Jobs and Equity: A Critical Examination of the Education of Working Women in Tanzania

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Abstract: *The education of working women in Tanzania so far has been an individual, sporadic and disorganized endeavor. Further more, majority of working women in the country have a bare minimum educational qualification and are employed in low categories of jobs (Mbilinyi, 1992; Bendera, 1990). In the light of universal human rights and considering transformational and emancipatory theories that promote the role pivotal of education in resisting all forms of oppression and exploitation (Freire; 1998; Newman, 1994, Mezirow, 1983, 1999; Fletcher, 2000), there is an urgent need to institute policies, procedures and curricular that would facilitate emancipatory education and training for all. Reorienting current adult education programs in the country to accentuate transformational and emancipatory agenda would enable women to attain the knowledge and skills required for balanced competition with their male counterparts in employment opportunities, status and remuneration. Educating women to higher levels has been acknowledged to play a significant role in impacting development both at family and societal levels. Thus, the education and training of workingwomen should be made a priority in adult education programs in the country. The paper explores the general benefits of education and that of women in particular. It uncovers both the traditional and work place roles that women play and establishes that women perform significant roles and need be duly educated and trained to perform these roles effectively and efficiently. They also need such education and training to command due status and respect at all levels in the society. For adult education and training programs in the country to be able to elevate women to such desired positions transformative and emancipatory theories need to inform adult education policies, procedures and curricular.*

INTRODUCTION

Generally education has the intent of contributing positively to the lives of all citizens (Hill and King, 1993; Bellew & King, 1993; MeoC 1995). Bellew and King (1993), for example purport that "education improves the quality of life. It promotes health, expands access to paid employment, increases productivity in market and nonmarket work, and facilitates social ad political participation" (p.285). When education discriminates among individuals or groups of citizens, its relevance and responsiveness ought to be critically examined in relation to the consequences brought about by such discrimination. The literature of adult education, especially that dealing with access and equity reveals wide and significant disparties between male and female workers in terms of access to and benefits from the present formal education system (Thomson, 1983; Kelly & Slaughter, 1991; Wjcman, 1991; King & Hill, 1993; Bendera, 1999). Women have and still continue to have limited access to

education due to a number of obstacles including traditional roles, beliefs and values; ill-defined and unsupportive educational policies and curricular and women's own attitudes towards higher education and training.

Furthermore, women tend to be discriminated at work places because of their gender and educational background, Bendera (1999) argues that girls have generally been "streamed to subjects with little relevance to the labour market" (p.129) consequently they have been employed into jobs that are less appreciated and hence command less pay and status. Existing trends show that women are not respected as highly as their male counterparts within the educational systems and at work places (Thompson, 1983; Wajcman, 1991; Mbilinyi, 1992). Feminists and other advocates of equity and social justice have been struggling to facilitate attainment of gender equity in access to and benefits from education and other socio-economic and political amenities and opportunities. Miles, (1998) proffers, "feminists are fighting for recognition of the value of the goods and services women produce—— health and education, housing and transportation services; and for decent wages for chronically underpaid "women's" clerical services and caring work" (p.255). For the struggle to be fruitful it is necessary for the education systems all over to be reformed in order to reflect, serve, and transform women and their positions.

This paper gives a personal perspective of the obstacles to workingwomen's educational participation, growth and recognition within the Tanzanian context. The paper argues that women have important roles and positions they occupy within the society in general and at work places in particular. Like their male counterparts, such contributions should be honored, fostered and elevated through relevant transformative and emancipatory adult education and training programs. This can best be realized when the government, non-governmental organizations and interested individuals collaboratively engage in this venture which has benefits that do not discriminate.

ROLES AND POSITION OF WOMEN IN SOCIETIES
The pivotal roles of women in societies cannot be over emphasized or exaggerated. Traditionally, the y perform distinctive, unique and important roles, including child bearing and general roles within the social-cultural, political and economic sectors. In many Third World countries the majority of women still assume roles such as firewood collectors, food and cash crop producers, cooks, water searchers, cleaners, and caregivers to children, the sick and the old (Azikiwe, 1992; Hyde, 1993; Bendera, 1999; Egbo, 2000). It is evident that with the current global economy more and more women face challenging roles as they integrate their traditional roles within the demands of the modern formal workplace responsibilities (Wajcman, 1991; Bendera, 1991; Azikiwe, 1992; Hill & King, 1993). However, women in work places are

generally assigned to what Miles (1998) refers to as "clerical and caring work" which is less rewarding than technical work mainly assigned to men. Assessing the conditions of aforementioned roles of women, Miles (1998) observes that, "women have long done the unrecognized, traditionally unpaid, and now also poorly paid, nurturing and cooperative work" (p. 254).

