

15.12.2025

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**Title**

Higher education policy reforms in Ethiopia : the representations of the problem of gender inequality

**Publication year**

2012

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education policy advance online publication, 2 October 2012. - 23 Bl.

**Inventory number**

44389

**Keywords**

Ausland : Äthiopien : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Ausland : Äthiopien : Studenten, Studium, Lehre

**Abstract**

The higher education (HE) subsystem in Ethiopia has passed through a series of policy reforms in the last 10 years. Key reform areas ranged from improving quality and relevance of programmes to promoting equality in access to and success in HE. Despite the effort underway, gender inequality has remained a critical challenge in the subsystem. This makes it imperative to question the way in which the problem of gender inequality is framed in the equity policies and strategies put in place. This paper reports on the analysis of two policy documents from the Government of Ethiopia. Drawing on Carlo Bacchi's 'what is the problem represented to be?' approach to critical policy analysis, the study reveals the inherent limitations in how the problem of gender inequality is understood and framed. The findings show that gender inequality has largely been equated with disparity in enrolment, and the policies are silent on structural impediments that underlie the problem. The drawbacks of the gender equity policy instruments are partly linked with the neoliberal policy elements endorsed in the reforms. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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