

## **Inequality in Accessing Higher Education in Kenya; Implications for Economic development and Well-being**

**Godfrey Mulongo<sup>1</sup>**

C/o Box 34424, Manara Road Plot 10,  
Ada Estate, Dar-es-salaam-Tanzania

### **Abstract**

*Society for International Development -SID-(2004) defines inequality as the extent to which the benefits of economic welfare produced in an economy varies from that of equal shares among the population. In reference to education, inequality is the extent at which supply of education as a good, and the benefits that accrue from it favour certain individual (s), group, generation, race, region e.t.c. In this context, access has to do with enabling the admittance of a broader range of learners into higher education than are conventionally incorporated. This involves facilitating substantial number of candidates, especially drawn from marginalized categories (such as the poor, historically sidelined regions or tribal subgroups) attain/access higher education. This paper discusses inequality in accessing higher education in Kenya. Using relevant theories, the paper discusses the implications of this inequality on economic development and well-being of the country and the people of Kenya.*

**Key words:** Inequality, Higher Education, Economic Development, Well-being

### **1.0 A Brief Profile of Inequality in Kenya**

Inequalities in Kenya take diverse forms; for instance, huge disparities in national share of income, security, employment, levels of investment, health care and public services are evident across counties, particular sections of the population, ethnic communities and genders. Society for International Development (SID, 2004) asserts that the 10% of the population controls about 42% of overall national income while the extreme 10% contends with significantly less than 1%. Also, disparities in life expectancy between regions are extremely diverse. For instance, a staggering 16 years of life expectancy exist between Central and Nyanza provinces and doctor-patient ratio is about 1:20,700 in Central Province compared with 1:120,000 in North Eastern Province. Furthermore, close to 93% of women in the latter have no education at all, compared with only about 3% in the former.

Development Policy Management Forum (DPMF, 2012) argues that poverty in Kenya has progressively deepened and socio-economic gap between the rich and poor widening by the day. For instance, the top 1% economic, social and political elites earn more than \$ 1204 a month while the highest wage from 0 to 90% level is only about \$ 181 a month. The latter are workers and peasants in urban and rural areas. However, pundits also point to education as always favoring the rich and powerful (Connell, 1993) and hence exacerbating social inequality (Ladwig & Gore, 1998).

### **2.0 Education inequality in Kenya**

Education inequality between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in Kenya is overwhelming (UNESCO, 2005). And according to DPMF (2012:17), 'this is one of the major drivers of social inequality in Kenya'. According to DPMF (2012), access to education in Kenya can be traced to colonial policy on development which significantly entrenched exclusionary practices resulting into certain regions benefitting more from development i.e. Access to infrastructure, social as well as educational amenities were and still, in most cases distributed along colonial administrative structures/divisions, with ethnic groups in the more resourced and centrally located regions profiting from the closeness to these amenities. Today, we see this regional disparities playing out in education too.

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<sup>1</sup>Institute of Education, University of London: I am most grateful to Chris Yates for his profound insights while writing this paper.

For instance, almost 100% of children in Central province attend primary school compared to about 34% in North Eastern (Limo, 2012) and the same children, mostly from rural areas are likely to drop out of school than their urban counterparts (see World Bank, 2004).

According to Kerigaet. al, (2009), inequality in access to education at all levels is a common phenomenon in Kenya leading to a vicious cycle in regional, ethnic, class and gender variation in the country (see Bold et.al, 2009; Nishimura et.al, 2008; Hilmert, 2004). For instance, females are almost twice illiterate than males (about 22% and 14% respectively), the ratio of literate women in Nairobi to those in North Eastern Province is almost 14:1 and about 93% have never been to school at all. Overall, 70% of illiterate people in Kenya are female. This leaves women to make up the 75% of the Kenyan agricultural and unskilled labor workforce. Women's wages are also two-thirds that of males (Limo, 2012). These statistics point to gross gender inequalities in the country.

But perhaps the fundamental question is what causes these disparities? Researchers in education posit that the quality and quantity of Education provided to an individual in Kenya is mostly influenced by economic ability. In other words, it is almost certain that children whose parents are not wealthy are likely to contend with inferior public education while those from affluent families attend high cost quality private academies; it is seldom that you will find the children from upper class homes attending public schools. Meanwhile, according to Burkam et.al (2002), schools serving low-income students, especially in rural areas in Kenya receive less resource, face insurmountable challenges in attracting and retaining qualified teachers, are rarely inspected for quality, and receive less support from the school community. The bottom-line is that education in Kenya is highly capitalistic, sold to the highest bidder. Children from poor families are therefore most disadvantaged by the education system, and are likely to be condemned to lesser professional and employment prospects. The Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) are national achievement tests at the primary and secondary levels respectively often relied upon for certification and selection for progression to higher levels of education. Historical data (from 2001) emanating from these tests indicate that private academies (where children of the rich attend), perform better than public schools. The 2010 data indicate that the top 30 KCPE performance schools included 27 private schools. Meanwhile, Nishimura et.al, (2008) argues that poor households cannot in most instances, afford the quality education provided by the private sector. Also, according to World Bank (2004), education attainment gap is inappropriately huge at the end of the primary cycle with only 60 percent of children from low income households reaching Standard 8, compared with over 75 percent of the children from middle-rich.

