PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER INEQUALITY AND THE BARRIER OF CULTURE ON EDUCATION

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"Educate a woman you educate a nation"

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Abstract: *Education plays an important role in gender equality. Two thirds of illiterate adults are women; this impacts on the lives of families and children because many mothers are the caretakers of the family. This societal challenge might also not be resolved as fast as expected and remains high on the global agenda. It is for this reason that the study will discuss how education can impact on bridging the gender gap. From a young age, many women are taught to be submissive, subordinate and obedient to their male counterparts; and they are less valued than men. This level of consciousness which reinforces cultural norms and expectations ensures the continuous cycle of male patriarchy. Cultural processes maintain gender differences which act as barriers preventing an increase in the education of girls and women and ultimately reducing the number of women in positions of power, thus leading to a small scale of gender equality in a male-dominated society.*

Children spend most of their lives in classrooms and the study presumes that education environments are also the incubation hubs where girls and women can be equally educated and eventually take on their rightful place in society. It has been demonstrated time and again that young girls remain excluded from society, alienated in some cultures because they are female or even unwanted, and can even be murdered because a woman is a liability to her father unlike a male. Education reinforces and conscientises both males and females on social justice, equality; fairness and respect.

Key-words: *Gender inequality; culture; education; inequality; discrimination*

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1. Introduction

The aim of the study is to examine gender culture on the education of girls and women. The paper will examine the literature on gender and education and the access of girls and women to education and their experiences in developing states such as South Africa. This forms an important study because women, particularly in the developing world, who have not been represented much by early feminist scholars, do not have much access to secondary and higher education. This hampers their representation, progress and the advancement of families in this context. The paper will therefore discuss gender inequality and explain the barriers which prevent equal access to education for girls and women and how education can impact on creating a consciousness of equality for all.

Globally, there are 101 million children who do not attend school; the disturbing reality is that more than half are girls (UNICEF, 2003). Upon the release of former South African President Nelson Mandela after spending 27 years in prison, he communicated to the people that knowledge is power and that people should go back to school to educate themselves. This was communicated to many South Africans who were about to enter a transitional period after years of racial discrimination and gross inequality. Women continue to be marginalised and oppressed as a result of gender, socioeconomic circumstances and are deprived from access to free and quality education (UNICEF, 2003).

In 1990, in Jomtien, Thailand, at the World Conference on Education for All, world leaders agreed that the priorities were to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to hindrances that prevent the participation and access for girls and women". The deadline at the time was to ensure universal access, and completion of primary education by 2000. At the World Education Forum, held in 2000 that year in Dakar, new deadlines were fixed: all children should complete "compulsory primary education of good quality" by 2015. At the UN's Millennium Summit, heads of states adopted these targets as two of the eight Millennium Development Goals for reducing world poverty (Choike, 2008).

Access to education has become an important civil rights issue. Access to education for women and minority rights is still a major challenge (Leer, Snedeker and Koszorus, 2010). There has been a neglect of racist, heterosexist, classist and religious biases among others, which have prevented social justice particularly gender equality (Okin, 1994). The World Economic Annual Global Gender Gap revealed a gender gap drop in recent years in some developing countries such as South Africa. There is a dire need to bridge the gap in ensuring gender equality. Women's rights are enshrined in constitutions, policies, Constitution Acts, employment equity documents, domestic violence frameworks, discrimination and empowerment documents; nevertheless, transformation remains slow. Even though

all these efforts have been made, women continue to be oppressed and side-lined in different spheres of society. Indigenous culture and societal norms often discriminate against women, leading to their exclusion from authority and succession. Traditionally, women have been discarded from progressing; hence they have been deprived of education, money, property and advancement in comparison to their male counterparts. The study will discuss the role of education in bridging the gender parity gap and how education and training can impact positively on the advancement of girls and women. The study will also explore whether cultures promote for women to have access to education, or not, further widening the gender gap in certain fields which remain male-dominated.

According to Wharton (2005), women perform 70 per cent of the world's work, receive 10 per cent of the world's wages and own less than one per cent of the world's property. These daunting facts demonstrate that women have been placed in these situations in an effort to ensure that male domination remains. The late 1980s led to women and children becoming the group living in poverty, this worsened into the 1990s. The transformation of the first world women's consciousness and the consolidation of feminisms in the third world helped to make constructive dialogue occurred in 2006 during COP 12 in Nairobi which witnessed the globalisation of the feminist movement. The paper will therefore discuss whether feminist work addresses issues of all oppressed women or only a specific category of women such as white middle and upper class women as opposed to poor black women.

Education has focused on access and parity closing the gap between girls and boys. However, decision makers have not addressed the norms and cultures that initiate inequality (USAID, 2008). O'Connor (2010) notes that women continue to face barriers mainly enforced by definitions of the sexes, males and male-dominated career paths; female embodiment and domestic responsibility. The paper will review the relationship between gender and education and will explore more specifically how indicators such as culture, religion and region impact on education. The paper will focus primarily on gender inequality, paying attention to the barriers of gender inequality which exist for girls and women. The study questions why women in third world countries have not managed to be at par with industrialised first worlds and why so many of these girls and women continue to be marginalised. This study will also explore whether all women are equally represented. Furthermore, the paper will discuss the challenges of gender inequality and why gender matters for the education of young girls.

