

Transitional Enrolment Trends within the Different Educational Levels in Kenya: An Analysis of Promoting Facets

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Abstract

Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have for decades grappled with bridging the gap in enrolment numbers between male and female students. Education for All (EFA) goals have provided guidance to these countries on attainment of gender equality in education. EFA goal number 5 articulates the international commitments aimed at achieving global gender equality in education by 2015. This is to be arrived at by increasing the enrolment of female learners at different levels of education. The Ministry of Education in Kenya developed policies and strategies to enable an increase in female students enrolling in school. With these policies and strategies, Kenya has realised tremendous successes in terms of enrolment numbers. However the country still faces challenges in some geographic areas. In as much as there is an increase in the number of girls participating in primary and secondary school levels, Kenya is yet to attain gender equality in education. The number of boys in these levels of education still surpass that of girls by a concerning proportion. Interestingly these trends change in post secondary education levels. Universities have recorded an amplified enrolment of female. This paper documents trends in enrolment numbers by gender in primary, secondary and post-secondary levels of education in Kenya. Further, the paper interrogates the facets that promote the shifts in the enrolment trends.

Keywords: Enrolment trends; Gender inequality in education; Education in Kenya; Gender and Education; Gender differences in Education.

1. Introduction

The history of education in Kenya is traced back to the expansion of the railway from Mombasa to Uganda. The construction of the railway began in Mombasa in 1896 and reached Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria in 1901. The expansion of the railway encouraged missionaries to establish schools. The construction of the railway plays a major role in the growth of education in Kenya. When Kenya gained her independence in 1963, there was a shift in the organization and structure of education. Kenya adopted the 7-4-2-3 system which included seven years of primary education, four years of lower secondary schooling, two years of upper secondary level and three years of university education between 1964 and 1985. In 1985, the 8-4-4 system was launched which meant that students had undergone eight years of primary schooling, four years in secondary level and four years of university. Kenya is currently utilising the 8-4-4 system of education (Kileva Foundation, 2011 & Wanjohi, 2011).

Discussions on gender parity and diversity continue to unfold in the field of education especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. The debate on gender equity in education presently revolves around the Education for All (EFA) targets and the Millennium Declaration Goals (MDGs). Despite adopting the EFA and the education targets of the MDGs gender inequalities in education continue to persist in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2008 primary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa had yet to achieve gender parity with female students still being a minority in the enrolment. (FAWE, 2009). The Economist (2013) indicates that progress has been made in primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa while the gender gap is widening in the higher levels of education.

Oxfam (2005) indicates that Sub-Saharan Africa has some huge problems to resolve if it is to achieve gender equality in education as well as realise MDGs related to education and gender. However, the region has some of the most innovative and enterprising initiatives that promote gender equality in education. With these dynamic examples of what works neither boys nor girls are doing well in Sub-Saharan countries. Oxfam estimates that with the current rate of progress, gender parity will not be realised in Sub-Saharan Africa until 2038. Not all is gloom in the march towards gender parity in Sub-Saharan Africa. With the innovative initiatives in place, there are countries that have registered tremendous outcomes. UNESCO (2004) lists Kenya among countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that had achieved gender parity in primary education.

Kenya has put in place efforts that with the aim of bridging the gender education gap. Some of these efforts have realised tremendous achievement in increasing student enrolment especially in primary schooling. In some areas of the country very little progress has been witnessed in primary and secondary levels of education. Some regions have recorded a tremendous increase in the numbers of girls enrolling into school, especially primary schools. There are also records indicating a decrease in the numbers of boys enrolling into primary school, an indication that the boy child might be slowly getting into trouble. However, the girls' gross enrolment rates are lower than that of the boys across the regions. This is replicated in secondary school and higher education levels. This paper documents the enrolment data by gender across primary, secondary and university levels of education. It also examines the trends in the gender enrolment in the three levels of education. The paper will further afford arguments on the facets that promote the trends.

2. Gender Enrolment Trends in Primary School Education

Primary school is the first phase of the 8-4-4 system of education. A major goal of primary school education is to develop self-expression, self-discipline and self-reliance while at the same time providing a rounded education experience. There are 8 class years required to successfully complete primary education. This culminates in a national examination, Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), which is used to determine placement into secondary school level (Chalkboard Kenya 2012). Since independence, enrolment patterns in primary education in Kenya have alternated between periods of stability and periods of sudden change. Kenya has experienced two enrolment shocks in its education history. A first enrolment shock occurred between 1984 and 1985 and a second between 1989 and 1993 where enrolment rates fell (Bedi, Kimalu, Manda and Nafula, 2002). Figure 1 provides the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in primary school level between 1990 and 2003. The sharp drop in the numbers experienced between 1991 and 2000 is attributed to the two enrolment shocks explained earlier. According to the statistics, girls have continuously recorded lower numbers than their counterparts.

