Estonia, 2022).

Seychelles is one of the top-ranking nations in Africa for having the greatest system for educating girls. It is ranked 28th globally for critical thinking in teaching and 34th for graduate skillsets in terms of total rankings (Purvis,2020 & Davidson,2020). Since the country gained independence from the British in 1976, numerous reforms have been implemented, and these reforms serve as the foundation for this effective educational system. This was supported by the creation of a purposeful education master plan described in the strategic plan of the Ministry of Education, which highlighted the importance of inclusivity in the educational field. The prevailing perception of Seychellois society is that it is matrifocal. This is due to the idea that women have a profound influence on every aspect of society, including the family, the church, politics, and organizations that provide public services (Choppy,2020 & Osituyo,2018). Seychelles has been regarded as particularly cutting-edge in its promotion of women in responsible roles ever since its social upheaval in the final quarter of the 20th century. The socialist revolution that the nation went through was crucial for removing social restrictions against the discrimination of girls and transforming society's perspective on access to education and the dynamics of the labour market. This was purposefully incorporated to account for diversity in the nation's curriculum reviews.

2.2 Ugandan case of girl-child inclusive attitude transformation education programmes

Therefore, the Ugandan government gives girl-child inclusive attitude transformation education a high priority, which is reflected in the designs of the country's national curricula. This technique has been implemented with knowledge of the nation's strongly patriarchal culture. Indeed, in the past, less focus was placed on supporting a girl child's education, particularly in Uganda's rural communities. The country began initiatives to promote girl child education, such as the Universal Education System (UES) for primary and secondary level, and the National Strategy for Girl's Education in Uganda 2015-2019, to alter this view (Akwero,2023 & Kikulwe,2017). The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) through the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), undertook a review of the Lower Secondary Curriculum, aimed at providing a learning environment, opportunities, interactions, tasks and instructions that foster deep learning by putting the learner at the centre of the learning experience(NCDC, 2019).

Therefore, in February 2020, the Government rolled out the new lower secondary education curriculum to meet learners' needs. The new curriculum design for lower secondary has led to the reduction of taught subjects in that eleven of the subjects are compulsory and one is elective. The compulsory subjects are English Language, Mathematics, History, Geography, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Physical Education, Religious Education (CRE and IRE), Entrepreneurship Education, and Kiswahili. With these subjects at hand, what is still at large is for the government to increase sensitization programs across schools through career guidance offices to encourage girls to take up subjects on equal measure with boys beyond the apparent subject selection gender stereotypes.

Although there appears to be a National Strategy for Girls Education in Uganda with the aim of programming for girls' education, the nation must continue to address the issue of economic welfare within families, which appears to continue impeding girl child education, creating a clear framework for the identification, implementation, and coordination of interventions designed to promote girls' education as a broad national strategy that directs national (World Bank,2017). The escalation in teenage pregnancies reached unprecedented heights within Africa during COVID-19 school closures. In Uganda, about 2,400 girls became pregnant during the lockdown (Sserwanja,2021 & Musinguzi,2022). This was indeed a setback to the progressive campaign to support girl child education. Moreover, many schools

were reluctant to admit such girls back after the covid 19 lockdown.

3. Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative research design. In qualitative data analysis, patterns and themes in textual data are found, examined, and interpreted to ascertain how these patterns and themes contribute to the resolution of the current research issues (Järvinen,2020). The process involved analysis of non-numeric information such as journal articles, textbooks, reports and other text documents. Case Study design guided the study. This enabled the researcher to learn more specifically, contextually, in-depth information on this particular real-world topic. It enabled the researcher to investigate the primary traits, significance, and ramifications of the research problem. To elucidate the connection to concerns, provide context for the study, and support the policy argument, reviewed data was acquired from textbooks, journal articles, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) reports, and Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). The study was based on textual analysis qualitative data collection methodology, which involved reviewing secondary data from textbooks and academic journals to discuss girl-child inclusive mindset change education in Uganda about the impact of national curricular design.

4. Results and Discussion

It has been stated that a nation must make a conscious effort to invest extensively in the establishment of infrastructures and other required learning materials to support the intervention if it wants any type of female child-inclusive education for attitude change to be successful. To support the new strategies, the teachers also need to receive refresher training. This idea is further collaborated by Beteille (2020), who noted that teacher training is a key component in any curriculum implementation process. Also, the national programs to make parents more aware are essential for achieving this comprehensive mentality shift free of cultural prejudice. However, this was partially by scholars such as Hervie (2018) who opined that a combination of strategies is key in supporting any mindset change through curriculum reviews.