The UN Entity for Gender Equality was created (1976) to ensure gender parity across field, the question that remains is how can this be mainstreamed into education for greater impact? Contradictory enough equality has relied on men, as most men continue to make decisions in big corporates, lead institutions and dominate most spheres on society. In order for change to occur society needs to let

go of patriarchal cultural influence. There is a need for policy intervention which will lead to a conscious shift in attitudes and behaviours from the grass roots. However, this can only occur when women make decisions and share power on violence against women, women's right and reproductive rights; ultimately, this will lead to action and ensure gender parity. In many developing countries, women are affected by conflict and displacement, leaving little room for decision-making. Women are often the ones who keep families together, the mothers of the nation and the ones who contribute most to reconstruction and reconciliation after war due to their inherent ability to cope, survive, protect nature and reconcile the nation. Often they are the ones to also suffer most in wars as their men go to war and they have to keep the family together; witness murders and killing; and are often victims by the opposition perpetrators, yet they do not classify themselves as victims, but society does (Coetzer, 2011).

The educational problems that face African communities are still present today. Education disparities have been as a result of social class inequalities, education is therefore a disadvantage for women. On the contrary, Jacobs (1996) notes that education is an advantage for women and gender inequality is evident in some area of the education system. Education institutions display themselves as being gender-neutral, although such institutions are clearly male dominated with male bias and cultures which ensures that the global balance of power remains under a male patriarchal system which promotes homosocial cultures. O'Connor (2010) agrees with Hasu and notes that men will not be the driving force in tackling gender disparities and attitudes; they will not fight a battle which resides with their male counterparts and which is in their favour.

The above demonstrates that there is a dire need for women to express their opinions, become the driving force in their destiny and for their contribution to be acknowledged. There is consequently a need for empowering women economically and strengthening their representation and participation which is gravely lacking in most spheres (Coetzer, 2011). Women must be encouraged to have equal access to education and culturally induced gender stereotypes which prohibit equal access for women within education and in their careers must be eradicated. Education will lead to achieving measurable and realistic results and will impact on greater achievement of the Millennium Development Goals such as reducing poverty; greater healthcare access; human right protection; this will also impact on families and communities as women often nurture societies and the role of women in society will be more present with them making significant contributions in the outcomes (Subramanian, 2005).

O'Connor (2010) notes that men are a social category which is associated with hierarchy and power over women, whereas women are defined as subordinates. The inability of most women to access education, and the lack of female representation in power and prestigious positions is a universal challenge. The Dakar Framework for

Action Education For All is a collective commitment to act. One of the frameworks goals aims at eradicating gender disparity in primary and secondary education in order to reach gender equality by 2015 through full and equal access to achievement of good quality education to girls. Subramanian (2005) notes that the Dakar "Education for All" and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) promotes gender parity through the participation of boys and girls and equal gender equality though education for both boys and girls.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) promote for eliminating gender inequality in primary and secondary education. The MDGs promote for gender equality and the empowerment of women (Subramanian, 2005). Therefore, the promotion of gender equality means that girls have the right to education through access and participation; right within education through awareness, environment, process and outcomes and the right through education through linking education in gender justice. Development and change are presumably occurring in most parts of the world, except in Africa and cultural features in the region have led to these negative effects (Harris and Huntington, 2000). Investing in the education of women ensures a socio-economic benefit for society such as increased productivity, higher family incomes, delayed marriages, reduced fertility rates and improved health and survival rates for infants and children (USAID, 2008, p 1).

2. Research Methodology

The structure of the study will form the collection and documentation of data with the aim of answering questions and the hypothesis. Firstly, there will be a quantitative, exploratory literature study which will search definitions, theories, policy, viewpoints, principles, methodologies and other research findings. Statistics relevant to the global gender discourse will form part of the data collected. The study will focus on gender equality within the globe and how education can ensure gender parity.

Secondly, primary and secondary sources will be used to conduct desk research on library sources, internet sources, documents and frameworks. The study will also utilise global frameworks, plans and documents related to gender and education. The report findings will conclude on the dynamics responsible for reinforcing stereotypes and challenges related to gender discrimination.

2.1. Literature review

Background on gender studies

Gender studies is an interdisciplinary study and academic field which focuses on gender identity and gender representation as central theme. The disciplines study

gender and sexuality in many fields. The term gender in gender studies refers to social and cultural constructions such as masculinity and femininity and the roles of being a male and that of being a female within societal constructions Gender studies take into consideration biological features of both sexes and the cultural expectations by the men and women (Wikipedia, 2012). The study of gender grew out of the second wave of the women's movement; the movement expressed feminist, criticism for ignoring women. Women were rarely subjects of research and activities dominated by women such as housework received little attention. There was a male bias in the literature particularly in sociology. Scholars have (O'Connor, 1995) questioned whether sociology could become a study of society not to promote for study on the science of a male dominated society. The differences between men and women were in the documents of gender studies which were gradually included into sociological literature. The sociology of women gave way to the sociology of gender. The increase in masculinity and femininity and its value was linked to domination and subordination, such examples include that male masculinity and female subordination are culturally applauded (O' Connor, 1995).