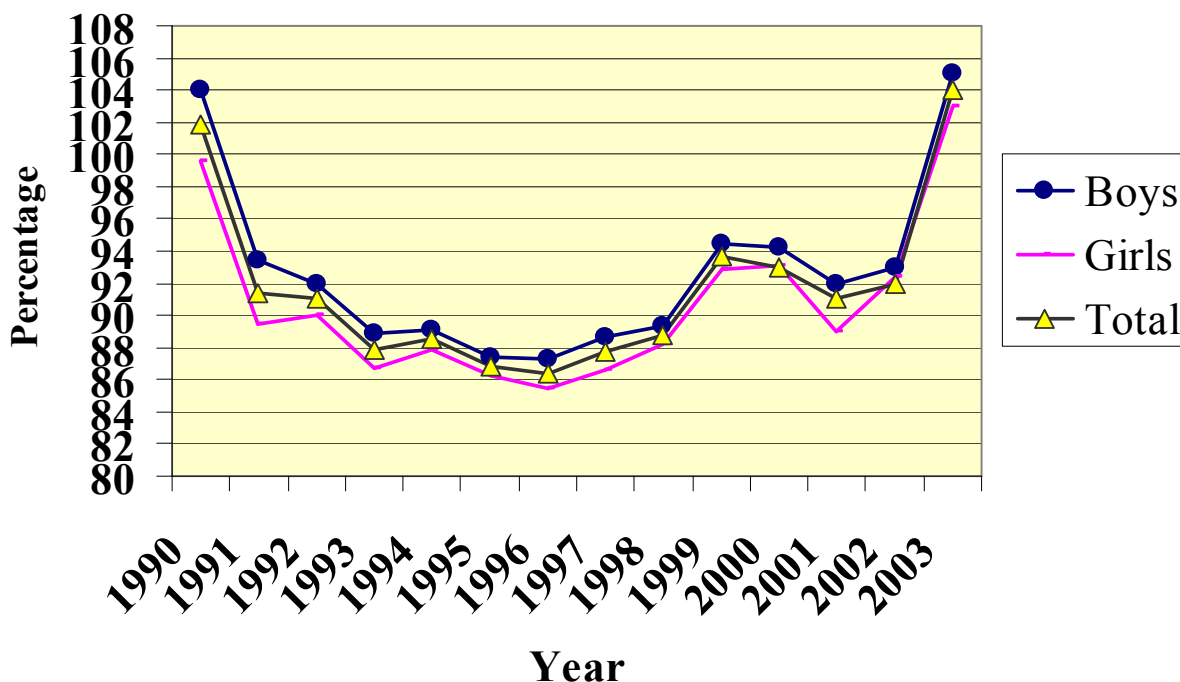


Figure 1: Primary Schools Gross Enrolment Ratio, 1990-2003 from Saitoti (2004). Education in Kenya: Challenges and Policy Responses. Paper Prepared for Presentation at the Council on Foreign Relations Washington DC.

The enrolment trend changed during the 2000s especially after 2003 due to the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE). The implementation of the FPE programme resulted in an increase in enrolment by 20% from 6.0 million in 2002 to 7.2 million in 2003. Since 2003, the enrolment has further increased to 8.6 million as of 2008, an increase of 23.3%. With the introduction of FPE, Kenya provided an opportunity for all children to access basic education. This placed Kenya on track in achieving the MDG goal of universal primary education. Data indicates that the enrolment has consistently increased yearly. By 2010 enrolment had reached 9.0 million. In 2009, the female enrolment numbers surpassed that of the males. Despite progress made in education Kenya, UNESCO (2012) indicates that millions are still denied a chance to go to school.

Kenya has made a steady progress towards meeting the MDGs and EFA goals. Kenya has shown commitment in funding primary education as well as supporting education for the girl child. The progress in education is not reaching the marginalised. The poor, and girls most of all, have far less chance of making it to school (UNESCO, 2012). Kenya has however recorded a tremendous increase in the number of girls who access primary education. Table 1 shows the GER, NER and GPI in primary school level in the period between 2009 and 2012.

Table 1 GER, NER and GPI in Primary School Level

Enrolment Type	Gender	2009	2010	2011	2012
Gross Enrolment Rates	Male	112.8	109.8	115.0	115.4
	Female	107.2	109.9	115.1	115.9
	Both	110.0	109.8	115.0	115.8
Net Enrolment Rates	Male	93.6	90.6	94.9	95.0
	Female	92.1	92.3	96.6	95.7
	Both	92.9	91.4	95.7	95.3
Gender Parity Index		0.98	0.96	0.96	0.97

Source: KIPPRA. (2013). Kenya Economic Report. Nairobi: KIPPRA

The GER increased from 108.9 % (118% and 106% for boys and girls, respectively) in 2007 to 110.0 % (112.8% and 107.2% for boys and girls, respectively) in 2009 and dropped slightly to 109.8 % (109.8% and 109.9% for boys and girls, respectively) in 2010. The NER increased from 91.6 % (94% and 89.0% for boys and girls, respectively) in 2009 and then dropped marginally to 91.4 % (90.6% and 92.3% for boys and girls, respectively) in 2010 (KIPPRA, 2013). These rates show the remarkable progress Kenya has made. This progress is attributed to a variety of strategies, programmes, projects and policies by the government with the help of development partners. The Economic Survey further points out that the country still faces regional disparities with low enrolments despite this impressive performance. Table 2 indicates primary school NER by County in 2009.

