Economically empowered young people in Africa: promoting creativity and inclusiveness
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Abstract

This panel aims to investigate issues surrounding the improvement of the social and economic empowerment of children and young people across Africa. It examines the initiatives aiding youth to gain control, to self-determine their realities and to fulfil their life and career goals. Economic restrictions are usually regarded as an obstruction to a youth's or children's social mobility; varying presentations and papers will provide analysis, experiences or research related to: (1) exploring avenues to ensure greater child social and economic empowerment, (2) facilitators to assist the economic barriers in education, social protection, health and other sectors' programmes; (3) the methods needed to bridge the gap between transferable skills from education to the workforce, and ensure maximum use of pre-existing creativity and innovative ideas.

Decolonising Education Institutions [5 min]
Guest speaker Distinguished Prof. Aslam Fataar (Sociology of Education, Stellenbosch University)

Prof. Aslam could not join the conference due to unforeseen circumstances and shared a video of his presentation. He addresses the questions of how to decolonise education in Africa and its importance in the continent. He begins by outlining some of the questions he will unpack; how decolonising education emerged in South Africa, the type of decolonity, and the implication of decolonising education for the curriculum. 2015 was when the process of

decolonising education began in South Africa due to a controversy surrounding the unequal treatment of university students at the time. This then permeated across South Africa and the African continent in general. Although decolonizing academia was not a new discourse in South Africa, as it initially emerged in the 1950/60s, it's only in 2015 that it re-emerged in the South African context. The overriding issue with decolonising education is that it deviates from the longstanding Eurocentric model of education. It attempts to reinsert the notion of Africa at the centre of the universe, both as an identity and a knowledge platform. In essence, decolonisation favours an ecologist knowledge approach which seeks to place Africa at the centre, where all other forms of knowledge become part of a much broader epistemological orientation. With the rise of decolonisation came 'afrocentric' views that emphasise African identity and roots. He also outlined the rise of the 'afropolitanism' view, which is built on the idea that African people and communities are worldly and deeply cosmopolitan. These views are certainly informing the discourse on decolonising education in Africa. With that being said, he questions how we can bring these views and debates and insert them into the curriculum.

Improving social and economic empowerment of young people through social and financial education (SFE): the challenge of SFE integration of secondary education level in Cameroon

Roger Kaffo Fokou (Government bilingual High School Dschang) & Livia Remeijers (Aflatoun International)

In order to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, youth in Cameroon need to create fruitful financial habits and practices. This has the potential to foster decent work opportunities which in return contribute to economic development. The Ministry of Secondary Education of Cameroon acknowledges the importance of helping youth become more financially savvy; thus they've signed an agreement with Aflatoun International to integrate Social and Financial Education into its secondary school system. This presentation elaborates on the national integration of SFE into the school system as a way to empower youth in Cameroon both socially and economically. The presentation also collates the different stakeholders' contribution to the process, the enablers and barriers, as well as recommendations to reach national coverage. This acts as an example for neighbouring countries who intend to follow these footsteps and achieve the same goals.

A call to action: designing from the 'furthest-behind-first' lens

Virginia Ngindiru (Zizi Afrique Foundation) & Winny Cherotich Ngeno (The People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network)

The curriculum reforms currently taking place in Kenya are hindered by the desperate need to prepare students for the workforce and the digital world. Because of the learning gaps seen over the years in assessments such as Uwezo and SACMEQ, there is a wide focus on competencies across all learning stages. Many students progress or leave primary stages of learning without acquiring the basic skills. When this happens, students experience greater challenges and enter a vicious cycle which results in unemployment eventually. According to The Accelerated Learning Program, an intervention targeted at students in middle school who lack foundational literacy and numeracy, there is a correlation between low learning levels and absenteeism. Therefore, it is important to prioritise those who are at risk of falling behind in early stages of education. Luckily studies have shown that, in a short period, those with little or no literacy and numeracy skills can catch up and acquire basic skills. Overall, there is a need for formulation and adoption of policies and pedagogical approaches that appeal to learning needs for all learners.

Impact of the AFLATEEN+ Life Skills and Financial Education programme on adolescent girls and boys in Cameroon and Burkina Faso [5 min]

Livia Remeijers (Monitoring and Evaluation Manager at Aflatoun International)

The Aflateen+ programme is a life skills and financial education programme for adolescent girls and boys, between the ages of 12-19, based in Burkina Faso and Cameroon. The aim was to teach these adolescents about self and interpersonal skills, rights orientation, sexual reproductive health, financial and entrepreneurial skills from a gender lense. It consisted of a contextualised curriculum of 47 sessions, spread over the duration of 10 months. Youth can participate voluntarily in Aflateen+ clubs held in public secondary schools in Cameroon and in non-formal centres in Burkina Faso. To gain further insight and a thorough understanding of the matter, Aflatoun employed research consultants to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation of the programme in both countries. The research question focused on what has been the effect of the Aflateen+ programme on social, financial and entrepreneurial outcomes among students attending the Aflateen+ programme, relative to the representative control group in Burkina Faso and Cameroon? In terms of the research design, they opted for a 'Randomized control trial', which randomly allocated schools into a treatment group (the group that receives the interventions, in this case the Aflateen+ programme) and a control group (the group that serves as a comparison, consisting of schools that did not receive the programme).

