

IMPACT ANALYSIS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN KENYA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to analyze the impact of gender mainstreaming environment in higher education institutions in Kenya. The objectives included;- to assess policy environment on gender mainstreaming in higher education in Kenya, to establish institutional environment in relation to gender mainstreaming in higher education in Kenya and to determine critical policy indicators in gender mainstreaming in higher education in Kenya. The study utilized an eclectic approach with a focus on descriptive survey design. The sample comprised three universities in western Kenya. The study participants comprised six deans of schools, nine heads of sections and 300 students. The study findings revealed that both the policy and organizational environment with regard to gender mainstreaming in higher education institutions in Africa still require amendments and strengthening of structures. Similarly, the study has emphasized the link between economic development and women's education. This is equally related to levels of economic productivity, gender equality and the empowerment of women which are important goals in their own right and are vital to poverty elimination, and achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) The critical policy indicators included both qualitative and quantitative indicators. The study findings are significant to educators, policy developers and policy implementers with regard to gender mainstreaming in higher education institutions in Kenya, Africa and worldwide.

Keywords: Gender mainstreaming, policy environment, institutional environment and critical indicators

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, Institutions of Higher Education in the world have embraced a new and broader agenda for equal opportunities between women and men (Morley L 2006.) By contrast with the cultural traditional focus on equal pay and equal treatment in the workplace, this new agenda also includes specific positive actions on behalf of women, as well as a new commitment to 'mainstream' gender throughout the policy process.

Rees distinguishes between three ideal-typical approaches to gender issues: equal treatment, positive action, and mainstreaming. *Equal treatment*, in Rees's words, 'implies that no individual should have fewer human rights or opportunities than any other', and its application in the higher education institutions context has taken the form of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(1948), Article 26 paragraph one which affirms that everyone has a right to Education and that Higher Education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit (Rees, 1998).

In contrast to the equal treatment approach, Rees posits a second approach, called *positive action*, in which 'the emphasis shifts from equality of access to creating conditions more likely to result in equality of outcome' (Rees, 1998). More concretely, positive action involves the adoption of specific actions on behalf of women, in order to overcome their unequal starting positions in a patriarchal society. At the extreme, positive action may also take the form of *positive discrimination*, which seeks to increase the participation of women (or other underrepresented groups) through the use of affirmative-action preferences or quotas. Rees detects a gradual move in the higher education institution since the 1980s away from a narrow equal treatment perspective toward the adoption

of specific, positive action measures on behalf of women.

The third and most promising approach identified by Rees is *gender mainstreaming*(Rees, 1998). The concept of gender mainstreaming calls for the systematic incorporation of gender issues throughout *all* governmental institutions and policies. As defined by the Commission of University education, which adopted a formal commitment to gender mainstreaming in 1996, the term involves: The systematic integration of the respective situations, priorities and needs of women and men in all policies and with a view to promoting equality between women and men and mobilizing all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account, at the planning stage, their effects on the respective situation of women and men in implementation, monitoring and evaluation(UNESCO, 2005.). Thus defined, gender mainstreaming is a potentially revolutionary concept, which promises to bring a gender dimension into all Higher Education policies. Yet, gender mainstreaming is also an extraordinarily demanding concept, which requires the adoption of a gender perspective by all the central actors in the policy process – some of whom may have little experience or interest in gender issues(Nyakundi E, 2000). This raises two central questions: why, and how, did the Educational Institutions adopt a policy of gender mainstreaming in the first place, and how has it been implemented in practice?