### **3.1 Inequality in Accessing Higher Education in Kenya**

#### **Enrollment/wastage**

The genesis of higher education in Kenya can be traced back to 1956 when the Royal Technical College was established in Nairobi. Following a 1961 Act of the East African Commission, the Royal Technical College was converted to Nairobi College. In 1970, the latter was established to Nairobi University by an Act of Parliament, becoming the first university in Kenya and the onset of higher education. More Universities were later to be established; Moi University in 1984, Kenyatta University 1985, Egerton University in 1987 and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in 1993 (Kerigaet. al, 2009). Since then, the number of universities has increased considerably. There are about thirty universities in the country today (-with an enrolment of 100,649 students<sup>2</sup>), seven of which are public<sup>3</sup>. With 40,000 to 60,000 students qualifying for admission to public universities, which only absorb 10% and only 3% being absorbed by Private Universities<sup>4</sup> (University of Nairobi, 1999), it was anticipated that this increase in the number of universities would reduce the wastage of students who attain university entry grades. However, even with this expansion, only 81,000 candidates out of 300,000 candidates (27%) in 2009 and attained the minimum entry grade were admitted. Out of these, public universities admitted a mere 24,000<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>Available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201010020044.html>- accessed on 23/06/2012

<sup>3</sup>The public universities in Kenya include University of Nairobi (UON), Kenyatta University, Moi, Egerton, Maseno, JKUAT, Masinde Muliro.

<sup>4</sup>The accredited universities are Daystar, Baraton, Catholic University and United States International University, Scott Theological College, Agha Khan University, Kabarak, Methodist and Kiriri Women University of Science and Technology

<sup>5</sup>Available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201010020044.html>- accessed on 23/06/2012

About 5% of the remaining joined private universities which are expensive and often unaffordable for most Kenyans<sup>6</sup>. In 2012, only 41,000 out of a qualified 118,000 candidates (35%), got places in both public and private universities<sup>7</sup>. Vision 2030<sup>8</sup> acknowledges the magnitude of wastage in the transition from secondary to university education. It is noted with concern that although there has been expansion in secondary school education and resultant rise in enrolment, the passage to university is still below the expected 15 per cent target for 2012<sup>9</sup>.

### Socio-economic Elitism

According to the Association for the Advancement of Higher Education and Development, entry to university education in Kenya is mostly dependent on a student's socio-economic background raising issues of fair access thereby ringing bells of inequality. For instance, at the University of Nairobi, about 84 per cent of students come from high income potential areas and only 0.5 per cent of total female students come from arid and semi-arid areas. Available information indicates those statistics are replicated in the rest of the public universities<sup>10</sup>. The issue is that entrance to higher education in Kenya is determined by access to quality secondary education. Subsequently, most students selected to join public universities as regular students are from high quality secondary schools that over the years have been dominated by pupils from high cost private primary schools. This has forced the government to consider introducing quota system in admitting students from private schools, a decision that has received overwhelming support –

*This is a decision that is long overdue and will allow for some fairness and equity to prevail in our education system, which was becoming increasingly elitist and discriminatory,* quips Amutabi M. (<http://allafrica.com/stories/201101170080.html> - Accessed on 23/06/2012)

### Degree Choice

In essence, inequalities in Kenya have been bolstered by intensive privatisation of higher education in public universities through parallel programmes. The idea of parallel programs was to expand access to higher education but also provide revenue to public universities whose funding from the government was inadequate. Though the former objective has been achieved to a large extent, this system has mostly enabled high school graduates with barely minimum entry grades of C+ to gain admission because they have ability to pay. For instance, it is common to see students from a poor household with a mean score of A plain in the examination admitted to a public university to study Bachelor of Arts (general) — though his or her interest was medicine or law — while a counterpart from a wealthy background with a mean score of B+ admitted to study for MBChB or LLB degrees through the parallel programme. This access as related to degree choice is skewed against students from disadvantaged economic backgrounds<sup>11</sup>

### Gender

Researchers posit that inequality in access to higher education has affected women more than men. Gender disparities are very stark, with female enrollment being half of male enrollment in some institutions. A government of Kenya report (Government of Kenya, 2000) indicates that female students comprised only 30.5 per cent of the total enrolment of 40,613 students at the five public universities in the 1998/99 academic year (Government of Kenya, 2000).

Table 1 below shows the enrollment trends in all public Universities over a period of 5 years from 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <http://colokango.hubpages.com/hub/UniversitiesinKenya2> - Accessed 23/06/2012.

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Teachers+call+for+change+in+JAB+powers/-/1056/1437776/-/rvoiqsz/-/index.html>. Accessed 28/06/12)

<sup>8</sup> This is a government's blue print aiming to consolidate efforts so as to turn Kenya into a middle income country by 2030

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.educationinsight.net/20100712316/vision-2030-targets-increased-university-enrolment-from-130000-to-450000-by-2015>

<sup>10</sup> Kigotho W. - <http://www.entraide-developpement.ch/?p=359> - Accessed on 23/06/2012

<sup>11</sup> Kigotho W. - <http://www.entraide-developpement.ch/?p=359> - Accessed on 23/06/2012

**Table 1: Enrollment in Kenyan Public Universities by Gender between 2003-2007 (Source: Republic of Kenya, (2008) Economic Survey, cited in Wainaina, 2011)**

Institution	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>NAIROBI</b>	16,992	9,720	21,268	11,706	21,940	11,706	22,513	12,426	23,513	12,826
Full time	9,603	4,406	9,987	5,250	10,800	5,250	10,858	5,536	11,340	5,714
Part Time	7,389	5,314	11,281	6,456	11,140	6,456	11,655	6,890	12,173	7,112
<b>KENYATTA</b>	10,735	5,023	11,252	4,803	10,896	4,803	8,845	7,891	10,172	8,425
Full time	5,221	3,495	4,313	2,887	4,356	2,887	5,066	3,285	5,826	3,507
Part Time	5,532	1,528	6,939	1,916	6,540	1,916	3,779	4,606	4,346	4,918
<b>MOI</b>	5,804	4,634	6,796	5,214	6,831	5,214	8,604	6,059	8,674	6,158
Full time	4,107	3,211	4,304	3,195	4,311	3,195	5,654	3,554	5,700	3,612
Part Time	1,697	1,432	2,492	2,019	2,520	2,019	2,950	2,505	2,974	2,546
<b>EGERTON</b>	6,908	2,444	6,350	2,247	6,262	2,247	8,163	4,006	8,262	4,205
Full time	6,207	2,196	5,540	1,960	5,322	1,960	7,319	3,383	7,408	3,551
Part Time	701	248	810	287	940	287	844	623	5,450	654
<b>JOMO KENYATTA (JKUAT)</b>	3,202	1,455	4,315	1,959	4,207	1,959	4,460	1,845	2,659	2,512
Full time	1,373	624	2,201	999	2,240	999	2,176	524	2,791	713
Part time	1,829	831	2,114	960	1,967		2,284	1,321	3,487	1,799
<b>MASENO</b>	3,428	2,179	3,413	2,168	2,826		2,778	1,937	2,370	2,199
Full time	2,777	1,765		1,690	2,106		1,888	1,277	1,117	1,450
Part time	651	414		478	720		890	660	946	749
Special	-	-		-	775		1,154	656	508	278
<b>MASINDE MULIRO</b>	-	-		-	420		620	422	438	179
Full time	-	-		-	355			234	60,504	99
Part time	-	-		-						
Totals	<b>47,087</b>	<b>25,464</b>	<b>53,394</b>	<b>28,097</b>	<b>53,737</b>	<b>27,940</b>	<b>56,517</b>	<b>34,820</b>	<b>60,504</b>	<b>36,603</b>

