Gender Policy as a Management Strategy in Education

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Abstract

Gender policies should be people centered and should respond to needs of women, men, boys and girls. Policies affect men and women differently which means all policies should contribute to gender equality.

Purpose

The aim of this paper was to examine gender responsiveness of gender policies to teacher education and challenges faced in the implementation of these policies in universities. The study outlined and tracked official responses to gender with regard to teacher training programs.

Approach

The study was carried out through document desk review of relevant research literature, policy documents and curricula of teacher education programs of selected higher education institutions in Kenya. Data was analyzed using social relations approach which is a framework used for institutional analysis. Resultant information was integrated with content to analyze gender in the context of teacher education and management.

Findings

This paper reveals that there are gender disparities and that the government and its partners have developed strategies and initiatives to address gender and education. The Gender policies understudy proposed gender balanced entry into teacher education, increased participation and gender equity in university processes.

Value

Education is a vehicle of development which can be achieved through equal participation of males and females, reduction of gender inequalities in access and control of resources, gender awareness and gender responsiveness. This paper views human well being as concerning survival, security and autonomy (Anderson & Woodrow 1989), which can be enhanced through gender equality and responsiveness through teacher education. The paper proposes focus on inculcation of gender values to populations through education to avoid gender disparities in systems of development. This can be done through teacher education and engendering the curriculum at all levels of education. The proposition will be beneficial to educationists, policy makers and communities.

Keywords: gender, gender policy, gender awareness, gender disparities, gender equality, gender inequality, gender mainstreaming, gender responsiveness, teacher education, development
INTRODUCTION

Gender policy can be viewed as a legacy of earlier efforts of women in feminist movements in 1970s and 1980s which called the attention of planners and policy makers to aspects of gender relations in development. Gender policy provides policy environment through laws, programs and other means to address key gender issues in a given society. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy in implementing gender policy in the development agenda, it involves putting women’s agenda and gender issues at the core of public policy. Gender mainstreaming views gender analysis as one of the keys to defining policy issues and program concerns. It includes women’s views and priorities in policy decisions, institutional structures and resource allocations. Education is a vehicle of development which can be pursued through equal participation of males and females, reduction of gender inequalities in access and control of resources, gender awareness and gender responsiveness. In Kenya focus has been on the girl child especially at lower levels of education (Otieno-Omutoko, 2006) although in Western countries there has been research on masculinity and underachievement of boys (Skelton, 2007). Gender and teacher education is a relatively under researched area (Skelton, 2007) and what has captured the attention of educational policy makers is the gender gap, in Kenya the gender policy focuses on gender gaps (MOE, 2007) where boys are seen to be more represented in various levels of education.

Gender mainstreaming should complement policy approaches to gender quality that are already in place, so that it works as a “twin track strategy” complementing the equal treatment approach and targeted gender equality policies. Gender mainstreaming should focus on teacher education and the society as a whole by changing the norms and practices that stand at the roots of gender inequality and sustain its reproduction. This implies the process should be continuous and gender mainstreaming should be a tool to be used in
ensuring that none of the institutions instruments perpetuate gender inequality (Krizân & Zentai, 2004).

This paper tracked the official responses to gender in terms of teacher gender policies to demonstrate that such positions reinforce conventional constructions and often essentialist constructions of traditional men and women in teachers and permeates to the students they teach. The paper located how gender matters are located in the gender policies that address teacher education and interrogated their practicability in addressing gender.

**Legal and Policy Context**

The African Union Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa which has been endorsed by majority African Member states agrees to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and guarantees equal opportunity and access in the sphere of education and training (The African Union, 2003). The commitment of the Government of Kenya to attain gender equality is underscored in various national and international legal and policy documents (MOE, 2007). The Constitution of Kenya and Sessional Paper on African Socialism (1965) outlaw discrimination on the basis of gender and emphasize social justice and equal opportunities with regard to education. The current constitution states that the State shall take measures, including affirmative action programmes, to ensure that youth access relevant education and training. The state commits itself to implement affirmative action programmes designed to ensure that minorities and marginalised groups are provided special opportunities in educational and economic fields. The government is a signatory to international protocols relating to education and human rights of women and girls. They include the Universal declaration on Human Rights (1948), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), The
Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Article 10 (1984), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), Jomtien World Conference (1990), Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (2000) and Millennium Development Goals (2000). Vision 2030 (2007) was intended to mainstream gender equity in all aspects of society, however, this endeavor has been slackened (Society for International Development, 2010) by inconsistencies in policies and policy priorities and there is no direct link between vision 2030 and the various key policy documents on gender and especially the National Policy on Gender and Development (2000) and Sessional Paper NO.6 on Gender Equality and Development. These documents emphasize the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination, enhance the right to education. They promote gender equality in education, gender inclusion and empowerment and they set goals and targets for achievement.

