

Knowledge and Technological Innovation for Global Competitiveness: Gender Mainstreaming and Technological Innovation for County Governments

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Abstract

Devolution is a problem Kenya as a country is slowly and effectively embracing, gender mainstreaming is one of the many aspects and a major problem in the devolved government that most counties and country at large has not effectively exploited. Therefore gender mainstreaming in tandem with knowledge, science and technological innovation needs to be a prerequisites for most counties in order to achieve competitive advantage at local and global levels. This paper opens a discussion on what it mean to lead gender equality mainstreaming in the context of significant changes in equality legislation, knowledge, and technological innovation and in the governance of the public services at county and national levels. This paper is purely theoretical, with an attempt to analyse various written works that will impact positively to the community since it contributes to a growing stream of feminist and critical leadership research that is concerned with the gendered, relational and interpretive practices of leading towards achieving global competitiveness. It also contributes to research into forms of leadership in relation to gender mainstreaming that are emerging in the context of changes in the public services in Kenya and more widely in the African Nations. This paper significantly marks an important milestone in establishing how far gender mainstreaming in knowledge, science and technological innovation can lead to global competitiveness and significantly embrace women equality, knowledge and expertise in the devolved government. It focuses on the concepts of gender mainstreaming, its dimensions and implications for effective leadership and development at county governments and for achieving competitive advantage at local and global level.

Keywords: *Devolution, Counties, Gender, Mainstreaming, Technology*

Introduction

Background of the paper

Mainstreaming is not about adding a "woman's component" or even a "gender equality component" into an existing activity. It entails bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear on the development agenda for effective leadership and increase local visa vie global competitiveness. The main focus is on utilizing individual and collective strengths to work towards common goals without coercion or domination (United Nations Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC], 1997).

Gender mainstreaming addresses gender inequality in a cross-cutting way, so that there is attention to gender perspectives as an integral part of all activities and programs. It goes far beyond simply having a women's project or component in programs, but as a solution to global gender inequality and poverty and also change institutional cultures, budgeting and resource allocation at the county and national level.

In Kenya, science and technology have been wrongly perceived as a preserve for men and exclusion of women and this no doubt has had a corresponding effect on the development and benefit of women from the process. According to the report of National Council for Science and Technology and UNESCO (December, 2010), fewer high school students have been pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Moreover from institution of higher learning to actual employment opportunity, women have played a second fiddle in matters of science and technology. A good number of women believe that science and technology is not their area and have concentrated on Art based courses and programs. If nothing is done, Kenya will be looking at a critical technology workforce shortage by 2030, yet we have to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) at the same period.

Important concepts underlying gender mainstreaming

Gender. The concept of gender needs to be understood clearly as a cross-cutting socio-cultural variable. It is an overarching variable in the sense that gender can also be applied to all other cross-cutting variables such as race, class, age, ethnic group, and many more. Gender systems are established in different socio-cultural contexts which determine what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman/man and girl/boy in these specific contexts. Gender roles are learned through socialization processes; they are not fixed but are changeable. Gender systems are institutionalized through education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, and culture and traditions. In utilizing a gender approach, the focus is

not on individual women and men but on the system which determines gender roles / responsibilities, access to and control over resources and decision-making potentials (David & Foray, 2003)

It is also important to emphasize that gender refers to both women and men, and the relations between them. Promotion of gender equality should concern and engage men as well as women. In recent years there has been a much stronger direct focus on women in research on gender perspectives (UNESCO, December, 2010)

Mainstreaming. Mainstreaming includes gender-specific activities and affirmative action. Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit equally from development efforts. These are necessary temporary measures designed to combat the direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination.

Gender equality. Gender Equality refers to the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals. It does not depend on whether they are born male or female. Equality does not mean “the same as” – promotion of gender equality does not mean that women and men will become the same. Equality between women and men has both a quantitative and a qualitative aspect.

- The quantitative aspect refers to the desire to achieve equitable representation of women – increasing balance and parity,
- While the qualitative aspect refers to achieving equitable influence on establishing development priorities and outcomes for women and men. Equality involves ensuring that the perceptions, interests, needs and priorities of women and men (which can be very different because of the differing roles and responsibilities of women and men) will be given equal weight in planning and decision-making.