The proportion of female students enrolled in the universities was 40.1 percent of the enrolment in 2007/08 compared to 39.1 percent in 2006/07 academic year. In all public universities, male enrollment surpassed that of females, almost by half.

Even The Ministry of Education has observed that the gender gap in public university student enrolment is an issue that needs urgent attention (Keriga et. al, 2009).

Strangely, enrollment is higher for females in private Universities<sup>12</sup> as compared to public universities. The increasing numbers of females attending private universities reflect the limited number of females that attain the minimum cut off points for public universities. Additionally they also indicate the levels of inequality; 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 (Keriga et. al, 2009).

<sup>12</sup>Student enrolment in the four accredited private universities rose significantly in the same period with female students constituting 46.7 per cent overall. Daystar University led with 48.1 per cent, while Scott Theological College registered the lowest proportion at 16.7 percent (Keriga et. al, 2009).



## Regional

Participation in higher education in Kenya is skewed in favour of urban and metropolitan areas. Students from rural<sup>13</sup> households face enormous challenges accessing secondary and higher education in general and higher quality higher education institutions in particular<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, more affluent institutions of learning often have well equipped laboratories, classrooms and instructional materials. In contrast, low income private, public and district schools, are often characterized by lack of infrastructural and learning equipment and facilities. For schools located in the poorer rural areas the conditions tend to be worse. Lack of infrastructural facilities such as classroom means that learning is conducted in open (Keriga et. al, 2009: 8). These regional inequalities are both historical and political (ethnic) i.e. Differential rates of access to education during the pre-independence era gave some groups a leg up in terms of educational attainment, and this early access to schooling has had long-term consequences (Rothchild 1969; Oyugi 2000 cited in Kramon et al, 2011).

Barkan and Chege(1989) investigated ethnic favoritism by Kenyan presidents and found evidence that the president's ethnic kin were, in fact favored with respect to their educational achievements.

The most straightforward explanation is that individuals who share an ethnicity with a president or minister of education acquire more years of schooling because they receive preferential access to critical educational inputs such as funds to create or improve existing educational infrastructure, hire skilled teachers, or purchase books and other educational materials.

Kramon et al, (2011: 14)

The Commission of Higher Education has strictly guarded data on regional and tribal compositions of students enrolled in universities. This is because the issue of the tribe is sensitive in Kenya. Probably this sensitivity explains why there seems to be no substantial research and literature in the area of ethnicity (Nakamura, 2008). But we can extricate regional imbalances<sup>15</sup> by looking at the number of students that qualify to join universities from each region. For instance, nationally, only about 15 counties (out of 47) posted candidates among the top 100<sup>16</sup> with regions of Nairobi and Central doing well while North Eastern and Eastern provinces come last<sup>17</sup>

Vision 2030 admits that there are high regional disparities in access to education at all levels. Meanwhile, the government asserts that at the university level, access to technical and science based courses are hampered by lack of infrastructure.

### 4.0 Implications for Economic development

There is evidence that access to education can have a dramatic impact on the social and economic development of the individual and community, and can help to alleviate poverty (King et. al, 2007). From studies conducted by Psacharopoulos (1994), returns of education in Africa are higher than other regions. Returns on education have been measured in a number of ways; economically, it is viewed as an investment in human capital (Keriga et. al, 2009: 1) and educationists have relied on the human capital theory (HTC) to explain the economic benefits of education (Gradstein et. al, 2002).

<sup>13</sup>This video was recently aired on local TV channel and underscores the nature of regional disparities

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFFyG1PONNA-> Accessed on 30/05/12

<sup>14</sup>Pillay, Challenges and Lessons of Higher Education from East and Southern Africa, sighted by Kigotho W.-  
<http://www.entraide-developpement.ch/?p=359>-Accessed on 23/06/2012)

<sup>15</sup> In addition, regional inequalities have been exacerbated by colonial administration structures which resulted in uneven development; ethnic groups close to agrarian commercial areas and colonial capital territory, railways lines, ports or centers of colonial commerce have benefited from the availability of public goods such as government offices, commercial housing and schools found in these areas (Harowitz:1985:151

<sup>16</sup><http://www.nation.co.ke/News/KCSE+results+reveal+massive+disparities+in+gender+/-/1056/1358952/-/item/0/-/n31yr0z/-/index.html>. Accessed on 30/06/12)

<sup>17</sup><http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Kenyan%20schools%20disaster%20in%20the%20making/-/1056/943902/-/15r2015z/-/index.html> (Accessed on 30/06/12)

#### 4.1. The Human Capital Theory (HTC)

According to Psacharopoulos et al. (2004a), the HTC has roots in the works of classical authors such as Adams Smith (1776) and Alfred Marshall (1890). The former concluded that ‘a man educated at the expense of much labour and time may be compared to one of those expensive machines... and the work he learns to perform should replace to him the whole expense of his education’. The latter referred to industrial training as ‘a national investment’. Much later authors such as Mincer (1958), Schultz (1961) and Becker (1975) gave ‘meat’ to this theory when they affirmed that time and money spent on education builds human capital hence one should be able to estimate the rate of return (RoR) on such investment, in a way similar to investment in physical capital. The HTC further states that a person’s education is an investment (involves costs, in terms of direct spending on education and the opportunity costs of student time) in her/his human capital (akin to investment by a firm in physical capital), which makes the individual more productive and accrue him/her a future stream of benefits (superior productivity, higher wages and other non-monetary benefits to the individual and the society).

