

Gender equality social policy

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Gender equality is basically the idea of equality between different genders or sexes (Kessler-Harris, p22).

This nation has also been referred to as sexual equity, gender egalitarianism or gender equity. The notion is a product of the belief in different kinds of injustices of likewise different kinds of gender disparities. All around the world there are many genders in equality issues that have been addressed in various ways. Some have been addressed successfully while some are yet to realize any positive change or development. Clearly gender equality issues are related to critical human rights issues more so the rights of women around the world and development economically. According to UNICEF gender equality is the leveling of the play arena for women and girls through ensuring that all children irrespective of their sex have equal opportunity to grow their talents.

The world at large has instituted several developments in order to achieve this objective. Many have even developed policy document to lead the way towards the achievement of gender equality. Such documents have been developed at international level, regional levels, national levels and local levels. The Millennium Development Goal is one of such documents developed at international levels to help realize this objective. Despite the existence of such documents success in achieving gender equality has not been forth coming.

Many countries including developed countries such as the U. S are still experiencing many challenges in achieving gender equality despite all the effort that were mobilized in the 20th century to faced out disparities

existing between the genders. Certainly, such a stalemate is a product of many forces acting against the efforts instituted to promote gender equality. As Kessler-Harris note, realizing gender equality within social policy frameworks has been very difficult during the 20th century has been an uphill task facing many challenges from different spheres. One of the issues that has greatly affected gender equality in social policy has been the existence of misguided ideology.

Separate spheres ideology is one of such ideologies. The separate sphere ideology owes its origin to the Victorian period during the last quarter of the 19th century. This theory aimed at explaining gender roles in society (Ibsen & MacLeish). The theory holds that the nature of men and women makes them best suited for different specific kinds of jobs and thus different spheres. The belief perpetuated by this ideology is that men are best suited for employment within the public sphere and within government or related environments. This mainly because, in the Victorian era, men were thought to be more aggressive, rational, amoral and competitive than their female counterparts.

As such these qualities meant that men would be successful in business and politics while at the same time making them unsuitable for child rearing chores as well as other roles that were supposed to be played by women. In contrast to their male counterparts, women were believed to be best suited to perform private jobs in the serenity of their homes and family because their nature allowed so. No matter how absurd it may sound women were considered to be emotional and irrational, traits that are not good for business and politics. Another contrast to men is that women were honest and moral

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people and excelled in child up-bringing (Ibsen & MacLeish). The effects of this spheres ideology spread well beyond the Victorian period through the 20th century to the 21st century. The roles performed by men and women are still greatly separated using the misconceived notion of physical and psychological differences between men and women.

Certainly, such misconceptions can never provide social policy development with a fertile ground to include critical gender issues in social policies. Another issue that faced matters of gender in social policy was protective legislation. Protective legislation is basically a kind of legislation that sought to ensure fairness for women as a means for gender equality. For instance, poll tax existed in America to hinder blacks from voting since majority of the blacks were poor. However, women and whites who were poor could not afford to pay this tax thus were locked out of voting process. Women in many instances could not raise the money to pay for this tax because their husbands controlled the family wealth and many men thought it was needless to pay for their wives to vote. As Kessler-Harris notes in the U.

S. Supreme Court enacted a protective legislation when it upheld the law that had been adopted by the Georgia state whereby women paid a low poll tax compared to men. According to the Supreme Court and both men and women at this time give women treatment different to that received by men was encouraging and promoting gender equality as long as the treatment was fair to the women. However most notable protective legislation was that passed by the state limiting the number of working hour for women at 10 hours a day. This law was challenged by Curt Muller who lost the challenge when the U.

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The Supreme Court passed a water shade ruling the case which was known as Muller v. Oregon case thus upholding the states right to stipulate and limit working hours (Kessler-Harris, p30). This victory was seen as a great success for the progressive reformer who believed that women were different from men and deserved a differentiated treatment. It is however unfortunate that the ruling insisted on women being less strong than men thus the need to protect their health and also insisted on their traditional role as mothers. This can be interpreted to mean that women were like young children who needed legislative protection like a child requires protection from their parents (Kessler-Harris, p31).

