Gender Inclusion in TVET: An Examination of Sustainable Interventions In Selected TVET Institutions In Kenya.

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Abstract

Sustainable development calls for participation of all persons. The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims at achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. Education has a critical role to play in addressing issues of gender equity and equality in Africa. Integrating gender perspectives in Technical and Vocational Education & Training (TVET) institutions is sound governance and will help to strengthen the impact of gender mainstreaming. Empowering women requires addressing structural issues such as unfair social norms and attitudes as well as developing progressive legal frameworks that promote equality between women and men. This paper was based on a study that examined sustainable gender equity interventions in selected public TVET institutions in Kenya. The study adopted a mixed method research design and 452 respondents were sampled from the four (4) selected public TVET institutions. The public TVET institutions were purposively selected because they had established gender centers that were assumed to be coordinating gender equity interventions. The study respondents consisted of institution managers (registrars, personnel officers, deans of students, heads of academic departments and the heads of gender centers, senior academic staff and students), from various departments in the institutions. Data for the study was collected during the months of April to June 2019. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaires for students and academic staff, semi structured interview guides for the managers and coordinators of gender centers, meetings, observation guides and a document analysis guide. The study focused on interventions related to access to TVET education by women, Curriculum transformation (Inclusion) and staff promotion and development. Mixed methods were used to analyze the data. The findings from this study reveal that there are a number of impediments to the implementation of sustainable gender equity interventions including in adequate funding for...
the activities geared towards enhancing gender equity, lack of gender awareness among students, staff and institution managers, negative attitudes towards gender issues and lack of a clear gender policy guidelines. The study recommends that both the national and county levels of government, as well as other stakeholders in the TVET education sector and in curriculum development, must ensure the integration of practical tools to support programs that address the equitable access to, and retention in TVET institutions. TVET education and training should be made relevant by undertaking a major curriculum review preceded by research and needs assessment, to establish the challenges posed by the Constitution and the skills needs for achieving Vision 2030. It is further necessary to incorporate gender considerations into activities to develop curricula and learning materials, and to capture sex-disaggregated data in all aspects of TVET; Ensuring deliberate action to promote or appoint qualified women to decision-making positions or position of power and influence in the TVET sector. (458 words)

Keywords: Gender inclusion, TVET institutions, sustainable interventions, Kenya

Definition of key terms

**Gender:** This refers to the socially and culturally constructed differences between men and women; as distinct from sex which refers to their biological differences. The social constructs vary across cultures and time.

**Gender Inclusion:** Attention to gender particularly significant in view of feminization. Gender equality and empowerment of women as well as the active participation of women in political, economic, social and cultural life.

**Gender Equality:** Refers to the equal treatment of women and men, girls and boys so that they can enjoy the benefits of development including equal access to and control of opportunities and resources.

**Gender Equity:** Refers to the practice of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits, access to and control of resources, responsibilities, power, opportunities and services.

**1.1 Introduction**

Kenya recognizes that the education and training of all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of attainment of Vision 2030. Education equips citizens with understanding and knowledge that enables them to make informed choices about their lives and those facing Kenyan society. The TVET sector will, therefore, provide the skills that will be required to steer Kenyans to the economic and social goals of Vision 2030. Global gender equity campaigns have been an important vehicle for encouraging the increased recruitment of women as students and staff into TVET education. The Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration (1995) identifies education as very important in the realization of equality.
In September 2000 at the Millennium Assembly, more than 189 member states adopted the Millennium Declaration. Built into the Millennium Declaration was a set of priorities, including precise and time bound development goals, which are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Eight goals were identified to be achieved worldwide between 1990 and 2015. **MDG 3** is concerned with *Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*. This goal recognizes the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment in effecting social change and transformation. Indicators linked to this goal aim to measure progress towards ensuring that more women become literate, have more voice and representation in public policy and decision-making and have improved job prospects in non-agricultural sector.

Despite the international campaigns for gender equality and equity in higher education, studies conducted in several countries continue to show that women are underrepresented in TVET institutions as students, staff and managers. The participation of women in TVET education as students has been found to be uneven across national, disciplinary and institutional boundaries in both developed and developing countries. UNESCO (2003:81) concluded that, although there are variations between and within different regions, there is a pattern whereby female participation in higher education tends to diminish as one moves from secondary to higher education especially in Science and technology oriented technical programs. Gender disparities are also apparent in fields/ subjects of study with women (UNESCO 2003: 81). Morley and Lugg (2009: 39) observe that since academy identity is often constructed and enacted via disciplinary choice and location, gendering of disciplinary choices in TVET serves to track students into different types of occupations and social hierarchies hence contributing to gender inequalities in society.

