Original Research Article

Setbacks to Gender Mainstream in Higher Education- Cameroon

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Abstract: This study argue that mainstreaming as the government's major approach for promoting gender equity in Cameroon is not put into practice despite sensitization in communications and expressions by international organizations about gender inequality. This could be via socio-cultural factors currently limiting the mechanisms existing in ministries to the extent that they cannot function effectively. Hence the educational gab between females and their male's counterpart is still wide in many developing countries of which Cameroon is one. There are yet ways in which the implementation of gender mainstreaming might be encouraged. These have been found through a comprehensive analysis of gender mechanisms in one ministry as case study. Thus the justification of gender inequality in higher education distinguished between different aspects of education and should explain those contexts in which women have attained parity as well as those in which they continue to lag behind men. The fact that these exist at all is a facilitating factor for gender mainstreaming. However, the majority of mechanisms are struggling with the dual mandate of mainstreaming, which involves both a focus on improving gender awareness inside ministries, and applying gender analyses to ministerial policies, programmes and budgets. Ethnographic studies with both qualitative and quantitative methods are greatly exploited in this study. Besides focusing on girl's education ensures economic security, improved living standards and more choices in careers will result to poverty eradication.
Keywords: Setbacks, Gender, mainstream, Higher Education.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Setbacks: Limitation or obstacles. Gender is said to refer to the display of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Whereas biological sex is determined by genetic and anatomical characteristics, gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, such that inequality between men and women is not perpetuated. It is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. According to the Cameroon government Gender Mainstreaming Policy, also necessitate the actual involvement and leadership of women.

Higher Education: This is the highest considered level in education in the society.

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

Gender issues are part of the current debates topics with emphasis on inequality. This being an intense topic to researchers and policy makers, many countries integrates gender welfare in most of their policy implication. The reason is because a good number of reports especially the Millennium Development Goals Report, 2006, UNESCO, 2007, to mention a few reveal that there is a high degree of gender discrimination with men favoured. It has to do when implementing policies that can help excel better living standards in the rural population.

The equality of men and women was adopted since 1945 by the United Nations Charter and accepted as a fundamental principle in human rights. Organizations like The World Conference on Human Rights, 1993, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women, 1979, the Millennium Development Goals, 2000 among many international agreements highlighted the need for countries to fight against discriminatory practices.

According to UNFPA, 2006 declaration, gender equality is first of all a human right and looking at the Millennium goals, promoting women enhances a greater economic prosperity.

Problem

Though the current profile in girl's educational attainment has known progress, there are a number of social setbacks which are instructional. Evidence is to take look at a study by Mathabe (2004), which indicates that South African universities disclosed that there are more female students at undergraduate level than their male counterparts, but the number diminishes drastically when it comes to postgraduate education. It therefore becomes one of the problems for which their non-representation in higher configuration is being feeble. These impair girl performance in school thus combining to prevent girls from furthering school like their male counterparts. To this effect girls continue to lag behind male mates in terms of completion rates and their overall performance in school. With, little or no enrolment at postgraduate it may be difficult for them to ascend or manage logical positions in society.

OBJECTIVE

To understand why Nationally, Cameroon has approved a number of international conventions related to gender issues with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) being one of the most highlighted. Despite this, gender bias and neutrality, violation of women right are still highly felt.

In a similar situation concerning Cameroon, Amin (1990) assert that Cameroonian girls enrolled in school but very few persist as far as boys. Hence only a small number acquire knowledge and qualifications necessary for active roles in the economic and civil lives of their country. To support this ideology, Nji (1997) on evaluating the participation of Dschang University students in some sponsored projects, realized that two reasons seemed to auburn lower female participation in higher education. From the look at things only 6% of those women were represented in higher education. Secondly because most Cameroonian women are not economically viable as men they lack the needed course fees. The goal of this review is to elaborate on the nature of studies, with special attention paid to the roles anthropology either has had or could have in this work.