The reviews of the national curriculum should include input from all facets of society. While these inputs can reflect the needs of the nation, efforts should be made to give them a global perspective to reflect and satisfy the needs of the world in the twenty-first century and to better prepare the students for the demands of the global market (Joshi,2019). This was one of the conclusions on the steps that nations like Taiwan, Estonia, and the Seychelles had to take to build an inclusive system of female child education that suited their needs.

Another important discovery was that some cultural norms continue to make it difficult for society and parents to support girl children's education in the same way that they do boy children's education (Chodorow,2018). The goals of today's educational systems go well beyond the traditional African indigenous education, which focuses on preparing girls to be homemakers. To underline the value of female child education beyond cultural interpretations, this asks for ongoing awareness initiatives for mindset development to be sponsored by the government on various media sources and other structures such as churches and mosques. This idea was supported by Reese (2022) who emphasized the role of government and other supporting institutional structures in creating change in achieving inclusive education.

Another important result was that, in contrast to nations where girls' agency is completely removed from the educational system, those that have been successful in having high levels of girls' education have demonstrated to have progressive economies. This gives Uganda a strong understanding of why it must maintain a focus on promoting the education of both boys and girls. As a result, a society that is self-sufficient and supportive of family welfare will be developed. The state will also be steady when other things are held constant once households achieve economic stability.

It was also noted that due largely to the gendered socialization they experience in their families, communities, and schools, the majority of young girls lack the life skills necessary to deal with obstacles in their future. Social skills known as "life skills" are those that are required for children to develop to their full human potential (Singh,2015). High self-esteem, assertiveness, decision-making, communication, and general interpersonal skills are a few of these that can help one succeed in life. The lack of emphasis on life skills in schools continues to impact girls the most because they are already at a disadvantage. This was also observed by Mukembo (2017), who noted that life skills should be a key component in achieving an all-inclusive education to demystify existing society's mindset on boy-girl education.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the aspect of a girl-child inclusive mindset change education in Uganda is very detrimental to the country's national development. To achieve this there is a need to continuously review the national curricular design

to accommodate dynamics in education given current century needs. Even though the country has made major progress in the issue of involving girl-child in existing education reforms, more needs to be done to change their mindset, that of their parents and society at large. But in implementing these interventions, the boy child should not be forgotten. Therefore, a balanced intervention that looks at both genders, in the long run, would be key for enabling the nation to achieve holistic social and economic development.

5.2 Recommendations

In the light of the findings, the study therefore suggests the following policy solutions that can effectively address the research problem based on the examined literature:

1. The research recommends promoting girl child agency, enhancing the policy framework, creating a mechanism to follow students who are pregnant or parenting to encourage enrollment, and implementing structural and infrastructural changes to help them remain in school.
2. The study's findings demonstrated that Uganda's education system continues to be founded on colonial ideology and culture. It is therefore recommended that the current education system should be purposely decolonized to reflect Africanism. The indigenous aspects of African culture that supported the agency of a girl child education should be incorporated in new interventions aimed at increasing girl child education for the social and economic development of Uganda.
3. To safeguard the girl child from harmful societal norms, there is a need to address existing cultural norms that hinder the inclusion of girls in the current education opportunities. To achieve this, Uganda should create an enabling environment for girls by addressing harmful social norms, such as early or forced marriage, child labour, gender-based expectations around care work and employment, providing social protection packages, and addressing financial barriers that prevent girls from accessing education to advance the effects of girls' education towards gender equality.
4. Intentional programs should be implemented and already-existing ones should be improved to allow girls access to chances for lifelong learning. The current educational systems should incorporate 21st-century skills into the curricula for girls, including critical thinking, effective communication, collaboration, problem-solving, a global mindset, and engaging with information and communications technologies. For school-age females, the Ministry of Education and Sports should offer high-quality, fully funded non-formal education with a focus on numeracy, reading, the development of skills for respectable work, and life skills.
5. The study also suggests community campaigns to inform teenagers about the effects of early sexual activity, targeted sexual and reproductive health education at very young ages, and training programs to facilitate parent-child conversations about sex. Additionally, it would safeguard a girl child from being pregnant too young in emergency scenarios like pandemic lockdowns.
6. There is a need to provide girls with adequate life skill programs for them to realize their full potential and contribute to national development.

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