The programme consisted of five core elements which also provided a set of outcome indicators: self-efficacy was the indicator for the first element 'Personal understanding and exploration'; critical thinking about gender roles, knowledge of human rights & responsibilities, and attitudes towards gender and sexual based violence were the indicators of the second element 'Rights and responsibilities'; healthy decision making in personal relationships as well as sexual and reproductive health knowledge were the indicators of the third element 'My body, my choices'; savings behaviour, spending behaviour, and financial knowledge were some of the main indicators of the fourth element 'Saving and spending'; finally entrepreneurial attitudes and entrepreneurial behaviours were the indicators of the fifth element 'My enterprise'. The programme had the largest impact on the first, second and fourth element. On the other hand, there was no observable impact (yet) on the third element 'My body, my choices'. This highlighted the need to focus on how to teach the sensitive theme SRH in training of teachers to maximise programme's impact. Finally, the research demonstrated the need for more in-depth research on issues pertaining to gender, rural/urban and age group differences as well as long-term effects.

Youth Training and the gender challenge in Africa: case of Safaricom Foundation scholarship programme
Purity Ngina (Zizi Afrique) & John Mugo (Zizi Afrique) & Eunice Kibathi (Safaricom and M-Pesa Foundation)

Whilst Kenya's economy is growing rapidly, unemployment is rampant amongst its youth. Studies have recently established the correlation between youth unemployment and gender, geographic location, level of education as well as household socio-economic status. A lot of regions in Kenya have seen youth unemployment reach as high as 80%. This can be due to many factors, but mainly due to limited access to information; most youth in rural areas (two thirds) access information through word of mouth. Safaricom Foundation has put in place a scholarship programme to somewhat solve this dilemma. In collaboration with two other civil society organisations, they target marginalised youth. This programme gives these youth a

chance to build a career and participate in the labour force. The paper illustrates the intricate challenges female youth face when seeking scholarship programmes. These limitations are traced back to economic, cultural and educational barriers women face generally across the continent. The paper analysis the following three key questions in an attempt to open a wider conversations that unpacks the gender conundrum:

1. Which challenges are limiting female youth from participating in fully-sponsored and gender-focused training programmes, and how do the youth themselves engage with these?
2. Which mobilization methods might work in locating and nudging participation in sponsored training programmes?
3. How could the prevailing social, cultural and economic blocks be countered to accelerate the economic empowerment of women on the continent?

Navigating African feminism: Wangari Maathai as a portrait
Eunice Wangui Stuhlhofer (Caritas Austria)

Western feminism ignores the various forms of inequality that operate together and exacerbate each other. Such feminism fails to recognise that women are neither a stable nor a homogeneous category. Women's varying problems can't be condensed into one. As such, Western feminism has been accused of marginalising black African women as they fail to address issues relevant to them. Cultural and historical context is important when looking at the discourse surrounding African feminism. Within African feminism alone, there is a plethora of strands that exist in disharmony. Through her achievements and activism, Wangari Maathai elucidates the realities of an African feminist. The same way Western feminism isolates the black African feminist, Western education is also guilty of the same crime. Additionally, this paper underlined the importance of involving men in the process of female empowerment. Overall, cultural and political agencies influence the course of feministic pursuits.

Discussion

Livia Remeijers led the discussion and kicked it off by asking Eunice Wangui Stuhlhofer what her take on African feminism is and the role it plays in educational intervention such as those presented by Zizi Afrique Foundation. Eunice was asked the question of how African feminists can play a role in such programmes and interventions. In response to this, Eunice first highlighted the importance of recognising the various feminists movements or strands that exist within Africa alone; some of whom mainly prioritise family life and marriage. In her response, she underlined the importance of involving men in the process of female empowerment. According to her, the empowerment of women is only possible if we engage men as they are also important agents of change when it comes to challenging established gender norms. In addition, she raised the issue of language and the importance of decolonizing academia as well as institutions through language. Language is a powerful tool, one that has been used for decades as a way to oppress linguistically different people. Eunice spoke of studies that demonstrate the benefits of teaching a child in their first language, rather than forcing them to learn in a second language. Thus, it is pivotal to empower children and youth by making indigenous languages the language of instruction.

Purity Nniga was asked to respond to the comments put forward by Eunice. She also agreed with Eunice, as she stressed the importance of promoting inclusivity when it comes to female empowerment. Additionally, she underlined some of the issues African women face, including struggles to conform to society's norms and values whilst also trying to fulfil their career aspirations. It is highly crucial to include women in non-traditional training

programmes and courses so they can push boundaries and be well positioned to provide financially for their family; this would alleviate the burden of women just being the caretakers.

The discussion moves on to the third question which explored the challenges or barriers that may impede the decolonisation of the national educational curriculum. Roger Kaffo Fokou takes the floor and answers this question in French, which is then translated by Livia. Roger emphasised the heavy influence France has on many West African countries. A lot of the resources, tools and training in West African countries is often made possible by the French. Such influence has overtaken the local values and cultures. For Roger, we are missing the local values, which are often very different from what is generally transmitted. As such, local values, religion, history and languages need to be recognised and promoted within the national curriculum.

Finally, Livia turns the discussion to Virginia Ngindiru, from Zizi Afrique Foundation, who reflects on the the topic of literacy and numeracy tools; Virginia was asked what are the challenges to scaling literacy and numeracy tools to national levels and to what extent is there a link with decolonisation of educational institutions? Virginia revisited the discussion around the language of instruction that was mentioned above; she explained the difficulty that comes with teaching children a language that is not spoken at home. Often English, French and Swahili are the main languages that are prioritised in African educational curriculum. In recent years, government organisations have come to realise the importance of teaching indigenous languages in school and have made some efforts. Using one or two languages as the main methods of teaching does not work for all students as there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach that is applicable to all students. Therefore, it is important to steer the conversation and measure learning in a way that is relevant to all languages and cultural contexts. Virginia advocated for a more flexible curriculum, one that prioritises indigenous languages and provides the necessary materials to teach such languages; It is important that indigenous language materials are available and easily accessed the same way English and French is. Beyond that, promoting the teaching of indigenous languages may also empower students, parents and teachers.