Premise to gender disparity content

When matters of inequality in gender surface, it could be supposed that these discriminations range from traditional norms, poverty, non-participations in decision, and so on. According to World Bank, 2005, the disadvantages of gender-oriented skewed towards men affect supply reaction and assets allocation both in mirco and marco. Consequently, gender-neutrality or non-bias gives way to remunerative activities that will help acquire personal assets hence, restraining overall household and local community interests.

METHODOLOGY

After exploring documents from research centers like SIL, IFORD, etc, we exploited the internet and got information from articles, and books. Memoires in the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences of Yaounde I and other information on the theme of gender and the role of women were equally consulted. Ministries such National Statistics and MINESUP were contacted as well. After gathering adequate information from documentaries, we proceeded to fieldwork to talk on the issue among friends, mates and colleagues in this area, specifically in the preliminary study it was realized that many people were very interested and deem it necessary to be researched on. This was an open door that generated courage to work on the subject. One of our major techniques exploited in this research was the sample and purpose technique. This means that only a part of the population on which the study is carried out was then widespread to the target population. Hence male as well as female respondents were contacted but with more of females than males since they constitute the deprived group. Of course they were considered to be in a better position to provide genuine answers because of their situation. Thus 200 respondents from the Masters level and above were recorded having worked on our questionnaire from four different universities which include: Buea, Yaounde I, Maroua and the Catholic University Yaounde. That is to say 150 females and 50 males respectively. Focus groups were not left out and were held with at most 6 persons to maintain objectivity. The tested hypothesis was that there is a major connection involving socio-cultural factors and gender disparity at the doctorate level in Cameroon. Data analyses were both qualitative and qualitative. We were equally participatory in the study.

Identification phase

In practical terms gender issues are still marginal to what we considered to be more important and urgent issues as stipulated in Mathabe, (2009). This is because some regions, notably developing countries, millions of girls still receive little or no education. Today, without formal complication preventing women from reaching high positions in colleges and universities, yet men still dominate at all levels UNESCO, (1998). Supporting to this, is a study by Ledin et al., (2007) exposing that in Europe women hold less than 15% of full professorship though more than half of the European student population is UK. Similarly a study by Schultz (1993) shows that the educational gender gap is still large, with countries of south and West Asia, North and Sub-Saharan Africa

with women attaining only 40 to 75 % level of education compared to men.

- More indications to this, is the global fact on education (January 4th 2011) that make known that even with many improvements in the status of women, there is still many disparity. A print view to this is as follow:
- Two thirds of people in the world who cannot read are female
- Nearly seventy percent of the world's poorest people are female
- Women represent a growing proportion of people living with HIV/AIDs
- In only 16 countries in the world is women's representation in national parliaments above 25 percent;
- Women's contributions to the goal of the economy are growing rapidly but their labour remains undervalue and under countered in national

accounts and an estimated one-quarter to one half of all women have suffered physical.

Cameroon Education System and Women

Considering that gender is without doubt the creed of development in Cameroon there is a pull-push in girls enrollment at lower level of education thus the number decreases as they climb up the educational ladder. By so doing mainstreaming this aspect in universities is an important matter that needs to be handled with exigency since gender affect social justice and equity seeing higher education as an institution with the objective of servicing the entire universe. Before looking at the situation of Cameroonian higher education institution, it would be necessary to take a brief look at the primary curriculum since the former has an affect on the latter. According to the second objective of the Cameroonian Millennium goal for development, it consists of assuring a free primary education for everybody. This means both boys and girls without exception can be enrolled in school.

