

Analysis of Gender (in)equalities in The Ethiopian Education Policy by Using the ‘What’s the Problem Represented to be?’ Approach of Carol Bacchi

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Abstract: This paper assesses the Ethiopian education policies by using the ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ (WPR) approach of policy analysis developed by Carol Bacchi. Since recognising women's rights in its 1995 constitution, Ethiopia implemented several laws and regulations, mainstreaming gender in all ministries, including education. Despite these measures, a significant gender gap still persists especially as one climbs up the education ladder to higher levels which is characterised by low enrolment and high attrition rate of female students. This paper assesses the education system of Ethiopia with regards to gender gap. Specifically, it examines the newly formulated education and training policy of the country and its strategic documents by questioning how the problem of gender gap is framed in the education system. By using the WPR approach of Carol Bacchi, as a methodology, the paper mainly aims to: (i) examine the existing gender gaps in the education system and (ii) analyse the problematisation of gender gap in the education policy and policy documents. According to the WPR approach, what governments suggest to do something about reflects their perception of what they consider to be problematic and is in need of change. Analysis of the problem representation of the 1994 Education and Training Policy shows that there is a gap concerning strategies and actions regarding retention and completion. After almost three decades of governments’ effort to gender mainstreaming, however, the recently reformed education policy kept total silences with respects to gender issue in spite of existing gaps. Hence, gender issue is left unproblematic in the problem representation of the newly established Ethiopian Education and Training Policy of 2023. In general, this policy inaction and incoherence can hinder effective governance, leading to inefficiencies, confusion and failure to achieve desired outcomes due to conflicting or counterproductive policy implementations.