

Gender and Education in Kenya: Alignment to Achievement of Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a landmark agreement negotiated and approved by the 193 Member States of the United Nations. Comprised of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets and 332 indicators, it aims to address the economic, social, environmental and political dimensions of sustainable development in a comprehensive and integrated way. The SDG Agenda is clear that achieving gender equality is not only an important goal in and of itself but also a catalyst for achieving a sustainable future for all. Education plays a pivotal role in contributing to the human resource development and to the nation's general economic development in today's globalizing context. Vision 2030 places great emphasis on the link between education and the labour market; the need to create entrepreneurial skills and competences; and the need to strengthen partnerships with the private sector. This has considerable importance for the structure and focus of the education system and curriculum.

Keywords: Gender, Education, Alignment, Achievement, Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals

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1.0 Introduction

Education is seen as a critical component of economic and social development, as well as a key tool for increasing individual well-being (Njeru & Orodho, 2014). It's also a crucial social service that helps individuals find areas where they may save money and be more efficient in fulfilling the needs of underprivileged children and their families. Education is also considered to improve an individual or societies quality of life and enhances family economic position, improves living conditions, lowers infant mortality rates, and improves the educational achievement of the next generation, so increasing the odds of economic and social well-being for the following generation. ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) is based on the principle of implementing locally relevant and culturally acceptable programs. Education is a critical component of achieving long-term sustainability.

The importance of gender in national development discourse, particularly in Kenya's sustainable development, cannot be overstated. The current Kenyan Constitution of 2010 lays a strong emphasis on gender equality and women's participation in the country's development strategy. Because gender disparities are unusual in nations with high levels of educational achievement, initiatives that increase access to education for all children may also help to decrease the gender gap. In the 1970s, Indonesia embarked on a huge school-building program that benefited both women and men in terms of education and other life outcomes (Akresh, Halim & Kleemans, 2018; Mazumder, Rosales-Rueda & Triyana, 2019).

Reducing the expense of secondary school in Ghana improved women's and men's educational attainment and other results (Duflo et al., 2019). In Nigeria and Kenya, cutting school fees reduced early fertility (Osili & Long, 2008; Brudevold-Newman, 2019), while eliminating school fees might occasionally aggravate gender disparities (Lucas & Mbiti, 2012). A assessment of programs to promote access and learning indicated that generic interventions that did not specifically target girls' education were frequently among the most effective (Evans & Yuan, 2019).

Gender equality and fairness play an important role in development, according to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG Target 20 underpins that the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a critical contribution to progress across all Goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels". Goal 5 of the SDGs aims at achieving gender equity and empowerment of all women and girls. UN Women acts to empower women and girls across all its programmes and advocacy.

More broadly, success in closing the gender gap in education has not been adequately reflected in increased

female involvement in the labor force in many parts of the world (ILO 2016). Only around half of the world's women work, with 21 percent in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and 28 percent in South Asia (SA), compared to three-quarters of men, and development has been slow in the last 20 years (World Bank 2017). Furthermore, women continue to be segregated in low-wage occupations, unpaid household duties, and the informal sector, resulting in persisting earnings disparities that have been well reported globally (World Bank 2011). Women earn approximately 77 percent of what males earn globally among wage earners (ILO 2016). According to the World Bank (2011), gender inequalities in occupations and industries account for a major part of the income disparity between men and women (in some countries gender segregation in employment explains more than differences in education). The progress in closing the pay gap between men and women has been modest and limited.

Kenya's Vision 2030 for education and training intends to provide globally competitive quality education, training, and development research. The main goal is to reduce illiteracy through increasing educational access, improving the transition rate from elementary to secondary schools, and boosting educational quality and relevance. Other objectives include integrating all special needs schooling into learning and training institutions, achieving an adult literacy rate of 80%, increasing net enrolment to 95%, and raising transfer rates to technical and university institutions from 3% to 8%. Furthermore, Kenya aims at increasing access to university education from 4.6% to 20%, with an emphasis on science and technology courses.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aims to balance and combine the three elements of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental). Recognizing the underlying and dynamic interlinkages between the three dimensions, and pushing universal and integrated development across all countries, the new agenda represents a major shift in development thought. The SDGs aim to address poverty's core causes, as well as how diverse drivers of change interact and impact one another in order to accomplish transformation for long-term development.