At the micro level, the theory postulates that an individual bears the costs (direct costs such as fees paid and indirect costs such as opportunity cost on student time) of education because s/he expect that this investment will create a future stream of benefits<sup>18</sup> to h/her (higher productivity and thus higher wages). There’s a significant bulk of literature and research to underscore this fact: For instance, Psacharopoulos and Patrinos study “*Human capital and rates of return*” (2004) conclude that educational quality, (measured by cognitive skills) has a strong impact on individual earnings, moreover educational quality has a strong and robust influence on economic growth with “truly causal relationships”. McIntosh and Vignoles (2001) studied wages in the United Kingdom and found strong returns to this investment while Finnie and Meng (2002) and Green and Riddell (2003) established the same fact in Canada<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, Nickell (2004) considered how differences in the distribution of incomes across countries were affected by the distribution of skill and concluded that “the bulk of the variation in earnings dispersion was generated by skill dispersion. Other studies have also concluded that skills have an increasing impact on the distribution of income and that the income distribution becomes more dispersed in reflection of growing rewards to individual skills (Juhn, Murphy and Pierce, 1993; Levy and Murnane (1992). Psacharopoulos (2004) concludes that more schooling is associated with higher individual earnings.

At the macro level<sup>20</sup>, Robert (1991) shows that education and the creation of human capital is responsible for both the differences in labour productivity and the differences in overall levels of technology in the world today. Robert explains the spectacular growth in East Asia that has given education and human capital their current popularity in the field of economic development. Countries such as Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan have achieved unprecedented rates of economic growth while making large investments in education. This correlation between education, national and international development can be traced to the Solow growth model, way back in the mid-1950s. This theoretical model asserts that the economic growth of a country depends on its endowments of labour (population size) and of physical capital (machinery, infrastructure), and on technological change. Detailed investigations on rates of return from education to families and national economies were undertaken by George Psacharopoulos in the 1970s and 1980s who like those before him, concluded that indeed education played a significant role in the social-economic development of a country.

#### 4.2 Access to Higher Education and Economic Development in Kenya

In 1962, Edward Denison used the Solow growth accounting framework to examine factors that contributed to economic growth in the US over the period 1910 to 1960. Denison concluded that as much as 23% of the annual growth rate of GNP could be explained by increases in the level of education of the workforce. In other words, education was an important determinant of economic growth. Much later, Denison (1985) found that the increase in schooling of the average worker between 1929 and 1982 explained about one fourth of the rise in per capita income during this period. Even in African countries such as Kenya, education contributed much to economic development, particularly in the phase up to the mid-1970s during which the economy grew at a comparable rate to the economies of East Asia and when agricultural improvements benefited from educational advancement

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<sup>18</sup>These will be discussed under the wellbeing subtopic below

<sup>20</sup> Macro level can be categorized into growth that is realized within a country and the cross-country growth

However, unlike the East Asian states<sup>21</sup>, Kenya has been unsuccessful in equalizing access to education thereby contributing to rising income inequality; inability to control population growth thus retarded economic growth (Oketh in Green et.al, 2007 pp. 131).

Oketch asserts that educational expansion has not been accompanied by comparable economic growth in Kenya, especially since the 1980s. This has led to many studies focusing on educational expansion and economic decline in Kenya (e.g., Appleton et al, 1999; King, 2005b; Manda, 2002). Researchers conclude that benefits of education have quickly been turned into a system that prompted ILO to observe that ‘what is now merely the beginnings of stratification by education and incomes could very easily within a further generation become a rigid and institutionalised barrier’ (ILO 1972: 97). Predictions and concerns revealed by the ILO report written 33 years ago are a reality in Kenya today, reflected in the levels of income inequality in the country. Statistics over the past decade show that Kenyans have become poorer and that past efforts to use education seem to have only perpetuated the inequalities (*Daily Nation*, November 4, 2005). The present condition can arguably be said to stem from how the Kenyan leaders viewed and used the inequalities they inherited from colonial administration as well as the policies that have been adopted to remedy them (Court, 1979; Alwy and Schech, 2004)

For instance, Manda (2002) posits that ‘those with no education earn less than those with formal education and the earnings increase with the level of education. The study further argues that the private rate of return to education for those with university education has increased over time while that of secondary education has declined and concludes that the rate of return to education in Kenya increases with the level of education. Unfortunately a further chain of events known as the ‘diploma disease<sup>22</sup>’ (Dore, 1976) have essentially been initiated by the abundance of school leavers and the paucity of jobs (Hughes, 1991). According to the ILO report, the poor and less educated found it difficult to ‘break out of the circle of poverty’ and yet poor education also resulted in a denial of job opportunity. A similar view is expressed by Court (1979) in his analysis of educational inequalities in Kenya where he points out that an education policy that places greater emphasis on academic achievement for economic advancement, and yet which allows inequality of access to quality schools by virtue of the distribution of good schools between ethnic groups and geographic regions perpetuates inequality