Proportion of General education for secondary school children between 2007 and 2012 by region

Regions	Total	Girls (%)	Total	Girls (%)	Total	Girls(%)	Total	Girls (%)
Adamaoua	31553	34,2	41699	33,9	44311	35,5	49864	36,0
Centre	248690	45,8	281507	47	337034	48,3	360535	48,5
East	42737	40,8	51726	39,7	53565	40,6	57367	41,9
Extreme North	84012	23,6	103363	25	120749	27,9	140066	29,0
Littoral	200983	48,3	256797	48,7	273477	48,8	302702	49,3
North	53682	28,4	73479	26,5	94608	33,4	97210	34,0
North West	108968	47,8	167277	49,8	172960	49,6	195823	50,2
West	205731	48,2	229647	48,6	269855	49,4	278451	49,3
South	50923	44,4	66122	41,9	77897	45,2	82708	45,0
South West	100412	49,4	119130	49,3	129996	48,6	148726	48,9
Total	1127691	44,2	1390747	44,5	1574452	45,5	1713452	45,8

Source: MINESEC, Annuaire statistique 2012

Approach for gender mainstream

With a sample of the above knowledge, the question one would certainly ask would be: What should be done?

However, several efforts have been made by development bodies and international organizations to bridge the knowledge gap in education. Some of these hard works include: gender-sensitive measurements which are critical for building that is taking inequality seriously. This is by enabling better planning and actions by gender and non-gender specialists, as well as holding institutions accountable to their commitments on gender equality. Nevertheless, measurement techniques and data remain limited and poorly utilized. According to Esplen & Bell (2007) it is difficult to know if efforts are on to achieving gender equality goals and commitment. Thus it would be of interest to make mentioned of the fact that several efforts are being done to close up the gender gap in education. These include:

- A favourable policy framework with clear gender guidelines;
- A significant mass of women to promote policy execution and gender equality;
- Obligation of all stakeholders concerned, together with leadership;
- Pledge of decision makers (organisations and project staff) to prioritize and assign sufficient resources for gender mainstreaming;
- Knowledge and attitudes (expertise);
- Choice of partner organisations;
- Adequate tools and instruments for gender inclusion in programmes are also necessary.

Effect of Perceptions, Altitudes and Critical Mass

Gender disparities in the education sector are caused by the perceptions and attitudes of a number of diverse stakeholders. However, it should be recalled that gender mainstreaming means the constant use of a sex viewpoint at all stages of the progress and accomplishment of guiding principle, plans,

programmes and projects. In the schooling sector, this would include not only the actions of governments, but also those of schools, colleges and learning institutions as well as where suitable, those of NGOs and the private sector. Thus mainstreaming gender vary from prior efforts to incorporate women's concerns into government actions in that, rather than 'adding on' a women's constituent to obtainable policies, devices, programmes and schemes, a gender point of view informs these at all periods, and in every aspect of the decision-making. Gender mainstreaming may thus require an essential renovation of the fundamental paradigms that update education.

Hence some knowledge, attitudes and practices involved with gender mainstream perceptions would include: Parents approach that is felt in a case when many do not see the importance of educating a girl child. Therefore parents who lack understanding about the profit of nurturing and guiding girls by sending them to school cooperate in bringing about gender inequalities. From every signal of studies there is push-force towards edification at intergenerational spread of behaviours and attitudes. Therefore, it is obvious that parents should adopt a habit of promoting and encouraging girl's children through education.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

When one look at the gender disparity in Higher Education the following can be explore to our study as findings:

Correlation among marital status and gender inequalities

In gender roles, the female have some activities which obliged her to carry by compulsion of nature and an example is childbearing. Studying or not, a woman cannot share such a task with the husband though at times very difficult since psychologically and physiologically a pregnant woman need sufficient rest for her own her health and fetus. But then academic demands like doing assignments, practical, attending classes, sitting for examinations may be quite stressful with some cases of complicated pregnancies. Thus these and many other marital challenges identified by respondents keep the female or delays here involvement with doctorate studies.