The fundamentals of sustainable development in Kenya are drawn from Article 43 of the Kenyan Constitution on Economic and Social Rights, which includes the right to the best possible health, education, food security, and decent livelihoods. The Vision 2030 economic strategy and its five-year MTPs are tools designed to put the demands of Kenya's 2010 Constitution into action in the service of the Kenyan people. The major goal of Kenya Vision 2030 is to achieve a "country living in a clean and secure environment" guided by sustainable development principles. Over a five-year period, the MTP III (2018-2022) aims to achieve fast, high, inclusive, broad-based, and sustainable economic growth, as well as socio-economic transformation and development, offering a framework for integrating the three elements of sustainable development. The SDGs and other continental commitments, such as the Africa Union's Agenda 2063, have been mainstreamed in the MTP. SDGs have been incorporated into the CIDPs 2018-2022 and Annual Development Plans at the subnational level (ADPs).

2.0 Methodology

This research was based on a desktop examination of quantitative and qualitative secondary data in the form of published works, papers, and theses, as well as regional, national, and international frameworks on education, gender, Kenya's Vision 2030, and sustainable development goals (SDGs). The literature was chosen expressly to analyze the role of gender and education in the achievement of Kenya's Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. The study looked at a variety of factors, including education, gender, and the achievement of Vision 2030 and sustainable development targets. It was a mixed methods approach because the data was presented using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The data was used to identify gaps in Kenya's existing gender and education policies and intervention activities, all of which are focused toward achieving Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

3.0 Findings

3.1 Gender and Vision 2030 as a strategy of achieving SDGs

The empowerment of women and gender equality have a catalytic influence on human growth (Valencia et al., 2019). Nonetheless, a 2015 review of the Beijing platform found that no country had fully achieved gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. Several goals in the SDGs have at least some mention of gender under their associated targets, confirming the relevance of gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment. This is true for the poverty (goal 1), nutrition (goal 2), education (goal 4), water and sanitation (goal 6), employment (goal 8) and cities (goal 8) goals (goal 11). Target 1.b establish sound policy frameworks at the national, regional, and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender responsive development policies. The inclusion of this and other gender-specific targets represents the belief that there are gender-specific experiences that deserve attention when it comes to particular concerns such as health, education, poverty, and nutrition. However, Goal 7 (ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all) does not mention the gender dimensions of energy, despite the fact that energy policy is not gender neutral (Nayana & Das, 2017);

and goal 9 (build resilient infrastructure and promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization) does not take into account the fact that poor infrastructure exacerbates the gender gap (Goetz & Jenkins, 2016).

Goal 12 which aims at ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns is also silent on gender issues and further the adaptation target in goal 13 on climate change was also not linked to gender issues yet gender inequalities increase vulnerability of women and girls to climatic risk and adaptation initiatives that do not take gender into account may unintentionally replicate gender inequality. SDG goal 16 on peace and inclusive societies lacks gender specific language. Thus, gender must be incorporated across all SDGs and gender issues must be included in all sustainable development initiatives to effectively strive towards gender equality and women's empowerment (Goetz & Jenkins, 2016).

Women's equality and girl's empowerment are key to Agenda 2030, and several goals in the SDGs include at least some mention of gender under their associated targets (Koehler, 2016). This is true for the poverty (goal 1), nutrition (goal 2), education (goal 4), water and sanitation (goal 6), employment (goal 8) and cities (goal 11) goals (goal 11). Target 1.b encourages countries to establish sound policy frameworks at the national, regional, and international levels, focused on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development initiatives. The inclusion of this and other gender-specific targets represents the belief that there are gender-specific experiences that deserve attention when it comes to particular concerns such as health, education, poverty and nutrition. To effectively work towards achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment gender must be integrated across all SDGs and gender considerations must be included in all sustainable development work (Odera & Mulusa, 2020).

3.2 Education and Achievement of Vision 2030

Kenya's education sector is dedicated to provide all Kenyans with high-quality education, training, science, and technology. This is in the hopes of assisting in the establishment of a just and cohesive society with inclusive and equitable social development. Its mission is to provide Kenya with globally competitive education, training, and research in order to ensure the country's long-term growth. Its mission is to deliver, promote, and organize outstanding education, training, and research in order to empower individuals to become responsible and capable citizens who respect education as a lifelong process. Quality education and training contributes greatly to economic growth, greater employment prospects, and the expansion of income-generating enterprises, according to the vision and mission of the Ministry of Education in Kenya. Education is seen as a key enabler in achieving the Big Four Agenda's goals. One of the Sustainable Development Goals is to provide high-quality education. Other core SDG goals, such as gender equality, poverty eradication, excellent health and well-being, decent work, and economic growth, are also aided by it.