Further, Kimalu et.al (2001) established that Nairobi Province had the highest percentage of economically active population of 46 and 4.1 percent for secondary and university education, followed by Central Province with 23.9 and 0.6 percent. In North Eastern Province, 85.4 percent of the total economically active population had never attended school, indicating the resultant effects of regional inequalities<sup>23</sup> in provision of quality education, especially higher education. The economic disparity across counties is grim<sup>24</sup>. This inequality is directly correlated with access opportunities that these counties have (or don’t have) to higher education and historical injustices. The map below shows the economic disparities by region

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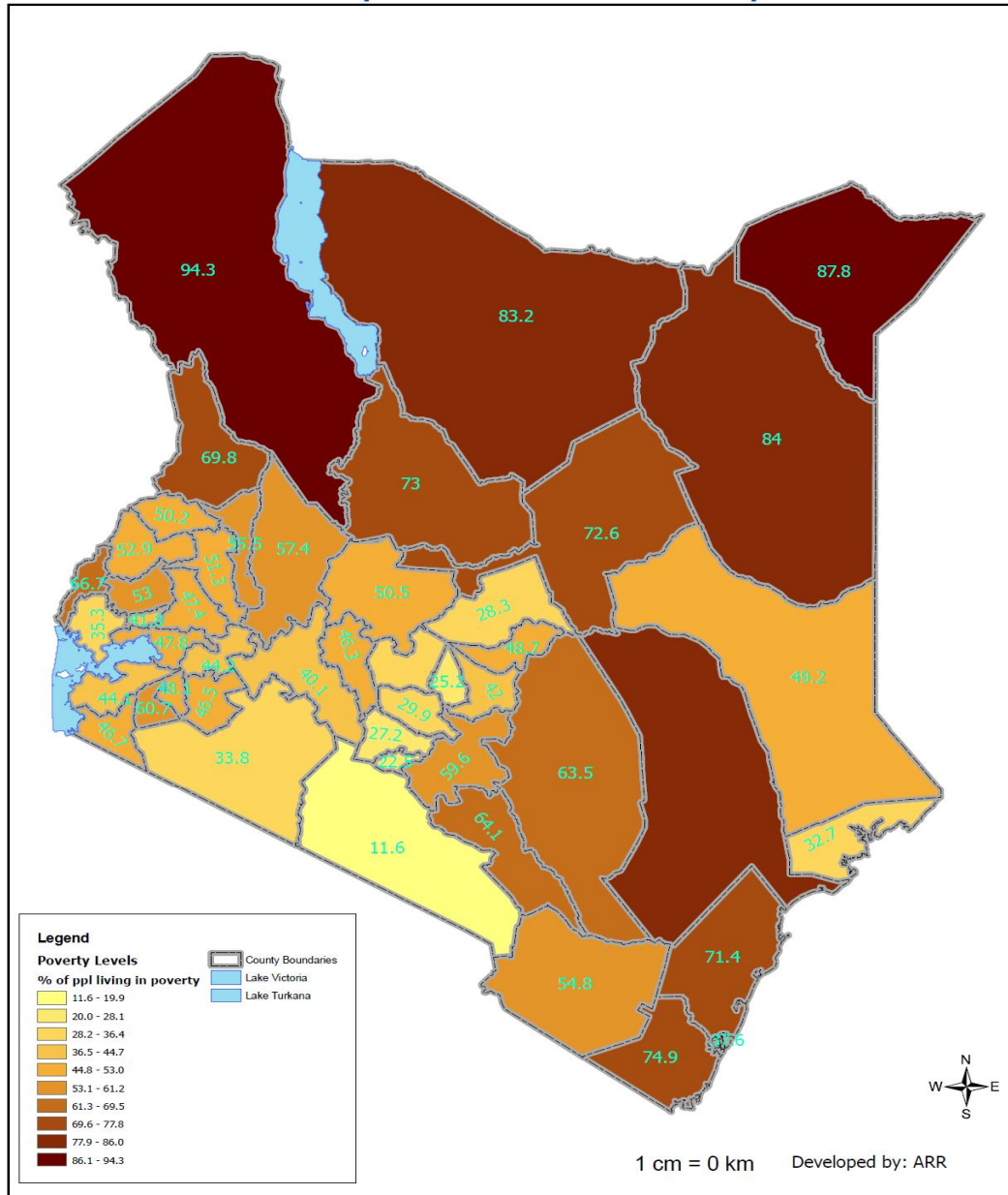
<sup>21</sup>Analysis by Mwega and Ndugu (2002)-cited in Green et.al show that between 1965-69 the economy of Kenya continued to perform better than those of the East Asian states. From 1975 onwards the economic performance gap between Kenya and the East Asian tigers reversed in favour of the latter. As Kenya’s economy slumped in the 1980s and 1990s, the East Asian tigers grew miraculously at an average of more than 6% a year and the gap widened

<sup>22</sup> It occurs when employers raise their hiring standards until they clearly exceed the training necessary to successfully fulfill job responsibilities. Individuals therefore respond to this by continuously increasing the number of academic certificates in the possession not necessarily as an indicator of skill advancement, but to effectively compete for the few chances

<sup>23</sup>In addition, regional inequalities have been exacerbated by colonial administration structures which resulted in uneven development; ethnic groups close to agrarian commercial areas and colonial capital territory, railways lines, ports or centers of colonial commerce have benefited from the availability of public goods such as government offices, commercial housing and schools found in these areas (Harowitz:1985:151). These trends are still reflected to today in the distribution of social and developmental amenities.