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or program in all areas and at all levels (Mbilinyi, 1984). Gender mainstreaming is important because it incorporates the fundamental principle that women and men experience different conditions and opportunities in life, have different interests and needs, and are affected in different ways by social, political and economic processes, as a direct result of their gender(African

Union, 2004).. In this regard, the decade following the adoption of the Beijing PFA (Platform for Action) that emerged from the fourth world conference on women held in 1995 in Beijing witnessed many changes on the African continent, including the development of regional declarations and mechanisms on gender and development (UN Beijing Declaration and the Platform For Action,1995). The creation of the African Union (AU), committed by its constitutive act to the principle of gender equality and equity, provides further opportunities for institutionalizing gender mainstreaming and increased political participation of African women in regional decision-making(African Union, 2004)

Patriarchal society, the colonial and post-colonial contexts show that the male body and the female body bear cultural meanings and representations that reflect power relations within society(Moser, 1994). How then, from a constructivist perspective, can we dispense with African epistemologies of the body by breaking away from a legacy that still bears the imprint of some anthropological vision of African sexualities, with a whiff of ethnocentrism or even racism?

However, as in spite of African women's mobilization, advocacy, and increased representation in governance, today's situation in Higher Education is far away from an equal participation of women and men in the different stages of the higher education career(DFID, 2009). There is a paucity of gender disaggregated data in almost all higher educational institutions. According to a study by Gender Equity in Commonwealth Higher Education(Morley L 2006.), it is evident that there are large gender disparities between women and men in higher education institutions. Solid evidence on the causes and impacts of gender inequality is essential but a lack of gender specific information and statistics makes it difficult to assemble an accurate picture of progress towards gender equality. In addition, a desk study of selected African higher educational institutions shows that there is a sizable gender gap, related to particular levels

and areas of study program (Best J. and Khan, 2004). It is against this background, that the researcher sought to conduct an impact analysis on gender mainstreaming in higher education in Kenya.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i) To assess policy environment on gender mainstreaming in higher education institutions in Kenya.
- ii) To establish institutional environment in relation to gender mainstreaming in higher education institutions in Kenya.
- iii) To determine critical policy indicators in gender mainstreaming in higher education institutions in Kenya.

4.0 JUSTIFICATION

Kenya is striving to achieve the MDGs as set out in the UN declaration. To achieve this, gender issues should be addressed as articulated in Higher education institutions' policy guidelines, specifically the African University organizations Protocol which is basically patriarchal in nature (2003). Similarly, in Kenya's Vision 2030 on the socio-economic pillar, education is among areas focused on and in particular gender equality that addresses the issues of the marginalized groups, especially women. Education is the best tool to provide the emphasis on gender mainstreaming and this can be simplified through the findings of this study.

5.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by the goal model of organizational effectiveness as advanced by Burlingame (Burlingame Justone, 2002.) and the Feminist Theory (Crawford). Burlingame observes that it is possible and desirable, to arrive at a single statement of organizational effectiveness. In the goal model, effectiveness is defined in terms of the relative attainment of feasible objectives having to do with physical facilities and equipment, the human energy of students and employees, curricular technologies, or some commodity, such as money, that

can be exchanged for other resources. The goal model, based on the open system concept, places great value on the harmonious operation of the organizations components, the ability to adapt, and the optimization of the leadership, decision making, and communication processes.

Feminist theory, on the other is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality. It examines women's social roles, experience, and feminist politics in a variety of fields, such as anthropology and sociology, communication, psychoanalysis, economics, literary, education, and philosophy. While generally providing a critique of social relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's rights, interests, and issues. Feminist researchers embrace two key tenets: (1) the research should focus on the condition of women in society, and (2) the research must be grounded in the assumption that women generally experience subordination. Thus, feminist research rejects Weber's value-free orientation in favour of being overtly political-doing research in pursuit of gender equality. Themes explored in feminism include discrimination, objectification (especially sexual objectification), oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping, art history and contemporary art, and aesthetics. According to this study gender mainstreaming is the independent variable whereas Higher Education is the dependent variable. This is because the role played by the Higher Education institutions with regard to gender mainstreaming is based on the goals of the Institution, which determine the effectiveness of the organizations.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

