

GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

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Abstract: The main vision of the modern societies is to reduce gender inequality. There are several international organizations and NGOs that are in the quest for reducing this gap between males and females. Indeed, there are many places in the world where gender diversity is in its high rate. In order to know more about international gender inequality issues in the global educational context, this paper presents six countries where Australia and Singapore have low, Malaysia and Thailand Middle, and Afghanistan and Nigeria high gender diversity issues in their educational systems. Furthermore, this paper identifies the process of overcoming gender inequality in the former six countries which can be a valuable source for other countries that feel the need to change. Data for the paper was collected from the available review of literature.

IndexTerms – Gender, inequality, Education, international context.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR EDUCATION TO MALE AND FEMALE

Education plays an important role in many aspects of human's life both for males and females all over the world. Education is imperative to gender equality, lessening of poverty, economic development, health services, conflict resolution and conversion to maintainable fabrication and consumption. As living in this world is related to both males and females, therefore, both groups need to have equal access to all the resources available for them. There are many countries where males are more predominant over the females in several aspects of life. This paper will explain a number of gender inequality issues in education from around the world and will finally present a conclusion of inequality in education from different nations while offering different solutions. As a result, one will be able to have a number of useful strategies to overcome gender inequality in the arena of education in international context.

According to Anton, Delprato, & Benavot (2016), equality in education can be further accelerated in terms of lessening of poverty, economic development, health services, gender equality, conflict resolution and conversion to maintainable production and consumption through guaranteeing justness in the education only. Economic inequality within countries is increasing (Milanovic, 2013) as cited in Anton (2016), that is why one of the new SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) is devoted to Human rights to reduce income inequality within the countries. Beyond this aim, the wish to leave no one left behind permeates to entire 2030 Agenda. Since, getting an education is the right of every human-being and all the countries have agreed to stay committed to it after they signed the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition to this, education is a key factor that helps every human being to consider gender equality, healthy children, poverty reduction, supportable eating, resilient cities or peaceable civilizations. As these aspects of everyday living play significant role in life of every individual, regardless of the individual's gender, country of residence, how poor or rich he/she is, color of the skin and religious views. Putting all the former points on the side with many others that make them different from each other, we need to provide equal access to both male and female regardless of any discriminations in order to make it possible that they receive equal educational opportunities in their lives.

Eliminating inequality in education can have positive effects on the whole world. As there are different people with different natural abilities, who have different level of intelligences in various aspects of life in the globe, therefore if equal education is provided, we will be able to have better economic growth. Since, most of them remained uneducated, we are unable to use their intellectual power to make the world a better place to live in (Anton, Delprato, Benavot, 2016). Based on the UNESCO Report, 2014, studies of low and middle income countries have proved that high inequality in education is related to a higher possibility of conflict in all the related countries accordingly. Now that we understand how important educational equality is, we need to further illustrate educational inequality in international context to provide equal access to all the males and females who are living in this world.

1.2 Human Rights: Promoting Gender Equality in and through Education

The word "Gender" is created socially by the people who incorrectly use it according to their own interpretations and understandings. This inaccurate perception of gender makes it more difficult to assess and address it; whereas, gender itself from a biological perspective does have following meaning. Differing people from biological sex perspective can be easily measured statistically. Now that we can differ them according to biblical sex, it is easy to talk about their equality in education. Gender equality in education means that in schools, colleges, universities and other educational and technical institutes, we must have equal numbers of males and females where both should receive the same quality and quantity of education (Wilson, (2004)

The government of each country is responsible to ensure equal opportunity to both male and female in all educational settings. According to Tomasevski, 2004 as cited in Wilson, (2004) all the analytical process of the government based on the equal availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adoptability of education to male and female is developed by the government, reported by the United Nations' Special Rapporteur. Guaranteeing the availability of education has several answers: to separate or provide single sex educational settings with equal availability of quality to both genders. Schools that are integrated where most of learners are boys would not be a great place to girls and a place where most of the students are females would not be a suitable place to boys to learn and adopt. As result, educational setting should always be provided according to the freedom and learning needs of each individual. Accessibility, is based on removing discriminatory barriers to enrolment of only boys or girls from all levels of educational process and as well the amount of expenditure on them, since these can cause a great deal of gender inequality indirectly. Acceptability in educational arena means, that both girls and boys should receive quality education so that later on they can use it in their life not only for the purpose of employment but also for keeping themselves healthy and wealthy. As a result to achieve

these basic needs of life, the first stage is to educate both males and females with high and equal quality of education. Availability means that education should be free and compulsory by law for both genders. Making education compulsory by law will make the families send their sons and daughters to schools in order to at least receive a primary education. In short, getting a compulsory education can be a solid step taken towards reducing gender inequality in education.