The Bill of Rights is at the heart of Kenya's 2010 Constitution, while Kenya Vision 2030 recognizes the need to reform education and training to establish a sector that is fit for purpose (Republic of Kenya, 2012). As a result, the policy principles enshrined in this text satisfy constitutional requirements and national goals while also providing guidance on updating and rebranding the country's education and training system (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

The link between education and Sustainable Development is complicated. In general, research indicates that basic education is critical to a country's ability to develop and meet sustainability goals. Education has been demonstrated in studies to increase agricultural output, boost women's status, reduce population growth rates, improve environmental protection, and elevate overall living standards. Education is the most significant factor in economic development, technological advancement, social-cultural sophistication, healthy living, and effective political government.

The government has outlined the implementation methods, which include integrating early childhood education into primary education, revamping secondary curricula, upgrading teacher education, and bolstering private-sector collaborations. The administration also plans to improve special needs programs and adult training programs, as well as alter the higher education curriculum. The importance of the link between education and the labor market, the necessity to develop entrepreneurial skills and competencies, and the need to deepen cooperation with the private sector are all highlighted in Vision 2030. This is significant in terms of the structure and focus of the educational system and curriculum.

Any sort of progress requires universities and university education (Mutisya, 2010). As a result, urgent reforms in higher education are required, with the goal of focusing on quality training and education while expanding enrollment, particularly among girls, for greater national growth. This has been demonstrated by the government by lowering of university entry points for girls with an aim of enhancing their enrolment.

The National ICT Strategy for Education and Training, which was implemented in 2006 with multi-stakeholder participation, set the groundwork for establishing the requisite capability for a competent people resource to realize Kenya's Vision 2030. This was also in accordance with the Constitution of 2010. However, despite significant financial resources invested in the initiative, the rollout of the laptop project, which aimed to provide a laptop to every child in elementary school, did not go as planned. This was a wonderful concept that may have resulted in all elementary school students being computer proficient.

The medium-term development iii goal intends to improve education's quality and relevance, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of educational services, which is in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4's goal of delivering quality education. The notion that education is one of the most powerful and proven drivers for sustainable development is reaffirmed by achieving inclusive and high-quality education for all. By 2030, this objective will ensure that all girls and boys have received free elementary and secondary education. It also aspires to equalize access to inexpensive vocational training, erase gender and income gaps, and ensure universal access to a high-quality higher education.

One foundation of the Kenya Vision 2030 is equity with respect to access to education, healthcare, resource allocation and rule of law which is in line with SDG goal 5 which aims at achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls in Kenya.

3.3 Curriculum and achievement of Vision 2030

Curriculum is the vehicle through which educational needs are met, and the teacher is instrumental in its interpretation and execution. The curriculum should be linked to the educational goals and should promote the development of the whole person (Rice, 2003). Industry-based curriculum for the Kenya Vision 2030's rich ideals should be created to satisfy the demands of local and global markets. It should take into account individual pupils at school and their work placement sites in connection to local and global markets. It should provide a high degree of employability and give students the freedom to choose their own path to their future employment. Most importantly, it should allow pupils to fully explore and utilize their potential. The products should be able to be sold both locally and internationally. As a result, the Kenyan national curriculum should be redirected to address the Kenya Vision 2030 principles and allow for the discovery of each learner's potential.

In order to attain Vision 2030, curriculum implementation, particularly teaching methodologies, teacher quality, and effectiveness, must be reexamined. According to Kelly (2008), the teacher is a critical component in all successful curriculum creation and implementation. Because the accuracy of a teacher's understanding of the curriculum is critical, teachers at all levels should be well-educated and endowed with effective teaching characteristics like enthusiasm. However, teacher education curricula are frequently found to be woefully inadequate, and curriculum implementation is a significant difficulty.

According to research, teacher preparation in Kenya appears to be of poor quality at all levels (Gathumbi, 2010; Hardman, 2009; Otieno 2010). In Kenya, for example, the entry standards for teacher training institutes for primary schools are lower, necessitating continued teacher in-service to save the situation.. However, there is inadequate in-service training for teachers thus hindering the realization of vision 2030.

