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Research paper

Globalisation and Gender Equality in Education: Government and NGO's Roles in Empowering Women

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Abstract

One of the remarkable advantages of globalisation is people having more access to adequate education, both for formal and informal. Although education is not shared evenly all over the world, through globalisation, there is an awakening process when most countries realise that education is not only a crucial factor in developing human resources, but also essential for economic improvement and technology expansion. Education is a primary need and a fundamental right for everyone, yet many women still lack of education, which has the potential to enhance their lives, particularly to fight against poverty. This article will argue that education needs in rural areas in Indonesia are not being shared equally by both genders. The results show that globalised standards of education are falling short for female students due to several reasons, such as financial constraints and cultural preferences for males. Therefore, the roles of the government and NGOs are vitally important in empowering women, particularly in rural areas. This article also draws the ethnographic data from rural areas in Minahasa Regency in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. This article recommended that the government should enhance the access to all educational stages, improve the education quality and distribute more funds in education to implement the educational fees exemption program. It can be concluded that NGOs can play the important role in assisting the government strategies. The roles may be conducted by embarking on campaigns for education. It may lead to increasing number of education enrolment and enlarging the opportunity for children and women to attain sufficient education.

Keywords: *Education, Gender Equality, Globalisation, Women's Empowerment*

1. Introduction

Debates over globalisation have emerged since decades ago. Several aspects of globalisation reviewed in many ways for different purposes. This article evaluates relations between globalisation and gender equality in education and describes the study case in rural areas, Minahasa Regency in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The first part explains the definitions of globalisation, historical background and followed by controversies about impact of globalisation on education. The next part describes about the roles of government and NGOs in improving women empowerment through formal education and skill. Suggestions and conclusion are given in the final part.

2. Definitions and Historical Background

Basically, there is no definite meaning about globalisation. Many experts have their own conclusions regarding the term of globalisation. Globalisation has become a phenomenon that changes people's lives and can be envisaged as a process of transformation in international relationships, cultural exchange, environmental, political, economics and socio-cultural relations [1]. "In sum, globalisation can be thought as the widening, intensifying, speeding up and growing impact of world-wide interconnectedness" [2]. Although globalisation involves cultural, political and technological dimensions, but its economic dimensions become the most widely discussed issue. Globalisation brings result to economic integration across national or regional borders through free movement of goods, capital, information and leads countries to have interdependencies with others.

There are many versions of the point when globalisation was started. Essentially, globalisation has occurred since the beginning of humanity, when ancient people migrated between the countries or continents. Globalisation appeared in 300 B.C. when Alexander the Great found the ancient world [3]. Another opinion argues that globalisation has begun in the 16th century when the great expansion of European capitalism occurred, then followed by exploration journeys where new continents discovered [4].

It can be summarized that the modern form of globalisation started at the 19th century through four phases. Initially, it began with technological inventions and good exchange between multilateral countries and followed by deprivation in economic sector, which led to protectionism. The next phase was the establishment of world organizations and the last phase is believed still occurring until now. It has begun when global market was swarmed by commodities from developing countries, while the other developing countries was experiencing economic crisis [1].

Globalisation is a never-ending process, but the significant point of globalisation was in the 19th century as the start of modern globalisation, when the expansion of transport systems and communication technology was introduced.

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2.1 Globalisation Impacts on Education

Globalisation has two-sided impacts, both positive and negative on the world society. In terms of education, globalisation has brought multi-dimensional effects. Nevertheless, globalisation has benefits for education that still outweigh the drawbacks.

One of the remarkable advantages of globalisation is, people have more access to have adequate education, both for formal and informal education. Although education is not shared evenly all over the world, through globalisation, there is an awakening process when most countries realise that education is not only a crucial factor in developing human resources, but also essential for economic improvement and technology expansion. "Education is an important investment in building human capital that is a driver for technological innovation and economic growth" [5]. Thus, education is vitally important in presenting a great contribution for a country and become a pillar to support country's development. Moreover, education may create intelligent and capable generation to be actively participated in all aspects of life.

Another benefit of globalisation in the education sector is the global event when an Educational Forum was held and it became a pivotal point to embark education for all. The event declared a campaign, called "Education for All" (EFA). All countries in the world, in World Education Forum in Dakar, 2000, pledged to provide primary and secondary education for all without gender disparities. This condition should have been implemented by 2015 [6]. In addition, the global leaders of most countries in the world collaborated and declared the goals at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 and established the set of eight "Millennium Development Goals (MDG's)". The goals should be reached by 2015, the same years as the Education for All campaign. The MDG's call for eradicating extreme poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing child and maternal mortality, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, protecting the environment and developing a global partner [6].

