



The Resolution of Poverty and Cultural Marginalisation in Zimbabwe through a Dynamic Educational System

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ABSTRACT

This essay focuses mostly on the Zimbabwean experience. Poverty reached endemic levels in Zimbabwe during the first decade of the twenty first century partly due to economic mismanagement and the devastating effects of western backed economic sanctions. Education is touted as one of the key factors that can contribute to poverty reduction, minimising of social exclusion and social marginalisation. Zimbabwe once a buoyant middle-income country is characterised by growing poverty, inequality, and lack of effective utilisation of resources. To many education is the answer to these social ills. Education for some has the ability to play a positive role in reducing HIV and AIDS, poverty and growing social inequality.

INTRODUCTION

The essay examines the role of the education system in combating poverty as well as other forms of social exclusion and marginalisation. The paper is largely focused on the Zimbabwean experience. According to de Bruyn, Erasmus, Janson, Mentz, Steyn, Theron, Van Vuuren and Xaba (2008:4) an education system is “an open organisational structure with specific aims/objectives, educational policy ... processes and programmes which is in constant interaction ... with its environment”. In a way an education system consists of different components with the main aim of providing effective education according to the educational needs of its members. Education on the other hand is seen as “a social institution responsible for the systematic transmission of knowledge, skills and cultural values within a firmly organised structure” such as the school (Kendall 2003:500). Thus there is a link between an education system and the development agenda of a country.

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The paper begins by defining some of the key concepts such as poverty, culture, marginalisation social exclusion and human development. The paper then goes on to examine issues related to the history of education in Zimbabwe, the poverty problem, the role of education in the country's development, education and the law, culturally marginalized groups, (girls, women, orphans) the role of education in HIV and AIDS reduction, and poverty reduction strategies.

DEFINING KEY CONCEPTS

The section presents definitions of key concepts used in the paper namely poverty, culture, social exclusion, marginalisation and human development.

Poverty

Zimbabwe once ranked as a middle-income country has since slipped into the ranks of low income countries, and poverty has become a common and generalised phenomenon. Poverty is seen not just as an economic and purely social problem, but a process in which both political and cultural dimensions are involved (Muzvidziwa 2004: 266). While it seems difficult to define poverty, Haralambos and Holborn (2005:292) see poverty as a social problem arguing that people in poverty need to be helped and empowered so that their situation can be changed. In defining poverty, sociologists, distinguish between absolute poverty and relative poverty. In most countries including Zimbabwe poverty is measured by an official poverty line, which is based on what is considered to be the minimum amount of money or income required in order to live above subsistence level. Generally speaking the poor are those unable to access resources in any given society. In Zimbabwe the proportion of the poor is increasing at an alarming rate in the context of runaway inflation rates. As at mid September 2008 estimates of inflation rate are as high as 11 million per cent by far the highest inflation rate of any given country in the world. This has obvious effects on the lives of the poor. Where there is poverty there are hardships. While the elimination of poverty is a key concern of those interested in the development of poor countries, Zamberia and Mabundza (2006:82) focusing on Swaziland, indicated that there is need to identify the dimension of poverty that require attention so that measures can be taken to address the situation. To improve the situation anti-poverty policies should be introduced, and it is through research that government and other organisations can be guided with to come up with relevant policies and intervention strategies.

Absolute poverty

Absolute poverty is when people do not have the means to secure the most basic necessities of life. In Zimbabwe poverty has been measured with

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reference to absolute poverty lines related to size of household and income levels (Cubitt 1988 and GoZ PASS 1996). Poverty in Zimbabwe is still defined as “the inability to afford a defined basket of consumption items (food and non-food) which are necessary to sustain life” (GoZ PASS 1996). On the other hand relative poverty means that people are unable to maintain the average standard of living. Based on the costs of diet and other essentials for physical efficiency, standards of living have often been calculated to produce a poverty line. Anyone who does not reach that datum line would be referred to as relatively poor. For instance, lack of entitlement is another concept that should remind us that poverty arises not only by scarcity of food but by power structures that becomes discriminatory.

