
ICT AND GENDER ISSUES IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines gender issues and national development with respect to what seems sex role limitation to equal participation of sexes due to age long conservative interpretation of what seems to be sex discrimination which has been used as the foundation for limitation placed on women from equal participation with their counterpart. This paper in reaction to the long mainstream tradition of neglecting women's status, roles and styles, posited that women in our nation should be given their rightful place and due recognition like their male counterparts in Nigeria as a result of recent legislative, technological and social changes which have affected women's roles in the family, work place and educational institutions. The paper concludes that since ICT which is a unisex media, women should be encouraged to fully participate in the educational development of the nation.

INTRODUCTION

Genders issues have been interpreted mainly as the deprivation of women of certain rights and entitlements which they ought to enjoy naturally as bonafide citizens just like their male counterparts. It is on this note therefore that the rights of women are sought to redefine whatever may be the background to such hegemonic subjection of women by their male force. Unlike the Spartan, the Greek, Roman and Jewish educations do not recognize the rights of women in the society hence, most texts are replete with the voiceless women in their society. Itedjere (2007:36) notes that the philosophy of women's education in Spartan society allowed girls to live a free out-door life and were provided education similar to that of the boys. Thus Spartan women enjoyed high reputation just as the Spartan men did as soldiers. The unique situation of equality in Spartan society was not a welcome development even among major and leading religious in the world. The patriarchal background of the Christian text, the Muslim women confinement in the Koran and the African traditional religious are highly up against the public recognition of women and they are voiceless in these society. Isiorhovoja (2008:34) in his argument on women ordination notes that among the Jews, women were not allowed to proceed into the thing of the Talmud. Similarly, the Muslim girls are confined to pudah while their male folks are not. It is against this backdrop that Armstrong (2003) notes that the pursuit of equal rights for women was sought through International law; the principle that everyone is entitled to rights without distinction of any kind, such as race, sex... as enshrine in Article 2 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

SOCIO-CULTURAL BASIS OF EXCLUSION AND ICT INTEGRATION

According to Taiwo (2002:47), gender is "the role played by members of either sex in the society and the parity." She agrees that this role will differ according to different factors which includes culture and tradition and the uniqueness of these to the different geographical regions; according to the educational background, economic power of the family and the social status from which the woman comes. Ugwuanyi (2003:40) in like manner agrees with Taiwo, that the gender question in Africa should rotate around those wrong roles assigned to either men or women, those roles that culture and tradition impose on men or women in Africa that should be reviewed. He however added that these roles in the cultural institutions of modern Africa should be examined in order to strike at equilibrium in the contemporary society. The African Society, vis-à-vis the family, the customary laws, the economy and the African state. The scrutiny of a necessity should be along the emerged nature of African social institutions in relation social dynamics in gender issues in Africa, to ascertain gender deconstruction in light of these dynamics. The question must address the socio-cultural factors that determine gender roles and the extent to which these factors have changed in the face of African modernity. Thus, even sphere in which women have been denied - religious, socio-economic, political and educational engagement should be revisited. Ursula (1987) notes that among other things, women have been subjected, suffered subordination and outright refusal in patriarchal society.

Isiorhovoja (2010:113) however challenged the women. He affirms that the challenges facing women today is that of rising up to the male folk and a re-visit to certain religious prohibitions that have been used against women. He notes that both male and female are created in the image of God and that any form of religious limitations are the formulations of men; women should look beyond these socio-cultural and religious limitations and to re-interpret any act of patriarchal subjugation (Akintunde 2005:23). Ojua (2003:58) described the harmful socio-cultural practices as another-child development yet they have sustained, supported and fed their families, clothe and champion educational responsibilities of their families despite their poor socio-economic status. Agee (1996), Olaleye (2003) and Amao (2003) all decried the deplorable conditions of women in a patriarchal society. They however, did not forget the useful contributions made by these women to the overall development of the nation as their labour accounts for a gross domestic product and daily volume of trade. Since women have tried to venture into diverse areas of the economy to better the lot of their families, it will not be out of place to define Information Communication Technology (ICT) into the businesses of women as a way to enhancing and harnessing their skills and potentials towards national development. The contribution of information and knowledge in bringing about social and economic development has been well recognizing globally. The advent of new age Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), especially, personal computers, the internet and mobile telephone during the last two decades has provided a much better and wider choice in collection, storage, processing, transmission and presentation of information in multiple formats to meet the diverse requirements and skills of people.