Between 1975 and 1985 women gained greater access to higher education due to liberal values, that posit that women alike men should be given the same opportunities as they are just as capable as men academically. The goal of this was to allow for women to graduate adding value to the labour market and integrating into high paying occupations ultimately adding value to the development of society (Bradley, 2002).

Mitra-Kahn (2000) (cited in Schober and Ebmer (2009) posit that discrimination of females was growth promoting in the early stages of semi-industrial states. However Seguinoi (2009) (cited in Schober and Ebmer (2009) notes that gender inequality in access to education and jobs can have devastating effects on economic growth, although this is based on the link between industrial exporting states. This study concurs with Schober and Ebmer (2009) that gender inequality in education is detrimental for economic growth as gender inequality reduces human capital which impacts on economic growth negatively.

The term 'women' has been criticised by feminist sociologists due to the increase in gender and its relations to age, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation and class are all features which impact on gender disparities. All these aspects remain intertwined and more investigation on their relationship is required. It is due to reasons like these that gender remains problematic. Some sceptics say that gender is as a result of language and not social constructional relations and overgeneralisations based on one group of women. Gender in culture is a way in which humans identify themselves, as lessons learnt have social relations (Wharton, 2005).

Gender has also increased in the development of studies and theories of justice since the 1980s. The neglect of gender inequality in the past was detected due to

household dynamics and public economics and politics. The second factor is due to arguments by sex, such as false gender neutrality which occurred and the neutrality between sexes was obscured. Domestic dichotomy poses problems that women are only good for rearing children and maintain households; their contribution has not been regarded as work. The work which is done in poor countries by women such as grazing land, farming and fetching water has been regarded as insignificant (Okin, 1994), although these duties in some instances keep economies and societies alive.

What is feminism?

Feminism started with focusing on women's issues, but has also focused on activism such as environmental issues, animal rights and reproductive matters. Therefore, modern feminists promote equality on all levels in all areas of society, focusing on political, social and cultural indictors which prohibit civil liberties in society (Wikipedia, 2012). Feminists Harnet Taylor and Charlotte Perkins Gilman in The Feminine Mystique (cited in Okin, 1994, p 6) noted in their literature that the women they were liberating would have servants, thus demonstrating that their theory did not cater for women from the lower classes such as poor black African slaves. Virginia Woolf and Elizabeth Spelman however were the exception, as they noted that feminist theory was focused on one group of women (1998), that is middle-class women in Western industrialised cultures (Lorber, 2010).

Scholars have questioned why women should be discriminated on cross-cultural differences and notes that white feminists excluded women of different groups from their literature even though their sexist experiences are the same; black women endured the same experiences of prejudice and inequality, perhaps to a worse degree than their white sisters (Okin, 1994) . The only difference was that the feminists at the time were the wives of white slave owners and could not communicate the extent of inequality and demeaning experiences of black poor slave women. Sexism is a form of oppression which is felt mostly by women, regardless of race or class. This questions why feminism and the justice of poor black women remain open for further enquiry. Currently, African women continue to be marginalised to a worse extent in comparison to their white female counter-parts (Okin, 1994).

Defining gender inequality

Gender was previously known as psychological, social and cultural aspects of maleness and femaleness. Gender represents the characteristics of males and females in social life and culture. There is also the belief that biological and genetic difference allows that natural and social cannot be separated. Wharton (2005) notes

that other scientists argue that this isn't true. Gender is not an individual characteristic such as behavioural traits that people possess based on a particular sex category. Gender equality means that men and women have equal opportunity to realise their full human rights and contribute and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political development (USAID, 2008).

Gender parity and equity are the building blocks of equity in education. Parity is attained when the same amount of boys and girls in the same age groups, enter the education system, achieve and advance in educational goals (USAID, 2008). Equity is the process of treating girls and boys fairly. Equity does not entail treating all learners the same. The World Bank (USAID, 2008) notes that equity therefore allows for equality of opportunity among people, promoting their talents and efforts rather than predetermined circumstances such as race, gender, social and family background.

Gender is a system of social practices; creating gender differences and creates inequality on the basis of these differences. Gender therefore creates distinction and inequality. Gender also has three features which include that gender is a process and fixed state; gender occurs at all levels of social structures and is not only a characteristics of individuals and gender is important in organising relations of inequality. Okin (1994) notes that feminism generally transpired from a white middle- and upper-class perspective which did not include the concerns of other women from other races, cultures and religion or classes. This in itself posed a problem with the literature. The status of women, in the global competitive market has changed little (Subramanian, 2005).