Although low income is one aspect of poverty, Watkins (2000) observed that deprivation-the absence of fundamental freedoms, is something more than material wealth. Such freedoms include attributes associated with good health and education and the ability to influence institutions or be in decision-making positions. According to Mubaya (2001:136), “the greater the participation of women in decision making . . . the greater their ability to escape poverty”. By involving women in decision making their opportunity in accessing resources would certainly increase.

Culture

The concept of culture is important to any society and more so the study on the impact of education on poverty reduction. Culture refers to the ways of life of members of a society. A society’s culture comprises tangibles and intangibles-the beliefs, ideas, values and norms (Giddens 2002). Norms are rules of behaviour, and in Giddens’ view, culture is concerned with the aspects that are learned rather than inherited. Culture has also been defined as “the distinctive way of life” of a group of people including customs morals and capabilities acquired by members of a society (Lemmer, Meier and Van Wyk 2006). Focusing on Zimbabwe before independence in 1980, women were regarded as minors with no rights to participate equally with men on issues of national development. In some instances women were made homeless due to domestic violence, thereby increasing poverty in those families. According to Donnison (2001:98) “a society committed to achieve greater equality has to treat its people with equal respect”. In the past wife battering was not perceived as a problem but was part of African culture. However, on attainment of independence, the Zimbabwe government developed a National Gender Policy that enables women and children to claim their rights to equality. Culture is a resource and a people’s heritage, which is seen as dynamic and always changing. Muzvidziwa and Muzvidziwa (2008:179) observed “through culture, communities are able to dig into the past in order to understand the present so as to come up with sound visions for the future”.

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Social exclusion

Social exclusion refers to a situation in which multiple deprivations prevent individuals from participating in important areas of society's activities. Hararalambos and Holborn (2005) argue that inadequate educational opportunities, unpleasant working conditions and powerlessness can also be regarded as poverty. In the case of Zimbabwe, experiences by AIDS orphans, vulnerable children, people with disability, and those deprived by gender, class, ethnicity, age and health reflect such a phenomenon. From Donnison's 2001 experience, lack of income and education, prolonged unemployment and discrimination suffered by women and ethnic minority is due to social exclusion

Marginalisation

Marginalisation refers to a state or condition of deprivation resulting from differential power relations, reflecting a great deal of cultural disadvantage in terms of educational opportunities. Culturally marginalized groups are therefore, those groups that are culturally disadvantaged as a result of social inequalities in society. Some of the culturally marginalized groups as noted above in Zimbabwe include women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and orphans and vulnerable children.

Human Development

According to the United Nations Development Programme (1990:9-10) the human development concept is defined as a process of widening people's choices and the level of their achieved well-being. Key components of human development involve the acquisition of human capabilities such as improved health and knowledge and the use people make of such acquired capabilities. Human development is concerned with the expansion of human capabilities and choices. Hence it is quite clear that education is quite central when it comes to human development acquisition. Zimbabwe due to its investment in education until recently scored highly on the human development index. Human development is linked to environmental protection and human reproduction reduction. The World Commission on Environment and Development (1990:28) noted that "those who are poor and hungry will often destroy their immediate environment in order to survive: they will cut down their forests; their livestock will overgraze grasslands; they will overuse marginal lands; in growing numbers they will crowd into congested cities"

Education System

An education system can be described as an open organisational structure with specific aims and objectives, educational policy and programmes and constantly interact with its environment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this paper combines elements of the conflict perspectives, symbolic interactionist and Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and cultural reproduction. The framework shows that schools reproduce social and cultural inequalities which results in the marginalisation and exclusion of other groups, and that it is the dominant group or culture whose values is organised and shared in schools. Within the same framework, Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital assists us in examining the impact of curriculum on gender and the way the education system facilitates the reproduction of the dominant gender or social group. The importance of economic conditions in producing inequality and conflict in society with particular emphasis on social groups is recognised by Max Weber with his conflict perspective. The implications of the perceived inequalities, how people make sense of their own situations and how the same institutions which are in constant conflict with social groups can make a difference, is covered through the symbolic interactionist perspective which according to Kendall (200:26), views communication, interaction and "symbols" as "instrumental in helping people derive meanings from social situations", for instance the disabled.

