

This study investigated the trends in participation in university education from different regional and gender groups in Kenya over selected years in the period 1974-1994. The Study covered selected undergraduate degree programmes at the University of Nairobi Kenyatta University and Moi University. The study also looked into the efficacy of various affirmative action measures in Kenya's public universities, and the views of different people regarding the use of academic staff, Officials of the Joint Admissions Board, the commission for Higher Education and the Ministry of Education.

The instruments used in data collection included interviews, a questionnaire and document analysis. Data on the enrolment of students was analysed quantitatively and presented in the form of graphs and simple tables. The information gathered from the interviews and from the questionnaire responses was analysed and presented thematically.

The main findings of the study were as follows: -

1. There are glaring disparities in participation in University education by the different regional and gender groups. These inequalities are more evident in the science based professional degree courses. Women and students from the arid and semi-arid districts are especially under represented in University education.
2. The various affirmative action measures that were meant to redress the inequalities in access to university education have not borne any notable results. There has been very poor-co-ordination and monitoring of the affirmative action measures and thus their efficacy cannot be quantified.
3. Many of the respondents were of the opinion that the various affirmative action measures already affected were a wasted effort since they did not aim at providing a lasting solution to the problem of inequalities in University education in Kenya. The practice of lowering University admission points for women was especially criticized and opposed.

It was strongly recommended that the problem of gender and regional inequalities in University education would best be tackled from the primary and secondary school level. This would involved opening up access to women students and students from the disadvantaged regions at these levels of education, and putting into place measures to ensure higher retention rates of these students. It was also recommended that the Universities be more flexible in their admissions, by for example encouraging more day scholars and also admitting mature-entry students and part time students.