II. LOW LEVEL OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION SYSTEMS AUSTRALIA AND SINGAPORE

2.1 Human Rights: Promoting Gender Equality in and through Education

In Australia, the average full time weekly income of a female worker is 15.3% less than a male worker wage. Having different income to different gender means that there is gender inequality in education. Public interest in the requirement of males has been reported by numerous media reporters which is also a sign of gender inequality. In order to overcome the gender inequality, one policy was put forward to improve educational outcomes of girls. From the 1930s to 1970s, boys were more likely to participate in post-compulsory education system compared to girls (McInnis, 1996). This was crystal clear in the tertiary sector when in 1971, less than a third female students were studying compared to boys. As the girls were at risk of education inequality, a national policy of Education of Girls in School was adopted in 1986. All the government and private schools were committed to implement the strategy with the following four objectives.

- Making people aware of the educational needs for girls
- Providing equal access to girls to receive the appropriate education.
- All the government and private schools should create an environment that support girls and their education.
- Making sure to provide equal resources to girls to get boys' alike education

Achieving these objectives in both governmental and private schools were achieved to a certain degree, however, there are still limits to these strategies in many educational settings or areas. One, two or three strategies cannot fix all inequality issues regarding the gender disparity, much more needs to be done to overcome it.

Now that we have a little knowledge about the gender inequality issues in Australasian education system in the past, we need to know how far they have come and what their current system of education for both male and female in schools and at universities is. According to Carrington & Pratt, (2003), women are approximately in equal numbers in schools and almost more than half are employed in higher education settings. Luckily, the gender disparity in Australian higher educational system is no longer an issue that needs to be solved. However, there are still some differences between male and female in the employment positions. For example, more females are employed in general staff positions whereas more males are employed in academic staff positions. Men are still in 80 percent of senior account in academic staff in Australian universities. The gender variation based on the traditional male and female fields of study is still visible in engineering, information technology, health and education. Whereas, more females have made changes in their selections by entering to nontraditional fields such as agriculture, science, and architectures at both graduate and undergraduate educational settings. Men, on the other hand, have moved backward based on the traditional culture. For instance, the quantity of male students enrolled in the wide field of education dropped from 25000 to 18000 which really has a huge effect on the way of teaching in Australia.

In conclusion, equality of gender in education is very crucial since it provides employment opportunities, security, income and labor for girls and boys. Therefore male and female should be equally educated in order to live in a happy, healthy and wealthy environment. In addition, inequality in gender needs hard and sustainable work by putting forward countless strategies to achieve the desired level of gender equality.

2.2 Gender Inequality in Education System of Singapore

Ban Ki-moon on International Women's Day in 2014 declared that "The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all" and it is also proven by evidence that countries which have high level of gender equality like Singapore, performs much better in education. Due to Singapore's better performance in education, the country has experienced dramatic economic growth and It is in the list of 189 countries that adopted the Millennium Declaration Goal which was set out for the purpose of gender equality in 2000.

Boys and girls have equal rights to the quality education in Singapore. The government of Singapore has tired its best to develop many strategies for improving equal access to male and female through all levels of education systems. The great effort of its government resulted in this country to achieve almost universal education level in the primary and secondary levels. This country in 2013 had 66% of women who had secondary or higher qualifications and the percentage of man was 71.8% who had same education level. In addition, 90% of male and female were able to complete at least 10 years of education. Moreover, Singapore was able to have great improvement in the number of female educators from 2001 to 2013. For instance, the rate of literacy for 15 years old and above was 89.7% in 2001 however there was a great change of increasing in 2013 from 89.7% to 94.6% (Department of Statistics, Singapore). Furthermore, this country was able to reach gender equality in the higher education system through making female to change their view of traditional customs of male dominated subjects. Most of the females started to take courses that were culturally believed to be taken only by men. For instance, these females were able to study physics, mathematics, science, architectures and information technology courses. Taking these courses made them able to have equal education compared with male students and finally this resulted in having equal work opportunities in the labor force of the Singapore government and private organizations. In short, providing equal opportunities in the education system to male and female can give them equal chances of acceptance in the work force and having same income (Department of Statistics Singapore).