3.4 Gender Issues impacting on achievement of Vision 2030 and SDGs

Low student transition rates, particularly among girls, have hampered Kenya's efforts to achieve gender equity, particularly in education development. Low transition rates have resulted in a decrease in the proportion of females enrolled in schools further up the Kenyan educational hierarchy, particularly in tertiary institutions such as universities and middle level colleges (Kibui, & Mwaniki, 2014). According to studies, female students account for 30% of total enrollment at public universities, which has resulted in a lack of female students in technological, scientific, and mathematical professional programs. As a result, males become overrepresented in the aforementioned professions, obstructing the attainment of gender equity (Wosyanju, 2009).

Although enrolment numbers at this level reveal that a significant proportion of children of pre-primary school age are not enrolled, more children are enrolling in pre-primary centers. A huge number of kids are not enrolled in school, while a few are enrolled in primary schools. Pre-primary access, in particular, is limited in arid and semi-arid areas, with the NER as low as 18 percent in Mandera County (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Kenya has achieved significant progress in terms of elementary school education. It's worth noting that nearly 8 out of every 10 children who enroll in Grade 1 go on to complete Grade 8. In addition, nearly the same number of students move on to secondary school. However, an enrolment bulge is anticipated to result from over-age primary enrolments combined with high repetition rates, especially in the lower grades (MoE, 2018).

Access to basic education is hampered by a number of factors. Children are unable to attend primary schools for a variety of reasons, including direct costs such as uniforms and school meals, as well as indirect costs such as poverty, insecurity, large distances traveled to schools, and a lack of food and water at home. Children from low-income families, those living in urban informal settlements, and those living in ASAL regions, such as refugee camps, are the most affected. There are retrogressive cultural behaviors for girls in particular, such as prioritizing school attendance by boys and requiring girls to assume domestic tasks in the home. There are also safety issues when girls are in transit and at school. Inadequate sanitary facilities at 22 schools is another issue, as well as early pregnancy which can contribute to poor school attendance and dropping out of school.

Women's participation in economic growth, as one component of sustainable development, is unimaginable (Solomon & Memar, 2014). The labor force of women has been underutilized. Despite certain changes as a result of government efforts, women's economic possibilities and engagement remain limited. In addition,

women in Kenya's arid and semi-arid regions lack access to education, which has kept them out of employment that need a variety of skills and qualifications. All of this contributes to women remaining passive observers in the country's economic sector.

3.5 Quality of Higher education in Kenya and achievement of Vision 2030

Kenya is implementing a number of programs to improve the quality of higher education. The Commission for University Education, which was established in 2012 to replace the old Commission for Higher Education, is in charge of overseeing the industry. Its key responsibilities include accreditation of institutions, recognition of qualifications, and quality assurance. While the Commission's regulatory role has traditionally been limited to commercial entities, its actions are becoming increasingly important to the public sector (Otieno, 2010). Public universities gained autonomy from the state after reforms in 2003, but since the Universities Act in 2012, they have been compelled to follow CUE standards. CUE is now taking steps to improve the quality of higher education by requiring institutional quality assurance, implementing course review methods, and changing promotion standards. The Inter-University Council for East Africa plays an essential role in quality assurance, and has worked with the German agencies DAAD and HRK to create institution-level practice. EAQAN (East African Quality Assurance Network) has a number of operations in this area as well (Brewis & McCowan 2016).

Despite Kenya's policy on excellent higher education, there are numerous obstacles to quality university education, compromising Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Large class sizes are the most visible indication of Kenya's inadequate higher education. While there is much discussion in educational research about the impact of class size on student achievement, there is no doubt that classes of hundreds of students, without adequate facilities and support activities, make learning exceedingly difficult (Foley & Masingila 2014; Allais, 2014). Furthermore, large-scale lectures are the only form of instruction for many Kenyan students, with little possibilities for tutorials or breakout seminar groups. In Kenya, state institutions have very high student-to-lecturer ratios, with an average of one lecturer for every 70 pupils (Chege, 2015).

There is also a shortage of capacity, as there aren't enough suitable individuals to fill open positions (McCowan, 2018; Odhiambo 2014). Because of the low turnover of new PhDs in the country and the loss of many highly skilled employees due to brain drain, colleges have a difficult time finding suitably qualified applicants when they need to hire (Odhiambo, 2014). In some cases, the lack of capacity has resulted in academic staff with insufficient qualifications, or staff taking on responsibilities beyond their level of seniority or outside their area of specialisation, taking on extra teaching load for more pay, or assigning teaching assistants to full teaching responsibilities – all of which could have a negative impact on quality (Gudo et al. 2011).

