



Perceptions of Youth on the Role of Basic Education in Breaking Generational Poverty

14

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14.1 Introduction

“To many observers, the African child is a composite of misfortunes: a symbol of hunger, ill health, illiteracy and other manifestations of poverty” (UNICEF and Organization of African Unity, 1992, p. 175). This is the profile of the African child that this chapter seeks to shed more light on. The chapter plugs into the book theme on youth and intergenerational poverty in Kenya. It is based on the practice of women in higher education who seek to deal with society’s problems caused by poverty as part of their work in social entrepreneurship.

The idea of this chapter came about as a follow-up study that explores the views of youth from Kibera slums, on their perceptions of generational poverty and role of education as a solution. The unpublished initial study in 2001 focused on the children’s approach in breaking the cycle of poverty from a sample of children living in the sprawling Kibera Slum in Nairobi. Although this study does not dwell on that initial study, it gleans some information on the plight of children living and growing up in Kibera.

In Kenya, children have been the hardest hit by poverty, which has caused life-long damage to their minds and bodies, turning them into adults who perpetuate the poverty cycle by transmitting it to their children. Impoverished children become transmitters of poverty as parents on to their children, who form the next generation, perpetuating the poverty cycle. As Johnson (2002, para 20) aptly puts it, “in this vicious cycle, malnourished girls grow up to become malnourished mothers who give birth to underweight babies... Poor children become parents of poor children.”

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They become parents lacking access to crucial information, unable to optimally feed and care for their children.

At the same time, illiterate parents cannot support children in their learning processes. The result is that their children become the next generation of the poor and the vicious cycle continues. This has proved to be a major problem in Kenya given that the KIHBS 2015/16 (KNBS, 2018) indicated that children in the age bracket of 0–17 years had the highest rate of poverty at both rural 43.9% and national level at 41.5%. In the core-urban area, child poverty stood at 37.9% and at 22.4% for youth aged between 18 and 35 years. Children and youth are poor and run the risk as adults of transmitting poverty to their own children. This same survey indicates that women-headed households are far worse in poverty at 30.2% as compared to men at 26%.

A lot of research has been done, looking at economic solutions and not much in getting the perception of the children and youth on how to break the cycle of generational poverty. This current study focused on youth who grew up in the same Kibera slum and would be the same age as those in the study 20 years later. However, they must have benefited from a secondary or college education. The purpose of this study was to explore the views of the older youths from Kibera slums on their perceptions of generational poverty and role of education as a solution to date.

This study is significant in bringing out views at a time when Kenya Vision 2030 that touches on development and basic education curriculum is being implemented. This has importance in the new school curriculum 2-6-6-3 that significantly overhauls curriculum in education in Kenya. In seeking to understand the perception of youth on the role of education as a solution to generational poverty, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1. Is generational poverty apparent in the lives of the youth?
- RQ2. What are the perceptions of youth on generational poverty?
- RQ3. What are the suggested solutions on how generational poverty can be broken?
- RQ4. What role does education play as a solution to generational poverty?

14.2 Defining Generational Poverty

Despite the amount of literature on poverty, there is no consensus on one unified definition or concept of poverty given the different contexts, measurements and types of poverty that relate to food or the state of unemployment (Khan & Siddiqui, 2007). Definitions can be quantitative as an absolute figure or qualitative as a relative concept (Nejati et al., 2013). On the global front, The United Nations qualitatively defines poverty as:

Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities.

It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation. (United Nations Statement, 1998)

On the local front, the 2001–2003 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) employs a qualitative description of poverty in Kenya reflecting the multitude of faces and numerous dimensions that poverty wears. This can be described as follows:

One man in Kajiado District, Ereret village, was quoted saying that “poverty is when children cry and you cannot stop them because they are hungry.” ... When a slum resident of Soweto Ward in Nairobi’s Kibera slum was asked to define poverty, he said that, “Poverty is me, look at me! Look at my clothes. I did not have anything this morning and I am not sure if I will eat anything today. My children are not in school and should they fall ill, I cannot afford to take them to the hospital.” (PRSP, 2001–2003, p. 13)

These qualitative descriptions of poverty aptly describe the environment that the poor in the Kenyan Kibera slum find themselves in. Quantitatively, poverty as defined by the World Bank (2015) is applied to those living below US\$ 1.90 per day, which roughly amounts to Kenya shillings 206.34 today. This is also noted as the condition of extreme poverty where most of the money goes to food which does not meet required nutritional levels; housing is of low quality with very little money left for education.

Generational poverty is then defined as a family having lived in poverty for at least two generations (Payne, 2005; Marger, 2008), resulting in the cycle of poverty where poor families become impoverished for at least three generations. This cycle affects children the most as they are dependent on parents or guardians (Corak, 2006). Thus, if the guardian is living in poverty, then the children will find themselves in the same circumstance. Due to their young age, lack of skills and experience that would pull them out of this cycle, it becomes almost impossible for these children in these circumstances to pull themselves out of poverty and the cycle of poverty continues (Ashworth et al., 1994). Wagmiller and Adelman (2009) found out that the chances of being poor in early adulthood increase sharply as the time spent living in poverty during childhood increases. Recent projections indicate that childhood poverty is set to increase in the future (Rahman, 2019), which further confounds the problem of generational poverty.