The whole system of education in Singapore is based on equity where every student can be nurtured in it regardless of his or her ability, achievement, and financial standing. In order to make sure that all the people who are in need, Singapore has developed a system of local community councils which find poor people who need funding and then provide them sufficient support in achieving their educational goals. In addition to this, the ministry of higher education in Singapore has started a scheme of financial assistance in order to allow more male and female students to qualify for assistance. Furthermore, the ministry of

Singapore has provided a comprehensive coverage of bursaries for middle and low income families to send their children to educational settings without worrying for their financial issues (Financial Assistance Scheme of Singapore, 2012). As result of their hard work, gender is no longer a word that needs attention in this country education system.

III. MIDDLE LEVEL OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION SYSTEMS MALAYSIA AND THAILAND

3.1 Gender Inequality in Education System of Malaysia

In Malaysia the number female students enrolled in the education system is quite good. However, there is a need for changes especially in the tertiary level where males and females are enrolled through traditional role. An example of this issue can be, presently, more females are enrolled in nursing and art courses while males are in great number in technical related courses such as engineering. Since both genders are equal and both needs improvement, therefore, it is very important for both genders to be given equal opportunities in nursing, arts, and technical related courses. Providing equal opportunity will make each group to be able to compete with their counterparts in the respected fields throughout their careers (Acharya, 2006).

Another issue in Malaysian education system is that more males are involved in labor force. Although the number of females in various levels of education in Malaysia is admirable, yet when it comes to the labor force the number of females is comparatively lower than that of males. For instance, in 2004, the number of working age population of 15 to 64 years old workers were estimated 10,856 people. The total percentage of male workers who were working was 88.1% and the total percentage of female working force who were 15 to 64 years old were 46.4%. To make this more clear lets have an example of the 1000(On thousand) male and 1000 (one thousand) female from a total population based on the given percentage where 88.1% in 1000 is equal to 881 male were working form each thousands of male population whereas 46.4% of 1000 female is equal to 464 female were working in the labor force from each thousands of the female population (Malaysian Economic Planning, 2004). The result of the percentage shows that the number of males is approximately twice as females in the working force.

Now that we know about the low numbers female in the working force, let's know what the solution is to overcome this issue in Malaysia. An approach was adopted by the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) where it stated that a country like Malaysia should adopt a Substantive Equal Approach. This approach not only identifies biological differences of male and female but also shows equality between the two where a crucial point related to this approach is the development of equal outcomes rather than equal treatment. The less number of female in the working force is one aspect of the problem another is the income. Most of the females who are working in the labor force are in the lower level positions. As we can anticipate through a saying that (the higher the position the higher the income and the lower the position the lower the income). This issue is also reported by the (UNDP) in the Human Development Report 2005, Malaysian female income is even less than half of the men income. For example, the total percentage of female earn in Malaysia is 47.2% of the income earned by male; if the man income is 1000 (one thousand) MR per month, a female will have an income of 472 MR. keeping this point in mind makes females discouraged to be active participant of the labor force and if this problem is not solved, the number of female workers will get reduced. However, the approach adopted by the Malaysian government focuses on the development of equal outcomes rather than equal treatment. It will help female to receive equal income which will eventually result in having an equal number females compared to male in the work force.

In conclusion, compared to other countries in the world, Malaysia is in the middle list of countries that has gender inequality in education. In order to overcome gender inequality in education, Malaysia needs to avoid traditionally defining professions based on gender such as, male should go to art and nursing courses and females should go to technical courses such as engineering. Less number of female participations in the labor force should be changed to an equal number of female participants through providing equal opportunities as men, women are in low level positions in their work place, these women should be given high positions in their work place so that they can make their own decisions in their job place which will help them to make other females join the work force too. Additionally, females earn less than men and female lives in less developed area of the country. These females should be given equal income as men and they should be persuaded to come to mega cites or at least those less developed areas should be changed to a semi modern one where they can have the basic facilities to get high quality education. As result, providing these opportunities to females will make Malaysia move from middle developed countries to modern countries in terms of equality in education.