<sup>24</sup>The data on education and health, water and sanitation, access to electricity and the road network all tell the story of historical inequities and to some extent of the failure of the state to equalize opportunities for all Kenyans, asserts Commission on Revenue Allocation (2011)

## Poverty Levels Per County



Source of data: Commission on Revenue Allocation (2011)

At a glance, the map reveals wide margins between the rural and urban areas<sup>25</sup> (for instance, Nairobi posts poverty levels of 25.2% while Turkana and Mandera counties post 94.3% and 87.8% respectively) and the regions that have had sitting presidents perform equally well (for instance, Kiambu, the home county of the first president posts 28.3%, Nakuru, home to the second president posts 27.2% and Nyeri, home for the sitting president posts 42%), further underscoring tribal and regional distribution of the “national cake”, which also serves to strengthen the argument that higher education benefits mostly regions that have had a sitting president. This is eventually replicated nationally, in the distribution of public jobs<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Court (1979) argued that education in Kenya could not act to reduce inequalities because in spite of rapid expansion, much of which occurred through low quality community self-help schools (*harambee schools*), the academic orientation of the education system mainly emphasised progress to higher levels where access and provision remained unequal among regions and between rural and urban areas

<sup>26</sup> <http://muigwithania.com/2011/04/06/national-cohesion-and-integration-commission-commission-of-idiots/>



Finally, as mentioned earlier, inequity in admissions also presents itself in the courses on which women are enrolled<sup>27</sup>. The fact that women and men follow different courses serves to reinforce inequality in terms of the kinds of occupations women enter, and this impacts their position in society. It is worth noting that most of the subjects that women are enrolled in, lead to jobs that do not have attractive remuneration. This implies that women stand to lose in terms of economic empowerment because they will earn lower salaries than men. (Onsongo in Creighton et. al-Ed. 2006, cited in Kerigaet. al, 2009). Kigotho postulates that the issue of the number of women who access university education has far reaching implications when it comes to acquiring positions of leadership at policy making level.

We conclude this section by reiterating that educational expansion has not been accompanied by comparable economic growth in Kenya, a factor that is attributed to quality and access, especially as far as higher education is concerned. If this is not checked, the economic development in Kenya and her place on the global<sup>28</sup> agenda will greatly diminish.

### **5.1 Well-being: Definition**

A certain school of thought amongst development theorists asserts that development cannot purely be measured or understood by economic returns/means (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2005; Deneulin et. al, 2009). The New Economics Foundation (NEF) instead proposes for development as a dynamic process which combines elements that include satisfaction of external conditions (work, home, family, physical health); functioning well, being engaged and satisfying one's needs; psychological resources (optimism, self-esteem, resilience); positive feelings day-to-day and overall. (Marks and Thompson 2008:12). This is what they call well-being, a concept that is being used increasingly in the international discourse about development, especially in relation to the Millennium Development Goals (Veenhoven, 1994; Copestake, 2009; White, 2009).

According to White (2009), wellbeing is 'notoriously' difficult to define because it means different things to different people. At its heart, however, is the sense of having what you need for life to be good. For some a single domain of 'psychological wellbeing' or 'subjective wellbeing' is thus sufficient, tracked either in the form of itemised measures of satisfaction. White identifies objective aspects as: income, wealth & assets, employment, levels of consumption, social-political identities, violence/insecurity access to services & amenities, household structures & composition, physical health etc. The subjective aspects include: perceptions of living standards, safety, discrimination and environmental quality, satisfaction with level of health, education and religious freedoms.

It is therefore apparent that the concept of well-being has diverse meanings, all of which refer to persons, either individually, in aggregate or as groups. For some writers well-being means having a good life and can be assessed in terms of material welfare and living standards. For others it means living a good life in terms of values and ideals held. 'Wellbeing is taken to refer to what people think and feel internally about their life as well as what they have and do' (Veenhoven, 1994 in Copestake, 2009:2). For Ryan and Sapp (2007) well-being refers to a person's capacity for optimal functioning. It goes beyond physical health and the needs for nutrition, clean water and shelter – and addresses the nutriment and processes entailed in psychological and social fitness. For Ryan and Sapp, well-being has three dimensions; growth, integrity and subjective well-being.

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<sup>27</sup>Analysis of students' enrolment in public universities by selected courses by the Ministry of Education confirmed that relatively few women are enrolled in science courses and especially in engineering (Government of Kenya, 2000).

<sup>28</sup>According to Knight (Ed.)-2009, "globalization" refers to the increasing internationalization (and the corresponding lessened significance attached to national borders and nation states). Thus, in the globalized economy, wealth and power increasingly flow less from the location of natural resources (with the exception of oil and gas) and the production of goods, and more from the ownership of capital and knowledge, protected by enforceable contracts, patents, copyrights, and licensing agreements. Globalization further diminishes the significance of national and local language, culture, traditions, or norms. In its place is a correspondingly hegemonic flow of language and culture from the highly industrialized and technologically sophisticated countries. Globalization's impact on financing higher education is to further heighten the advantages to both nations and individuals of obtaining high levels of knowledge and skills—and thus to increase the quality of their higher education. Globalization also applies directly to higher education in the increased ability of universities and other suppliers of knowledge to transmit this knowledge across borders electronically and without much, if any, control or regulation by local or national governments.

The achievement of these involves the learning of autonomy, of competence and of relatedness. The NEF (2009) defines well-being “as the dynamic process that gives people a sense of how their lives are going, through the interaction between their circumstances, activities and psychological resources or ‘mental capital’”. It comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well.

Diener et. al (2010) postulate that the term well-being still require considerable conceptual clarification and better metrics. However, there is a growing consensus that these accounts need to include both objective and subjective measures of well-being. “In the same way that governments collect systematic measures on many aspects of the economy...they should also collect a variety of measures reflecting individuals’ subjective evaluation of their lives (ibid pp 36). Diener concluded that good governance requires information about well-being in order to set priorities and to formulate and evaluate policies that are aimed at improving well-being. The discussion below looks at the effect of high education on well-being in face of inequality in accessing higher education in Kenya.

## **5.2 Access to Higher Education and Well-being in Kenya**

There is plenty of evidence of the influence of education on many important aspects of people’s lives Pannozzo et. al (2005). Being able to read, count, communicate, make informed choices, have a sense of self-worth, have greater degree of control over one’s life and so on – have a substantial impact on life expectancy. Significantly, the direct effect of those educational functioning on longevity is almost equivalent to their effect by way of resource accumulation” (Wigley and Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006: 287-301).