There is a staggering amount of literature on gender which has led to an increase in conceptual and theoretical frameworks have sufficed. Gender has no common meaning even amongst feminists (Wharton, 2005). Wharton (2005) defines gender as a categorical denomination and the production of recognisable difference. Angela Harris (1990) (Okin, 1994, p 8) discussed the experiences of culture and gender inequality, she clearly demonstrated the difference between black women and white women with regards to rape and that this point needs to be explored even further, because there are difference in the extent of the women's oppression and inequality. Spelman and Harris (Okin, 1994, p 8) however do not agree with white feminists who ignore the continued marginalisation of poor black women.

Women have been oppressed as a result of institutions and processes which promote male bias; this has become acceptable by women in oppressive cultures. However, the oppressed eventually become silenced and become the oppressors themselves. One wonders if men would endure these practices if they were to be in the same position? Feminists should seek solutions to problems of all women. Okin (1994) notes that there is a need for educating women on oppression and knowledge

on culture. Different women from various races, cultures, places share a similar oppression. Therefore, there is a need to rethink justice and feminism all together.

2.2. Why does gender inequality exists?

Attention has not been paid to the barriers of education of girls and young women. Access, duration, and the quality are all critical variables in the educational benefits. Cultural stereotypes often overlook educational policy and frameworks which do not further reinforce the gender gap (USAID, 2008).

Both women and men remain portrayed as villain and victim, inequality is viewed as a set of social forces. From a young age culture becomes entrenched into children, thus reinforcing gender difference. The forces are subtle and are an unconscious exercise of power over people (Wharton, 2005). As individuals develop they bring personal interests into institutions and this shapes their interactions (O'Connor, 2012).

Sex as a concept unifies anatomical features, biological functions, bodily desires and regimes of classification. Traditional beliefs on male dominance and male patriarchy are assumed to underline sexual division of labour positing that women should only produce babies. This implies that women do not have babies, but that babies are a product of material diverse social exchanges, relations and contributions. In contrast to her views women are seen to make babies only. Therefore, patriarchy reinforces views that women are exclusively meant for sex and making babies. On the contrary, women have demonstrated time and again them alike men can be both mother and a professional (Wharton, 2005).

Bradley (2002) notes that women's choice in education is based on rewards which are multidimensional and not economical. Gender impartiality has worsened due to the notion that women don't study certain fields such as Science, Education and Technology (SET).

Culture emphasises that women should be nurturers thus taking the caretaking roles which have lower rates of economic paying occupations feminine roles such as humanities and social sciences, whereas male dominated fields include business, engineering and technology. This demonstrates how culture has impacted on female choices in society (Bradley, 2002).

Mama (2006) notes that intellectual capital is related to cultural development. Cultural challenges create circumstances and cultural victims which prevents progress and development. There is a clear line between traditional expectations and challenges to gender equity and misconstrued representation such as violence and abuse which do not stem from culture. If gender inequality has become the norm then the distinction between culture and male patriarchy should be distinguished.

2.3. The relationship between culture and gender

Cultural values do not define or constitute culture, although they are thought to be the key cultural barriers of economic progress. "Values "are defined as conceptions of the desirable, common ideas on what is good. (Harrison and Huntington, 2000) Cultural values are important as they are adaptive, subject to negotiations, however they don't determine cultural values which guide social action (Harrison and Huntington, 2000).

In certain cultures, women are oppressed and often regarded as less than that of a man due to stereotypes of masculinity, femininity, male patriarchy and because we live in a male dominated society as many men remain in the position to make decision and balance global power. This is evident in multinational corporations, delegations in Heads of States and education institutions more specifically. This means that men make decisions on the access that women have to education, opportunities available for women in education and higher education investments available for women. Therefore, there is a need for greater inclusion and participation for women, who remain excluded, oppressed and undermined in decision-making processes. There is ample research on the contributions that women have made in education such as their contribution to research, teaching and learning and different academic fields of study, thus demonstrating their value and contributions. Women remain at the forefront of education as most education institutions in developing states like Sub-Saharan Africa employ more women, their workforce comprises of women, yet these very women remain excluded in holding high ranks, decision-making processes and the representation of women.

Cultural careers in underdeveloped states such as Sub-Saharan Africa continue to the hamper economic growth. Harrison and Huntington (2000) note that a large number of African values and norms are compatible with economic development and political diversity). Cultural careers include vocations such as the caretaking of children; shared family work for children; compliance to elders and ensuring social networks remain intact. There often combat schooling because they are so time consuming and are regarded as more important that education. This is also as a result of economic and social activities.