The History of Education in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is one of the 53 countries within the continent of Africa. Before 1980, the opportunities for formal and informal schooling were unequal for Africans and Europeans. In 1980 Zimbabwe became independent and embarked on the roads to correcting the injustices of the past within the education sector. The country's education system reflects its past history. Prior to attainment of independence in 1980, women in Zimbabwe were disadvantaged in many ways.

On attainment of independence, however, efforts were made to reduce the imbalances. The Zimbabwe government introduced mass free education to eradicate educational inequalities. Despite the increase in enrolments of both boys and girls, fewer girls were enrolled than boys. Enrolments have reached near parity levels at primary school. Gordon (1996) found out that the dropout rate was higher for girls than boys at primary level resulting in lower percentage of girls than boys making a transition from primary to secondary. The higher the level of education, the fewer the females were.

Like other developing countries, Zimbabwe is characterised by poverty, inequality, and lack of resources. What has been the trend in developing countries was to value sons more than daughters. In times of economic hardships, parents were not just educating their children, but saw their sons' education as an investment. Girls' education was meant to prepare them for marriage. The parents' perception of what is termed normal is the key factor that contributes to the girls' educational success. From this observation, Hill

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and King (1993) indicated that parents socio-economic background and attitudes about educating girls, contribute to educational success or lack of advancement of their daughters.

Culture is another aspect that comes into discourse on women's access and opportunities to education and decision-making positions. The Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MOESC) in Association with UNICEF (1998:8) found that "women were poorly represented in ranks of power, policy and decision-making". Deliberate efforts have been made in order to redress inequalities of the past in terms of accessing education.

The trend in Zimbabwean primary and secondary schools has since changed. The number of girls who are excelling has increased to the extent that in tertiary institutions and teachers' colleges, women are highly represented as compared to men. However, despite women being the majority for instance in teachers' colleges, there are fewer women in positions of authority. This trend led the women to be predominantly positioned as subordinates and marginal to their male counterparts.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE'S DEVELOPMENT

In order to correct colonial educational inequalities Zimbabwe's post independence government adopted the policy that viewed education as a basic human right and in the process committed itself to providing universal and equitable educational opportunities for all. In pursuit of its developmental objectives the education system of Zimbabwe seeks to:

1. provide education for all at all levels;
2. transform and develop the curriculum to make it more relevant to the country's cultural, socio-economic and skilled manpower requirements;
3. improve the quality and standards of learning and teaching;
4. maintain the cost of education at a level the country can afford (UNESCO IBE world data on education 6th edition 2006).

Zimbabwe's educational objectives are related to educational aims. The primary function of Education is the socialisation of children and new members of society. Some aspects of socialisation include:

- Teaching basic skills such as reading and writing
- Transmitting the cultural heritage
- Communicating to children the basic values of society
- Teaching the special aspects of culture such as art, drama, music, science technology and sports.
- Teaching vocational skills that help individuals enter the job market.
- Preparing children to live among and form meaningful relationships with other human beings
- Preparing and sorting out pupils for future jobs.

Secondary functions of Education constitute what may be called the hidden curriculum. Children are trained behaviour patterns, such as manners, how to dress, how to speak and what to say in accordance with societal expectations.

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Education gives individuals the opportunity to change their social status. It provides activities for the community e.g. recreational and other social activities. It keeps children and youth occupied, thus keeping them out of streets.

EDUCATION, THE LAW AND DEVELOPMENT IN ZIMBABWE

Any discussions concerning the role of education in poverty reduction need to take into account some of the legislative provisions existing in any one country as these have a potential constraining or enabling effect on poverty or developmental strategies being pursued by a given community at any one time. Zimbabwe has a number of progressive laws that have been passed that can contribute to poverty reduction given the right support. The Education amendment Act of 1991 lays out general principles and objectives of education in Zimbabwe. The Manpower Planning and Development amendment Act 1994 promotes the development of higher and tertiary education levels. There is also the National Council of Higher Education amendment Act 2006 focusing on higher education. In addition to these laws in the area of education some law regulates literally every aspect of people's life in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately it appears it is not the shortage of laws that is a problem but the lack of advocacy and integration into the school curriculum, legislative provisions in order to create greater awareness, and strategic ways of implementing, monitoring and evaluating.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Disability is a condition based not only on the physical but also on social and environmental factors. It refers to a reduced ability to perform tasks that one would normally do at a given stage of life and that condition may result in stigmatisation or discrimination against by other people. People with disability have often been excluded in the mainstream of society and denied equal opportunities in education as well as within the employment sector, yet experience from the few who were fortunate to receive education reveal that given proper opportunities, assistance and guidance without discrimination, the handicapped can overcome their disability and develop their abilities (World Congress 1988). The society marginalizes people with disability because they are not able to perform everyday roles or have lost old roles or status and then are labelled 'disabled'.