**Gender Policy in Education**

Gender policy in education is necessary for provision of plans of action, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and to enhance creation of an enabling environment for stakeholder participation. Gender disparities in education have reduced especially at primary and secondary levels, although disparities are evident in certain provinces in favor of boys with regard to access, retention, completion, performance and retention (MOE, 2007). Gender disparities tend to increase at higher levels of education, while men dominate decision-making levels at high levels (UN, 2005). A majority of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa are male (UNICEF, 2008), however, between 1999 and 2006 there was an increase in female teachers in most regions in the world, although in the pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa there was a slight decrease in the number of female secondary and tertiary teachers. In recognition
of the importance of gender equity and equality in education, the government and partners have developed strategies and initiatives to address gender and education. The documents that address gender and education are the National Plan of Action on Education for All 2003-2015, the Report of the Education Sector Review 2003, the MOE Strategic Plan (2006-2011) and service charter, Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005, and the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP) 2005-2010. The government has ratified a number of conventions, while MOE has established a National Task Force for Gender and Education, a Ministerial Task Force on Girls’ Education and a Gender Desk (MOE 2007) all aimed at addressing gender issues in education at various levels and management. Arnot & Miles (2005) explain that there is marginalization of gender equality in mainstream educational policy which perpetuates traditional gender construction and influences teachers and students, no wonder their interest in how gender relations are recontextualized, produced and reproduced through education.

In regard to gender mainstreaming and gender responsiveness in teacher education and management the ministry’s initiatives include gender balanced intake of pre-service teacher trainees, gender responsive deployment of teachers. Beijing Declaration 1995 called for sufficient resources to be provided for gender mainstreaming into all policies and programs. Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin & Frame (2003) argue that there is need to consider gender dimension in discussions of inclusion because of the prevalence and complexity of gender differences in education and the interaction between gender and other sources of inequality. They suggest that policy makers and practitioners need to take account of the ‘gender jigsaw’ rather than relative disadvantage of females in education.
Gender Disparities in Teacher Education

There are gender disparities in enrolment in teacher education. Between 1999 and 2003 enrolment of females was at 49.6% in primary teacher colleges and 44.3% in secondary teacher training colleges and 53.1% in special education teacher training programs. In 2002/2003 to 2004/2005, those enrolled in teacher education programs in public universities were 39.8%. The Gender policy of Education expresses concern on these disparities and proposes to ensure gender-balanced entry into teacher education and employment, engender management structures, ensure gender considerations in infrastructure development and strengthen educational structures but some of the strategies identified to eliminate disparities are not directly related to realization of the policies and implementation plans lack which leaves a gap in actualizing gender concerns (MOE, 2007).

In university education, the number of female students is much lower than that of males in public universities, but there is a higher percentage of females in private universities. In this regard, the gender policy intends to increase participation and ensure gender equity in teaching, learning, governance, management and administrative responsibilities in universities. To do this, there are policy statements and strategies that include encouragement of gender responsive teaching, dissemination of gender responsive research, mainstream gender in University policies and programs, implement affirmative action in admission and participation of females and enforce policies against sexual harassment and gender based violence. However, there is a mix up in some of the policies and strategies which inhibit implementation (MOE, 2007).
Gender Policies in University Education

The gender policy of University of Nairobi (UoN, 2008) states that evaluation should be carried out every two years at the end of every intervention to assess whether the policy has achieved its goals and objectives. What the policy does not explicate is the performance indicators, who is responsible for the process and how feedback will be captured and disseminated. The policy is to be reviewed five yearly to take account of emerging trends and issues (UoN, 2008).

In 2004, universities in Kenya addressed the issue of gender mainstreaming and recommendations were made to enhance gender equity in public and private institutions of higher learning, one of which was establishment of a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in each university. Formulation of a university gender policy was guided by the UoN Strategic Plan of 2005, the first objective calls for the university to implement Government Policies and international conventions and guidelines on gender, disability and marginalization, this demanded that the university develops a relevant policy. The second aim was to promote an institutional culture conducive for learning and research which indirectly calls for gender and diversity within the university community.