According to McCowan (2018), the quality of higher education is also influenced by the physical environment and specific instructional resources. Universities report having insufficient classroom equipment and lacking the specialized equipment required for specific disciplines of study. Only a few elite private colleges appear to have acceptable facilities and equipment, such as projectors in each lecture, student broadband access, and classrooms with adequate layouts for interaction and discussion.

A variety of initiatives have been used to assure quality in Kenya's higher education system, with relevant bodies established at the institutional, national, and regional levels. However, current action has largely focused on 'quality assurance' rather than 'quality enhancement' (Brewis & McCowan 2016), focusing on course validation, accreditation, and audit procedures rather than supporting lecturers in improving their teaching practice and students in improving their learning.

3.6 Policy Frameworks for Gender, Education and achievement of Vision 2030

At the pre-primary school level, the government has made Pre-Primary Education free and compulsory for all Kenyan children aged 4 to 5, and at the primary school level, the government has made all primary schools Child-Friendly, with automatic transition and transfer between grades and levels of education. Feeding programmes have also been put in place in impoverished areas of the country. At the secondary school level, the government has made secondary education free and compulsory, as well as integrated secondary education, as part of basic education, and has ensured that all children have access to secondary education. Ensured inclusive education for learners with special needs and disabilities, approved and implemented the national gender policy, and provides school-feeding in distressed areas.

The government has embraced and implemented inclusive education for special needs education, and special education programs are integrated into all learning and training institutions. Institutions must also be responsive to the education of learners with special needs and disabilities.

The goals of university policies in Kenya are to promote socioeconomic development in line with the country's development agenda, acquire manpower and skills, promote knowledge discovery, storage, and dissemination, encourage research, innovation, and application of innovation to development, and contribute to community service. The administration has outlined the following policies in order to achieve these goals.

Promote expansions with the aim of satisfying the demand for university slots owing to rapid population

growth in the country, provision of incentives and creation of an enabling environment allowing for increase in the number of privately own universities, expanding government student sponsorship to students enrolled private universities but meeting the cutoff points, ensuring that all universities enroll and graduate sufficient number of PhD students in all fields and restructuring and expansion of the mandate of the Commission for Higher Education to include both public and private universities. Additionally, the government aims at increasing capital support to the universities with an aim of enhancing institutionalization of excellence in the universities, improving collaboration between industry, professional bodies and universities thus enhancing competencies of the graduates.

There is also the provision of incentives to the private sector which allows them to invest in university education, the government also aims at increasing the number of graduate researchers capable of fulfilling industrial, commercial, national needs and increase the opportunities for businesses to expand on their capability for high technology innovation and growth and at the same time mechanisms to enhance implementation of national values, cohesion and integration have been instituted in universities.

Other policies that have been put in place by the government with an aim of attaining Vision 2030 and sustainable development goals include the increased level of research funding available to universities, establishment of lean and efficient management systems and efficient utilization of resources allocated to universities, provision of budgetary support to public universities in direct proportion to the total number of Full-Time Student Equivalent (FTSE) in each institution, determining the amount of budgetary support per programme based on the strategic importance of the programme to national development goals and the programmes Differentiated Unit Cost, diversifying sources of funding university education through participation of businesses, industry and donations or endowments from individuals or philanthropic foundations, encouraging universities to be more entrepreneurial in provision of their services and seeking contracts for research and consultancy and empowering public university councils to determine their own individual terms and conditions of service for their staff.

These policies have seen a good number of female students enrolling and graduating from both public and private universities thus filling the employment gender gap. Additionally, in the management of various universities has seen women being appointed as the vice Chancellors thus reducing gender gap in management of universities.

4.0 Conclusion

Gender equality by 2030 requires urgent action to eliminate the many root causes of discrimination that still curtail women's rights in private and public spheres. For example, discriminatory laws need to change and legislation adopted to proactively advance equality. The SDG-specific 'follow up and review' mechanisms foreseen in the 2030 Agenda need strengthening, including to boost and inform their engagement with women's human rights. On the other side, because of the limited reach and weaknesses of the SDG accountability architecture, it is also crucial to seek other complementary pathways and tools for accountability. As part of the commitment to gender equality, macroeconomic policymaking should incorporate distributive impact analyses that allows for macroeconomic policies to be evaluated in terms of their effects on women and men.

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