

Abstract:

The recent and rising increase in enrollment at the primary school level since the introduction of the FPE in 2003 has led to a corresponding and significant rise in enrollment rates at the secondary school level. This has translated into an increased demand for higher education in the country. The demand for higher education is driven by the realization that this level of education forms the principal pillar of development. The current development agenda in Kenya is inspired by the realization that there are many available options and avenues via which the goals of industrialization and socioeconomic development can be achieved. Higher education will play the strategic role in the process. It is therefore necessary to explore and understand the nature of linkages which exist between upper-secondary and higher education levels in terms of access, equity, relevance, financing, curriculum, quality and articulation to the job market. This study has examined the evolving trends and what they portend for the development of higher education and life long learning in Kenya. It has critically analysed the articulation routes, delved into the quality aspect, the sustainability of the various initiatives, and identified the lessons learnt for possible best practices. Although the local focus of higher education is university education, there are four national polytechnics and several middle-level colleges which also absorb the secondary school graduates in Kenya. The demand for university education has led to the opening up of public universities for the Self Sponsored Programmes (SSP) and an increase in private universities. Horizontal and vertical articulation between the curricula and its assessment has been discussed. The study previews the sustainability of the articulation pathways in the face of the expected surge in demand for higher education in the short and long term in Kenya. The study concludes that the recent initiatives to reform the upper secondary curriculum, to open up university access via the SSP route, to reconfigure student financing, to provide for the establishment of private universities and for admission of more female students have had positive impacts, and are sustainable. The limited horizontal articulation within the higher education sector and the tendency to take over ongoing middle-level institutions in order to provide for access need to be evaluated. It is also proposed to assess the impact of the long waiting period between upper primary and higher education and how it affects articulation and subsequent student performance in the university.