3.2 Gender Inequality in Education System of Thailand

Thailand is one of the countries where most of its boys' and girls' lives used to depend on agriculture; however, a shift in agriculture technology has recently changed the expectation of their parents regarding their children labor contributions. Now, these farm families allow both boys and girls to study for longer time in schools (Knodel, Chamrathirong, and Debavalya 1987). The cost of education including tuition fees, instructional materials, transportation, and opportunity fee for schools children in Thailand is financed by family resources. According to Knodel, Chamrathirong, and Debavalya (1987), the education fee of the students in Thailand is seen as more hardship than the loss of these children's economic contribution to their families in the future.

Even though the government of Thailand brought a number of structural changes in the education system to ensure that every child receives equal education in the country, there are still poor families in which only a few children can get education. Those families spend more money on their sons compared to their daughters. According to Dejong, Richter, and Isarabhakdi (1996), the basic causes that these families prefer to spend more money on their sons compare to daughters are as follow: first, boys will have to take responsibility as household head for the family, second, the availability of opportunities to get a job in the civil service are higher to males than females.

As there were some issues in the education systems international organization, Thailand government, and its people were trying their best overcome the gender gap. The number of girls and boys who were in the upper secondary schools have increased between 1990 and 2000. During these years 10th grade girls enrolment who were studying in schools had a dramatic upward trend in their numbers over boys. In 1990, the boys' percentage who moved from 9th to 10th grade was 27.7% while females' percentage was 29.6%. By the year of 2000, the number of boys had increased to 47.0% whereas the number of the females has increased to 70.1%.

In conclusion, the researchers have examined the gender issues based on the literature of the education system in Thailand and fortunately, the gender gap has visibly lessened. However, Curran, Chung, Cadge, and Varangian (2004), have discussed that in some

parts like northeast, gender gap is still visible among the families due to their extreme financial limitations. As there are many reasons that cause gender inequality in Thailand, yet parents throughout this country oppose any type of gender discrimination between their sons and daughters. The parents believe that going to schools depends on the ability of their daughters and sons regardless of their gender. In short, gender gap is lessened in Thailand, however, there is still a lot to do to say no to gender discrimination in this country.

IV. HIGH LEVEL OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION SYSTEM OF AFGHANISTAN AND NIGERIA

4.1 Gender Inequality in Education System of Afghanistan

According to the Canadian Government's Parliamentary Information and Research Service as cited in Khan (2012), Afghan female situation got worse during the civil war in 1990s. During that time, women were not allowed to work as an employee outside of the homes. Schools for girls were closed. By 2002, only 5% of females were literate and 54% of them were married before the age of 18. Afghanistan was then in the top second country in which 15,000 women were dying due to the childbirth each year (Oxfam, 2011, as cited in Khan, 2012)

As females were in great troubles those days, international community and Afghan people themselves gave a major priority to the women rights in the early 2002. For example, the European Union contributed and still contributes in overcoming the gender inequality in the country. In addition to this, the human rights of women put female participation as core aspect of its foreign policy toward this country and many other international and non-governmental organization have been seeking to enhance the number of females in various educational and employment positions throughout the country with the contribution of emerging Afghan government. As a result of the Afghan government and international organization commitment, there has been a significant change in the life of women. For instance, a survey was conducted by the Asia foundation in six provinces of Afghanistan. The result of the survey shows that there was a great deal of improvements in the life women; according to these women the improvement is slow but steady and they are hopeful for a future where things will be getting better, however, they know it may need further time to completely balance the gender inequality in all aspects of life throughout the country.

Afghan constitution which is established in the year of 2004, explains gender equality in the article no 22. This article states that discrimination and privilege between males and females is prohibited by any mean. All the people who live in Afghanistan whether they are male or female have equal rights and duties before the law. Moreover, articles number 43 and 44 of the constitution make the rights of female guaranteed to education in all private and governmental schools, institutes, and universities. To make this gender inequality in control, government launched a ten years development plan that helps women to be equal in all educational and work related fields with men.