This study used an eclectic approach with a focus on descriptive survey research design as recommended by Koul (Koul, 1984). Descriptive survey design is a convenient way through which views, opinions, perceptions, attitudes and suggestions can be collected and

analyzed. The survey also enabled the researcher to collect information from a smaller group of population in such a way that the knowledge gained was representative of the total population under study (Best J. and Khan, 2004). The descriptive survey collected detailed descriptions of existing phenomena, with the intent of employing data to justify the current conditions and practices with regard to the impact of gender mainstreaming in higher learning institutions in Kenya. The descriptive survey described the policy environment and institutional environment in relation to gender mainstreaming in higher institutions of learning in Kenya. The universe of the study included two Public Universities in western Kenya. The study focused on Deans of schools, the heads of departments, and the students' representative purposively sampled. A total of 300 respondents were involved in the study. This is because this group of respondents possesses the required characteristics as espoused by Best and Khan (Best J. and Khan, 2004). Data collection instruments included two questionnaires for heads of departments and student representatives, Document Analysis on policy environment and institutional environment in higher institutions of learning, and Interview Schedules for Deans of students on detailed descriptions of institutional environment.. Quantitative Data collected was analyzed using frequencies, and percentages, while thematic approach was used to analyze qualitative data..

7.0 DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

7.1 Discussion

The study findings were based on the study objectives. The first objective was to determine the gender policy environment and the findings were as per the Table 1.

The study findings revealed that there is an education sector policy in place and this was an indication that the members are aware of the policy availability. The respondents were also aware of the education gender policy 300(100%). The definition of gender mainstreaming utilized by this study was developed by the Council of Europe:

Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking (Koul, 1984).

Most 240(80%) of the participants realized that gender mainstreaming is not a goal in itself but a strategy to achieve equality between women and men. This is in agreement with Mbilinyi who observes that gender mainstreaming involves a process of change and transformation which implies that all actors involved in policymaking integrate gender-equality concerns (Mbilinyi, 1984). This concretely means integrating a systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men, the relations existing between them, and differentiated policy impact on the

Table 1: Policy environment

SN	ITEM	YES	NEUTRAL	NO
1.	Is there an education sector policy?	300(100%)	None	none
2.	Is there a gender policy in the education sector?	300(100%)	None	none
3.	Is the policy stated?	300(100%)	None	none
4.	Is the policy clear and effective?	150(50%)	None	150(50%)
5.	Has the policy been implemented fully?	None	210(70%)	90(30%)
6.	Does the policy guide goals, plans and activities at institutional level?	None	240(80%)	60(20%)

7.	Is the policy time bound or indefinite?	None	90(30%)	210(70%)
8.	Has the policy been reviewed, changed and/or evaluated since inception?	None	90(30%)	210(70%)

concrete lives of women and/or men. The findings indicated that the policy document was effective and clear 150(50%) and majority 210(70%) were unsure on whether the policy had been implemented fully or not.

The respondents seemingly were not involved in the development, review, change and/or evaluation of the gender policy document. Success in the implementation of gender mainstreaming can be gauged by the involvement of the policy users and can be measured according to policy stages and policy output: good gender mainstreaming is found not only in policy and planning but also in implementation and evaluation.

The critical problems of gender mainstreaming with regard to policy environment were identified as indicated on Fig. 1. These included issues with reference to decision making 210(70%) agreed that one gender would be favored over the other depending on the activity area of concern. The other areas included management composition 240 (80%), Cultural attitudes 270(90%), and

mentoring and succession systems 240(80%)

On the institutional environment on gender mainstreaming, the findings revealed that though the institutions of higher education are expected to be role models in all aspects of policy implementation, the public universities in Kenya are still lagging behind 240(80%) of the respondents confirmed this.