A gender analysis carried out in 2005 revealed that there are gender disparities in staff and student populations with management staff being 75% (85) male and 25% (29) female (UoN, 2008). To date there have only been two female Deputy Vice Chancellors with the latest being appointed in 2011. The policy has data that was collected in 2005 which does not give up-to-date sex disaggregated data which is essential for analysis and decision making.

The policy used one college to collect data and as an illustration of gender representation among academic staff by designation because it is the largest college in the university. However, this is not representative as there are six colleges in the university dealing with
different disciplines, due to differences in socialization and defining of gender roles, other colleges will give a different representation. Differentiation should be captured for gender mainstreaming purposes in each college.

The document reveals that training positions for academic staff are barely available to the extent that there are very few assistant lecturers and tutorial fellows which enhance disparities by reducing chances for preparation for higher positions. Staff support of 40% of fees for staff studying in Module 2 increased opportunities for men and women to improve their education and professional development. However, in 2010, this was reduced to 18% which will be a systemic way of interfering with accrued benefits. There is lack of sex-disaggregated data for training of staff in Grades A-F and 1-IV, this inhibits analysis which would pave way for interventions.

In this institution, there is an Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies in which a gender and development program was introduced in 1999. The Gender Policy (2008) indicates that curriculum in the university has very few programs and course units targeting women and gender. The following are some of the programs and courses offered:

(i) The Institute of Anthropology and Gender Studies (IAGS) offers Bachelor of Arts in Gender and Development, Postgraduate Diploma in Gender and Development Studies, and Master of Arts in Gender and Development

(ii) There is no common undergraduate course focusing on gender. Gender is, however, one of the sub-topics in Fundamentals of Development and its Application to Kenya.

(iii) Some departments have courses with a focus on women, for example, Women in Islam in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies; Women in
Development in the Department of Sociology, and Women in the Legal Process in the School of Law

iv) Outside IAGS, there is almost no course offered with a gender focus. An exception is Population and Gender in PSRI and Master of Arts- Gender Issues in Development in Department of Extra Mural Studies.

v) Some units have chosen to integrate the discussion of gender into all (or most) of the course units rather than to mount separate courses. The Institute of Development Studies in the course Master of Arts in Development Studies is an example that uses this approach.

vi) Department of History and Archaeology has a Master of Arts program entitled: Women in History (UoN, 2008:5).

Emphasis has been made on the need for a gender policy on grounds of informal reports of sexual violence which shows further need for establishment of Gender Centers in colleges to allow quick response. This would be an apt way of institutionalizing gender concerns. The goal of the university is to create and sustain a fair and just academic environment where men and women, boys and girls have equal opportunities. The policy addresses codes of practice which include decision making organs, recruitment, training and promotion, student admissions, a gender sensitive curriculum, working and learning environment, role models, student organizations and co-curricular activities, university staff awards, examination and coursework, gender violence and staff and student welfare. However, some of the strategies identified are not measurable and are difficult to implement. For some of the strategies, expected outcome is not stated which would provide concrete guidance in achievement.
In regard to development of a gender sensitive curriculum, one of the strategies is to ensure that all students are exposed to theories and concepts that enable them to understand gender and its implications. From the aforementioned, there is no common course offered to undergraduates to enable them understand gender and not all courses at other levels have a focus of gender in the curriculum.

The gender policy advocates affirmative action as a strategy to address gender inequality. The policy states that the university has made progress in recognizing the crosscutting nature of gender issues and their relevance to development of the institution. The glaring setback is the lack of empirical data of the level of success which would be a viable basis for action. The document ably expresses the need for an integrated institutional arrangement to coordinate gender initiatives at various levels which should include a university-wide structure, college-based committees and other structures that can facilitate implementation. The question is whether this has been done. This paper suggests a fact finding mission to find out if the university has a Gender Mainstreaming Division and if it carries out its functions in the university which include raising gender awareness, promoting gender sensitivity and gender equality, train trainers in gender analysis, coordinate gender outreach programs, facilitate gender research, establish a resource centre, develop a monitoring and evaluation plan and coordinate a gender awareness week.

Mechanisms of implementation are setting up a gender mainstreaming division, college-based committees, and campus based gender focal points. The policy mentions complaint procedures but does not delve into it, it does not mention the process and how this is communicated to users. It is explained that the university will develop an effective resource
mobilization strategy to source funds for capacity development for implementation of the policy and gender mainstreaming, but how it will be done and by whom is not clarified.

