
Education and Women in the Era of Globalization

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Abstract

The paper revamps education as a tool for enlightenment and knowledge which gives women the confidence they need for success in this era of globalisation. It affirms that education helps in the development and progress of every society; it is the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women to better understand issues affecting women. Education is widely believed to be critical for any nation's economic, political and social development. It helps people escape from poverty and participate fully in the society and in the market place. Education more than any factor known to mankind, is an empowering tool. The paper concludes that women should seize all the avenues open to them to go to school so as to increase their social and political power in the society. It is a strong reason why governments around the world should assume the responsibility for providing and financing education especially basic education for women.

Education is the spring board for advancement and empowerment of women in different areas of human endeavour (Sharma, 2007). The reason is that women have important and strategic roles to play in the growth of children and national development. Education is the greatest investment that should be given to women in order to empower them to fulfill their roles and participate effectively in national development.

The educational empowerment of women in Nigeria is the foundation of all other forms of empowerment, be it social, economic, technological, and political empowerment (Osokoya, 2008). With the rapid technological advancement which the world is now witnessing and the continuous transformation of the world economics through globalisation, there is a greater pressure than before on national governments to develop efficient educational systems to meet development needs of the 21st century.

Therefore the old adage that says that the education of women is tantamount to educating the whole nation would never be over-emphasized.

Globalization

The term globalization has gained increasing currency and is used with varying scope and significance. Clearly, globalization refers to something more than just the internationalisation of the world economy. It is therefore necessary to define and characterise globalization and examine the qualitative changes that are likely to affect women and the poor in the society which the majority are women.

Globalization is a process through which finance, investment, production and marketing are increasingly dominated by firms (including banks) whose vision and actions are not confined by national borders or national interests. Such firms regularly and continuously review their profit making options on a global basis. Their sphere of decision making is world-wide and they continually re-adjust and change their portfolios of currencies, customers, factories and offices, seeking to move their operations "offshore", outside the full scope of national jurisdictions. Globalisation then also refers to new networks of production, finance and information which have increased the international mobility of goods, service-delivery and capital. Globalisation implies the creation of new opportunities, risks, and benefits; and hence, new sources of potential social friction.

The term globalization is defined in the oxford dictionary of business (1996) as the international of products and services by large firms; viewed from a general perspective, the notion of globalization is broad and diverse (Akinboye,2007). It encompasses political, economic, socio-cultural and technological dimensions.

Benefits of Globalization

The world is a very different place from what it was in the mid-1970s. Three giant population blocs -- China, The republics from the former Soviet Union, and India - - are entering the global market and include nearly half the world's labour force .Countries that combine low wages with high technology skills have out-competed more established countries. However, in order to achieve a sustained and generalised reduction in absolute poverty, 'the opportunity' requires careful management. The merits of Globalization are:

1. Globalization has helped to enrich the world scientifically and culturally and also benefited many people economically with constant worldwide flow of people, ideas, news, money and technology.

2. The average family in the world today has 3 times more income when compared to 50 years earlier. The reason for this stems from the fact that the women are contributing to the average family income.
3. It offers enormous potentials to eradicate poverty in the 21st century. The reason for this optimism is the drastic increase in prosperity that globalisation has brought in its wake if well handled.
4. It has made economic integration possible and may probably make more countries not to go to war due to their vested interest.
5. It has also helped to increase social integration with potentials for improving global solidarity.
6. It has helped people with disabilities by encouraging them to work with computer terminals that are connected to ancillary devise that make them adapt to physical impairments.

Demerits of Globalization

1. Globalization has helped to widen the gap between the have and have not. While global wealth has undoubtedly increased, it has become concentrated in few hands and few countries among the world.
2. The environment has been seriously affected since the market forces have much interest in profits than in the protection of the environment.

Through globalization, the tools of trade and commerce can be easily converted into tools of crime. As the multinational corporations have led the drive to globalize the world economy, crime has also gone up with it. This is because the organized crime syndicates have been quick to exploit it and so benefited immensely through drug peddling, smuggling, cyber crimes, internet prostitution, trafficking and many other heinous crimes, thus Okoli (2011) opined that there should be a re-thinking of globalization to carry everybody along.

Globalisation: Gender Implication

The problematic issue lies with the nature of the incorporation of women into industrial work. Problems facing women--who are not unique to globalisation-in this regard are:

1. Lack of promotion opportunities and denial of access to many areas of work (including managerial and skilled work)

2. Occupational hazards and poor working conditions;
3. Significant barriers for married women and women with children;
4. The sex-segregation of many jobs inside the factory: social rules which determine which work is “suitable” for men and women, i.e. the intra-factory gender division of labour. This segregation is also an important structural and organisational mechanism supporting the differential wages that men and women receive. The gendering of jobs: e.g. work performed by a woman might involve much greater reliance on, and deference to, the shift supervisor than if the same job were done by a man.
5. Where women enter new areas of work, or take over old ones, the jobs women do acquire the status of "women's work"; similarly, former "women's jobs" taken over by men gain status and women thereafter are often excluded from such work.
6. The absence of worker rights, including the right to collective action.
7. The lack of provision/ contribution/ accommodation by employers towards the social costs of ‘producing’ labour (e.g. maternity leave, childcare, etc.).