In Tanzania, many of the employed women have only a mere basic educational background, making their participation and involvement at formal work places less competitive than their male counterparts, who have been, and still remain with wider access to more appreciated and higher education as well highly paying jobs. Citing the condition of employment at the Ministry of Education and Culture in Tanzania, Bendera (2000) demonstrates that males occupy most of the high-ranking positions in the ministry. She indicates that women occupy 14% of the position of district education officers, 10% of the position of heads of public and private schools, 20% of the principals of teacher education colleges, 17% of education inspectors, and 14% of the ministry's directorship at different ministry's directorates. Having examined a Labor Force Survey (LFS) in the country Mukangara & Koda (1997) determined that, "only 20% of women are in paid employment. Not only are women few in numbers but also they are mainly found in female job stereotypes-nursing, secretarial work and teaching. Women also work in semi-skilled, manual and repetitive jobs" (p.,25). These facts are not unforeseen given that in Tanzania more men have more access to higher education than their counterparts. Further more, job appointment has always been the responsibility of a patriarchal system or what Bendera refers to as "the old boy network" (p. 126). Rathgeber (1991) shows that of all who join higher education in the country only 30 percent are women. Apparently women also occupy fewer high- ranking and rewarding jobs at work places. The system reinforces women discrimination at work places in terms of type of jobs assigned, pay and status.

For the women to be competitive enough and perform their roles effectively, they need to be critically conscientized and educationally well prepared in both technical and traditional subjects. The need and effect of individuals being made critical conscious for effective participation and performance in society have well been articulated by educators like Freire, (1970, 1998), Adams & Horton, (1986), Mezirow, (1983); Newman, (1994, 1999), and Fletcher (2000). Talking specifically about the female gender, Fletcher posits, "critical consciousness is necessary to guide efforts to improve the achievement of girls and women…it would be futile, and on some account potentially even counterproductive, to involve girls and women in instruction without creating circumstances in which they also can develop their capacity for critical consciousness" (pp. 138-139).

Moreover, the issue of re-training or in-servicing workers to keep workers

abreast of the demands of the workplace has been widely discussed (Tight, 1988, 1996). The review indicates that currently adult educators and theorists are increasingly becoming aware and giving high priority to education and training programs that prepare workers for specific job-performance. It is in respect of the above views that this paper sees the needs to upgrade and update women's educational and training levels and status jobs.

It is unfortunate that in Tanzania, and perhaps in many other countries, women's roles and status have been so trivialized that it has become convenient for policy makers to brush aside women's preparedness when formulating and implementing educational policies. Since independence (1961) educational policies and acts have only paid lip service to the educational problems of working women who have originally been squeezed out of the education system due to a deep-rooted patriarchal system. Tanzania's education system reflects discrimination patterns founded on, gender, class, and geographical locations. This discriminative position has been clearly expounded by Fletcher (2000) who observes that ones education attainment and advancement depends on how power and status are attached to membership in one group or another. However in Tanzania gender inequality seems to be most outstanding particularly since women have fewer educational opportunities in higher education than men. Historically Tanzanian communities have attributed women's position to be predominantly the home.

The trivialization, marginalization, and devaluation of women should be resisted and resented. Adult educators should insist that women's educational needs and advancement be made an integral part of the educational policies and decision-making. Like their male counterparts, the present level ad status of women's education and training need to be advanced in order to meet the challenges, opportunities and developments in the society and of the work place environments in particular. If democracy in Tanzania should seize being used only for political polling and attain meaningful practical worth within the country's constitution, working women's education and training need to be facilitated through transformative and emancipatory adult education programs.

TANZANIA'S PYRAMID EDUCATION SYSTEM AND GENDER INEQUITIES
Since the colonial era the education system in Tanzania has maintained a pyramid structure. Although the Universal Primary Education's (UPE) target was attained in 1977 and it facilitated attainment of equal gender opportunities in primary education, the majority of pupils who enroll in primary schools cannot go to secondary schools and higher education. To date primary education still remains terminal for 95% of primary school graduates (Bendera, 1999). The majority of those who terminate education at primary level are girls. This result from the cultural preferences for educating male children,

high drop out rates resulting from early marriages and pregnancies, relatively low performance levels of the girls and a poor economic base. The society generally places more preference to male education hence there are more places for male students in secondary and higher education in the country especially where boarding facilities are provided. It was not until late the 1980's that the government started placing emphasis on more places for girls in secondary schools, instituting acts directing all secondary schools to provide equal places for boys and girls. Nevertheless, very little has been done in higher education.