Harrison and Huntington (2000) note that it is incorrect to say that culture and values which form part of national cultural "character is inflexible." Cultural beliefs on the contrary are tools for adaptation not fixed patterns that determine institutions. Culture is a mix of shared values and beliefs, activities in daily routines of life and experiences based on interaction that have emotional meaning. Culture raises children in certain ways; this often creates problems later on in their lives. Harrison and Huntington (2000) give reference to the difference between how Western children and African children differ in their upbringing and later in adulthood. This

knowledge is transferred through nonverbal channels of participation and modelling. Matters such as practices around childcare cannot be blamed for hampering economic and social progress. According to Harris and Huntington (2000) it is because of the ecological differences around regional, national and international institutions which hamper the capacity of children and the youth.

There is a diversity across the African continent which is based on shared values, attitudes and institutions which binds African people together, there is also however an eagerness for social change which will benefit all the peoples of Africa. Culture has been a prominent feature which continues to impact on female education and cultural influences impede on education as seen in Muslim cultures and safety, security and distance issues. Where women are not allowed to travel alone or without the consent of a women's husband or father. African cultural values are the reason why social change is not taking effect and these values themselves need to be altered. Research and studies conducted that there is ample of opportunity for change which can be provided to children which turns to new child rearing practices. Cultural norms differ in various African states but one thing remains common, economic growth is slow or there is little growth. Perhaps this is because of a lack of the emergence of democracy, and other issues. Therefore this calls for a study of cultural circumstances which can add concrete value leading to meaningful change and above all social justice which promotes for the basic democratic right for all such as education, food and shelter too mention a few. Oppressive regimes often leave room for female oppression and discrimination to breed (Harris and Huntington, 2000).

Bradley (2002) notes that women's choices in education is based on rewards which is multidimensional and not economical. Gender impartiality has worsened due to the notion that women don't study Science, Education and Technology (SET). In South Africa more specifically female access to education has increased, but women still dominate vocational fields of study such as education, nursing and social science.

Traditions often play a role in deciding gender roles and occupations. This has been demonstrated through female nurses, male doctors and house wives, some people might have been taken aback when new job descriptions such as "male nurse, women lawyer" or stay-at-home-fathers" was introduced. The traditions of a particular culture assist in directing career choices which are acceptable to men and women within that culture. Social norms govern society's behaviours; they ensure societal control and are not legitimate laws. People who often resist these laws, such as when a women whose cultural role is to be a caregiver, decided to pursue her career as a fighter-pilot, which traditionally is not considered normal leads to her being considered deviant within society. Norms therefore conform and socialise people of a particular culture (Wikipedia, 2006).

2.4. Education, equal opportunity and the gender gap

Education can be defined as a means which ensures that the aims and habits of people are sustained from generation to generation. It is an experience which affects personal impressions of individuals, reasoning and the manner in which people act. Formally defined, education is the process by which society transmits knowledge, skills, and customs and values from generation to generation. Equal opportunity means that people are given the same opportunities free from barriers, prejudice or favour over other, unless a particular peculiarity can be made. There is therefore equal chance, there is fairness and free from nepotism (Wikipedia, 2006).

The gender gap narrowed down in the developed world from the 1960, but progress has been slow in the developing world. The literature points out that prior to this change; women did not have many choices such as birth control which influenced women's careers, education paths and age of marriage. Traditional gender roles for women in first world states have changed because women are not prohibited to pursue their careers. However, the developing world still battles because many girls do not have access to education; this reduced their opportunities and chances of progress. This is also depicted cross-culturally in women's dress roles, dress codes and behaviours (Wikipedia, 2006).

2.5. Access to education and women studies

Practitioners have remained focussed on class and race issues but more research is needed on the connection between schooling and gender inequality (Jacobs, 1996). Ramirez and Boli (Jacobs, 1996) suggest that in recent years there has been a diffusion in countries which has led to education for all, giving women access to education at the same time. There are however those women that have been denied access to education due to cultural practices which devalue any investment in women.

Education has started to serves many and has become a salvation, vocation, civilisation, participation and recreation. There are still those that have been denied access to education. The connection between culture and education of women need more investigation though. Okin (1994) notes that the wellbeing of women is equal to that of men; however there is a decline in the existence of women who are devalued in states where women are regarded as unimportant. Underdeveloped states devalue women even more than first worlds, and this leads to less investment and opportunity for girls and women in education.

Globally one-third of households are headed by single women and children who also bear the brunt of a high poverty rate. The division of labour and wages impact on females who are economically invaluable, this is worse in developing worlds. Poor

states also give work to younger less exposed to education and this is also why women are less devalued than boys. This has led to a decline in female morality rates due to boys being favoured and having greater access to food and healthcare-girls are often considered a liability in comparison to boys (Okin, 1994).