According to Crocker (2002), the well-being of modern society is dependent not only on traditional capital and labour but also on the knowledge and ideas possessed and generated by individual workers. Education is therefore the primary source of this human capital, especially higher education. To underscore this, Kaka et. al, (2009) established that there was a direct relationship between formal education and occupation in Kenya. Those with higher education were more likely (90%) to be employed than those with no formal education. According to Hughes (1991), getting a job in Kenya is a long and complex process, which begins with education. Since there is no alternative to education if wage employment is to be gained, and since many households are almost completely dependent on the remittances from wage labour for survival, education becomes increasingly essential for wellbeing. This has resulted in an almost desperate demand for education of virtually any type and at every level (Hughes, 1991; Oketch, 2004). Crocker also established that educational attainment is positively associated both with health status and with healthy lifestyles. Kaka et. al, (2009) established that there was an inverse relationship between education and action taken when child had malaria in Kenya i.e. first action to take the ill child to hospital decreased with decreasing level of education. Though Kenya has recorded improved child and maternal healthcare<sup>29</sup> marginalized counties<sup>30</sup> (characterized by poor access to higher education) still face insurmountable access to appropriate healthcare<sup>31</sup>. For instance, North Eastern, with the lowest proportion of population with higher education also had highest maternal death rate, more than twice the national average of 488 deaths per every 100,000 live births<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup>And in recent years, Kenya has recorded significant reduction in child mortality. According to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (2008-2009) the country’s under-5 mortality rate reduced from 115 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2003 to 74 in 2008-2009. Infant mortality also dropped from 77 deaths per 1,000 in 2003 to 52 deaths per 1,000 in 2008-2009 ([http://www.unicef.org/kenya/media\\_10961.html](http://www.unicef.org/kenya/media_10961.html))

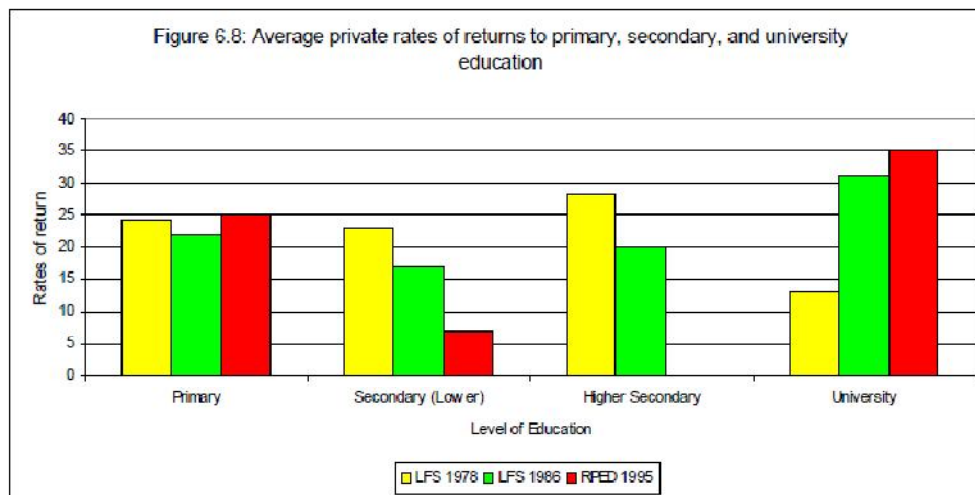
<sup>30</sup>Generally speaking, the Central Province and Nairobi are deemed to have the best facilities, whereas the North-Eastern Province is found to be the most underdeveloped (<http://www.allianzworldwidecare.com/healthcare-in-kenya>)

<sup>31</sup> Private sector continues to dominate health care financing at over 50% of the total with out of pocket household payment accounting for 45% of total payments. Public spending translates to a paltry 8% – which falls short of the required 15%. This state of affairs perpetuates inequalities in access to health care especially by the poor.

Findings further point to gross disparities in staffing and facility distribution in Kenya, which are pertinent contributing factors to inequalities in health in the country. It notes that, while some provinces experience surplus in terms of personnel and facility distribution, some areas suffer acute shortages. The surpluses are essentially experienced in Central and Nairobi Provinces while the shortfalls are more acute in North Eastern and Nyanza Provinces the provinces that have the worst health indicators! Findings further indicate that the provinces with highest morbidity especially Nyanza province continue to receive the lowest per capita allocation while low morbidity provinces like Central continue to receive the highest per capita allocation averaging to about half of the total allocation (<http://www.gtzenyahealth.com/blog3/?p=1448>)

<sup>32</sup>([http://www.unicef.org/kenya/media\\_10961.html](http://www.unicef.org/kenya/media_10961.html)).

It is therefore apparent that inequality in access to higher education is impacting on health well-being of many Kenyans. From a health determinant perspective, education is clearly a good investment that can reduce long-term health care costs” (Crocker: 37-38). However, according to Allianz Worldwide Care<sup>33</sup> Kenya spent 5.1% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on healthcare in 2002, falling to 1.5% in 2010/11<sup>34</sup>. This was well below the high-income OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries’ average of 9.8% for the same period. Meanwhile, higher education has been found to have a positive impact on healthcare burden (Kakai et. al, 2009), and thus overall nation’s well-being. In addition, workers with higher education were more likely to have secure, high-wage, high-benefit jobs. Moreover, employees with less than high school education were more likely to have insecure work, low wages and no benefits. . . poverty and inequality are acknowledged to be the most reliable predictors of poor health outcomes, and they are also closely linked to low educational attainment and unhealthy lifestyles (Crocker, 2002: 39). The figure below shows the private returns<sup>35</sup> on education in Kenya.



Social returns were found to be lower than private returns, and the difference was most marked at university level and least pronounced at the secondary level. Private returns to university education in 1995 was very large – 35 percent relative to 17 percent social returns (Kamalu et al, 2001: 63). This basically imply that those with a university education will have an edge in access to health, higher incomes, options in leisure activities, purchasing power, choice of school, neighborhood etc.