From the symbolic interactionists' view, labelling individuals with disability leads people to treat others as outsiders. The argument is that those in positions of authority create policies and artificial barriers that keep people with disabilities in subordinate positions (Kendall 2003). Thus the conflict perspectives see inevitable clashes between social groups. Members of the deaf community for instance do not see themselves as being restricted entry into mainstream schools due to their own limitations but societal barriers. In fact their perception of special schools is different as they see it as discriminatory

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despite that even within an inclusive education system some form of discrimination exists. The stigmatisation of people with disability starts early within families and is extended to school system. This has been achieved by consigning them to special education classes or special schools. People with visible disability are often the objects of prejudice and discrimination, which interfere with their everyday life and learning experiences.

The education system and schools as agents of change, are responsible for social change in this regard, and that can only be achieved through intervention programmes such as, in-service training to educate those experienced teachers on how to integrate people with disability into the mainstream education, and to include a multicultural syllabi to colleges so that new teachers are trained to meet the needs of a multicultural class environment. Many persons with disability endure the same struggle for resources faced by other socially deprived groups such as the women, girls Orphans and the lower class. Hence the need to pay attention to education that promotes the well being of people with disability, as well as developing their full potential to enable them to play a more meaningful role in the developmental processes of the country.

Although Zimbabwe through special schools like Kapota at Zimuto mission in Masvingo Province, have contributed a substantial amount of work towards people with disabilities, it has not been possible and it is still not possible for this group of people to be totally covered by these special institutions, and hence the need for integrated schools which would work towards inclusive education in order to redress the problem of social exclusion, poverty and marginalisation of people with disability. Both the Zimbabwean government and the non-governmental organisations can work together towards building of resource-rooms suitable for integrated education and the training of teachers to meet the requirements of teaching from diverse backgrounds. Organisations such as the UNICEF which are known for their commitment to the development and welfare of the children can work in partnership with the government, identifying, and even making use of existing health and educational infrastructures in order to make inclusive education a reality.

On average, workers with severe disabilities are more likely to become economically disadvantaged because of chronic illness or because of their disability. Unemployment, poverty and disability according to Kendall (2003) are related, yet poor people are less likely to be educated and more likely to have inadequate access to health care facilities. Mainstreaming of learners with disability in Zimbabwe has proceeded without taking the needs of these learners into account. In combating poverty, there is need for opening up more opportunities for persons with disabilities, and provide greater access to education and jobs for this group.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN HIV AND AIDS AND ILLNESS REDUCTION

A summary of Zimbabwe Human Development Report (2003) acknowledges that illiteracy is one of the factors that contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS and deepening or worsening poverty. Although Zimbabwean education has been highly ranked, AIDS is one of the most serious challenges facing Zimbabwe's education system and the country at large. Though the HIV prevalence rate has declined dramatically from a peak of 33% to 18% for those aged between 15 and 45 years old, it still remains one of the highest in the world. The effect that HIV and AIDS are having in the country is of great concern to Zimbabwe and the education system has not been spared either.

Sociologists identify a number of life style factors that contribute to illness such as abuse of alcohol and illegal drug use such as cannabis, marijuana, sex abuse etc. Although both males and females experience discrimination due to illness and disability women are less likely to be covered by health insurances and/or health plans or provisioning. From a functionalist perspective sickness is a form of deviance that must be controlled by society. In view of this, if society is to function as a stable system that is without poverty and illness it is important for people to participate in health policy formulation and implementation and to contribute to their society's development.