The discrimination and sex segregation in education and the workplace persists due to norms and values which unconsciously reinforce gender inequality. Even culturally accept work such as household work and the rearing of children is economically devalued, clearly depicting that condescending nature of male domination in society. This results in women becoming socially vulnerable and dependent on men, particularly in poor states. This also leads to women becoming subjects of sexual, physical and biological abuse by men in their social circles. Women are therefore marginalised and deprived from health, food, education and their birth right as a result of cultural influences (Okin, 1994).
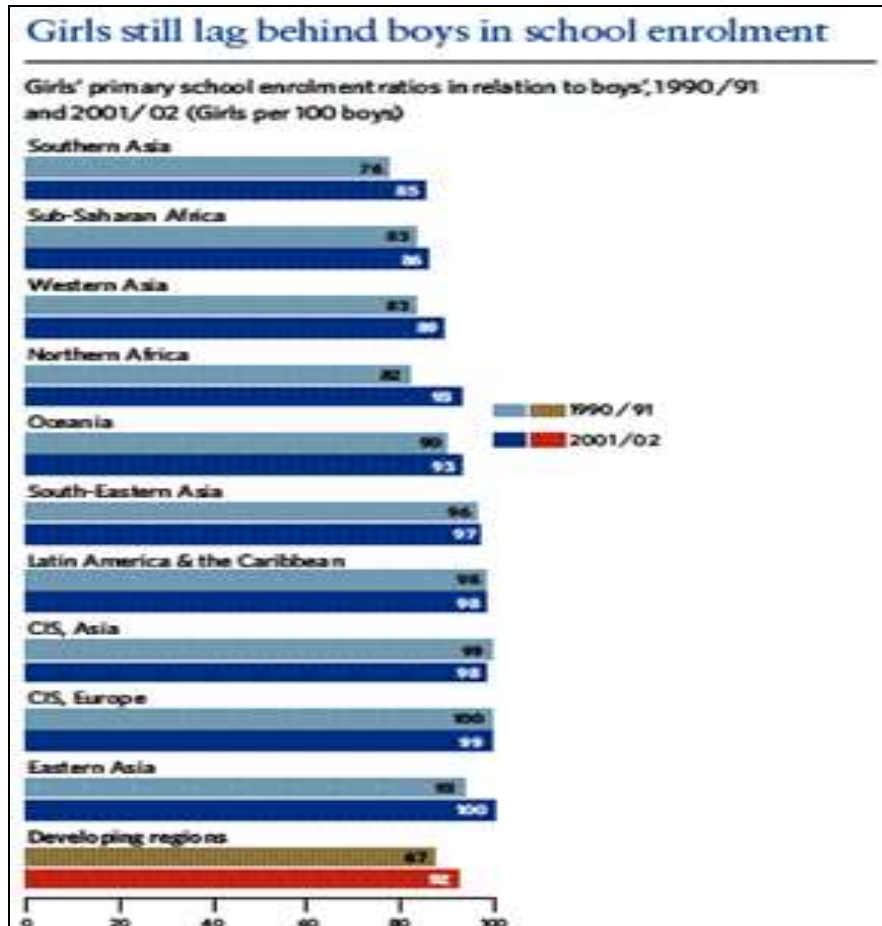
This explains why women are discriminated upon against jobs, pay and promotions in the workplace and society. Background on gender inequality and access to education. shows that the enrolment of girls grew faster than that of boys in poor countries during the 1960s until 1980s (Jacobs, 1996).

Gender remains important because it shapes the identities and behavioural temperaments of individuals. Gender shapes the way people see themselves, the manner in which they behave and how they view others. Gender matters because it shapes social interaction and organises social institutions which entails rules in institutions such as education, religion and sports, work and less formal institutions such as marriage and parenthood. Based on the above, gender shapes and gives significance to social relations and institutions. Benshap and Brounds (2003) (O'Connor, 2005) note that gender is as a result of aspects such as of organisational culture in the symbols, images and rules and values.

Access to education for women globally

The more   that multinational invest in a developing country, the less education is provided for girls and women, this is as a result on multinationals ideology and gender bias, as most of this corporations are headed by men who are also their decision makers (Jacobs, 1996) . Therefore this impacts on the status and work opportunities of women. There is evidence which suggests that the presence of brothers might reduce investment in daughters' schooling.

Table 1
Universal Gender Gap Bar Graph

Girls still lag behind boys in school enrolment

Girls' primary school enrolment ratios in relation to boys', 1990/91 and 2001/02 (Girls per 100 boys)

Region	1990/91	2001/02
Southern Asia	76	85
Sub-Saharan Africa	83	86
Western Asia	83	89
Northern Africa	82	95
Oceania	90	93
South-Eastern Asia	96	97
Latin America & the Caribbean	98	98
CIS, Asia	99	98
CIS, Europe	100	99
Eastern Asia	93	100
Developing regions	87	92

Source: United Nations. 2005. *The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2005.* New York: United Nations.

Table 2

Countries with least improved gender gaps

Countries where 75 or fewer girls for 100 boys are enrolled in primary education, 2001/02	
Gender parity index[1] in primary education	
Chad	63
Yemen	66
Central African Republic	67
Niger	68
Benin	70
Ethiopia	71
Burkina Faso	71
Côte d'Ivoire	74
Guinea	75
Mali	75
[1] See technical note at the end of the chapter for definition. Source: United Nations Statistics Division, "World and regional trends", Millennium Indicators Database, http://millenniumindicators.un.org (accessed June 2005); based on data provided by UNESCO.	