Crocker indicates that 75.4% of female university graduates had a job in 2001, compared with 79.3% of male graduates in Canada. By contrast, women with less than a Grade 9 education are less than half as likely to be employed as their male counterparts – 13.6% of women compared to 29.4% of men. In Kenya, labour force participation was 76.4% for female and 88.1% for males in 2009<sup>36</sup>. This typically reflects the access disparities to higher education by women compared to men, which inevitably gives the latter a better chance in well-being as far as decision making<sup>37</sup> and access to assets is concerned. Population growth rate (average annual %) in Kenya is 2.6 and a fertility rate of 4.5%<sup>38</sup>. This population growth is quite high. Meanwhile, evidence indicate that population growth impacts negatively on well-being in developing countries , providing pressure on land and resources, health, food availability, housing, poverty, the environment, and possibly education (Ahlburg et. al 1996). Having said that, studies reveal overwhelming correlation between education and fertility rates (Stephens et al, 1998).

<sup>33</sup> (<http://www.allianzworldwidecare.com/healthcare-in-kenya>),

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.gtzkenyahealth.com/blog3/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Health-Budget-Analysis\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.gtzkenyahealth.com/blog3/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Health-Budget-Analysis_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Kimalu P. et al (2001) The private rate of return to education for a given level of education is given by the discount rate that equalises the stream of benefits to the stream of costs at a given point in time

<sup>36</sup> (<http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=kenya>)

<sup>37</sup> This can be reflectd both at home and on the national stage. For instance, Seats held by women in national parliament is 9.8% in Kenya <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=kenya>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

Therefore unless many more people access higher education in Kenya, they are likely to be disadvantaged as far as access to food, housing, land and other material asserts necessary for well-being are concerned for there is a strong correlation between this and higher education (Shirahase, 2000) Kenya has gone down by 20 places in the grading order in the past three years. According to UN's human development index (HDI)<sup>39</sup>, Kenya dropped by 20 places in 2005, meaning a Kenyan was less likely to live longer or even get a better education the UNDP report said. Kenya was ranked 154 out of the 177 countries included in the report. Kenya scored very low on the ability to provide a decent standard of living based on the earnings per person per year and how fair wealth is distributed. And since education in Kenya, especially higher education "connects with only the best", the role of education as a greater equalizer is greatly diminished. This means that an average Kenya (without a university degree) is likely to be unemployed (stands between 30-40% for 15-30 age group)<sup>40</sup>, live in the slum, cannot access clean water, electrify and other amenities<sup>41</sup>.

In terms of security, cases of domestic violence, drug abuse, burglary, ethnic rivalry, torture in Kenya are mostly committed by young poorly educated youths (Aronson, 2011<sup>42</sup>; UNODCCP, 1999; Ojiambo, 2009). This is an indicator of betrayal as far as well-being is concerned. The HDI report (UNDP 2006<sup>43</sup>) recommends that the country should institutionalize mechanisms that ensure participation of all Kenyans in economic development, regardless of income status, gender or ethnicity in order to arrest this situation. But in a country which education fuels this, this recommendation will take time to materialize.

### ***Recommendations and Conclusion***

It is noteworthy that Kenya's Vision 2030 acknowledges the magnitude of wastage in the transition from secondary to university education. The blue print has noted with concern that although secondary school enrolment has risen tremendously, the passage to university is below the expected 15 per cent target for 2012, high regional disparities in access and that access to technical and science based courses hampered by lack of infrastructure<sup>44</sup>. To mitigate these, the blue print recommends that The Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) explore new avenues for funding in order to enhance access and equity to university and higher education and ensure that all qualified students access the loans especially the disadvantaged girls and the many young Kenyans who are victims of regional disparities caused by high costs of higher education coupled with remoteness and underdeveloped infrastructure. Other recommendations include: Establishing of new university colleges in regional areas, with specific focus on strategic disciplines, expanding the capacities of existing universities by establishing campus and constituent colleges of existing universities, upgrading existing middle-level colleges to degree-granting institutions without losing their current mandate.

For Kenya to be a country that is productive and has a highly skilled work force that is both innovative and hardworking, it must adopt state of the art technology, with a vibrant private sector and a public sector that facilitates investment. The country must pursue policies that do not disrupt economic activities of her people as well as those of external investors. Kenyans should also be assured of equal opportunities to employment and guaranteed a decent income that ensures them wellbeing<sup>45</sup>. In conclusion, this discussion has briefly demonstrated inequalities in accessing higher education and the effect of this to the economic development and the wellbeing of Kenyans. The discussion also presented a sneak preview of the social-economic inequalities in the country and brief recommendations if the country has to achieve the goals encapsulated in vision 2030 blue print.

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<sup>39</sup>is based on life expectancy; literacy levels and manpower development. It also measures a country on the basis of wealth distribution. The human development index also measures the average achievements in a country based on a long and healthy life as judged by life expectancy at birth, among other things. It also examines adult literacy rates and the combined gross enrolment for primary, secondary and tertiary schools <http://www.afrika.no/Detailed/10388.html>

<sup>40</sup><http://mjengakenya.blogspot.com/2012/01/unemployment-in-kenya-ruralurban-divide.html>

<sup>41</sup><http://www.stacyharrisministries.com/id20.html>

<sup>42</sup><http://www.studentpulse.com/articles/278/2/crime-and-development-in-kenya-emerging-trends-and-the-transnational-implications-of-political-economic-and-social-instability>

<sup>43</sup>[http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Kenya/kenya\\_2006\\_en.pdf](http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Kenya/kenya_2006_en.pdf)

<sup>44</sup><http://www.educationinsight.net/20100712316/vision-2030-targets-increased-university-enrolment-from-130000-to-450000-by-2015>

<sup>45</sup>[http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Kenya/kenya\\_2006\\_en.pdf](http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Kenya/kenya_2006_en.pdf)

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