The increasing employment of women in manufacturing industries is the most conspicuous pattern caused by globalisation in developing countries receiving inflows of foreign capital. There is no doubt that globalisation leads to new risks and new vulnerabilities. However, where globalisation is associated with new investment, new manufacturing production locations, new employment opportunities for large numbers of women, and additional demand for the paid labour of women in associated sectors, there are positive direct effects for women. Women now comprise about one third of all industrial sector workers in developing countries (Aina, 1993).

It is when women are marginalised from industrial production and pushed out of traditional domains of production by the introduction of new technologies and land uses that the direct labour-effects of globalisation on women are adverse. It is the exclusion from integration into globalised manufacturing and higher value-added production such as that experienced by Africa that is of concern for women and men. Direct adverse effects for labour, including the labour of women, are also experienced with the relocation and shifting away of current locations of global production platforms.

Status of Women

According to the United Nations Information Unit (1997), the following vividly explains the status of women education:

1. Women have not achieved equality with men in any country in the world.
2. Of the world's 1.3 billion poor people, it is estimated that nearly 70 per cent are women.
3. Between 75 and 80 per cent of the world's 27 million refugees are women and children.
4. Women's life expectancy, educational attainment and income are highest in Sweden, Canada, Norway, U.S.A. and Finland.
5. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China from 4 -15 September, 1995, resulted in an agreement by 189 delegations on a five-year plan to enhance the social, economic and political empowerment of women, improve their health, advance their education and promote their reproductive rights.
6. Over 100 countries have announced new initiatives to further the advancement of women as a result of the Beijing Women Conference.
7. The 1979 U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations against Women, often described as a Bill of Rights for Women, has now been ratified by 160 Countries.

Constraints to Women Education in Nigeria

Many factors could be attributed to general low level of women's education in the third world and particularly in Nigeria. Colonialism for example has been identified as a major constraint to women's education. The British colonial policies in Nigeria were dominated by "Victorian" ideology which presented men as "breadwinners" and women's role as domiciliary and procreation (Alele-Williams, 1988). Emphasis on girls' education during the colonial period was limited to the stereotypical jobs of sewing, house making and laundry which aimed at making women "good wives", mothers and good ornaments of society. The colonial rule ignored women's access to Western Education for a long time but was only made available to men. Even after Independence, the gender disparity in education remained. Thus, men emerged as policy makers, while women remained predominantly at the background. Attempts to bridge the gap through adult literacy programmes have failed because such programmes tend to emphasise the traditional view of women's education which tends to reinforce gender assigned roles.

Many socio-cultural barriers still hinder "empowering" of women through education. For example the basic socialisation process still presents marriage as an unequal gender relationship between men and women. In such an unequal gender

relationship, a woman's desire to participate in literacy programme or to improve self through higher education may be undermined by her husband, in order to maintain traditional *status quo* in the home. The division of labour which wholly places child rearing and nurturing responsibilities on the woman makes many women unavailable for literacy programmes and self-development through higher education.

Globalization: Impact on Education and Women

The principal objective of education has been the development of the whole individual. Presently, education needs to be able to respond to the additional demand of the rapid globalizing world by raising awareness of environment, peace, cultural and social diversity, increased competitiveness and the concept of a global village. Education prepares the individual to connect and live in harmony with the environment around him. Globalization has changed the size, nature and quality of the environment. The challenge for higher education therefore, is to reform, create and develop a system that prepares the individual to work in a developed economy and live in a global society. Thus an educational institution needs to produce global citizens.

Education has always encouraged and represented openness, inquiring, diversity, research and limitless learning. Globalization has a negative impact on micro and small enterprises affecting both men and women, and thus causing an increase in migration flows. Women face low wages and unemployment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Masses of adult men and women are still inadequately prepared to participate in the emerging global society as parents, workers and citizens. Concerted attention to their learning needs would have to be paid in order to stem the divisive and destructive forces of globalization and of economic restructuring. There would be need to create learning spheres whereby communities could understand and critically reflect on the changes taking place around them and explore and develop new approaches for bringing about positive changes in their lives and in the lives of those to come.

Kofi Annan, a former United Nations Secretary-General stated that 'if globalization is to succeed, it must bring hope and good news to both the rich and poor alike. It must provide social justice and equity no less than economic prosperity and enhance communication'.

It is important to note that women education is an essential tool for individual family and national development, this is because educated women help to boost the living standard of the family and health of the family members, a good education for a woman aims at physical, intellectual moral development or well-being of the woman, thus women should seize all the avenues open to them to go to school so as to increase

their social and political power in the society, this is a strong reason why governments around the world should assume the responsibility to provide and finance education especially basic education for women.

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