In regard to curriculum for teacher educators, most of the programs neither have gender based units nor focus on gender. However, there is evidence of raised awareness in curriculum development because in School of Education, Department of Communication and Technology, there is a unit in Bachelor of Arts, Family Studies and Gender, while the revised curriculum for Masters in Early Childhood in Education will have a unit in Gender. In the same school in Department of Educational Administration and Planning there is a unit titled Gender Issues in Education, while in Department of Foundations there is a unit on gender although it is not compulsory. In Department of Educational Studies which trains majority of teachers in the respective college, there is no focus on gender in the curricula.

The gender policy of Kenyatta University (KU, 2007) aims at enhancing sustainable development through the principle of participation, maximum use of human resources and fair compensation for work, promote involvement of women and men in production of goods and services and equitable sharing of benefits accruing from their inputs. It also aims at achieving excellence through recognizing the value of every individual, creating an environment that respects the diversity of staff and students to enable them achieve their full potential, contribute fully and derive maximum benefits and enjoyment from their involvement with the university. The policy was developed to ensure that senate, schools, departments, and the entire community has an agenda on affirmative action and gender responsive activities to assist in the initial stages of gender policy implementation.
In this institution, gender mainstreaming is guided by priority areas of the 2005-2015 strategic plan (KU, 2005C) because despite initiatives to address gender inequalities, gaps still exist in teaching, learning, research, students’ enrolment and staff welfare. The initiatives put into place to address gender gaps are:

1. Affirmative action in favor of female students in science, mathematics and technical disciplines

2. Establishment of the Centre of Gender and Development Studies in 2001 as an academic unit to promote gender and development Studies as a discipline

3. Establishment of Gender and Affirmative Action and Implementation Centre which is tasked with the implementation of the Gender Policy and the Policy on Gender Based Violence and Sexual Harassment. This centre holds gender training programs for the academic staff to build capacity (KU, 2005a).

One of the objectives is to ensure that curriculum design, development and implementation; pedagogy and material development are gender responsive. The scope of the policy applies to all activities and programs in education, training and research programs. In School of Education little information is available on the inclusion of gender in various departments. Some departments have programs and courses that focus on gender and women studies. In this regard, gender has been focused on in the following ways:
i. Literature department offers a unit on women literature where they study about the various gender issues as they are depicted in the books for study. Gender issues are also pointed out in poetry.

ii. Philosophy and religious studies department offers Gender and Philosophy.

iii. Kiswahili department and African Languages offers Gender issues in Literature.

iv. History, archeology and political studies department offers Gender and Relations in African History as an optional core unit and Gender in Archeology as an elective unit.

v. Some common units like HIV/AIDS and Development Studies include topics on gender issues in the path.

vi. Medical School has a post-graduate course in gender- Master of Science in Gender health.

Further progress includes initiation of Department of Gender Studies in the School of Humanities in 2008, commencement masters degree in Gender and Development Studies, there is also a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Gender and Development Studies. The department also offers short courses leading to the award of certificates and diplomas in Gender studies and a PhD in Gender and Development Studies. The policy provisions are Gender and Education, Gender and Governance, Marginalized and Vulnerable Groups, Gender and work environment, Gender Based Violence, Gender and Research, Establishment of linkages, Gender responsive health services and Gender and HIV/ AIDS.
On Gender and Education, the policy mentions inclusion of gender in the curriculum which would be a way of achieving and encouraging gender equity and equality. Faculty members in the School of Education have also done research on Gender, poverty and education outcomes. Though Gender mainstreaming is one of the priorities of this University, a lot still needs to be done especially in giving gender a central place in training of student teachers.