Table 2 Primary School NER by County

Rank	County	Male NER	Female NER	Total NER	Rank	County	Male NER	Female NER	Total NER
1	Murang'a	93.2	93.7	93.4	25	Trans Nzoia	81.8	84.3	83.1
2	Nyeri	92.1	93.1	92.6	26	Homa Bay	82.2	83.7	82.9
3	Kirinyaga	91.3	92.4	91.8	27	Nandi	80.9	84.7	82.8
4	Embu	60.4	92.1	91.3	28	Kakamega	81.1	83.9	82.5
5	Kiambu	90.4	91.2	90.8	29	Migori	81.7	83.3	82.5
6	Nyandarua	89.7	91.2	90.4	30	Busia	81.0	83.3	82.2
7	Machakos	89.4	90.7	90.1	31	Mombasa	80.6	81.6	81.1
8	Makueni	88.7	90.4	86.6	32	Laikipia	80.6	80.9	80.8
9	Bomet	87.9	89.6	88.7	33	Lamu	74.4	75.1	74.7
10	TharakaNithi	87.3	89.1	88.2	34	Kajiado	73.2	73.0	73.1
11	Kericho	87.4	89.0	88.2	35	Narok	69.5	69.7	69.6
12	Nyamira	87.6	88.7	88.1	36	Kwale	69.1	69.9	69.5
13	Vihiga	86.1	88.9	87.5	37	Kilifi	67.9	69.0	68.5
14	ElgeyoMarakwet	86.3	88.3	87.3	38	Baringo	67.2	69.8	68.5
15	Nairobi	86.6	87.2	86.9	39	Isiolo	63.2	63.7	63.5
16	Kisii	85.9	87.4	86.7	40	Tana River	53.8	51.5	52.7
17	TaitaTaveta	85.6	87.3	86.5	41	West Pokot	50.2	52.1	51.1
18	Nakuru	85.1	86.8	85.9	42	Marsabit	49.0	47.7	48.4
19	UasinGishu	84.0	86.2	85.1	43	Mandera	42.9	40.6	41.9
20	Meru	84.1	85.9	85.0	44	Samburu	43.1	39.5	41.3
21	Siaya	84.0	85.7	84.9	45	Wajir	35.9	32.9	34.6
22	Bungoma	83.2	85.7	84.5	46	Garissa	35.0	32.9	34.1
23	Kisumu	83.2	84.8	84.0	47	Turkana	24.7	24.6	24.6
24	Kitui	82.3	84.9	83.6	48	National	90.6	92.3	91.4

Source: KIPPRA. (2013). Kenya Economic Report. Nairobi: KIPPRA

Kenya appears to have not yet achieved gender balance in enrolments in certain areas of the country. There is gender and regional disparities in access and participation in primary school education. According to data by KIPPRA (2013) Garissa and Turkana have especially low NERs of 34 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, against a national average of 91.4 per cent in 2010 and 95.7 per cent in 2012. The primary school NER for boys is higher than that of girls in most counties, except in some counties in Central and Eastern

regions. North Eastern, and to a lesser extent the Coast, present the highest gender differences in favour of boys in enrolments. Counties in Central and Eastern record very high NERs for both boys and girls. The NER for girls has surpassed that of the boys in some of these counties which include Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Embu, Kiambu, Nyandarua, Machakos and Makueni.

3. Gender Enrolment Trends in Secondary Education Level

The importance of secondary education in Kenya has grown considerably with the success of FPE. With the increase in enrolment in primary school level has led to the demand for secondary education. Secondary school is the second phase of the 8-4-4 system of education and runs for 4 years. The current secondary education programme is geared towards meeting the needs of both the students that terminate their education after secondary school and those that proceed for higher education. Expansion of secondary education in Kenya has resulted from government, development partner, and private providers support for basic education over the past decade. At independence, Kenya had only 151 secondary schools, with a total enrolment of 30,120 students. A review of secondary education development in Kenya indicates that the number of secondary schools have increased over the years. For instance, the number of schools increased from 2,678 in 1990 to 3,999 (11.3% private) enrolling 0.870 million students in 2003 and 4,215 (13% private) schools enrolling 1.03 million students (10% in private schools) in 2006 and 1.7 Million in 2010 (8% private). The number of secondary schools has increased from a total of 6,566 secondary schools in 2008 to 7,308 in 2010 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

Statistics on secondary school enrolment rate indicate some growth. Student enrolment increased from 851,836 in 2002 to 1.18 in 2007, an increase of 38.6%. Enrolment grew from 1.18 million students in 2007 (639,393 boys and 540,874 girls) to 1,328,964 (735,680 boys and 593,284 girls) students in 2008 and further to 1,701,501 (914,971 boys and 786,530 girls) students in 2010. This increase was as a result of the Kenyan Government introducing Free Secondary Education (FSE) tuition which saw a 15.0% growth. The GER for secondary increased from 27.3% (28.8% for boys and 25.7% for girls) in 1999 to 47.8 % (50.9 for boys and 46.3 for girls) in 2010. The NER recorded an increase from 28.9 % (29.8% for male and 27.9 % for female) in 2008 to 35.8 % (36.5% for boys and 35.1% for girls) in 2010 having progressively improved from 13.7% (13.5 for male and 13.9 for female) in 1999. Over the same period, Gross Enrolment rate (GER) rose marginally from 26.8% in 1990 to 32% in 2010. The gender disparity index as at 2009 stood at 0.96% up from 0.75 in 1990 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Table 3 displays the secondary enrolment in the period between 2008 and 2011.

Table 3 Enrolment in Secondary School

YEAR	BOY	GIRL	TOTAL
2008	720,500	615,400	1,335,900
2009	787,900	684,700	1,472,600
2010	885,500	767,800	1,653,300
2011	948,700	819,000	1,767,700

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2012). *Kenya Facts and Figures*. Nairobi: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

While secondary school enrolment has grown over the years, it is not as impressive as the growth in primary school level. While tremendous increases have been witnessed in primary school access, secondary school access remains low. The gender gap increases in the post primary levels of education. This disparity is witnessed in the secondary school enrolment in Kenya. Figure 2 summarises the secondary school GER between 1999 and 2008. The statistics indicate that the GER has been below 50% in the period. This indicates that Kenya is not close in achieving gender equity in secondary schools. The GER in 1999 was 27.3%. The GER decreased to 25.5% in 2000 and then saw slight increase from 2001. 2008 saw a notable increase to 42.5% from 38.0% in 2007. This increase is attributed to the introduction of FSE tuition.