In conclusion, much has been done for the women rights in promoting gender equality in Afghanistan education system since 2011. The number of females enrolling in educational setting is getting bigger and bigger and around 9000 new schools have been built recently from which some of these new schools are especially devoted to the females where they can get high quality education. In addition to this, 36% of the female teachers have been hired in education system since 2002 (Oxfam, as cited in Khan, 2012). Things are getting better day by day in this country and it is not faraway to say that this country will be a palace where the word gender inequality will not need attention.

4.2 Gender Inequality in Education System of Nigeria

In Nigeria, the word gender is divided based on the sex for two different groups of male and female. The word gender has effected both male and female in this place a lot especially the female are in great trouble. Their thoughts, interactions, and positions at the work place is related to this word; based on their traditional culture, male and female should have certain way of living in the country. People, based on their culture have preoccupied activities for males and females and the activity which is culturally related to male should be related to their jobs and the ones which are related to females should be handled by the female. Additionally, people prefer to have sons rather than daughters in their families, for example, the first question they ask about a new born baby is "is it a boy or a girl?". Asking this kind of question have a great deal of importance in the life of these children. If the child is a male, then everyone is happy, and if female, everyone is sad and do not like the new born baby. Furthermore, parents do not really care about their daughters' education compared to that of their sons. Therefore, most of them do not receive proper education; the only things they can do is do be a housewife and take care of their babies. As result, staying at homes and taking care of the children are only two jobs that make them least important compared to male in the country. (Omorieg & Abraham, 2009).

In African culture, paying attention to the education system of female seems less important and women therefore hold second class status in the society. All the females are only engaged at the chores at their homes. Working only at homes causes gender inequality in Nigeria, which puts all these females who live in the country to be less predominated compared to boys from the primary to tertiary levels of education. In addition, the opportunities in the field of education provided is mostly for the males, while females are kept away from taking the same advantages in most cases. The government is trying its best to provide equal education to both genders, yet there is a fear for tomorrow. If the same trend is continued, tomorrow's education in Nigeria will be only for males while females would be housewives where they can only make babies.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics as cited in Omorieg & Abraham, 2009, the percentage of male enrollment in the primary level is 56.27% while the percentage for female in the same level is 43.73%. Secondary schooled boys are 56.21% and girls are 43.78%, in the master level percentage for male is 72, 79% and the percentage for female is 27.20 and in the PhD level male are 76.43% and female are 23.57%. The difference in percentage reveals that there is gender diversity in the education system of Nigeria from the primary and secondary levels to the master and PHD levels. As a result, the gape of inequality enrolment based on the gender in education system is getting larger and larger from low to higher levels.

The above statistics shows that a higher number of male students are enrolled in all levels of the educating system in Nigeria. Based on the traditional culture, the basic cause of this diversity is parents' preference for male children over the female ones. Culturally, these parents believe that their sons will look after their families and daughters will marry other men where they will make their own families. Furthermore, most Nigerian parents trust that sending females to schools may interfere the marriage of their

daughters therefore they do not want to send them to schools. These parents believe that marriage is the primary mission to a female children rather than going to schools, Nwideduh (1996) as cited in Omoregie & Abraham, 2009.

In conclusion, gender inequality in the education system of Nigeria is presented in all levels such as, primary, secondary, tertiary, master and PhD. The cause of this presentencing gender inequality is mostly due to culture and tradition of the people. As a result, gender inequality causes the females to have less or no control over their own lives, economy, and decision-making.

V. CONCLUSION

Generally, gender inequality in international education system is obviously presented on low, middle and high levels of disparity and there is still long way to go and say no to the gender differences in the international context. Nevertheless, the overall main purpose of this study was to help us to learn about Australia and Singapore (low level gender diversity countries), Malaysia and Thailand (middle level gender diversity countries) and Afghanistan and Nigeria (high level gender diversity countries). In order to reduce gender diversity in education systems in the global context, countries such as Afghanistan and Nigeria can follow and benefit from the experiences and strategies of those countries that are recognized as low level of gender diversity.

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