Rathgeber (1991) reported that Tanzania's higher education enrolment ranked lowest of all African countries and as observed earlier, of those enrolled only 30% were women. This situation has not changed much since. A country with a population of above thirty million people Tanzania has only four public and three relatively new private universities. The conversional public universities, The university of Dar-es-salaam (UDSM), The Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and Mzumbe university have an enrolment capacity of less than 15,000 students, majority of whom are males. The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) established in 1994 attained an enrollment of about 13,000 students in 2003. Although OUT provides an evenue for equal gender enrollment opportunities because it uses technology to deliver education and students are not obliged to incur residential costs it is surprising that of the 13000 students enrolled only 18% (data obtained form admission office of the university) are women!

Private initiatives in establishing educational institutions at all levels in Tanzania were paralyzed in the 1970's when the government nationalized and made public all educational institutions (except for religious seminaries) due to the socialist ideology that guided the country's polices. Women whose performance was relatively lower than that of men were more affected by this move because the competition to enter secondary and higher education became highly stiff (MoEC, 1995). The government neither made concerted efforts to expand the institutions it nationalized nor built new ones to serve the rapidly expanding population. Prior to the nationalization act ere were more places for male than female students both at secondary and higher education, hence the inability of the government to expand and/or build new educational institutions forced women into further disadvantage.

With the shattering of the leftist ideology world over, and structural adjustment policies (SAP) Tanzania has since the late 1980's instituted privatization policies in all economic and social sectors (Mbilinyi, 1992; MeoC, 1995; Bendera, 1999) For the first time since independence Tanzania instituted a comprehensive educational and training policy in 1995. Strikingly, the policy acknowledges women's discrimination and the need for gender equity in educational opportunities; but nowhere does the policy consider working women in terms of advancing their education and provision of in-service training except for

women teachers (MoEC, 1995, p.20). The policy associates adult education to literacy and basic education while it accords the responsibility of in-service training programs to individual employing organizations. Yet such responsibilities are not mandatory! If public and private schemes are to help women improve and advance their education and lives the government ought to establish clearly binding policies to that effect. Such polices should consider women at all levels, ages and positions in the society because the benefits of educating women abounds as will be discussed in the next part of the paper.

Refocusing the policies should go hand in hand with relevant curricular that foster the raising of women's critical consciousness (reflective and critical thinking) leading to transformation and emancipation. Curricular that considers women's experiences, ethical, moral, political and power issues gearing at eliminating discrimination both in education and work place. When women are appropriately conscientized they will take advantages of emerging educational and training opportunities in the country like that provided by the Open University of Tanzania (OUT).

BENEFITS OF EDUCATING AND TRAINING WORKING WOMEN: AN OVER VIEW

According to Hill and King (1993) the benefit of female education goes beyond increasing individual productivity and income. Fertility decreases in highly educated women, leading into a lesser population pressure as couples plan for smaller families, improve their health, life expectance and the quality of life in general. A study done by Hill and King indicates that, " A country's failure to raise the education of women to the same level as that of men imposes a substantial cost on its development efforts. Unless the gender gap in education is closed, desired improvements in social indicators can be achieved only at much higher levels of economic growth" (p.21).

With this view in mind and considering that economic growth rate in Tanzania has been very slow I may safely argue that educating women in the county would enhance development. My experience shows that many men in the country tend to use their income for selfish-ends. For example in some tribes and religious denominations, the higher the income a man gets the more wives he marries-increasing the number of dependants hence, diminishing the life standards of the whole family. The benefits of educating a women in Tanzania has been found to be significant, Bendera's (1999) study established that in the country families where women have higher education the rate of educating children rises to more than 62% while it is lower in families where men have higher education and thus higher income. Education does not only liberate women economically, it also imbues psychological and social liberation that enhance empowerment of women especially in decision-making. Martin (1988) argues that better education makes women attain a positive view of themselves. Members of the society also recognize the worthiness of educated

women. Martin posits "higher education, occupation, possession and money are measures of status in societies, so it is understandable that women should seek education to enhance job prospects" ... "and independence of action-decision-making" (p.18). In Tanzania where women have been provided education they have been facilitated to access credit unions that empower them with the capital to facilitate economic and social activities. Women in education socialize and exchange ideas thus gain more knowledge and skills. Goldberger (1996) positively argues that ideas grow as people "talk and listen". Exposure to education thus contributes to women's growth as they collaboratively engage in the learning experience with people other than their family members.