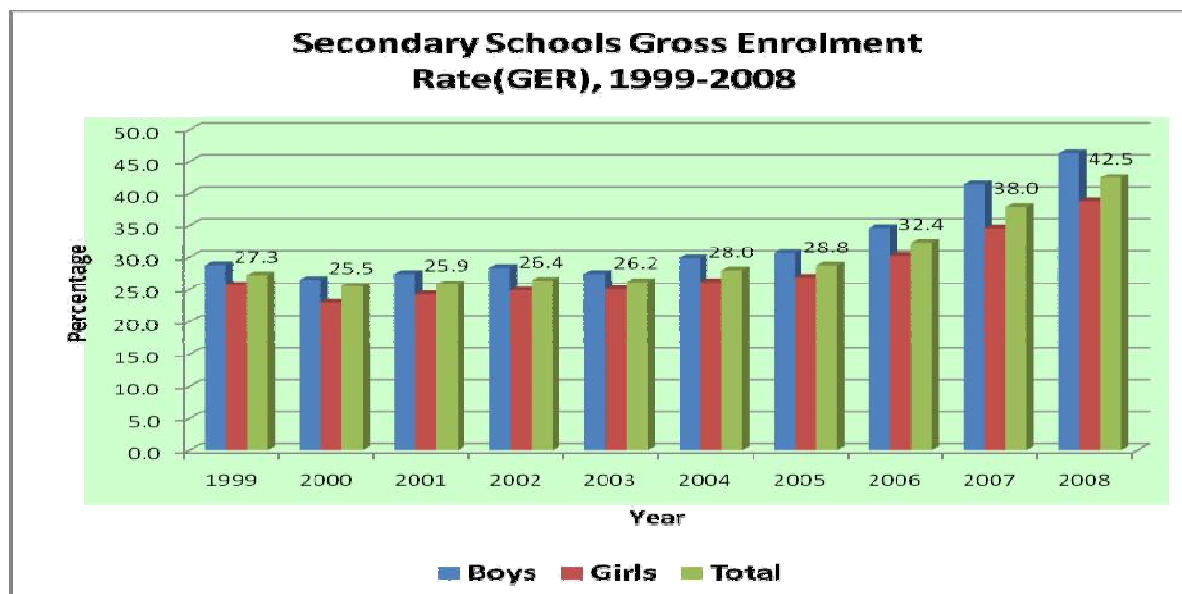


Figure 2: Secondary Schools GER between 1999 and 2008 from Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2009). Kenya Facts and Figures. Nairobi: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

Similar to primary school level there is regional differences in secondary school enrolment as well. Table 4 gives data on the NER by counties and gender. Counties in Central and North Eastern regions had the highest and lowest NERs, respectively. A low NER of 3.5% for secondary education was recorded in Turkana County and a high of 50% in Kiambu County against the national average of 24.2%. Nairobi ranks second with 48%. Nyamira (40.5%) and Kisii (35.2%) counties joined the central Kenya counties in the top ten ranking. In most of the counties the NER for female students exceeded that of the male students. For instance, in the leading county the female NER was 52.4% compared to the 47.5% for the male.

Table 4 Secondary Education NER by Counties and Gender in 2009

Rank	County	Male NER	Female NER	Total NER	Rank	County	Male NER	Female NER	Total NER
1	Kiambu	47.5	52.4	50.0	25	Trans Nzoia	18.7	21.9	20.3
2	Nairobi	49.0	47.2	48.0	26	Bomet	17.9	22.1	20.0
3	Nyeri	42.5	50.3	46.3	27	Siaya	19.1	20.5	19.8
4	Nyamira	37.9	43.2	40.5	28	Elgeyo Marakwet	17.4	22.2	19.8
5	Murang'a	36.0	42.1	39.0	29	Kakamega	17.5	21.0	19.3
6	Kirinyaga	34.0	42.1	38.0	30	Migori	19.7	18.8	19.2
7	Kisii	34.4	36.0	35.2	31	Nandi	16.2	21.7	18.9
8	Nyandarua	31.2	39.4	35.2	32	Baringo	16.2	21.0	18.5
9	Embu	28.3	37.0	32.6	33	Bungoma	15.8	19.5	17.7
10	Laikipia	30.1	35.1	32.5	34	Kitui	15.0	19.0	17.0
11	Mombasa	33.6	31.5	32.5	35	Isiolo	16.6	16.9	16.7
12	Nakuru	29.7	34.9	32.3	36	Lamu	15.6	17.3	16.4
13	Machakos	26.2	32.5	29.3	37	Busia	16.7	15.9	16.3
14	Kisumu	28.1	28.3	28.2	38	Narok	9.9	11.3	10.6
15	Tharaka	23.9	30.6	27.2	39	Kilifi	10.6	10.4	10.5
16	Makueni	24.2	30.4	27.2	40	Marsabit	10.0	8.8	9.4
17	Kajiado	25.0	28.9	27.0	41	Kwale	8.7	9.6	9.1
18	Uasin Gishu	23.8	29.9	26.9	42	Mandera	9.2	8.3	8.9
19	Vihiga	22.5	27.8	25.2	43	Samburu	7.5	8.1	7.8
20	National	22.2	25.9	24.0	44	Tana River	8.2	6.6	7.4
21	Homa Bay	24.0	22.6	23.3	45	Wajir	7.5	6.8	7.2
22	Taita Taveta	20.7	25.6	23.1	46	Garissa	7.2	6.5	6.9
23	Meru	19.1	25.3	22.3	47	West Pokot	5.4	6.0	5.7
24	Kericho	20.4	22.4	21.4	48	Turkana	3.8	3.1	3.5

Source: KIPPRA. (2013). Kenya Economic Report. Nairobi: KIPPRA

The reason for an impressive female NER signifies that structures and strategies mostly targeting the female students at secondary school level are present. These strategies are arguably working well in encouraging the access and participation for female students at this level. It is also evident that more female students of the official age group in the secondary level of education are enrolled. As indicated in table 5, the national female NER is surpassed that of the male students in 2010 (38.0% for male and 38.9% for female), 2011 (32.6% for male and 33.1% for female) and 2012 (32.6% for male and 33.5% for female). However, the male GER was higher than that of the female student in the period between 2009 and 2012.