Source: United Nations. 2005. *The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2005.* New York: United Nations.

Female representation in education

The absence of women in senior management positions in education is due to denial and structural factors. O'Connor (2010) notes that women are perceived as lower than men. Studies have revealed that culture is highly gendered in male patriarchy. For years, men have worked in patriarchal systems where they found the culture to encourage men to work with men, due to a lack of both emotionality and gender awareness. Women were seen as emotional, with a low-self-esteem, poor ability to market themselves and failure to make lifestyle choices. In recent years, there has been the promotion of diversity, transformation and more females being promoted to senior positions. There have been instances of homosociality and patriarchal bias in organisational culture. This remains problematic globally and needs to be addressed (O'Connor, 2010). Gender roles in society are promoting a better future for girls and women. However many girls and women do not have access to education, thus robbing them and society of progress and development (Oxfam, 2010).

2.6. Gender inequality in higher education South Africa

Adedeji (2007) notes that Africa claimed this as its own century which is knowledge based and knowledge driven. It is for this reason that education remains a central

theme in the development of the African continent. The importance of knowledge, innovation and technology will only ensure development, intellectual independency and ultimately economic progress.

The educational problems that face African communities are still present today. Education disparities have been as a result of social class inequalities making education a disadvantage for women. On the contrary, Jacobs (1996) notes that education is an advantage for women and gender inequality is evident in some area of the education system.

Education institutions display themselves as being gender-neutral, although in practice they are male dominated with male bias and inherent cultures which ensures that the global balance of power remains under a male patriarchal system which promotes homo-social cultures. O'Connor (2010) notes that men will not be the driving force in tackling gender disparities and attitudes; they will not fight a battle which resides with their female counterparts and is in their favour.

Female participation and education ensures that women are given access to empowerment and resources in order to ensure parity and equality for all. Education is the gateway to economic security and opportunity for women. Gender bias does impact on the education choices of girls and it has been established that economic factors prohibit girls from entry into education. This is due to expectations, attitudes, traditions, religion and cultural beliefs. The UNESCO Institute of Statistics posit that two thirds of 875 million illiterate adults are women and half of them are in Africa (Sharma, unknown).

Osirim (2004) notes that education should act as a buffer for creating social justice and gender parity in Africa. This explains how women become groomed into becoming housewives through the education system as opposed to promoting a freedom of choice as demonstrated in images of women barefoot and pregnant with the baby on their back. These images are reinforced in society subconsciously and there is a need for a conscious shift in the thinking of gender.

3. Policy implications on gender inequality

Okin (1994) notes that policy solutions have been recommended to resolve social problems such as gender inequality in the public and domestic domain, to prevent the overlooking of women. This can also become an analysis of the individual access for women to education, skills, credit, labour markets, technologies and equal pay. There is a need to stringent policies on this for women to improve their socioeconomic status which will impact on their progress towards gender equality. There is however a need for equal treatment of females by policy makers, can this be achieved it the decision makers remain male dominated.

There is a need to universalise and reconcile justice by looking at different and multiple cultures and people in order to listen to the oppressed and marginalised women in society. A conscious shift is needed for the rejection of social and cultural norms that perpetuate inequality. There needs to be a common ground between culture and gender which ensures sustainable transformation, equality and access for all. Huntington and Harrison (2000) note that children and families throughout Africa are ready to engage new changes, due to diversity and eagerness for change.

Policymakers have a number of policy challenges to tackle in their efforts to ensure equality of opportunity. There is general agreement that programs to bring about equality of opportunity can be difficult, and those efforts to cause unintended consequences or cause other problems. There is agreement that the formal approach is easier to implement than the others, although there are difficulties there too (Wikipedia, 2006).

Insights into further research on gender inequality

The family remains the school of moral development, as males are taught to be patriarchal; females are taught to be subordinate, accept abuse in certain cases and taught that they will never be equal to males. Parents affect the development of justice in children and often certain societies cannot let societies unlearn gender inequality due to power, authority and access to resources. Inequality remains the main challenge in gender parity, whereas justice allows for equal access for both boys and girls to education, healthcare and food. Many cultures discreetly promote inequality and social justice. This poses great concern and a need for more investigation and enquiry.

Different women have different lives and experiences as women from rich industrial countries live different lives from women from poor states due to cultural and socioeconomic difference. Okin (1994) questions where feminists would voice the concerns of the poor in underdeveloped countries, whether it does justice to their livelihood and if it will impact significantly on these women's lives through policy and change the consciousness of the stakeholders.

Gender is an important part of socialisation. The study has revealed that gender studies are far too young and more investigation on the matter is needed. Women are disadvantaged in rank and institutional prestige. There is also not enough study on gender equality which can also entails social and racial equality. There is however a need for more study on gender in education. Economic, social, cultural and political indicators impacts on gender. The education-decision making process needs more attention though. Questions around access to education inequality, education experiences and outcomes need to be linked and considered for meaningful change

for equal opportunity for both girls and women who have been marginalised within the education sector, for far too long.