However, not all effects of globalised education are positive. Globalisation has brought its own drawbacks for society, particularly in education. As a consequence of globalisation, an enormous number of educational institutions compete with each other to improve the standard quality of education. Recently, many institutions have utilised cutting-edge technology, advanced information systems, modern educational mechanisms and provide professional instructors. Although these are impressive steps, all these advancements need a huge budget to generate. Therefore, the vast majority of institution or state universities have been privatised. As a result, education has become a commodity, sometimes with exorbitant tuition fees. Higher education privatisation indirectly leads to a commercial enterprise system. The investment in education, whether public or private, is purposely driven to make profit. Moreover, education is no longer considered as the service sector but as an industry [5].

The other disadvantage of globalisation on education is most likely experienced by the poor society and it may lead to a predicament for them. Indirectly, globalisation contributes to the situation where the education quality can be measured by educational fees. It is generally believed the higher the education cost, the better the education system that can be obtained. This has occurred in any sector of education, from primary school to higher education. Obviously, the expensive education fee is unaffordable for people who live in poverty, such as in most developing countries, for example, in Indonesia, which still has a high number people who are effected by poverty. This condition also may contribute to widening the gap between 'the haves' and 'have nots'. Definitely, the top layer of society can attain a better quality of education system while the bottom layer of society has to satisfy with the adverse quality of education.

Furthermore, higher education sector in Indonesia is also highly privatized. Over 3400 higher education institutions are owned privately and only 140 are operated by the government [7]. Higher education fees have become expensive and there seems to be an unrealistic expectation for every individual to have a tertiary education level. Under these circumstances, the gap in education access between rich and poor has become wider [8].

However, the positive impacts of globalisation in education still outnumber the negative impacts. The Indonesian government should endeavour to overcome the disadvantages of negative effects in order to harmonise the benefits and the drawbacks of globalisation effect on education.

3. Government and NGO's Roles in Empowering Women

Education is a primary need and a fundamental right for everyone, yet many women still lack education, which has the potential to enhance their lives, particularly to fight against poverty. Women's education and poverty eradication is inextricably linked. Gender equality in education may lead to empowerment where women can confront and consequently overcome obstructions in politics, social and economics [9].

There was a set of eight Millennium Goals (MDG's), which were targeted for completion by 2015. It was declared and signed by 189 countries in 2000. The third goal of the Millennium Declaration was gender equality and women's empowerment. Furthermore, the World Education Forum in Dakar, in April 2000, committed to abolish gender disparities in primary and secondary education in 2005 and planned 'Education for All' by 2015. In 2000 the data from UNESCO Report showed that 57% of the 104 million children of the world still had no formal education: two thirds were girls and 860 million of illiterate adults were women [6]. Similar circumstances affected women in Indonesia, for example, in Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi, where women who live in rural areas still have low formal education.

The education needs in rural areas in Indonesia are not being shared equally for both genders. Globalised standards of education are falling short for female students due to several reasons, such as financial constraints and cultural preferences for males. Therefore, the roles of the government and NGOs are vitally important in empowering women, particularly in rural areas. This study also draws the ethnographic data from rural areas in Minahasa Regency in North Sulawesi, Indonesia.

According to the data from the Indonesian Board of Family Planning and Family Prosperity, in Minahasa Regency in 2004, 40% of girls aged 7-15 were not in schools. There were several contributing factors to this issue: financial constraints due to many people in those areas still lived in poverty. The data showed that approximately 30% of Minahasa population was categorized as living in poverty [10]. Until 2013, the number of people living under poverty line was increasing [10, 11]. A family's income restricts the education enrollment of the children. Many parents cannot possibly afford to pay education fees and other costs, such as books, uniforms and transportation fees.

Secondly, parents have full authority in deciding which children should have education. In rural areas, in particular, primary or secondary educational level is considered sufficient for women; only a few can reach tertiary education. It is believed that in Minahasa Regency, men have more privileges than women in pursuing higher education. Because of the value of the patrilineal principle, men are believed to continue the family's name to the next generation and will inherit the largest portion of the family's possessions, such as agricultural land or family house. This cultural preference for males contributes to a considerable gap in gender equality. The similar situation also occurs in other part of Indonesia such as in North Sumatera at Pakpak community. This phenomenon led to the marginalization of women who experienced lack of access to formal education, high rate of school dropout, less inheritance rights, and less power in the decision making [12].

It is pivotal to diminish gender gap by encouraging girls in school enrollments. Several countries in the world still experience the gender gaps. In Minahasa Regency, the results of gender disparities, poverty, lack of education and knowledge, means rural wom-

en are more likely to become entrenched in early marriage and adolescent pregnancy. These women tend to get married early at the age of 16-21. Bringing up children and taking care of household chores are the only two things that they most probably do for the rest of their lives. Specifically, in 2004, 58.85% of rural women in Minahasa Regency were housewives [10]. Recent data shows that the student number of secondary education level in urban area, such as Manado city, is as twice higher compared to rural area in Minahasa Regency [11].