Table 5 Secondary School Level GER, NER and GPI

Enrolment Type	Gender	2009	2010	2011	2012
Gross Enrolment Rates	Male	49.0	50.9	51.0	51.0
	Female	41.8	46.3	46.8	47.0
	Both	45.3	47.8	48.8	49.3
Net Enrolment Rates	Male	36.5	38.0	32.6	32.6
	Female	35.1	38.9	33.1	33.5
	Both	35.8	32.0	32.7	33.1
Gender Parity Index		0.96	1.02	1.01	1.01

Source: KIPPRA. (2013). *Kenya Economic Report*. Nairobi: KIPPRA

According to KIPPRA (2013) the secondary school GER increased from 38.0 per cent (41.4% for boys and 34.6% for girls) in 2007 to 45.3 per cent (49.0% for boys and 41.8% for girls) in 2009. In 2010, the GER increased to 47.8 per cent (50.9% for boys and 46.3% for girls). The NER recorded an increase from 28.9 per cent (29.8% for boys and 27.9% for girls) in 2007 to 35.8 per cent (36.5% for boys and 35.1% for girls) in 2009. In 2010, the NER dropped to 32.0 per cent (32.4% for boys and 32.9% for girls). The Gender Parity Index improved from 0.94 in 2008 to 0.96 in 2009 and in 2011, it is in favour of girls at 1.01.

4. Gender Enrolment Trends in University Level

Higher education has seen remarkable change since independence. This metamorphosis has been witnessed especially in the last decade with the proliferation of institutions offering higher education. Kenya has as well experienced progressive developments within the higher education system (Ooro, 2009). This progression is directly linked to the increase in the number of Kenyans accessing higher education at different levels. Today Kenya boasts of having 22 public universities that are fully accredited, 9 Public University Constituent Colleges, 17 private universities that are fully accredited, 5 Private University Constituent Colleges, 11 Private Universities with Letter of Interim Authority (LIA), and 2 Registered Private Universities. This paper will only look into enrolment trends in the undergraduate level.

University education in Kenya began in 1963 with just 571 students enrolled in Nairobi University College. The student enrolment has grown in bounds over the years to 81,000 in 2003, 112,229 (68,345 male and 43,884 female) in 2006 to 180,978 (111,050 male and 69,928 female) in 2010. Table 6 provides a synopsis of the undergraduate enrolment in the academic years between academic year 2000/2001 and 2004/2005 in the Nairobi, Kenyatta, Moi, Egerton, Maseno and Jomo Kenyatta Universities (CUE, 2014). These universities are considered the oldest and biggest among the public universities in Kenya.

Table 6 Public and Private Universities Students Enrolment by Gender

INSTITUTION		2000/2001		2001/2002		2002/2003		2003/2004		2004/2005	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES											
1.	Nairobi										
	Full time	8383	3341	8724	4450	9163	4428	9603	4406	9987	5250
	Part time	2149	960	6702	4820	7037	5061	7389	5314	11281	6456
	Sub-total	10532	4301	15426	9270	16200	9489	16991	9720	21268	11706
	Total	14833		24696		25689		26711		32974	
2.	Kenyatta										
	Full time	4510	3019	53844	3983	4972	3329	5221	3495	4313	2887
	Part time	1433	991	1447	1001	5765	1669	5532	1528	6939	1916
	Sub total	5943	4010	6831	4984	10737	4998	10753	5023	1152	4803
	Total	9953		11815		15735		15776		16055	
3.	Moi										
	Full time	4046	3163	4066	3179	4086	3195	4107	3211	4304	3195
	Part time	707	603	1403	690	2188	1354	1697	1432	2492	2019
	Sub total	4753	3766	5469	3869	6275	4549	5804	4643	6796	5214
	Total	8519		9338		10824		10447		12010	
4.	Egerton										
	Full time	5981	2127	6161	2053	6307	2151	6207	2196	5540	1960
	Part time	648	229	655	232	668	236	701	248	810	287
	Sub- total	6629	2356	6816	2284	6975	2387	6908	2444	6351	2246
	Total	8985		9100		9362		9352		8597	
5.	JKUAT										
	Full time	1301	520	857	339	1442	613	1373	624	2201	999
	Part time	1691	768	768	776	1742	791	1829	831	2114	660
	Sub total	2992	1288	2565	1115	3184	1404	3203	1455	4315	1959
	Total	4280		3680		4588		4658		6274	
6.	Maseno										
	Full time	1994	1155	1922	1132	2885	1736	2777	1765	2260	1960
	Part time	602	383	608	386	620	394	651	414	753	478
	Sub total	2596	1538	2531	1518	3505	2130	3429	2178	3413	2168
	Total	4134		4049		5635		5607		5381	
	Total	33444	17260	39637	23040	46875	24957	47088	25462	53394	28097
	GRAND-TOTAL	50704		62477		71832		72550		81491	
	PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES										
		2000/201		201/202		202/203		203/204		204/205	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Accredited	3093	4050	3122	4089	3476	4163	3650	4371	3796	4546
	Un accredited	876	472	949	511	748	742	763	757	801	907
	Subtotal	3969	4522	4071	4600	4224	4905	4413	5128	4597	5453
	TOTAL	8491		8671		9129		9541		10050	
	Overall Total	59200		66526		77467		82091		91541	