Through education discrimination and stigmatisation can be reduced, and Zimbabwean schools in particular have a duty to play. Schools can educate pupils and encourage them to respect people suffering from any illness including HIV and AIDS. Through education schools can teach children morally acceptable behaviour and the importance of maintaining good health. While the education sector is under stress and threat it remains an important tool in the fight to minimise the spread of AIDS. As Piot Head of UNAIDS (2002) rightly notes, "Without education, AIDS will continue its rampant spread. With AIDS out of control, education will be out of reach". Economic growth would be negatively affected as more resources are needed to keep ailing people alive and investments in human development are quickly lost due to increasing death rates of the young and skilled leading to economic decline. In Zimbabwe one study by Price-Smith and Daly (2004) found that 19% of male teachers and close to 29% of female teachers were HIV positive. HIV has infected not just teachers but parents and pupils as well thus posing a serious threat to the development of the country.

While young people are more likely to be affected by HIV and AIDS than other age groups, because of the age factor that makes them more sexually active, they have the potential to change their behaviour through education in Zimbabwe since the education for all (EFA) goal has almost been achieved especially at primary level in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe has a literacy rate above 95%. Literature shows that more children are in school in Zimbabwe more than ever before. It is through education that schools can sensitise communities, and teach people good moral behaviour, respect for

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others and hence reduce stigma and discrimination which is a major problem for many people living with HIV and AIDS. Education is not just about the classroom interaction. It extends further from child to parent to peers and to the wider community actually it's a chain. AIDS education can be very effective in that once informed about AIDS pandemic a child wants to share it and from that sharing the information moves like a 'whirl-wind'.

With the introduction of school community partnership in the form of parents teachers' associations and school development committees the school has more chances of interacting with parents and the whole community and therefore can use that opportunity for awareness campaigns. It is through education again that children with HIV and AIDS can be taught to stand for their rights and challenge discrimination and encourage them as well as inform them to access treatment when ever possible. AVERT (undated) acknowledges that schools can help to reduce the vulnerability of girls to HIV and AIDS by empowering them with knowledge. More women through education can be economically independent – this is another major factor in fighting poverty and marginalisation of other social and cultural groups, since increased prevalence of HIV and AIDS cases leads to increase in teacher deaths as well as people in general leaving more orphans, who will have no one to sponsor. In order to fight poverty and all forms of social and cultural exclusion, it is important to identify those areas that actually lead to poverty areas that create the problem resulting in people being discriminated, so as to look for proper strategies or the right prescription to solve the problem.

ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN (OVCS)

Orphaned children are particularly vulnerable when compared to other children. The growing number of orphans in Zimbabwe demands that policy makers come up with innovative orphan care strategies to cope with the crisis. In terms of magnitude the increase in the number of orphaned children mostly as a result of the HIV and AIDS pandemic has reached unprecedented proportions in Zimbabwe. The estimated number of orphans in 1990, 2005 and 2010 was put at 370 000, 1 330 000 and 1341 000. The proportion of orphans due to AIDS is given as 16%, 85,7% and 88,8% for the corresponding years (UNICEF 2001, UNAIDS 2002). There is definitely a growing orphan crisis in Zimbabwe. While there are orphans due to other causes the single greatest contributor to the orphan crisis is AIDS.

The AIDS pandemic threatens the lives of many children in Zimbabwe. Orphans due to AIDS are increasing both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the total number of orphans and children in general. The Government of Zimbabwe (2004) rightly observes, “the extended family, once the safety net for vulnerable children, is fast disintegrating because of poverty, high rates of unemployment, hyper-inflation, urbanisation, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic”. Again there is a link between orphan care crisis and the country's development agenda. The Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) has been put in place by Government in order to assist vulnerable

children especially orphans with school fees. It has been observed that the girl child tend to shoulder greater responsibilities in those household especially child headed ones where a parent or both have died.