A review of previous studies on gender equity in education in general and in TVET in particular gives useful insights into some of the international, regional and national policies and interventions being put in place to enhance gender equity in education in different contexts. However, there is a gap in relation to local and sustainable gender equity interventions that can be used to enhance gender equity in Kenyan TVET institutions. As Molestane (2004) observes gender equity interventions should be contextual and they should address specific local issues related to gender equity. They should be developed locally and understood by the beneficiaries and the implementers. This paper makes a contribution to this debate by examining some of the
interventions geared towards enhancing gender equity in selected public TVET institutions in Kenya.
1.2. Statement of the problem

Technical education in Kenya can be traced to 1951 when the Royal Technical College of East Africa was established in Nairobi. The college opened its doors to the first students in April 1956. In 1961, the Royal Technical College was transformed into a university under the name University College of Nairobi giving University of London degrees.

There have been attempts by individual TVET institutions to incorporate women’s issues in their programs. Some of the attempts at enhancing gender equality include establishing gender centres, affirmative action and enhancing women’s participation in engineering related courses.

Most of these attempts have been financed by donor funding or Non-Governmental Organization such as the Women in Technology (WITE). It is against this background that a study examining sustainable gender inclusion interventions in selected TVET institutions was carried out.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Status of equality and inclusion in Kenya

According to the National Gender and Equality Commission, (2016), *Equality in education* implies securing education as a right for all learners and supporting the learners to exploit their full potential and aspirations, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. It also involves implementing and institutionalizing interventions and arrangements towards achieving the set goals.

*Inclusion in education* refers to the extent to which education service delivery responds to the diversity of needs and learners, according to the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI). Specifically, UNGEI defines ‘inclusion’ to entail “providing all learners at all levels including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age appropriate classrooms in their neighborhoods, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society”.

Inclusion also means increasing access to and participation in learning, cultures and communities, and in reducing exclusion from and within education. This process may involve changes in education content, approaches, structures, interventions and strategies. At the centre of inclusion is the human right, UNGEI (2010). Equality in education implies securing education...
as a right for all learners and supporting the learners to exploit their full potential and aspirations, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. It also involves implementing and institutionalizing interventions and arrangements towards achieving the set goals. All levels of education have multiple outcomes, such as cognitive achievement (what do the pupils know/achieve), affective achievement (attitudes such as whether the pupils like going to school or like subjects such as science, reading or mathematics), and behavioral values (such as civic responsibility and good moral values such as respect and social work). Other aspects of focus were gender dimensions, including access to all levels of schooling, and whether it is boys or girls who perform better. Gender dimensions also focused on education management (education managers and management boards) and teaching (teachers), among others. The aspects of inclusion and equality discussed above form the fundamental principles of the Education for All (EFA) commitment of 1990, and SDG No. 4 on quality education.

**Student enrolment in technical institutions by sex, 2013-2015**

![Table of student enrolment in technical institutions by sex, 2013-2015](image)

*Figure 1: Student enrolment in technical institutions by sex, 2013-2015*

Source: Equality and Inclusion Survey (2015)

**2.1 Global perspective on gender issues**

Based on Sustainable Development Goals Report (2018), around 2017, an estimated 21 per cent of women between 20 and 24 years of age reported that they were married or in an informal union before age 18. This means that an estimated 650 million girls and women today were
married in childhood. Rates of child marriage have continued to decline around the world. In Southern Asia, a girl’s risk of marrying in childhood has dropped by over 40 per cent since around 2000. Around 2017, one in three girls aged 15 to 19 had been subjected to female genital mutilation in the 30 countries where the practice is concentrated, compared to nearly one in two around 2000. Based on data between 2000 and 2016 from about 90 countries, women spend roughly three times as many hours in unpaid domestic and care work as men. Globally, the percentage of women in single or lower houses of national parliament has increased from 19 per cent in 2010 to around 23 per cent in 2018.

3.0 Research Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive survey and case study designs in order to enable the researcher to carry out an in-depth study of gender inclusion interventions in selected public TVET institutions. The study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data. The quantitative methods were used to scrutinize the existing datasets relating to the participation of women and men in the selected public TVET institutions as students and staff.