Table 6 also indicates that the scenario is different in private universities, especially the accredited ones. Enrolment for female students was higher than that of the males in the academic years running between 2000 and 2005. The explanation given to a higher female enrolment is that the competition in gaining access into a public university is too great and lesser for private universities. These students therefore find it easier to access higher education in a private institution. According to most females enrol in private universities because they fail to secure admission into the public universities, and also due to the fact that the course offerings in these institutions are in the social sciences, education, arts, business administration, accounting, and computer science (Wosyanju, 2009). As such, female students' under-representation is higher in engineering and technical-based professional programs (Ngome, 2003). The increasing numbers of females attending private universities reflect the limited number of females that attain the minimum cut off points for public universities. This also indicates the levels of inequality as high cost deters many from enrolling in these institutions; even those with the relevant

marks. As a result a very small percentage of high and middle-income earners can afford to study in privately run institutions (Mulongo, 2013).

The number of women students entering Kenyan universities rose at the fastest rate ever – by more than 30% in 2012, and for the first time there are more than 100,000 female students in higher education. There were some 105,115 female students enrolled in universities in 2012, up from 80,560 in 2011. This highlighted a trend over the past five years that has seen female enrolment rise faster than that of males, whose number rose by 15% – half the growth rate of women – from 117,700 in 2011 to 135,436 in 2012 (The Economic Survey, 2013).

In spite of this massive expansion, gender imbalances have shaped and continue to shape the development of higher education in Kenya. It is clear that the proportion of girls' enrolment declines as they move up the educational ladder. As a result, female students make up about 30 percent of total enrolments in the public universities (Ngome, 2003 & Wosyanju, 2009). Notwithstanding the expansion in the past several years, the capacity of the higher education sector in Kenya is still limited and only 3 percent of the university aged cohort are enrolled in university education. In 2007, for example, of the 82,000 students who were deemed officially qualified for university admission on the basis of their KCSE results (out of the 276,000 students who took the examination), only 10,000 were selected for government sponsorship, 10,000 entered university on a self-paying basis and 5,000 entered the private sector, leaving 57,000 qualified students unable to enter higher education. Currently, the proportion of female students enrolled in the universities stands at 40 per cent (Mulongo, 2013).

5. Promoting Facets

According to the KIPPRA (2013) there has been remarkable increase in access and participation rates in the education sector as reflected in indicators such as enrolment rate (both gross and net) and gender parity across all levels. Primary education recorded the highest participation rate, while access rates at secondary and tertiary education are still low. There are disparities across counties, with the worst affected areas being the arid and semi-arid lands and those areas with high poverty levels. This section discusses the promoting facets for the disparities in the primary, secondary and higher education levels. It considers the features that have contributed to the increase in enrolment and the gender differences in accessing education. The facets in primary and secondary levels will be discussed together as they cut across both educational stages.

As indicated earlier, primary and secondary levels of education saw an increase in enrolment in 2003 and 2008 respectively. As statistics indicate, Kenya has recorded remarkable increase in the number of girls accessing primary education. Secondary school education has recorded a male GER that is higher than that of the females while the female NER surpasses that of the male in 2010. UNESCO (2012) reports that Kenya has made significant progress in education, achieving gender parity in primary education enrolment and near parity at secondary level. One of the reasons attributed to the growth in enrolment is the introduction of FPE and FSE tuition. However, the big question is: have FPE and FSE contributed in narrowing down gender differences in schooling? In 2003, the Kenyan government abolished all school fees in government primary schools, reducing the private cost of attending these schools. Lucas and Mbiti (2012) point out that FPE increased access for both genders, but that boys responded to the programme in greater numbers than girls. While the FPE programme lowered the marginal cost of school attendance for both boys and girls, the response to the programme could be differential by gender for a number of reasons.

UNESCO (2012) further points out that enrolment in secondary education remains low for both boys (51%) and girls (48%). This is of a particular concern for girls, as the data imply, over half of secondary school-age girls are not enrolled in secondary education. In 2008 Free Secondary Education tuition was rolled out as stipulated in Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) which was launched in July, 2005. The Kenyan Government committed herself to ensure that Free Education went beyond primary school (Njoroge and Ole Kerei, 2012). Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo (2014) indicate that the Government of Kenya adopted Free Secondary Education policy to enhance transition of pupils from primary school education to secondary education. The rationale for Free Secondary Education Policy was to ensure equity in education by reducing the burden of fees borne by parents /guardians and enhance transition from primary schools to secondary schools, which at that time aimed at increasing the transition to 70%. According to the Ministry of Education (2011) the introduction of the FSE Programme was informed by the decline in Secondary School enrolment caused by among other factors, high cost of Secondary Education, poverty, high cost of instructional material, school uniforms, private tuition development levies and transport costs. The need for secondary education was also compounded by the introduction of FPE (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo (2014) further observe that it was expected that the free secondary education policy would not only enhance the transition but also enhance gender equality in secondary education. When secondary school education is subsidized by the government catering for tuition, fees, repair, maintenance and improvement of physical facilities, provision for local travel and transport, administrative costs, electricity, water and conservancy, activity fees, personal emolument and medical fees the expectation are that gender

equality in secondary education should improve. They conclude that Free Secondary Education policy alone cannot be used to improve on gender inequality in education. There are other factors that contribute in denying the girl child access to secondary school education. Therefore, gender disparity remains a great concern in secondary schools in Kenya despite the free education policies.

