

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Inclusivity and Quality of County Government Projects through Education to Meet the Demands of 21st Century

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Abstract:

The purpose of equity and inclusion is to help countries ensure that there is an inclusive society. This is a society that over-rides differences and ensures inclusion, equality of opportunity as well as capability of all members of the society to determine an agreed set of social institutions that govern social interaction. Most of the projects at the county government lack citizens input. The objective of this paper is to analyze the citizen inclusion in various programs at the county government in Kenya, to promote inclusivity and quality of service delivery. The dimension of inclusive societies is a tolerance for an appreciation of cultural diversity in which societies celebrate multiple and diverse expressions of identities. The study was guided by stakeholder theory and utilized descriptive design with a target population of 1122963. The findings noted the lack of awareness on various projects. This paper brings about understanding of equity, social inclusivity and also suggest the incremental steps as well as the approaches to promote social inclusivity that meets the demands of 21st Century through education. The study recommended some initiatives which could be considered to promote equity and social inclusivity. Finally it draws a conclusion that education plays a critical role as it will provide opportunities to learn the history and culture of one's own and other societies.

Keywords: Equity, inclusive society, equality, education and social interaction

1. Introduction

1.1. Understanding of Equity, Social Inclusivity and Quality

"It is impossible to realize our goals while discriminating against half the human race" Kofi Annan 2006. It is widely believed that countries' social and economic well-being will depend on the quality of their citizens' education (Serdyukov, 2017). Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy, essential life skills and achieving gender equality. How the resources are allocated and utilized will significantly affect the orientation of a society, either towards a more integrated, inclusive society, or an exclusive, polarized, and disintegrated one. Equity in the distribution of wealth and resources is another critical element of inclusive societies. Equal access to public information also plays an important role in creating equality and an inclusivity, as it will make popular participation possible with well-informed members of society.

Equity in access to education is important in eradicating poverty and building shared prosperity. There are two types of equity; Vertical equity which calls attention to the need for unequal treatment of unequals, and horizontal equity which calls for equal treatment of equals. Inclusivity requires responding to the diversity of needs among all stakeholders, through increasing participation in different societies, communities, and reducing exclusion from and within education. It involves changes in content, approaches, structures, and strategies, driven by a common vision that covers all the responsibility of the regular system to service delivery (World Bank 2016).

1.1. Citizen Inclusion in Programs at the County Government in Kenya

Participation of all members of society is essential as it cultivates the understanding and appreciation of other societies, cultures and religions; while on the one hand, underlining the importance of equity and equal access for all and participation of all stakeholders in decisions that impact on them (DESA, 2009). There must be processes that seeks to promote diversity and the participation of difference groups in the process of governance. Using data from county governments of Kenya, the need to engage successfully with all potential stakeholders is clear (Moi and Minja, 2018). Everyone must be encouraged to participate and partnership must be facilitated. Figure 1 shows projects that people are more engaged, Schools and roads (29%) were seen to be higher than the other projects. This implies that education sector plays a major role in equity, social inclusion and equality in the society. A better education is often associated with better health, a higher probability of diverse labor force, in association and civic life participation, and a better ability to cope with individual or covariate shocks.

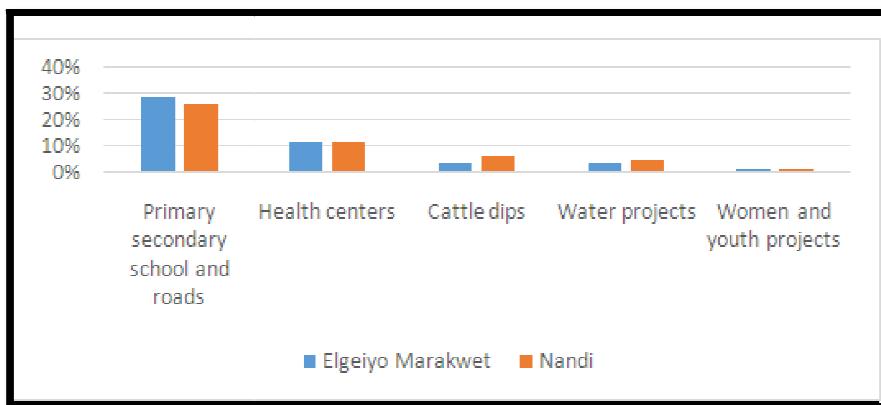


Figure 1: Citizen Engagement on Projects at the County Government in Kenya

The study found out that people's knowledge on various projects and programs is as a result of their inclusion and participation. These findings were in line with (Archon, 2016) who asserted that governance effectiveness and arrangements were capable of solving the substantive problems by providing education, caring for the poor, ensuring security and providing public goods and services.

Discrepancies in education are one of the major drivers of income inequality, both in Kenya and internationally. Without basic education, those in the bottom percent of a nation's income distribution are unlikely to be successful in a globalized economy. According to (World Bank 2012), a fair and inclusive education is one of the most powerful devices available to make society more equitable. A well-educated workforce is also a powerful tool for promoting economic growth (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2015). Education enhances the ability of vulnerable groups such as the poor, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities to contribute to and benefit from the economy, and thus contribute to economic growth.