This study was guided by the feminist critical policy analysis perspective following Bensimon and Marshall (1997). According to Bensimon and Marshall (ibid), feminist critical policy analysis has two objectives. The first objective is to “critique or deconstruct conventional theories, policies and explanations and reveal the gender biases (as well as the racial, sexual, and social class) inherent in commonly accepted theories, constructs, methodologies and concepts”. The second objective is to “conduct analysis that is feminist both in its theoretical and methodological orientations”. For a study to be viewed as a feminist critical policy analysis, Bensimon and Marshall (ibid) argue that it is not sufficient to include women but it must pose gender as the fundamental category of analysis, pay attention to differences among women and in local contexts, use women’s lived experiences as data and aim at transforming institutions.

The sample consisted of four public TVET institutions in Kenya. The TVET institutions were purposively sampled based on the fact that they have established gender centres/institutes that are assumed to be coordinating gender equity interventions. These TVET institutions were Thika Technical Training Institute, The Kabete National Polytechnic, Sigalagala National Polytechnic and Michuki Technical Training Institute. In each institution four departments were selected using stratified random sampling. From the selected institutions, the managers that is, the
Principal (4) Deputy principals - administration (4), Registrars (4) and deans of students (4), Heads of academic departments (32), chairmen of gender centres or institutes (8) were targeted for interviews. Ten (5) academic staff at the rank of senior technical and vocational trainers and above were selected from the four departments of each selected TVET institution (n=80). Students (male and female) 20 were selected from each of the four departments in each institution based on their year of study, that is first, second and third years (n=320). An additional group of students enrolled in the short course on Gender, poverty and development at Thika Technical Training Institute were involved in the study as a special sample to enable the study investigate some of the gender interventions in the selected TVET institutions. These students responded to a different questionnaire related to the course they were enrolled in.

The data was collected using questionnaires (for students and academic staff) semi-structured interviews guides for managers and directors/coordinators of gender centers, document analysis guides (for statistical data) and structured non-participant observation schedules (for observing gender relations in the classrooms, meeting and training sessions). Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts of the men and women enrolled in various courses was used to show the gender inequities in the selected institutions.

4.0 Research Findings

4.1 Intervention geared towards increasing female students’ access to TVET education.

The students surveyed were asked whether there were programs in their institutions/ departments that were geared towards supporting female students generally, making the institution environment conducive to female students and the curriculum. A majority of the students surveyed in this study indicated that there were no specific programs in their institution and departments geared towards attracting female students to TVET education. Some of the academic staff and managers interviewed mentioned that the admission of female students with a lower cut off point as an intervention was not a consideration in their institution, however, some institutions considered late admission of students from marginalized areas.
4.2 Interventions geared towards mainstreaming gender issues in TVET institutions: Establishment of Gender centre/ Institutes.

Another intervention that was considered by some students, academic staff and managers geared towards enhancing gender equity was the establishment of gender department/ centres or institutes. Document analysis and interviews with the champions of gender centres sought to find out the history, objectives and core activities of these centres. The questions asked included: i) has the institution integrated gender equality into the mainstream i.e. systematically included women’s and men’s priorities & needs in all policies, programs, projects, institution mechanisms and budget?, ii) has the institution designed & implemented gender specific action measures to reduce the effect of past or continuing discrimination through affirmative action and special measures to empower the disadvantaged group?, iii) has the institution addressed both practical & strategic gender needs because the roles and needs of women both in the family and in the workplace are different from those of men?, iv) does the institution undertake gender budgeting and auditing?

After analyzing the responses, it was found out that the gender Centres at all the selected TVET institutions were inactive. The gender committees in place were nonfunctional and only functioned to meet performance contract (PC) targets. All gender-based issues were being handled by the Guidance and counselling department. Most of the respondents disagreed that the gender mainstreaming policy guidelines were being followed.
Figure 2: Interventions geared towards mainstreaming gender issues in TVET institutions: Establishment of Gender centres/ Institutes.
4.3 Interventions geared towards making the institution environment Supportive

Data regarding the role TVET institutions play in providing a supportive environment was collected from the students. The students were asked whether they perceived the institution environment to be supportive of female students in terms of : i) developed proactive gender policies & strategies in order to promote opportunities for girls and women in TVET, ii) TVET and skills system has been made inclusive of persons with disabilities, iii) the institution provides safe accommodation for female students, iv) the institution has put in place strategies for incorporating support for female students such as counselling, maternity and daycare services. Again, the views of the students did not suggest any formal arrangements by TVET institutions geared towards making the institution environment safe for the students. The study also found that there were no accommodation facilities set aside in the institutions for female students with families or those who fall pregnant. A majority of the students (83.1%) said there were no facilities for these students. At the time of this study the institutions sampled were not providing accommodation for student mothers.