GENDER AND EDUCATION-THE ISSUE OF CULTURAL MARGINALISATION

Gender inequalities still thrive in many schools. However, Zimbabwe has a vision in which men and women live as equals. The first step to eliminate gender discrimination was in 1981 when the legal age of majority was passed and the 1987 Education Act that realised the need for equality between boys and girls. While parity in terms of enrolment figures for boys and girls has yet to be achieved significant steps have been taken towards realising this goal. Girls constitute 51% of the school going age population but are 48.1% of secondary school pupils and 49.4% of primary school pupils (Ministry of Education and Culture 2006). The figures reflect a very big improvement and an achievement in the process of addressing the issue of educational inequalities. In order to achieve gender equity and equality by 2015 Zimbabwe needs to review and revise its educational curriculum to make it more gender sensitive, educate parents and communities on the importance of educating girls, and increase girls' access to secondary education to 50% of enrolments, offer scholarships targeting girls.

Drop out rates continue to be quite high for girls compared to boys. The dictum that says educate a girl and you educate a nation remains true and need to guide strategies to encourage and keep girls at school, and as Muzvidziwa (2007:27) observes, "culture is both a resource and a constraint that lies at the root of human development", cultural marginalisation, gender inequality and social exclusion can only be dealt with when there is a reverse in the "society's thinking that perceives males as the sole breadwinners and hence accords them the first priority of anything that has something to do with progress in life".

There is also a need to promote and provide more resources to enable girls to take up science maths and technological subjects, this will ensure that women do not continue to be channelled into traditional low paying and low status feminine professions. The curriculum need to be used as a major tool in creating a new generation that cherishes equality. Zimbabwe has a robust gender policy but more could be done at the implementation stage and education remains one area with the greatest potential to achieve the desired results of gender equity and equality.

Education for girls and women is not just a basic right but a condition which would help reduce poverty as well as other forms of social exclusion and cultural marginalisation. Furthermore, education influences health outcomes through increased access to information and people can be influenced to change their attitudes and behaviour. Schools are change agents in which all the learning takes place and the learning environments are very

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influential as socialising forces. The process of socialisation is the one that is very critical as it has a bearing on the educational outcomes and the overall development of the nation.

Focusing on the curriculum, Leach (2003) observed, whether in school, college, or training centre, the curriculum should not be considered as neutral since it is the product of dominant group or culture, and according to conflict perspectives, schools are seen as perpetrators of class, ethnic and gender inequalities. Bourdieu asserts that students from diverse backgrounds come to school with different cultural capital yet only those with dominant cultural values are the ones that are highly rewarded by educational systems. Taking into account the concept of cultural marginalisation and gender in the classroom setting and the school as an agent of socialisation reproducing gender inequality - boys tend to dominate formal classroom talk while girls speak less and receive less attention than boys do. Colley' (1998) research found that boys actions and voices dominate resulting in different knowledge acquisition as boys learn from the interactions of the teacher that their words and opinion are important and that alone boosts their confidence prejudicing females. This type of classroom interaction reflects Bourdieu's concept of cultural reproduction, teacher attitude is influenced by cultural beliefs about what is perceived as normal behaviour of boys and girls in class. From the same note, female students learn that they are less important and not that respected compared to boys. Muzvidziwa (2007:31) observed that "gender inequalities can be attributed to societies that have over the years regarded the innate characteristics of sex as one of the clearest legitimacy of different rights and restrictions". The choice of educational career path is also influenced by stereotypes of male and female attributes and beliefs about masculinity (dominance, self-reliance and ability to lead) and femininity (caring, kindness and affectionate). These attributes are linked to social as well as gender roles and their effect is that males tend to occupy roles which are controlling within our society and economy, while females predominate in caring and nurturing roles which consigns them to marginalised positions and to remain excluded in development programmes. How gender roles are learned and internalised demands that we focus upon the process of socialisation that prepares children for their future roles by encouraging what is perceived as appropriate behaviour and interest. Examples of this is when a girl child chooses a previously perceived male subject such as mathematics, science subjects like chemistry, physics and computer science at A level, the peers would tease her and condemn her for venturing into male domains. Those comments have an effect on her performance and self-esteem if she happens to find the subject challenging along the way. Course enrolments and subject choice of male and female students follow the stereotypes of curriculum subjects. Some subjects are perceived as masculine and others feminine. In addressing the problem of social exclusion and cultural marginalisation in Zimbabwe, one of the major goals of the education system should be to try and promote not only equality of opportunity but choice of subjects. The fact that boys and girls take different career pathway through

the education system shows that it is through the same root again that the problem of marginalisation and poverty can be combated. In fact the focus now should be on equity and not just equality of opportunity.

GLOBALISATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Globalisation is and continues to be an influential paradigm that contributes to an understanding of development processes in Africa. It is a concept that is useful to those seeking to understand development programmes in Zimbabwe and their attendant problems. According to Kiely and Marfleet (1998:3) “globalisation refers to a world in which societies, cultures, politics and economies have, in some sense, come closer together”. According to Kellner (1998), and Owolabi (2001) globalisation refers to the homogenisation of ideas, images and institutions, leading to what has been termed the global village. For Owolabi (2001:73) globalisation “refers to the interpenetration and interdependency taking place among divergent peoples of the world”.

Today Zimbabwe partly suffers a serious economic crisis mostly as a result of its past and its vulnerability to international market forces. Due to structural weaknesses of the Zimbabwean socio-political economy the country made very little progress even during those years when it embraced the economic structural adjustment programmes during the 1990s. Foreign currency and foreign investment is not forthcoming due to the unfavourable rating of the country.

As far as Zimbabwe and Africa is concerned the impact of globalisation has generated varied opinions. On one hand are the optimists those who see globalisation as a solution to age-old problems of underdevelopment, and on the other hand are the pragmatists and pessimists who see globalisation in negative terms. Instead of heralding a new international order characterised by declining poverty and social inequalities globalisation has deepened the problems of underdevelopment. Akokpari (2001) observed that while economies across the globe have become globalised and unified contrary to expectations that globalisation will hasten the eradication of poverty, the process has deepened the economic crisis being experienced in the third world. Africa has experienced an unprecedented increase in poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, social disintegration and environmental destruction. The on-going crisis in Zimbabwe can also be linked to the disorganising effects of globalisation that result in deepening poverty for some and increasing prosperity for others. This process has been driven by an emphasis on efficiency and profitability resulting in thousands of workers being retrenched. The ruptures in family life and values that accompany migration are part of the resulting consequences of global flows of people a consequent of globalizing tendencies. Population movements and shifts have been greatest in sub Saharan Africa over the past century. Such movements have implications in terms of how local cultures cope with increasing diversity in a global world.

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Experience so far has been that globalisation is driven by self-interest and forces that seek to privilege the western interests at the expense of non-western groupings in particular Africa. In Africa globalisation instead of being an integrating force ushering in rapid development it operates as a constraining force limiting and undermining the free development of Africa (Smith, 2001; Orr, 2001; de Benoist 1996). Africa's hope including Zimbabwe lies in tapping and developing its human capital resource base. In other words positive change will not simply occur there is a need by Africans to invest in education and work towards sustainable development goals within the global village.

EDUCATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Sociologists who adopt a relative definition of poverty accept that some reduction in inequality is necessary if poverty is to be reduced. It is the role of the education system to draw the nation's attention to necessary steps required in order to address the problem, since according to de Bruyn, et-al (2008:5) "the activities of an education system often place special emphasis on those aspects of the education that the country particularly needs". It is therefore important for an education system to design an education that reflects the needs of its community and to shape that particular community or society. In recent years due to the socio-economic and political challenges facing Zimbabwe as a country has witnessed, an increase in inequalities and absolute poverty thereby threatening the developmental gains of the country has also been experienced. However, the Ministry of education together with non-governmental organisations, embarked on different programmes that assisted the poor children to enable them to continue with education at the times when they could not afford to pay fees for themselves nor feed. It is imperative that one sees poverty reduction in broad terms.

