



Enhancing Gender Mainstreaming in Teacher Training Curriculum in Kenya

Background

Integrating gender mainstreaming within the teacher training curriculum is critical for fostering Kenya's inclusive and equitable education system. The Ministry of Education's Training Sector Gender Policy 2015 policy aims to address gender disparities in the education sector by equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to promote gender equality in classrooms.

However, how does the teacher training curriculum prepare teacher trainees to respond to gender mainstreaming in teaching and learning?

The African Population and Health Research Centre, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Kenya, undertook a study titled *Gender Mainstreaming Practices in Basic Education and Teacher Training in Kenya*. The study was conducted in Kenya and aimed to provide evidence to inform the review of the 2015 Education and Training Sector Gender Policy. It sought to examine how gender mainstreaming strategies are integrated within teacher training and practiced in classrooms and to assess the policies, practices,

and guidelines supporting gender mainstreaming in educational institutions.

The findings revealed that teacher trainees had a relatively good understanding of gender-equitable teaching and learning practices from an equity perspective. Most trainees agreed that encouraging equal participation, extending positive reinforcement to girls and boys, and maintaining eye contact while allowing both male and female students to speak without interruption are all important.

A review of the curriculum indicated that gender mainstreaming was not built into the teacher training curriculum and, thus, was not taught as a topic of a stand-alone unit. The general knowledge and understanding demonstrated by the teacher trainees were mainly acquired from general courses, such as child development and psychology, inclusive education, and other private training.



Key Findings

Understanding of Gender-Equitable Practices:

- Teacher trainees in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) exhibited a basic understanding of gender-equitable teaching and learning practices.
- However, there were gaps in their knowledge, particularly regarding specific gender-responsive teaching methods.

Curriculum Content:

- The TTC curriculum for diploma programs in primary and secondary teacher education lacked comprehensive content on gender mainstreaming.
- In contrast, the early childhood teacher education diploma included some aspects of gender mainstreaming.

Assessment Misalignment:

- There was a misalignment between the assessment and teaching of gender mainstreaming. While gender-inclusive teaching was assessed during the teaching practicum, it was not explicitly taught to teacher trainees.

Teacher Trainers' Practices:

- Teacher trainers practiced gender equity in their teaching within TTC classrooms, promoting a gender-responsive environment.

Perceptions of Teacher Trainees:

- Teacher trainees' perceptions of gender-responsive practices varied, with a general agreement on the importance of gender-responsive language and communication.
- There was a high level of agreement (90%) on practices such as allowing adequate wait time before calling on learners, avoiding gendered pronouns, maintaining eye contact with all students, and encouraging both male and female learners to participate without interruption.

Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations outlined here aim to revolutionize the Teacher Training College (TTC) curriculum by integrating comprehensive gender mainstreaming content across all educational levels.

Revise and Enrich the TTC Curriculum

- **Integrate Comprehensive Gender Mainstreaming Content:** Ensure that all teacher training programs—whether focused on primary, secondary, or early childhood education—include robust and detailed content on gender mainstreaming.
- **Explicitly Teach Gender-Responsive Methods:** Incorporate specific gender-responsive teaching methods, making them an essential part of the curriculum, and provide opportunities for trainees to practice and refine these methods.

Align Assessment with Teaching Practices

- **Synchronize Assessment with Curriculum:** Design assessments that reflect the gender-responsive content taught within the curriculum, ensuring teacher trainees understand these criteria and are prepared to demonstrate these practices.
- **Raise Awareness of Assessment Criteria:** To foster alignment between teaching and assessment, inform trainees about the expectations and specific components related to gender-inclusive teaching that will be evaluated during practicums.

Strengthen Teacher Trainers' Capacity for Gender Equity

- **Provide Continuous Professional Development:** Offer specialized training for teacher trainers to deepen their expertise in gender-equitable teaching practices, equipping them with advanced strategies to model and encourage these practices in the classroom.
- **Encourage Reflective Practices:** Support teacher trainers in engaging in reflective practices on gender mainstreaming, helping them to continuously improve their teaching approaches and serve as role models for trainees.

Foster Gender-Responsive Classroom Practices

- **Promote Inclusive Language and Communication:** Encourage teacher trainees to use gender-responsive language, such as avoiding gendered pronouns and maintaining eye contact with all students. Reinforce practices that allow equal participation from male and female learners.
- **Engage All Learners Equitably:** Establish a classroom environment where both male and female learners feel equally supported by promoting practices such as providing adequate wait time before calling on learners and encouraging respectful and inclusive dialogue.

Monitor and Evaluate the Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming

- **Develop Mechanisms for Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement structured processes to track the integration of gender mainstreaming in teacher training programs, evaluating both curriculum effectiveness and teaching practices.
- **Use Feedback for Continuous Improvement:** Regularly gather feedback from teacher trainees and trainers to identify areas for curriculum enhancement and to improve teaching practices, ensuring that gender mainstreaming remains an evolving and responsive component of teacher education.



Conclusion

Strengthening the integration of gender mainstreaming in the teacher training curriculum is essential for achieving gender equity in Kenya's education system. By addressing the identified gaps and aligning assessment with teaching, the Ministry of Education can ensure that future teachers are well-equipped to promote gender equality in their classrooms, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and equitable education sector.



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