This ruling encouraged the passing of other protective legislations protecting women from hazardous work environments, preventing them from lifting heavy materials and working at night. However, the grounds on which the ruling was based were nothing different from the foundation of the separate spheres ideology. It was based on physical differences and traditional gender role of child rearing. The equal feminists warned that the ground for the ruling would spell terrible consequences for the women in future such as making employers believe that women are less desirable employees compared to men (Kessler-Harris, p8). Protective legislation created differential treatment with at that time many people consider it a give women a fair treatment due to their marginalized position in the society. The impact this treatment has caused on the quest for gender equality has been instrumental in the failure of social policies in regard to gender equality within the 20th century.

At the close of the century such fair treatment was considered as gender equality. Unfortunately this perception has also been brought forward in to the 21st century. Amidst such controversial development however, the Social Security Act of 1935 was engendered in different ways and also enjoyed popular support from women reformers. First the act provided for federal state unemployment insurance and aid to dependant children. Certain through social scheme would ensure that mothers would receive grant in case there is no male breadwinner thus appreciating how important motherhood is. This certainly protected and supported single mothers throughout the country.

Be provide pension for those who withdrew from employment thus encouraging retirement for the old people to create opportunities for new employees both men and women. Most gender activists or women reformer supported the Act due to the support it gave to women financially whether employed or not. Unfortunately the act left out some jobs especially domestic jobs occupied by most African-American and Hispanic women (Kessler-Harris, p9). This was very unfair to these women. It is also worth noting that windows and women who were not on permanent employment were neglected unfairly (Kessler-Harris, p5).

In 1946 the Employment act was passes and had various implications on gender roles. Basically women could boost of more equality to men due to change in the perception on what was fair and what was equality (Kessler-Harris, p243). Kessler-Harris clearly address the question of how, when, and why the notion of fairness for women changed from difference to equality (p241). Clearly, the change in how people perceived equality can as a result <https://assignbuster.com/gender-equality-social-policy/>

of the events occurring during the World War II. During the world war many men who could have been engaged in meaningful employment within the country joined the military to go to war thus creating a shortage in the supply of labor in addition to this shortage there was rapid expansion in industry to supply the government with military utilities and therefore these industries increased the demand for labor. The shortage of labor and the increased demand encouraged employers to encourage jobs that had been previously preserved for men.

This led to an increase in the number of women that took up paid employment. The first wave of this employment started with absorption of unmarried women later married women. Those employing the women started by restricting women to traditional paid jobs that were preserved for women but increased in availability of male laborers encouraged them to assign women tasks that were meant for men such as clerical work. Eventually women started taking up the jobs that had been preserved for men as the intensity of the war increased and more men joined the army. Women started taking up jobs such as riveting as employers tried to redefine the jobs as women work done under male supervision.

As such women discovered they could do jobs that were considered men's domain just as good as men did and for the first time it was clear that women could be valued laborers the same way they were valued men (Kessler-Harris, 243). As women filled these vacancies, gender activism became vibrant and demanded that women doing work that was preserved for men should be paid as much as what the men doing the same job earned. This came to be known as "equal pay for equal work." This was a product of the belief <https://assignbuster.com/gender-equality-social-policy/>

that fairness meant equal pay and as such the change from perceiving difference as equality had started. In September 1942 the government gave in to the pressure as the governments War Labor Board ruled that employed women should be paid on the principle of equal pay for equal work. As women equate themselves in terms of equal pay for equal work, a new sense of fairness emerged whereby fairness was now considered as being equal to me.

Latter the Equal rights amendment added to the public's reception this new notion of fairness or equality as protective legislations came to an end and also women were now seen as equals to men not subordinates who stay at home take care of their children thereby encouraging women to pursue different career to become physicians, lawyers among others (Kessler, Harris, 250). Certainly the development of the idea of gender equality in social policy was slow and faced numerous setbacks caused by ideologies such as materialism and separate sphere ideologies and resistance from the public especially employer. Despite these challenges however, various opportunities presented themselves allowing and facilitating a change in policies to adopt policies that encouraged gender equality from its rudimentary perception in the early 20th century to the late 20th century.