

ABSTRACT

International attention to the issue of girls' education has grown dramatically over the past several decades. Gender parity and equality in education has become a significant global development priority. The Dakar Framework for Action (DFA), which set the agenda for achieving Education for All (EFA) commitments by 2015, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were aimed at the reduction of global poverty, also by 2015, serve as the main policy blueprints with respect to the global agenda for achieving gender equality in education. Despite widespread acceptance that states ought to decrease gender disparities in education, progress with respect to achieving the related DFA and MDG goals has varied between states. Although sub-Saharan Africa continues to lag far behind other regions, there are some countries in the region that have achieved better results than others. This variation in outcomes raises pertinent questions about the constitutive influence and diffusion of norms at the national level.

This research report seeks to identify the mechanisms that determine the constitutive effects of the norm vis-à-vis gender parity in education in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Using the Gambia and Chad as case studies, the study tests whether domestic political structures and domestic norms have a significant impact on norm diffusion processes at the national level, as well as how these factors will predict the pathways for diffusion and, ultimately, the constitutive effects of the norm. The study begins by tracing the evolution and documenting the existence of a global norm with respect to gender parity in education. The norm's emergence is shown to correlate with changes in policy and practice amongst African states at both the regional and national level; however, there remains significant differences amongst states with regards to their performance in relation to gender parity targets/goals. The central finding of the study is that domestic political structures and domestic norms explain this variation between countries and predict the key drivers of normative change. In the cases of Gambia and Chad specifically, the extent of civil society participation has significantly determined the countries' performance with respect to gender parity in education goals.

Key words: Norm evolution, norm diffusion, gender parity in education, sub-Saharan Africa mechanisms for diffusion, domestic political structures, domestic legitimacy