Gender mainstreaming. According to Council of Europe (1995), 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 players normally involved in policy-making. It is the public policy concept of assessing the different implications for women and men of any planned policy action, including legislation and programs, in all areas and levels. Mainstreaming essentially offers a pluralistic approach that values the diversity among both women and men.

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (1997),

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

Gender Mainstreaming and Technology Today

The Developed countries have seen tremendous changes in the field of technological innovations from women and men. However, this concept has not effectively been felt in the developing countries. Kenya is effectively trying to address this issue through the constitution promulgated the year 2010. This became apparent and a necessity after the realization that women were left behind in many areas. The ideal situation was to implement legislation on affirmative action that could see 1/3 of women represented in various sectors of the economy.

But the question that lingers in many people's mind is how far are women and men through gender mainstreaming able to transcend in areas of science technology and innovation. This has clearly been reflected by the National Council for Science and Technology (2008). It adds value to this paper to recognizing the best women who have achieved in STEM in the past and recent years: their efforts were necessitated through assistance from men (NCST, 2008).

There are typical examples of various inventions by both men and women in the world. These inventions in various areas are a clear reflection that through gender mainstreaming in the devolved government, ideas can be generated and implemented, since equality is taking root in the Kenyan system. For instance, after the 2012 general election it became clear that there is an increase in women elected and nominated to various seats. Therefore they have a mandate to instill to the society in general and women in specific the principal “You can make it”.

Ethiopia; Technological Innovation



Figure 4. Illustration of Ethiopian women

Ethiopian women are increasing their footprint across the country, in business and especially in technological innovation. In April, a new initiative was launched by leading African telecom operator MTN that aimed to boost women's participation in the technology sphere of the country and region.

They teamed up with Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia and presented awards to female innovators and entrepreneurs. It was part of an overall effort in the country to increase women's participation and empowerment in non-traditional areas. This idea has been well received by young Ethiopian female university students who are excited about the increasing opportunities available to women in the country.

Kenya

The attempt by Kenya government to mainstream gender can be traced to the year 2000, when the ministry of gender and sports developed the national gender and development policies. Subsequent developments have made government come up with various initiatives. Although the initiatives are too little beyond everyone's reach policy provides a frame work for advancement of women and approach for effective resource distribution for both men and women. The policy makes reference to education and training and it recognizes that in terms of technical training women lag behind than men hence an important aspect to be observed.

Ministry of Education: Gender Policy in Education. In 2007, the ministry of education developed a national Gender Policy in Education to address issues affecting and relating to gender and education. The policy provides a framework for planning and implementation of gender responsive education. It recognizes that in national examinations, KCPE and KCSE, boys outperform girls. Boys are better in science subjects and even the enrolment level of boys in schools is higher than for girls.

Kenya Vision 2030: A Competitive and Prosperous Nation, 2007. This is a development blue print that provides concrete, numerical benchmarks for tackling extreme poverty in its many dimensions. The bench mark is categorized into three pillars; social, economic and political pillars. Social pillar is more relevance to science and technology and is covered in chapter eight. It advocates for the exploitation of science and technology to improve social welfare and promote democratic governance (Kenya vision, 2030)

The jubilee manifesto; youth and women policy, 2012. The manifesto is anchored on three pillars: unity, economy and openness and it highlights various strategies, programs and policies they intent to roll. Key issues include agriculture, infrastructure, health and education sectors. Among these issues, women and youth entrepreneur in development (WID) initiatives has fully been included in the manifesto. It aims to connect women and the youth to boost them in entrepreneur with financial support to fund their projects (Jubilee Manifesto, 2012).

Constant loaning and financing of women activities endeavors to empower their initiatives and improve the economy through local knowledge at the grass root levels. Also the manifesto aims to empower Kenyan women to take their rightful place in developing this country. This is clearly indicated through the implementation of the constitution: women representation implemented.

South Africa

Speed gun. The South African-made speed gun, developed by Somerset West inventor Henri Johnson, was formally launched at the Oval in England during the 1999 Cricket World Cup. In 1992 Johnson invented the Speedball which was manufactured by South African firm Electronic Development House. The device accurately measures the speed and angles of speeding objects such as cricket and tennis balls. Generally referred to as a "speed gun", Johnson's gizmo is sold in cricketing countries and in the US and Europe.