The decision making structures are equally not representative enough and tend to be patriarchal in nature. This was confirmed by 180 (60%). Though the resource availability is friendly to both the male and the female, majority 210 (70%) of the respondents agreed that some areas are not well represented by both gender. There seem to be problems in attracting women to certain professions such as petroleum studies, and engineering course. This was in agreement with Morley(Morley L 2006.) who observed that good practices in gender mainstreaming should document the way in which gender-equality concerns are made central to policymaking, legislation, resource allocation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programs. They

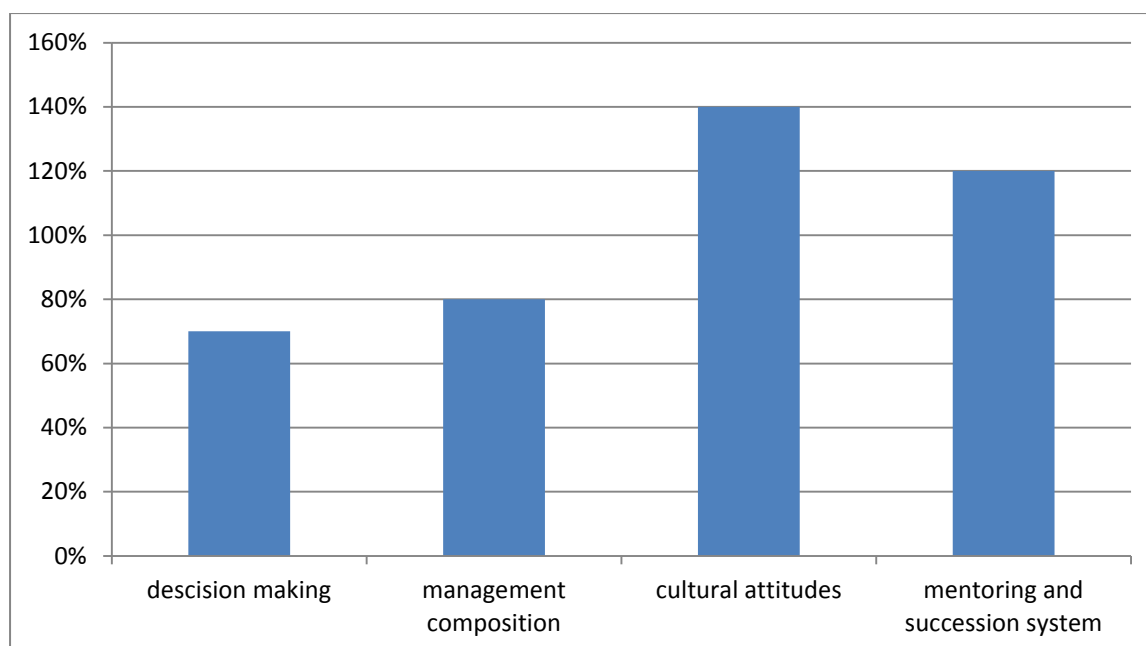


Fig 1; Problems of Gender mainstreaming in higher education institutions.
Source; Researcher, 2013

should, if possible, also document the transformative impact of implementing and/ or adopting gender mainstreaming into goals, strategies, actions and outcomes which leads to increasing equality between women and men.

The study identified the critical gender mainstreaming indicators in higher education institutions as Provision of higher education equally to both male and female 300(100%), Access to higher education 300(100%), Participation of both the male and female in all the programs offered 300(100%), Resources and Achievement.

The study concluded that gender mainstreaming needs to encompass four policy stages: rhetoric, planning, implementation and evaluation, Lack of implementation can show as evaporation, invisibilisation and resistance, Input, output, effect and impact indicators are needed.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD

Based on the above findings the study recommends the following;

1. Everyone should be enlightened on the issue of gender mainstreaming especially the policy document and the role of all the stakeholders should be clearly communicated. At the institutional level, adequate political will should be evident combined with concrete action by the management.
2. Women should be assured that they would benefit from the goods and services without any favour or discrimination and allowed to participate fully at all levels of decision making.

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