Even with the introduction of FPE and FSE girls are still challenges in accessing primary and secondary education. There are factors that contribute to keeping the girl child out of school. Kikechi, Andala, Kisebe and Simiyu (2012) identify a number of issues that affect access to primary education. These include family, economic, socio-cultural, as well as geographical factors. Lucas and Mbiti (2012) argue that parents are still responsible for other expenses such as uniforms, meals and transportation, which continued to act as barriers to educational access for some children. Under conditions where parents cannot afford to have all their children in school, priority is given to the male child. In poor families children are expected to contribute economically and take up employment (which is usually poorly paid) or are married off early (in the case of the girls). Socio-cultural activities such as funeral rites and circumcision festivals have also been identified to interfere with schooling of children leading to early marriages and pregnancy in girls.

UNESCO (2012) identifies one of the main reasons for the low enrolment of girls in secondary education as the persistent high level of poverty, especially in urban slums and rural areas. Most families are unable to cover the cost of their children's education and opportunity costs for sending children to school are high. Furthermore, as socio-cultural norms based on patriarchy prevail, families tend to give priority to boys' education when faced with financial constraints. In addition, factors such as lack of adequate infrastructure, inadequate guidelines for policy implementation, as well as prevalence of HIV and AIDS, have prevented girls from accessing education.

An interesting feature in primary and secondary education enrolment is the regional differences. Regional differences in school participation in Kenya have historically been influenced by regional inequality in economic development. Distinct disparities evident today can be traced to decisions made by missionaries and the colonial administration who established formal Western education in Kenya in the first half of the 20th century. Their decisions favoured areas of the country where ideal climatic conditions and agricultural potential resulted in a greater concentration of population. This head start has persisted even after Kenya gained independence from Britain in 1963. Central and Western areas of Kenya have had the highest primary and secondary school gross enrolment rates. Eastern, Rift Valley, and Nyanza follow. Then the Coast, while North Eastern is ranked with the lowest rates. North Eastern is the poorest and the least populous area in Kenya. However, the capital of Nairobi Province also had a low enrolment rate especially in primary education. Despite a concentration of population and wealth in the capital, Nairobi is faced with high levels of inequality as a result of a stream of poor rural-urban migrants that has stretched its social amenities, including in the education sector (Onyango, 2013). It should be noted that some of these areas are characterised by adherence to cultural beliefs and practices that have been indicated to affect access and participation of girls. For instance North Eastern and some areas of Rift Valley still practice Female Genital Mutilation as well as marry off girls at an early age.

The gradual decline in male enrolment at secondary school level opens new direction in the discussion on gender disparity in Kenya. There are growing concerns that the attention accorded the girl child has affected the enrolment of the boy child. Chang'ach (2012) argues that persistent campaigns for awareness of girl's retention in school have started bearing fruits, but in retrospect the society has ignored the plight of boy-child. As the girl child is given prevalence, the boy child is left vulnerable. Chege, Likoye, Nyambura and Guantai (2012) draw attention to the fact that girls' education has, for many years, been the preserve of projects. While these projects have produced some impressive results, they are necessarily limited in terms of promoting gender equality in the long-run because of their "blindness" to the issue of boys' education. The decline in enrolment for males is witnessed in some regions of Kenya. There are area specific reasons for this decline. For instance in the central part of Kenya, boys choose to engage in what they term as concrete economic activities which are readily available. Of central importance is the attraction to transportation business using motorbikes (*boda-boda*) for ferrying passengers or using donkey carts to vend water and working in the rice paddies. In Eastern Kenya the boy child prefers to take up *miraa* farming as it is more lucrative than being in school. Socio-cultural factors also influence boys' transition rate from primary to secondary. In counties within the Rift Valley, customs and beliefs such as traditional circumcision has affected the transition of boys to secondary.

Education as a basic right to all children is also enshrined in the Education Act, the Children's Act and the Constitution of Kenya (UNICEF, 2009). Female student access and participation in primary and secondary education has significantly increased as a result of positive government policies and strategies. These policies and strategies have heavily been in the favour of the girls. From the statistics on GER, NER and GPI, it is clear that the provision of education and training to all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the Government's overall development strategy. This development strategy is seen to be considered within the different and important development documents especially Vision 2030 and the Sessional Paper No1 of 2005. Vision 2030 was developed using three pillars which are the basis of comprehensive national development. These pillars are

the economic pillar, the social pillar and the political pillar. Education and training is considered within the social pillar. The objective of the social pillar social pillar is to invest in the people of Kenya in order to improve the quality of life for all Kenyans by targeting a cross-section of human and social welfare projects and programmes. Flagship programmes in education and training include recruitment of additional teachers, the introduction of the Voucher System Programme in five of the poorest districts in Kenya, establishment of Centres of Specialization, Construction and Equipping of 560 Secondary Schools, expansion and Rehabilitation of Existing Schools, Construction and Rehabilitation of at Least One Boarding Primary School in Each Constituency in Arid and Semi Arid Lands, and the Establishment of a Computer Supply Programme (GOK, 2014)