Findings of the Study

The paper reveals that gender disparities in staff and student populations, disparities increase at higher levels of education and in enrolment of student teachers. In recognition of the importance of gender equity and equality in education, the government and partners have developed strategies and initiatives to address gender and education. The Gender policy of Education expresses concern on these disparities and proposes to ensure gender-balanced entry into teacher education and employment, engender management structures, ensure gender considerations in infrastructure development and strengthen educational structures (MOE, 2007). This policy intends to increase participation and ensure gender equity in teaching, learning, governance, management and administrative responsibilities in universities. There are policy statements and strategies, however, these are not quite clear which affects implementation. Ministry of Education has included gender mainstreaming and gender responsiveness in teacher education and management initiatives, which include gender balanced intake of pre-service teacher trainees and gender responsive deployment of teachers. The methodology used in sampling for construction of the policies in higher education was faulty which culminates in non-representativeness and inability to capture information that is useful for gender mainstreaming. The
Gender Policy (2008) indicates that curriculum in the university has very few programs and course units targeting women and gender. The gender policies indicate need for institutionalization of gender concerns to create and sustain an academic environment where all gender have equal opportunities. The study reveals that the policies aim at developing a gender sensitive curriculum, but the strategies to do this are not explained. The document expresses need for institutionalized coordination of gender activities and structures that can facilitate implementation, possibly a gender mainstreaming division that carries out gender functions. The aim of second policy was to ensure affirmative action and gender responsive activities to assist in gender policy implementation. Gender mainstreaming is guided by the 2005-2015 strategic plan, however gaps still exist in teaching, learning, research, student enrolment and staff welfare. The second institution is ahead in that it has a Department of Gender Studies, courses in Gender and Development Studies and gender studies at other levels.

Teacher Education as a Strategy for Development

A number of higher institutions of learning in Kenya do not have gender policies which means that gender are not addressed in initial teacher training. Coffey& Delamont 2000 in Skelton (2007) point out that gender holds a marginal position in teacher training curriculum. Gender policies are important as they give direction on how to deal with gender issues and engineer development of gender responsive policies and procedures. This paper views gender as a matter of social justice, therefore the curriculum should raise gender awareness of students because gender is a source of inequity.
There should be standards set out for training of teachers, one of the areas of focus should be promoting rights of students irrespective of gender and gender should be central to the curriculum. To add value to teacher training, diversity such as age, gender, ethnicity and disability should be used as equality standpoints in order to address power dynamics and differentials (Dick 1990; Siraj Blatchford 1993). Student teachers would be a good avenue through which gender concerns can be enhanced once they go to the field to practice. UNICEF (2008) suggests inclusion as a key approach in dealing with gender concerns. While African Union (2003) seeks to integrate gender sensitization and human rights education at all levels of education curricula including teacher training. It would be a cost effective way of engendering the curriculum and integrating gender in development because through completion of the education cycle at any level, students will be well aware of gender issues which are vital for all aspects of development including decision making, participation by gender, environmental management, youth and development and recognition of human rights.

To address the teacher gap (UNICEF, 2008) recommends that governments should adopt a gendered approach to the teaching profession in the following ways:

- Increasing the number of trained women teachers and emphasizing nurturing and caring components of teaching to retain boys and girls in school
- Instituting more gendered approaches to budgeting in order to enhance development of the teaching force, including targeting female recruitment, training, deployment and retention
• Implementing more coherent national and regional visions and policies to ensure greater equality in the teaching force and support institutions responsible for quality assurance, teacher education and professional development (UNICEF, 2008:23).

**Challenges Facing Implementation of Gender Policies in Institutions of Higher Learning**

1. Lack of political will
2. Lack of sex disaggregated data
3. Scarce human and financial resources for capacity building and to support gender and affirmative action
4. Inadequate policy-making tradition which is able to provide adequate level of specialization and to make the process continuously accessible
5. Lack of a critical mass of gender experts to give the process sustenance

**Recommendations**

1. Developing prerequisites by carrying out gender impact assessment and launching pilot projects before implementation.
2. Develop a conceptual framework to guide mainstreaming, this can be done through engaging in discourse with feminists, policy makers and academic experts.
3. Specific tasks should be included in the gender policy, for example, support for victims of gender based violence or discrimination, awareness raising campaigns, training and education programs, inclusion of gender in curricula, focus on gender in disciplines, introduction of gender sensitive elements in the education curricula,
assessment of the implementation of gender specific regulations, support gender related policy research, carrying out situational analysis of gender related concerns, review available statistical data and publications

4. Form a standing committee on gender mainstreaming headed by people who have sound knowledge of gender

5. Teacher training institutions should engender the curriculum and introduce core gender course in the curriculum of student teachers

6. Academic staff should be trained on gender and gender analysis; gender training workshops should be organized

7. There should be plans and projections for gender mainstreaming in teacher education

8. Research should be carried out to find out if respective universities have gender mainstreaming divisions and if they carry out their functions.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that gender policies are vital for institutions of higher learning and that they should be implemented in initial teacher training because they steer gender issues and ensure development of gender responsive policies and procedures. The resultant policies and procedures will enable inclusion of gender in the curriculum which should raise gender awareness of students while student teachers and teachers will enhance gender concerns in teaching. This would be a cost effective way of engendering the curriculum and integrating gender and development.

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