Empowerment of the poor and marginalized groups in society is a necessary pre-requisite to achieving poverty reduction and social exclusion. Sustainable development demands recognition of the role of women and the youth and the strengthening of institutions that work to see positive developmental changes in society. For instance in Zimbabwe before independence, the curricula lacked gender sensitivity. Women and children particularly girls were regarded as minors with no rights to participate equally with men on issues relating to national development. Responsibilities and even educational opportunities depended on whether one was born male or female. The role of the education system is to review and revise the curricula in order to make it gender sensitive. In addition de Bruyn, et-al (2008:5) suggest a multicultural education with pluralistic as well as gender sensitive curriculum to be necessary for sustainable development. Lemmer, Meier and van Wyk (2006) see multicultural education as a multiplicity of programmes and practices which recognises and accepts the rightful existence of different cultural groups and advocates equal educational opportunities. While there is no education system that can be right for every

country, Steyn (2008) believes that the type of education system that is best is the one that fits the needs of the country and its people. It should be purposefully planned and require a change in attitude on both the educator and the entire school environment. To minimise bias, curriculum developers and material writers need to engage in systematic analysis and revision of materials produced and organised learning activities, since there is a lot of, for instance textbooks that portray gender stereotype content.

Promoting women's education is an important objective if poverty and the marginalisation of social groups are to be reduced. Women's education creates opportunity for child health and has the potential to overcome gender-determined inequalities especially in terms of income, since income poverty according to Watkins (2000) is one of the primary drivers of child malnutrition. Although the education status for men makes an important difference to child health, women's education is more important as mothers have direct responsibility for the welfare of their children, including their nutritional status and their contacts with health service providers for instance during antenatal care. A clear example is a case I witnessed in 1984 at Masvingo general hospital during antenatal care when one of the middle aged mothers referred the nurses to the husband for information about the duration of her pregnancy. Had she been educated, she would have known when she conceived and when she was due, in the same way she would be aware of the diet to give the child. Zimbabwe Human development report (2003) summary indicated that the status of women, though being continually being looked into, needs special attention. While a proactive policy is seen as the main tool for reducing vulnerability, the critical point is the implementation, monitoring and continuous evaluation and research using micro-analysis approach.

Successful implementation of Millenium Development Goals depends on coming up with the right priorities and development agenda involving the participation of marginalized groups. Setting up of education and training programmes that seek to achieve meaningful development by focusing on human qualities of humility, mutual respect, responsibility, caring and respect for human dignity and trustworthy and ethically committed individuals. Unless programmes, projects and activities seeking to effect poverty reduction are people oriented and are driven by ethically committed individuals who respect people irrespective of gender, ethnicity, class and age not much will take place to change the current scenario.

It is important at this stage to note that discussions on the link between education and poverty reduction strategies need to factor in a strategic tool in this age of high tech. The promised worldwide knowledge society has finally become a reality mainly because of developments such as the Internet. In 2006 there were 650 million Internet users compared to 16 million in 1995. Ikpe and Ibekwe (2006) define the Internet as "a massive, searchable, dynamic, widely available, distributed multi-platform information system that possesses a number of capabilities".

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Not many schools in Zimbabwe are connected to the Internet. A school can use the Internet in a number of ways for example electronic mail, commerce, publishing and public relations activities. Multimedia resources like software, videos, and online exercises, animations in education. Information communication technologies (ICTs) and the Internet in particular are the new tools for competency and information sharing. This includes the exchange of practices and ideas, sharing experiences, and collaborative construction of knowledge. Through use of ICTs communication and transmitting of information in society is easier now compared to the past. In this age of globalisation the Internet has emerged to become the most effective global information and communication gateway. We have witnessed the shrinking of the world electronically. The potential for the Internet in terms of utilisation for education purposes is great. The Internet has transformed learning. All classroom exercises, business transactions can be done over the net.

CONCLUSION

The paper has sought to establish strong links between various actors, policies and strategies and sustainable poverty and social exclusion reduction strategies. In all these efforts actors need to be committed and guided by Zimbabwe's policies, laws and the global protocols to which the country is signatory. Monitoring and evaluation programmes need to be put in place to make sure the policies are effectively being implemented. Education plays a major role in reducing poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation when the system is made dynamic and allowed to re-visit the curriculum and teaching methods. It should equally adopt a multicultural approach in teaching both formal and informal or hidden-curriculum. Electronic forms also tend to be influential as far as achieving learning and development goals is concerned. It is hoped that this essay would contribute to an understanding of the role of education in combating poverty as well as other forms of social exclusion and cultural marginalisation in Zimbabwe.

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