Besides, in group discussions we realized that when women get married, a good number find it quite difficult to continue since they must equally get married before the Doctorate level for fear of remaining unmarried since men fear to get married to women after this level. Reason of difficulty faced in marriage has to go with the fact that some men are quite demanding and would want only their wives to do everything for them. Consequently, they spend their time taking care of their husbands, children and other household chores thus

having little or no time to give in to studies at this level which is quite demanding personally. Some just need violence to come out of these daily routines. Many testify that their mates have drop because of childbearing and family responsibilities.

Bhalalusesa (1998) attested the fact that family responsibilities affect women participation not only learning in higher education but also in career and profession development, thus preventing women in showing up their capacity and contribution to development. My husband and I are working but when our baby was sick, I have to stay out of work to look after our baby and this almost let me losing my job because of my long stay from duty to take of the child recount one of our informants. There are similar examples like the case of this informant on daily bases. The social conditioning that female should look after children or a sick person is a major issue in gender inequality in many African communities.

Link involving tradition and gender

Culture stipulates that a women's place is in the kitchen as our informants expressed and women who go far in education are considered to be stubborn and do not in line with cultural norms and values. Menye (2007) confirms this fact as his study reveals that in Mbang-Mboum a community in Adamawa region, traditional mind-set towards girls has kept them from being educated. Hence despite parent-education initiatives organized to promote gender equity in homes and school many people from here still stick on traditional customs involving girls to domestic activities, early marriage and have a lower status to that of men. Such customs do encourage the girl child to excel in education talk not of the doctorate level.

Discussions among informant reveal that traditional and religious beliefs discouraged women from going to school. Like the Northern region of Cameroon the Islamic religion is a great factor hindering education and promoting early marriages. Secular tradition is therefore discouraged so as to save their children from a corrupt society. Evola (1986) indicated that women from this part of the country are mostly occupied with child nurturing, home management farming and serving their husband. Also many who have researched in this area are of the same opinion.

Relationship between participation in decision making and gender inequality

Another striking answer we found for inequality in gender at the doctorate had to do with decision making. There is the problem of women not partaking in decisions of their communities though some have attained a point of decision making in homes as some testified. However, the only contribute and the

husband has the final say. This finally say of their husbands equally has to do with whether they should continue school or not. Consequently, only few women are represented in management and administrative positions beginning even from the university which many are passing through.

Relationship between financial autonomy and gender disparity

Though education demands a lot of sacrifice at all levels, it is quite outstanding at the doctorate level. why? Frida says one need a laptop, Airtime for telephone or internet communication, field trips and so forth. This therefore demands money. In which case most of the married women depend on their husbands for this and when your husband does not accept the ideal that you should attend this level of education it becomes very difficult if you are not also working. Hence poverty and financial autonomy is one of the setbacks to women education especially at the doctorate level.

SUGGESTIONS

In the quest for gender justice, it is vital that the Higher education body should construct gender-sensitive backgrounds that will advance the realization of the ideas of these institutions. A starting point may be in the course of the institution's check of its dreams assignment and tactical planning in expressions of how it can set up gender receptive polices and practices. This could be done by: sensitizing people engaged in career counseling on gender issues, thus ensuring that they also direct women to sex-atypical occupations;

- Propagate information to students and parents about career counseling and vocational guidance;
- Work out a career guidance programme to encourage bright girls to further their education in areas where they are traditionally under-represented, such as technical and scientific areas; and
- Steer boys and men also into 'female' occupations, which could eliminate gender segregation in jobs.

Gender mainstreaming cannot be attained within education alone, apart from other departments and non-state organisations since a good number of the gender difference that affect the young woman education begin from outside the education segment. The national directing officer should broaden its control and look for co-operation with all other government departments and non-governmental organisations. With such notions and in accordorance with the National Gender Policy every influential organisation as well as individuals can apprehend a pledge to gender fairness in their day to day maneuver, policies and measures. Also, the ability to take everybody on board involves enormous programmatic preparation, both at financial and human resources. Therefore the Ministries of Education and others like Health and Child Welfare; Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation; Public Service and Social Welfare; Justice and Parliamentary Affairs ought to seize a chief role for the reason that they are directly link to subjects of equality and social justice. In this consideration, the Education ministries and others mentioned, need to connect the administration with NGOs that are concerned in the endorsement of children and women's issues as answer to human rights matters.

