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WOMEN IN LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

Background

Education plays a major role in the growth and progress of society. It is one of the key components that can make or break a culture's advancement. In particular, women's education is very important for the country to fully develop. An educated woman has the skills, information, and self-confidence that she needs to be a better parent, worker, and citizen. An educated woman will also be more productive at work and better paid. Indeed, the dividend for educational investment is often higher for women than men.

In reference to their role in the education sector, women bring to the exercise of leadership an arsenal of strengths, which increasingly are consistent with the current reform efforts in education leadership, governance, and instructional improvement. These qualities combine to create a leadership style that is inclusive, open, consensus building, innovative, collaborative, collegial and meticulous. Therefore, their equal representation in school administration will offer them opportunities of developing and utilizing their skills and talents they possess.

By 2030, SDG Goal 4 envisions inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all and has seven targets and three means of implementation which are: -

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes
- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education so that they are ready for primary education
- By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

- By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
- Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
- By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries
- By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states

Status of women's leadership in the Education Sector: Statistics at a glance

Integrating women fully into educational leadership positions remains one of the major challenges facing many countries, including Kenya. Yet, growing literature documents that female educational administrators tend to be more consistently present in the school, and keep more abreast of instructional programs than men. Their leadership styles are more transformational, participative, and inclusive than the leadership styles of their male counterparts.

In Kenya, women's literacy level is 80.2 percent and for men it is at 89 percent. The most recent policy framework in education recognises the need for reforming the education sector to ensure that the results of education are in line with the obligations created by the Constitution. We look at the general data on enrolment to try and explain women's participation in education, and factors that may be impacting the same.

Women who have secondary and post-secondary education, have been found to also enjoy better human development outcomes in health, nutrition and their children also reported better human development outcomes. As such, access to education is a fundamental right for women that benefits the broader society (UNWomen, 2009).

The table below presents enrolment data in the various levels of education (2018)

| Level of Education | Enrolment Girls | Enrolment Boys | % of Girls | NER | GER |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Pre- Primary | 1,660,308 | 1,730,237 | 49.0 | 77.2 | 78.4 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|------|------|------|
| Primary | 5,178,300 | 5,364,300 | 49.1 | 92.4 | 104 |
| Secondary | 1,437,400 | 1,505,300 | 48.8 | 53.2 | 70.3 |
| TVET | 158,742 | 205,142 | 43.6 | | |
| University | 210,543 | 302,639 | 41.0 | | |
| Adult Education | 146,799 | 65,642 | 69.1 | | |

Source: Economic Survey, 2019

Other indicators, 2018

| Indicator | Female | Male | Total |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Pupil Primary Completion rate | Data not accessed | Data not accessed | 84.2 |
| Primary to Secondary Transition | 82.9 | 83.3 | 83.1 |
| Scored Above C+ | 37,323 | 53,627 | 90,950 |
| % who scored above C+ | 11.7 | 16.0 | 13.9 |
| Secondary Completion rate | 80.9 | 82.2 | 81.6 |
| Literacy Rate ¹ | 78.2 | 85 | 81.5 |

Source: KNBS,

From the data above, girls are performing almost at par with boys in most of the indicators. Kenya seems to have achieved close to gender parity in enrolment especially in primary school. This could be attributed to the implementation of free primary education, which reduced the cost of accessing education, therefore sparing girls the discrimination they faced when families had to make a decision on whether to educate boys or girls with their meagre resources.

There are however some indicators that pose some concern looking at the net enrolment ratio (NER) for pre-primary, it is at 77.2 percent. This means that 22.8 percent of children who are of pre-primary age are not enrolled in school. This has several implications. First, when children miss the critical milestones taught in early childhood development, it impacts their learning even in the latter years. The second implication is that children are staying longer at home, which would mean that mothers are not able to engage in economic activity outside the home effectively, and thus impacting on their income earning potential.

The most alarming indicator however is the NER for secondary school, which is at 53.2 percent. It implies that 46.8 percent of children of secondary school age are not in school. This would

¹ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/ke>

suggest that many children are falling through the cracks. Evidence from cross sectional studies has shown that girls are more vulnerable as they progress in education, with many factors hindering their progress including the onset of their menstruation, teenage pregnancy, competition with their brothers for school fees, needing to supplement family income through work, household chores, early marriage amongst many other factors (Kiriti and Tisdell, 2003).

Interesting Statistics

Going by the 2020 KCSE results, gender parity was nearly realized as Out of the over 747,161 students who sat the exam, 366,834 of them were girls and 380, 327 boys. However, a few select counties namely, Mandera, Wajir, Turkana, Garissa, and Homa Bay had more boys than girls sitting for the 2020 KCSE.

A recent report on de facto heads of 48 sampled Kenyan Universities highlighted that only nine have women as vice chancellors. These are, Jomo Kenyatta University, Technical University of Mombasa, University of Eldoret, Kirinyaga University, Machakos University, United States International University, Pan Africa Christian University, Great Lakes University of Kisumu, and KAG – EAST University.

Although the share of women (47 percent) in wage employment in the education sector is almost the same as that of men (53 percent), they are under-represented in the top ranks of university leadership.

Nine out of 73 public and private universities and university constituent colleges vice chancellors and principals are women.

About 287 female academic university staff were professors or associate professors compared to 1,313 males in 2018. At the same time one in three universities academic staff with a PhD in Kenya is a woman.

Conclusion

Although more women are now advancing to leadership positions in academia, gender imbalance is still a national issue because the progress towards equity has been very slow and uneven reaffirming the sentiments and arguments that women have historically been excluded from leadership and managerial roles at universities/TVETs and other learning institutions across the country. Cultural norms and the persistent nature of gender inequalities within institutions exacerbate the problem of under-representation. This therefore calls for urgent attention to address the menace. There is need for the government and other relevant actors to incorporate both genders in formulating policies that specifically address critical issues of equal participation of both men and women in the decision making processes.