![Figure 3: Interventions geared towards measuring equality and inclusion in TVET institutions](image)

Figure 3: Interventions geared towards measuring equality and inclusion in TVET institutions
4.4 Interventions geared towards Curriculum Transformation in the selected TVET institutions

Hearn (2001) observes that changing the matter of academic content is part of reducing gender inequalities and promoting gender equality in education. Gender equality is not just about structures and procedures but also about the content of academic teaching and research, and the deconstruction of non-gendered mainstreams. Curriculum transformation is important because as Morley (2006) observes lack of attention to gender issues in form of language, resources, representation of women, references and teaching styles can reinforce gender inequalities. Students were first asked to indicate whether there were courses in their departments, faculties and universities that address gender issues. A total of 110 students responded to this question. A majority (66.4%) of them said that there were no such courses at their departments or institution. In one of the institutions sampled, it was evident that there was no female student registered in male dominated courses notably of mention, Diploma in electrical engineering (Power option).

4.5 Short courses on gender, poverty and development at Thika Technical Training Institute

An additional group of students enrolled in the short course on Gender, poverty and development at Thika Technical Training Institute were involved in the study as a special sample to enable the study investigate some of the gender interventions in the selected TVET institutions. The findings for this group of students was based on a tracer study that was carried out by the Open Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL) department between November 2017 to January 2018. The short courses offered included: basic sewing skills, Tailoring course, Entrepreneurship,
Poultry keeping and Welding and Fabrication. These courses targeted the disengaged youths who hailed from not well to do families. Four (4) female students were enrolled in welding & fabrication course and successfully completed and three are currently employed in welding firms while one started her own welding and fabrication workshop which is doing quite well. One male student (an orphan) who did entrepreneurship course on cleaning got attached to a carwash and after saving some money, he started his own cleaning company by name ‘JOSE DRY CLEANING SERVICES’. From these findings, it is evident that Thika TTI has addressed the issues of gender, poverty and development through sponsoring these students to undertake short courses which are skill based and have equipped them with relevant market driven skills which they are now applying to earn a living.

5.0 Conclusion

The findings on the gender inclusion interventions at the selected TVET institutions presented in this paper reveal that there are no interventions geared towards increasing female students’ access to TVET education in general and to specific departments. The lowering of entry points for girls at the admissions level has not taken place. There has been a move to incorporate gender issues in the selected institutions through the setting up of gender committees. However, most of TVET institutions had not fully launched these activities. These activities/interventions were geared towards making students especially female students cope with the many challenges they were facing in a hostile institution and social environment. There are no interventions geared towards transforming the TVET curriculum including content and teaching strategies especially in the engineering courses. This implies that the gender inequities in the different disciplines are being perpetuated by gender insensitive content and teaching and learning styles.

Abraham and Altman (2005: 13) writing from the experience of several programs designed to attract and retain women and minority faculty members and to draw women to fields in which they are historically under represented at two Institutions in the USA (Bryn Mawr College and DePauw University) contend that “a comprehensive, rather than a piecemeal, approach to institutional transformation is crucial to mentoring and supporting women and minorities at all stages of academic careers”. They argue that special programs to enhance gender equity must be accompanied by an overhaul of academic and personnel policy and a genuine commitment to achieving gender equity at all levels. This they observe requires the creation of partnerships.
among administrative and faculty leaders to bring about meaningful and lasting change. They further argue that from the perspective of feminist theory, a policy approach based on principles of formal equity, for example ending discrimination in salary and promotion, may appear to be in tension with a programmatic approach based on women’s different situations and needs. For gender equity interventions to succeed Abraham and Altman (ibid) argue that the two approaches need to be used.

Based on the findings on the gender inclusion interventions in the selected TVET institutions presented in this paper it can be argued that only a combination of various gender equality measures and initiatives can make an effective and target-oriented contribution in order to establish gender equality and parity at institutional level. Gender equity interventions should not be left to a specific unit but it should be integrated within all areas of TVET institution (teaching, research, personnel and budget issues, leadership/management and steering/controlling levels).

5.1 Recommendations

The study recommends that both the national and county levels of government, as well as other stakeholders in the TVET education sector and in curriculum development, must ensure the integration of practical tools to support programs that address the equitable access to, and retention in TVET institutions. TVET education and training should be made relevant by undertaking a major curriculum review preceded by research and needs assessment, to establish the challenges posed by the Constitution and the skills needs for achieving Vision 2030. It is further necessary to incorporate gender considerations into activities to develop curricula and learning materials, and to capture sex-disaggregated data in all aspects of TVET; Ensuring deliberate action to promote or appoint qualified women to decision-making positions or position of power and influence in the TVET sector.
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