Criticism

Although one of the principal characteristic of gender-based violence is that it occurs against women precisely because of their gender. Gender-based violence involves power imbalances where, most often, men are the perpetrators and women the victims. During this session we have explore in detail the causes and contributing factors of gender-based violence, various effects of gender-based violence on victims and their families, perpetrators and the society as a whole, as well as examine a variety of possible social responses to the phenomenon. However it should be put in mind that female counterpart stands as bottles –necks to the progress of the female child.

To begin with it is essential to consider that fact that not only men are responsible for the set back of women. Even women too cause their own hindrances. How? when one give a look at the many few educated female in Cameroon, Africa and the world, the question you ask is:: why do women not give in to those hard subjects that would enable them go in for occupations such as polite or sailor? Is it still men standing on the way of the educated few? The answer is No! Women want or would only want to go in for that which is easy. That is the more reason why this issue could be look at from both prospective so as see the necessary measures require to resolve the problem of gender.

Also, though men have the tendency to go after many women, it is the place of another to help solve the problem of his female counterpart. Why I'm I saying? I am trying to bring out the fact that a married male will not approach a girl or another married woman and she gives in. Many strive and quarrels in matrimonial issues are sometimes the matter of a "second office". Many female consciously go into competition with their friends, colleagues and so on to fight over men. This give men the upper hand over women when these females friends, colleagues or whosoever could easily turn down these male request and get many other single men out there and get along with. The women world turn to be one of disunity, betrayal and mishaps consequently giving men room to excel at their own weakness rooted within. Could they not see that they are responsible for the spread of diseases because of their contribution to the ruin in their

sister, friend or colleagues house? Women must be first standing for themselves by uniting against men in the culture then; setback against them can be handled.

Besides, when women are in authority positions like president for few causes, ministers, senators, mayors or even in other sub structures in the society, leadership is at times uncertain for their female's counterparts. It is always the case to hear a female colleague who is boss by another female complaining. These complain go a long way with their male bosses whom they would prefer than their female counterparts. Female members in leadership do not make things easy if not possibly for their counterparts when they are in a better place to understand and solve some of their mate's problems amicable. Consequently some collide with male colleagues against the female boss thus rending things difficult to her. Women therefore need to be conscious about the fact they do not make things easy for their female counterpart to move forward talk not of leadership. Thus before we look into social responses like health care, victim assistance services, working with Perpetrators, Media Information and Awareness Campaigns, Education , Faith-Based Programs and Services amongst other, the female world must first of all be orderly so as to fight gender bias towards the female.

CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding worldwide confirmation of the small number of female partaking in social, educational, economic and political fields, there is still a propensity to see it as a real difficulty only in a partial number of countries. So far, as eminent above, the truth is that no country in the world, no matter how complex it is has attains true gender equality. As considered by analogous decision making authority, equal prospect for education and progress, equal input and status in all amble of human endeavour is essential. Gender disparities exist, even in countries devoid of obtrusive male-domination, and measuring these disparities is a necessary step towards employing remedial course of action. Yet measurement is demanding and country performance difficult to evaluate using disaggregated and various data for each nation. Our study is an attempt to combine these data in a manner that allows us to take a quicker and more planned look at relative country strengths and weaknesses.

Though some of these recommendations are famous, in most cases the main thing to put in mind is the actual followed-up with patriotic involvement by all stakeholders. With a constant reminder and opportunities put in place for women to access higher education and high decisions positions. This is to permit the process of policy and strategy formulation to be monitored regularly since some of the analysis and options may prove to be in appropriate and ineffective.

Meanwhile specific persons and organs being responsible for implementation within a specific time frame should be involved.

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