Though certain jobs in the past were exclusively defined as masculine, ICT does not necessarily require the macho strength to be operated. Working in traditional ICTs stations like the television and radio, print media and internet centres to serve as assistant does not bother on sex. World Bank (2009) in like vein recognized the role of ICTs in Millennium Development Goal No.8 (MDG 8), which emphasizes the benefits of new technologies, especially ICTs in the fight against poverty. Thus, women struggle against poverty and other forms of socio-cultural and economic deprivation are well taken care of through ICT which is not strenuous requiring macho strength rather mental capacities.

EGALITARIAN QUEST FOR EQUAL ACCESS

To build a just and egalitarian society according to the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004:6), the Nigerian nation realizes the full implication of harnessing her resources both human and materials. In explanation and further pursuance of this goal, the believe is expressed thus:

There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria... school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive while interest and ability determine the individuals' direction in education.

In actualization of the above statement, education has to be geared towards self realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, unity as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress of the individual and the nation. Idumange (2003), pointed at equality and justice as the two cardinal principles underpinning the Nigerian constitution and the national policy on education because very many women are not enlisted as part of this noble objective of the nation. There exist monumental gender imbalances in access to secondary education with female enrolment in senior secondary examination less than 50% in most states of the federation as in Bayelsa. Based on Idumange's argument, it is imperative for the government to take a more drastic action in ensuring that there is a fair representation of women based on the recommendation of the NPE and global perspective like the Beijing conference 1995 for the emancipation and recognition of their potentials that will fully integrate ICT training, equipping and development. The traditional attitude of retraining women from acquiring education because of marriage, religious practices as in (Pudah) and other domestic purposes should be outlawed by government legislation.

Sofolohan (1992) thus advocate for the widening and enrichment of the school curriculum in order to achieve our well articulated objective that will give the students in an education system, the opportunity to learn how to use the cognitive and psychomotor domains and also to appreciate the dignity of labour as individuals with potentials. Kaiberie (1959) in like manner said "the empowerment of Black women constitutes ... the empowerment of our entire community". The fear often entertained by some men over women's education and empowerment centres on the traditional preconceived idea of women becoming more relevant to the society. Hence Onuola (2008) re-iterated the need adding that by the special

roles they play as mothers, they are instrumental to the development index of the community. He concludes by soliciting further support not only to enhancing their well-being as essential condition for sustainable human development but also as a factor for the overall development goals of any nation of the world. Women are known for their roles in bringing about remarkable changes in the society. They are the moral strength and pillars of their husband and children. Educating women further to embracing ICT will not only boost their morals but will also serve as the springboard to national development.

GLOBALIZING WOMEN'S INPUT THROUGH ICT

The relevance of ICT in harnessing women's potentials has been demonstrated through CRISP working paper 2011. From this pivot study which can serve as a model for the African continent, it was employed to educate women in the diverse areas in which they have directed their potentials. Though many of the women have not been able to explore the new technology largely because of illiteracy, it has been observed that few who have been trained in the implementation ICT have improved considerably. Thus far, rural women are increasingly gaining in terms of employment in ICT-based enterprises. There is also clear evidence on women gaining by use of ICTs in their enterprises. ICTs do contribute to women empowerment, through its contribution vary significantly, based on the tool use, for what purpose it is applied and by which agency. There is evidence, though limited, to reasonably conclude that ICTs have the potential to contribute towards education, economics, social and political empowerment.

Gerber (2011) in advocating for a better balanced gender equation notes that education is ultimately more effective than laws in empowering women to overcome the barriers to equality. He however linked women issues with the girl-child's need for greater level of education. The current trend of enrolment has shown a considerable empowerment but there are rooms for improvement. Though the Nigerian scene holds some examples of woman who are already equipped through education in the like of Prof. Akunyili Dora, Oby Ezekwesili Ngozi Okonjo- Iweala, Aina Pepple among others, ICT educational training is yet needed to boost women population for a meaningful development

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a Not much has been achieved in terms of ICT gender empowerment in Africa. There is the need to implement greater policy that will enhance enrolment of more women's.
- b There are very many women who have not yet been liberated from the shamble of culture, tradition and obnoxious beliefs inherent in some religious setting.
- c There is the need to re-evaluate student's enrolment in our schools to encourage gender equality that will boost the parity between the sexes.
- d Though the NPE has the provision for ICT training; the schools, families and non-governmental agencies should try to assist in empowering women to harness their resources.

e Education is the is the most effective tool for liberation, every family should be encouraged to avail themselves of this opportunity through the UBE as we have in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The gender issues have been a reoccurring decimal in most discussions. Certain traditional and patriarchal traditions which do not enhance the full realization of human potentials are inimical to the development of the Nigerian nation and indeed, the continent of Africa. The global challenge launched and directed through MDG and vision 20:2020 will be realizable only through meaningful investment in human capital. The 1995 World Conference at Beijing should serve as the yard stick for the emancipation and empowerment of both sexes.

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