The Education Policy has also played a major role in encouraging the enrolment of the girl child at primary and secondary levels. Education policy has evolved over the years through the recommendations of numerous commissions. Recent policy initiatives have focused on the attainment of Education for All and universal primary education. Key concerns are access, retention, equity, quality and relevance and internal and external efficiencies. In 2003, the Government organised the National Conference on Education and Training that brought together more than 800 players in education. The conference developed a new policy framework for education. The Sessional Paper No 1 of 2005 on Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research constitutes the Government policy on education and training and is based on the recommendations of the conference (Republic of Kenya, 2012). National policies are indeed the road maps of practices in education in any country. However, the degree to which they succeed will depend on certain variables; environment, resources, political, economic capacity and the implementation process (Boitt, 2008). Kenyan education has been guided by policy guidelines since independence. Policy documents have been in the form of commissions, presidential working parties, committees and development plans to guide education practice (Oduol 2006). Policies that have been adopted and implemented in the journey towards realising the EFA and MDGs include The Policy Framework for Nomadic Education in Kenya, The National Special Needs Education Policy Framework of 2009, The Health and Nutrition Policy of 2011, The Gender Policy in Education of 2007, and The education sector on HIV/AIDs of 2011. Some of these policies directly touch on the countries commitment in reducing gender disparities in education.

It cannot be ignored that the Kenyan Government has realized the tremendous achievement in increasing female enrolment with the help of development partners. For a long time, religious organisations in Kenya have been witnessed to support education in Kenya. During the colonial era, Christian denominations partnered with the government in setting up and managing schools. After independence these religious organizations set up their own schools. Even after the Kenya Government took over of their schools, churches including Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Seventh Day Adventists and Africa Inland have continued to influence education at different levels. At the primary school level these religious organizations have been seen to construct and run schools, jointly with the government are involved in the daily management of schools, and provide support to learners especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Muslim religion has also participated in supporting education. Islamic schools, known as *madrassa*, are a main feature of Kenya's basic education system, especially at the Coast and North Eastern provinces. Some of these religious organizations have specifically supported the girl child by setting up schools targeting female students only, funding girl schools as well as supporting individual girls by paying for their schools and other needs.

International and local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have also been partners with the Government, local communities and religious organisation education. These NGOs have provided funding targeting the girl child directly and indirectly. They have supported the development of schools through improving infrastructure such as toilets. They have also supported initiatives to help the girl child meet essential needs such as through provision of sanitary towels and school uniform and books. Other support has been in the form of provision of food and payment of school fees. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) main interest is basic education and it has provided massive support for the Free Primary Education programme in Kenya. UNICEF has continuously supported pre-school education programmes, girls in primary school, participation and retention, non-formal education and education of children in difficult circumstances. Other areas of support include assessment of education outcomes at the primary level and HIV/Aids education. The Department for International Development (DfID) has offered funding to support NGOs, charities and the private sector who can find better ways to provide education opportunities to marginalized girls. DfID has also supported primary, secondary, technical and higher education in Kenya in the form of physical facilities, provision of equipment and development of human resource development.

Inequality in access to higher education has affected women more than men in Kenya. Gender equity campaigns have been an important vehicle for encouraging the increased recruitment of women as students and staff into higher education. Despite the international campaign s for gender equality and equity in higher education, several countries including Kenya continue to show that women are underrepresented in universities as students, staff and managers. There have been attempts by individual universities to incorporate women's issues in their programmes. Some of the attempts at enhancing gender equality include establishing gender

centres, affirmative action and enhancing women's participation. Most of these attempts have been financed by donor funding or Non Governmental Organisation such as the African Forum for Women Educationists (FAWE) and the Association of African Universities (AAU) (Onsongo, 2011). Sessional paper no.1 of 2005 indicates that despite the rapid expansion of higher education, challenges of access and equity still exist. To address these, the government through the respective university councils and commission for higher education committed to promote the expansion of university education and training in tandem with population, growth and the demand for university places and research facilities, promote private sector investment in the development of university education and training, and provide scholarships based on the needs of the economy; targeted bursaries and loans to the needy, taking into account gender parity (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

Arguably, these attempts have not done much to increase access to higher education for females. Most of the attempts have been geared towards preparing and encouraging female staff into leadership as well as advocate for a more deliberate recruitment of females. An outstanding attempt at increasing female enrolment is by lowering cut off points.

A critical feminist policy analysis by Onsogo (2011) on the effect of the lower cut of points for female students on increasing female access to university education revealed that it was not having any great impact on female students' access to university. It is argued that that encouraging preferential treatment in university admission and hiring or appointing women to leadership positions perpetuates the myth that women are inferior. Women who enter university through affirmative action are considered inferior to other students and sometimes called names suggesting they are below standard. This name calling sometimes discourages other students from joining the programmes. Some students are opposed to affirmative action on the basis of the stigmatisation of beneficiaries (Onsongo, 2009).

6. Conclusion

Kenya has witnessed growth in the numbers of learners accessing all levels of education. This is as a result of the policies and strategies put in place at the different levels. Kenya today can boast of having more girls and boys accessing basic education. Kenya has also made progress in achieving gender parity in primary education. This is an indication that the Government of Kenya considers gender balance and equality in education as a key contributor to the economic growth and sustainable development of Kenya. The government has thus committed itself to develop, nurture and promote access and participation of all especially women in national development. This has been achieved by several policies and strategies put in place to increase access of the girl child to education. These strategies have realised fruit in primary and secondary education where more girls than boys have enrolled in some counties. This has further created a concern on the vulnerability of boys as focus has been on the girl child. There is regional disparity in enrolment with some counties registering low very numbers. In higher education, the strategies have not enabled increase in female student numbers. Enrolment is low compared to that of their counterparts. Kenya, therefore, needs to revisit the policies that are in place, come up with new strategies and have continuity in implementation of these programmes if gender parity is to be realised.

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