Individuals need to experiment with their cultural practices. There is a need for new institutions and community activities are applied with local cultural understanding, this will ensure that they find their place. Continuing gender segregation which restricts cultural careers of boys and girls will only prevent equality and social change; thus cultures that promote patriarchy need to find a common ground as this will impact on career choices, work environments and development within society (Harrison and Huntington, 2000).

The four dimensions of equality in education include access, equality in the learning process, equality of educational outcomes, and equality of external results. All of these aspects need further investigation and research in order to tackle educational equality challenges for women (USAID, 2008).

Recommendations

Badat (2010) posits that the implementation of law will make the education sector which was previously dominated by males easily accessible to women. Bang and Mitra (2011) make a strong case for a global consciousness shift in the manner in which gender roles are enshrined in society.

There is a need for a conscious shift which goes beyond cultural challenges and aims to redressing legacies of the past. Mama (2006) prescribes that development for solutions should be based on past collective experiences gained, suggesting for new solutions to African gender problems based on experiences in an African context. This can be achieved through a commitment by all stakeholders to drive the gender agenda for gender equity across disciplines in education, specifically higher education which is the doorway to professional sectors.

Active policies are needed to develop a more diverse student profile at every institution. Equity of access starts with conscientising girls from primary schools and creating opportunity through working with schools and other institutions to ensure greater levels of academic readiness and freedom of choice for girls. It is imperative for institutions to be held accountable, there needs to be transparency and legitimacy in ensuring transformation in order to ensure social justice, rule of law and moral authority.

Tsikata (2008) notes that institutional change strategies which are responsive to dormant institutional and cultural dynamics of gender in all aspects of their operation require for policy and reform based on different contexts. Gender research should create for gender advocacy which ensures sustainable change which creates social

justice, the promotion of human rights and democratisation all of which impact on economic growth and development.

De La Rey (unknown) boldly notes that women need to collectively challenge cultural subordination and stigmas, which prevent them from gaining equal opportunity alike their male counterparts. The shift from gender disparity to equality will trace a number of changes in the understanding of the category 'women.' Gender inequality has been closely related to inequality of racism, colonialism and imperialism. Feminist sociology has become more interested in culture. Wharton (2005) notes that there is a need for an interdisciplinary, cultural, historical and sociological perspective on the sociology of gender and a refashion of core concepts. The study should ensure that there is tremendous diversity within the sociology of gender at the core meaning of the term gender.

Occupational sex segregation however persists and in Africa and cultures has framed educational choices of individuals (Bradley, 2002). Individuals should be given the choice and free will base on democratic values, to choice.

The is a need for greater study and investigation on the subordination and stereotypes of women , this needs to be revisited in order to bridge the gender gap where women are concentrated in low-paying occupations which hampers the progressive power relation of women globally, as males still dominate the global market system. Thus macro-economic policy does not deal with issues of women's empowerment and gender equality (Badat, 2010).

4. Conclusions

Change in society has however already occurred, but cultural norms which exist ensure that change in this regard is slow. Based on this there is a needs for intervention and new value orientations which require change within this new social and political system. Many individuals have therefore become cultural victims. Intervention should also however support security, stability, health and resources for girls in order for them to achieve a sustainable daily routine which meets the needs for their good (Harrison and Huntington, 2000).

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Addressing issues of gender on issues of access alone are insufficient in the task of ensuring that they stay in school, learn and achieve requires much more of an action-orientated approach. The barriers that prevent the education of girls such as culture, religion and norms needs to be revisited and the opportunities available need to be seized, this will significantly impact on education and change the lives of so many millions of girls and women globally.

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RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

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Abstract: *The main feature of the present situation regarding communication is the impregnation of the social with technology. Computer-mediated communication systems has led to the crystallization of a strong specific interactions. This article describes how human relationships constitues the ontological pillar of society and social relations form the axis irradiance of sociology. Overall, as social agents in social space, people come in a variety of social relationships. Thus, a distinct note of the article refers to the rapid development of information technology over the past decade, which has enhanced electronic communication between people.*

Key-words: *communication, social agents, technology, network, virtual space*

1. Introduction - Communication creates relationships

Social networks are also communications network. JR Taylor's thetic option, widely agreed by researchers, is „thesis that communication is the essential modality (…) of the constitution of organization and, more generally, of society" (Taylor J. R., 2000, p. 3). Relationship with the other is the base on which any communication develops. This can be subsumed to the input on different binary lines: submission-dominance, cooperation- competition, etc. Interaction in which communicative relationship develops produces primarily a communication that tends "to change the system of relationships" (Dâncu V.-S., 1999, p. 85). Staying right in terms of this perspective, communication, as shown by professor Laurenţiu Şoitu is defined as "setting a relationship" (Şoitu L., 1997, p. 7).

Communicative situation creates primarily a communicational relationship. Specifically, communication generates a derived communicative relationship by which the reproduction of communication occurs. Secondly, infrastructures of

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