1.2. Approaches to Promoting Social Inclusivity and Equality

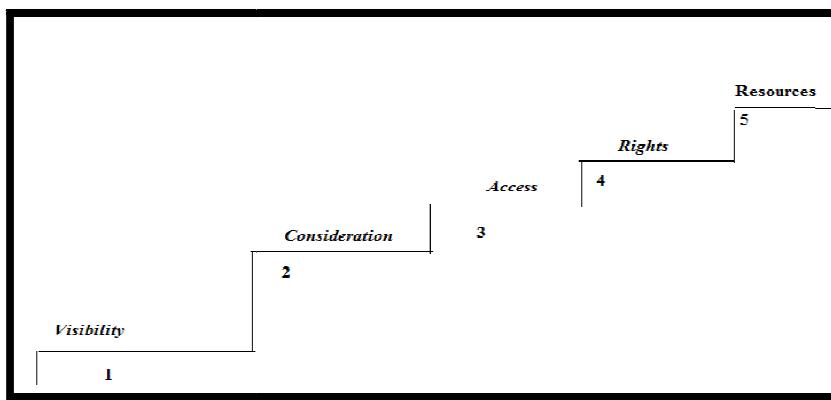
Promoting respect for democracy, the rule of law, diversity and solidarity and removing institutionalized inequalities are critical to successful social integration. To that end, national Governments and the development partners have utilized the educational systems and the various media to advance an understanding of the multiple features of social integration and to promote tolerance in the societies. Participation by all, including civil society organizations in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring requires responsive and accessible government as well as capacity of and opportunity for all, especially the vulnerable and groups with special needs. Equity, social justice and equality of access and opportunity, for both basic services and work are important concepts to promote social integration (Fitzduff, 2007).

The capacity of local governments to accommodate different needs of diverse groups is critical if civic participation and civic engagement are to occur. Traditionally, local government dealt mainly with roads, public transportation and land use. However, recently new areas, such as the economic and social dimensions of local development have been included as responsibilities of local governments. For instance, at the request of stakeholders, particularly for young people, education provides the opportunity to instill values of respect and appreciation of diversity. At the same time, education can empower those who are marginalized or excluded from participating in discussions and decision-making. Learning about the historical processes and changes allows people to understand the way in which they and others have been affected by socially inclusive or exclusive policies, which ultimately influences the values, choices and judgments of individuals; in particular, those who are in decision-making positions has a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for the most vulnerable members of society to participate in the social and economic life of the community including the unemployed, homeless, mentally ill and those that are disadvantaged as a result of a physical or intellectual disability (Taylor, 2017).

Having effective leaderships essential to the development of an inclusive society (Moi and Minja, 2018). Where leadership is not representative of the society, may eventually result in a disconnection between the people and their leaders. The most common way of addressing this critical element at the local level is by engaging in open consultations with members of society about county level issues such as the budget, program development and enhancing the free and timely flow of information to all stakeholders. Public participation in decision-making and policy formulation processes could be sought for, at all levels of governance. At the same time, there must be an effort made to achieve transparency and accountability by all decision-makers and stakeholders.

1.3. Positive Steps to Promote Equity, Social Inclusivity and Quality of Services

Diversity in any organization depends on the motivated involvement of everyone. Lessons from Klugman, this paper highlighted five steps that given considerations can promote equity and inclusivity in the society. As shown in figure 2 these steps are visibility, consideration, access, rights and resources.

*Figure 2: Steps to Promote Social Inclusivity and Equality*

Source: Adapted From Klugman (2012)

2. Visibility

To promote social inclusivity and equality people need to be noticed, recognized, and have their own voices heard. There is no possibility of having a voice if an individual or group is not accounted for and represented in the processes that make up formal society. One of the greatest difficulties at a local level is the actual census of population. People remain uncounted and therefore invisible.

2.1. Consideration of Needs and Concerns

The policy-makers are ought to take into account the concerns and needs of individuals and groups. Often policy-makers do not consider the poor and other marginalized groups as important stakeholders, and therefore, do not incorporate their needs and concerns. Educational and awareness campaigns can help on the needs of people who are socially excluded and to encourage service providers to adapt their services to meet their needs.

2.2. Access to Social Interactions

People must be able to engage in society's activities and social networks in their daily life, including economic, social, cultural, religious, and political activities.

2.3. Rights

People must have rights to act and claim, rights to be different, legal rights, rights to access social services, such as housing, education, transportation, and health care. They must have the right to work and the right to participate in social, cultural and political life. The right to claim will regress if one is discriminated.

2.4. Resources to Fully Participate in Society

Participation is a constitutional provision that people have rights to access; however, they cannot participate fully without facilitation. Therefore, to fully participate in all aspects of societal activities resources are the ultimate step for successful social inclusion. By taking care of resources leaders help to ensure that they work well and help to ensure that people stay and are committed to the organization and to their work free of inequality(Moi, 2017). It is not only because of lack of financial resources that people are unable to participate, or not participating, but also because of conditions such as insufficient time or energy, spatial distance, lack of recognition, lack of respect, physical conditions or challenges. These elements all need to be taken into consideration.

2.5. Contributions to New Knowledge

The contribution of this paper is on an inclusive system in the society and all levels of government. This implies that identifying areas where quality of service needs improvement and people's involvement will lead to satisfied customers and service delivery that will meet the demands of the 21st century.

3. Conclusion and Recommendation

The multiple, potential and positive benefits of education fails to materialize if there will be exclusion in the society. There is need to create positive accounts of an inclusivity and equality of the future, and enable each member of society to share, understand and contribute to those accounts. Effective accounts on the future can act like a magnet drawing society towards its intended future. A society with no vision for the future indicates a society in decline. Societies that maintain a unity of purpose, or a shared vision embraced by the community, and encourage broad-based stakeholder participation in the formulation and implementation of various projects or programs. Education therefore plays a major role in change in the society, having this in mind there will be more inclusive as every member will be working united towards a unified objective.

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