Given the educational benefits exposed here I am encouraged to seriously advocate for the re-enrollment of women whom the system pushed out before they reached their full educational and training potentials. If the nation wants to improve its income, raise its GNP, and life expectance the educational gender gap should be closed. Further education and training ensure higher socio-political mobility and economic growth. When more women are highly educated they will be more responsible, independent and productive. Mbilinyi (1992) argues that today women in lower categories of employment in Tanzania cannot access resources for research and writing processes-they "remain unduly dependent on the good will of the middle class researchers" (p.9). Further appropriate education and training for women will empower them to access resources for developmental purposes. However, since such provision has not been systematically organized there is a need to facilitate the process. How the process can be facilitated is the focus of the next part of this paper.

FACILITATING WORKING WOMEN'S RETURN TO EDUCATION
When one thinks of strategies to bring Tanzanian working women back to education consciousness, raising becomes an underpinning priority. As I observed in the introduction the importance of critical consciousness has been widely discussed (Freire and Horton (in Bell et al.,1990); 1983, 1987, 1997, 1998; Newman, 1994, 1999; Mezirow 1983, 1999; and Heng, 1997; Fletcher (2000). Three of the out-standing concepts that need be considered to further the conscious raising perspective include perspective transformation, reconstructing subjectivity and emancipation. Heng points out that conscious rising is "a healing and recovery process beginning with renaming reality" (p83). Renaming reality imbues a conscientization process making the women proactive rather than reactive to gender equity issues, particularly issues on access to and benefits from education and training. If the target women are not conscious of what their real abilities, interests and needs are, emancipatory action is critically hampered.

Hegemonic and patriarchal mechanisms that have constantly been employed (Mbilinyi, 1992) coupled with patriarchal cultural beliefs have made low level workingwomen accept their positions as given/natural. Thus, raising women's critical consciousness on gender equity and their underprivileged positions both at the local, national and global levels are crucial for any successful female adult returnees to further education and training programs. Mezirow's perspective transformation theory, which is advanced here for application is closely interwoven with emancipatory theories, which counteract neo-conservative agenda (Fletcher, 2000). Mezirow proposes, "the emancipatory process...is precisely that of encouraging transformative learning through enhancing context awareness, critical reflection of assumptions, discourse and reflective action" (Mezirow, 1999,p.225).

Conscientizing, transforming and emancipating women in Tanzania are necessary actions. For sometimes now, gender related issues in Tanzania have been a concern of both the government and non-governmental organizations. However, non-governmental feminist groups intended to sensitize women on gender issues have concentrated their efforts in limited geographical locations and have targeted girls' education at the expense of working women who have been squeezed out of the education system after their initial efforts failed to provide the level of education the would have otherwise attained. Again government policies have failed to cater positively for the education of workingwomen in the country.

The feminist groups in the country are based in the capital city-Dar-es-salaam and a few other regions-Morogoro, Moshi, and Mbeya (Mbilinyi, 1992; Bendera, 1999). These groups include Women in Development (WID), Institute of Development Studies Women (IDSW), Women Education Development (WED), Women Scientists and Technologists (WST), Tanzania Women Journalists (TAMWA) and Tanzania Gender Net Work Program (TGNP). Except for TAMWA and TGNP all the other groups are based at the University of Dar-es-salaam. Because of their working base and negligible actions in urban and sub-urban areas their effects have not touched the majority of the women in the country. The groups' activities rotate around middle and high-class women and direct much of their efforts towards "girls". They deal with girls in terms of girl's access to education and fees; streaming in schools; attitudes and expectations; violence, and language (Bendera, 1999). Such issues are presented in form of workshops, seminars, plays/drama and publications. No group out of these has deliberately scrutinized the working adult women's conditions and deliberated concerted efforts for educational programs. Such a situation has made women's conditions and deliberated concerted efforts for educational programs. Such a situation has made women's re-entry into adult education and training programs in the country an individual, sporadic ad disorganized endeavor that is uncoordinated, unsupported and un-programmed.