Early marriage is one of the major barriers to reach higher educational level. It leads to detrimental life conditions for women. The General Assembly of the United Nations in 2015 committed to eliminate all practices which cause specific harm to women and girls, including child marriage (Target 5.3, Goal 5 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs). However, the inequality gender norms in some societies which resulted in child marriages were prompted by laws and customs that ignores women and girls in decision making, economic and political rights [13]. Education can prevent early or child marriage, but in rural and remote areas where communities live in poverty, early marriages have become a common phenomenon and has increased every year.

Being involved in prostitution is the worst case scenario that could happen to Minahasanese women when they move to bigger cities. They are most likely to become victims of women trafficking and work in forced prostitution. Approximately, 200,000 to 225,000 South-East Asian women and children are annually trafficked, one third of global trafficking trade. The victims are exposed to high risk of violence, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS infection [14].

These can be avoided if they have a good education. In fact, globalisation has embodied positive impacts on women particularly in education, through the one of the Millennium goals, which specifically accommodate gender inequality. It declared the eradication of gender disparity by 2005 in primary and secondary education and all educational stages by 2015 [14]. The goal is for women to become more independent and that can only be achieved if they have the option to receive a higher education. Furthermore, education and income are often used to measure women's status in community. The accessibility of women to social resources can be measured by their education achievement, while women's access to material resources is specified by their occupation and economic activity. Education also tends to delay women to marriage lives and increase their opportunities to earn incomes in different professions, which bring about economic freedom, higher social status and recognition [15, 16].

According to UNESCO Report of MDG's Goals in 2015, at some points, the targets of MDG's has reached significant achievements although there are still significant gaps among regions and countries. Disadvantaged and poorest people are still being left behind. In terms of goals number two and three, concerning the targets to achieve universal primary education and to promote gender equality and empower women, the 2008-2012 survey showed the disparities of out-of-school children still occurred between urban and rural locations across countries. The rate in rural areas was two times higher (165) compared to urban areas (8%). As a result of MDG's campaign which was supported by national and international efforts, the number of female students increased as compared to data 15 years earlier. However, the largest number of gender inequality in enrolment ratios was found in tertiary education in 2012 [17].

Educated women bestow a great advantage in society. They are more likely to have healthier and less number of children. Children are brought up in appropriate manner with adequate education and morality, hence this could proliferate better a generation for the society [9]. To address this matter, the Indonesian government should establish a strategic plan by involving non-governmental organisations to contribute to education and reach poor families and disadvantaged groups. This is aligned with the study of [18], which suggested that the government of Indonesia, private sector and civil society partners should prioritize secondary education for all girls and boys, and ensure that the social welfare is sufficient to reach poor community [18]. Therefore, the government and NGOs should collaborate in empowering women by giving them more opportunities in formal education and skill development in order to encourage women to be more appreciated in society.

There are several NGOs in North Sulawesi. In Minahasa, there is an NGO called Minahasa Raya Foundation, which is concerned with community based development and human resource empowerment. This NGO organises a compensation fund from Newmont Minahasa Raya Mining Company, a multinational mining company, which has granted the fund for human resource development in Minahasa Regency. The committee consists of government officer and the company's employee. Other NGOs are in Manado, capital city of North Sulawesi, such as Children and Women's Empowerment Foundation (*Yayasan Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Anak*) and Female's Voice (*Suara Perempuan*) which are concerned with women's empowerment and rights.

Basically, NGOs are boosting the government's effort in assisting community development by sourcing funds from international aid or developed countries. For example, there is a fund, formed by The World Fund called FTI (The Fast-Track Initiative). Countries that provide Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) with credible education sector plan are qualified to submit proposals to secure the fund [6].

There is a synergy that should be demonstrated between the government and NGOs to bolster up education, particularly for women in rural areas. The government should enhance the access to all educational stages, improve the education quality and distribute more education funds to implement the educational fees exemption program. They should also provide scholarships or grants for high achieving students from poor families to pursue tertiary education. Meanwhile, NGOs can play important roles in assisting government strategies by embarking on campaigns for education, conduct different types of training in health education, maternity, work force and family planning. Other stakeholders, including religious and traditional leaders, could initiate public awareness campaigns and mobilize community resources to disseminate messages about children's rights, gender inequality and the harms of child marriage [18].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, gender equality in education and women's empowerment are crucial. Both males and females have the same rights to attain education. However, previous studies have shown that rural women in developing countries still have limited access to adequate education due to many factors. It is pivotal to realize gender equality and women's empowerment, so that women can gain economic freedom, higher living standard and social status, particularly for women in Minahasa Regency in North Sulawesi, Indonesia.

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