

The Gender Education Poverty Nexus: Kenyan Youth's Perspective on Being Young, Gendered and Poor

Abstract

This article argues that the role of education within the gender–poverty debate needs to be reconceptualised. It stresses the importance of conceptualizing the gender–education–poverty nexus as a cluster of complex interactive combinations and bonds in which education outcomes are shaped by, and shape, both poverty and gender. The aim of the paper is to contribute towards a greater understanding of this set of interrelations. It does so by drawing on findings from research in Kenya in which a sample of 24 young people (brothers and sisters aged 16–25) living in 18 poor households were interviewed. These young men and women with varying levels of formal schooling discussed the complex relationships they perceived between their education, gender relations in the community, and the adult lives they hoped to build. Young men wished to build a life in the community whilst some of the young women were keen to marry and leave. Female and male youth were aware of gender changes in identities and roles and how they might challenge the respect associated with particular forms of masculinity. Although weakening of gender boundaries in employment was observed, these appeared to be more associated with young people's survival strategies than with gender equality promoted by schools. Education is not a way to escape poverty – it is a way of fighting it.

Keywords: Gender, Education, Poverty

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