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Government's efforts on gender matters have also not been targeted to females' educational advancement after initial employment. Mbilinyi (1992) reflects, "National governments have created women focal points in ministries to meet the demands of donors and vocal organized groups of middle-class women" (p.16). This argument is backed by Bendera's (1999) contention that although the Ministry of Education and Culture Tanzania has created a gender coordination unit to coordinate and monitor gender activities the unit is more a rubber-stamping mechanism than a serious unit to improve women's lot. The unit has structural problems, a weak bureaucratic leadership and has no independent decision-making power.

The Tanzania government like many other governments in the Third world had rarely supported personal enrichment education, rather it has directed most of its adult education efforts to overcome mass illiteracy, providing basic education and creating a pool of skilled manpower (Bellew & King, 1993; Mirriam & Brockett, 1997) hence women's personal growth has suffered government neglence. Women in low employment categories have been left out to fend for their own advancement. However, it is a fallacy to insist on social development at the expense of individual development because the two are intertwined (Illsley 1992).

The negligence by government of individual educational and training growth of the working women in Tanzania has led into stagnation of their development and loss of women's educational benefits as explored earlier in the paper. The best and genuine hope for women's return to education is action through adult education in the country. As Merriam & Brockett (1997) positively argue "The social climate of an era often defines particular groups of adults as targets for adult education" (p. 117-118). Now that adult education is taking a critical perspective worldwide dedicated to provide emancipatory adult education programs (Mezirow, 1983; Newman, 1999; Freire, 1997, 1998; grace, 1998; Collins, 1998; Flitcer, 2000). It is the responsibility of adult educators and organizations to identify, involve and empower female workers. Such empowerment requires a shift from earlier biased concerns to equity. Mile (1998) states that "academic adult education must be physical accessible to the women and be opened to the major paradigm shifts. It requires not just equal access to existing programs and credentials-but also respectful attention and integration"(p. 254) into the mainstream.

Merriam & Brockett (1997) identify four basic purposes of adult education among which is provision of a second-chance for those who missed any kind of education-from basic literacy to mature entrance to university (p. 167). Adult education and training programs in Tanzania should be restructured to provide working women with a second chance to education and training aimed at erasing the educational gender gap in the country and stimulating economic growth.

Until now, Tanzania's adult education has basically been a public and government domain. However, with liberalization policies since 1985 the private sector and individuals need get involved in providing adult education in order to share the costs involved. While I acknowledge the poverty inherent among the working women in Tanzania I advocate the use of fund raising strategies recommend by Bendera (1999) for women to raise funds for their education. The strategies recommended include: attending to petty business, taking loans from financial institutions and joining women's informal credit systems known as "Upatu" (p.125). Government policies should encourage financial institutions to extend educational loans to workingwomen. It should also mandate employers to facilitate the education and training of their employees.

Adult education for women can be provided through formal, informal and non-formal initiatives. The on-governmental women groups like the ones mentioned earlier should play the role of mobilizing, organizing and conscientizing working women for re-entry into formal education and training. Moreover, the existing government educational structures should be purposefully and directly involved in working women's education and training. Polices in all educational institutions should be adjusted to ensure equal access and opportunities while unique preference is accorded to women on the basis of their previous disadvantages positions. Most importantly adult education curricular should incorporate gender sensitivity, empowerment and emancipation programs.

Distance education, which has been proved effective elsewhere (Keegan, 1994; Moore & Kearsley, 1996) should be encouraged and popularized since it has more potential to mass provision of education especially at higher levels. Above all women purposely should be critically conscientized to take advantages of such endeavors.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Evidently Tanzania rewards males more than their female counterparts both in access to and benefits from education. With today's cry for gender equity and also considering the benefits of educating women there is need to reverse the situation. Firm and practical policies as well as relevant curricular need be instituted in respect of this demand. Collaboration and partnerships between the government, non-governmental organization and individuals should be encouraged o facilitate working women's re-entry into adult education and training programs.

While acknowledging the problem of women's uncritical position and poor economic base, the paper argues a shift in the nature of curricular and fund rainsing strategies. The curricular should be revised to spearhead transformative and emancipatory agenda. Also as recommended by Bendera

(1999) fund raising strategies like women attending to petty business, taking advantages on finacial loans, and joining informal credit systems should be encouraged to enable women to take a share in paying for their own education. Government policies should make it mandatory for employers to facilitate worker's (particularly women workers) education and training. Trade unions should also be part in spearheading the movement to empower working women for re-entry higher education and training. Moreover, the existing government educational structures should adjust to reflect and encourage equal educational and training opportunities while giving special priority to women who have experienced educational discrimination in higher education in the past.

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