14.3 The Situational Analysis on Poverty in Kenya

The situational analysis on poverty in Kenya from the Kenya Economic Report 2020 (KIPPR, 2020) shows an improvement from 46% to 36.1% of those living below the poverty line. Kenya’s Vision 2030 targets 10.0% GDP growth and a reduction of the number of people living in absolute poverty to the smallest proportion of the total population by 2030. During the first 2007–2012 Medium Term Plan (MTP), the target was to reduce the number of those living below the poverty line from 46% to 28%. The Kenya Integrated Household Budget (KIH) Survey 2015/16

(KNBS, 2018) indicated that progress had been made with poverty levels at 36.1% in 2016. The fact that the target level of 28% has not been achieved, implies that a rapid pace of poverty reduction efforts needs to be employed.

In the case of urban and rural poverty, the KIHBS 2015/16 showed that rural poverty stood at 40%, with poverty in peri-urban areas at 27.5% and core urban areas at 29.4% in comparison to the national average of 36.1%. At county levels, the overall poverty incidence varies widely among counties, from 16.7% in Nairobi County to 79.0% in Turkana County (KNBS, 2018; KIPPRA, 2020).

Research findings in the Kenya Economic Report, 2020 indicates that access to education and health by individuals relates to the income and education levels of the parents. Thus, those with more educated parents and those in the highest income group enjoy greater access to all levels of education (KIPPRA, 2020).

14.4 Education as a Vehicle for Poverty Reduction

There is little debate on the efficacy of education to change the human condition, yet poverty influences student development (Howard et al., 2013; Williams and Crockett, 2013) and negatively influences student academic achievement (Chege and Arnot, 2012; Cho et al., 2015). A sufficiently wide database now exists which shows that education does make workers more productive (Gakuru, 1998; Guerin, 2014), that female education is inversely related to fertility, child morbidity and mortality and that education is a major catalyst for development (Bahemuka et al., 1998; Chege and Arnot, 2012). What is less clearly understood is how this change actually takes place – what is in education that brings about this change? The fact that poverty influences student achievement, which influences productivity cries out for teachers understanding the effect of poverty on students' lives and learning process, and how their own teaching can respond to this (Bennett, 2008). There is therefore a need for a poverty curricula that could respond to this through an instructional design and implementation process. This curricula would include goals relating to awareness of poverty, ability to recognize students in poverty, skills to help students and relationships with parents (Cho et al., 2015, p. 306).

A key aim of the Europe 2020 strategy in relation to poverty and education is to raise 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion. The vehicle to do this is education by improving educational outcomes for the long term. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) has been identified as a pathway to the reduction of inequalities linked to a child's background (Heckman, 2008; Guerin, 2014) as it has been identified as an intervention that works in dealing with inequality (Allen, 2011; Walker et al., 2011).

In Kenya, the 8-4-4 curriculum was aimed at increasing self-employment and thus self-reliance. However, self-employment largely went to the informal sector known as *Jua Kali*, which was not adequate to pull people out of poverty and break its vicious cycle, due to the low income generated from this sector, thus resulting in the "working poor." A study by Chege and Arnot (2012, p. 200) to establish the nexus between the gender-education-poverty among the youth in Kibera found that

youth expressed faith in the ability of education to improve their lives and more so if it included skill development. An interesting finding to their study brought out the gender differences in thought concerning staying in or exiting Kibera. The male respondents were not prepared to leave the Kibera slum to escape poverty, but were ready to use their education to find work and raise their families in the slum despite the struggle to survive. The young women, on the other hand, were prepared to leave the slum and move to more affluent areas and raise children there to get better lives based on upward mobility that came with marriage, rather than educational credentials. However, they appreciated the role of education as a way of reducing stereotypes on the types of jobs that men and women can do.

14.5 Perspectives of Children and Youth on Poverty

The need to recognize a child-centred perspective in breaking the cycle of poverty has grown over time (Gordon et al., 2003a; Minujin et al., 2005; Roelen et al., 2010). This is because poor children tend to be trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty from birth to adulthood and less likely to extricate themselves from it. This allows the formulation of strategies and policies that would address poverty reduction in relevant and effective ways (Corak, 2006). Policy that responds to child poverty has been to get low-income families above the income threshold (Smith, 2010) where the poverty line is used.

Youth have been considered catalysts of change and contribute to decision-making and development though hardly consulted on matters of poverty reduction by their governments (Nejati et al., 2013). The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum held on 30–31 January 2017 in New York aimed to address the role of youth in poverty eradication and promoting prosperity in a changing world by 2030. The breakout session for Africa addressed recommendations to address poverty in all its forms, especially among the vulnerable population of the youth and women in Africa. One of the key messages that came out of the event was the need to ensure youth inclusion and engagement at all levels and in all processes that affect them, including the design of national plans (UN News, 2017).

The study by Nejati et al. (2013) made up of youth from 66 countries taking part in a Youth Assembly in Glasgow, Scotland, found out that youth who were poor became used to the condition and participated less actively in formal community activities in comparison to those from affluent backgrounds. This was thought to weaken their efforts to change their situation and break away from poverty. However, the more they had forums that made them think about poverty and ways to resolve it, the more responsible they felt towards trying to resolve it. If the youth were also empowered with the capabilities and skills to take action, then they could initiate positive changes in their respective communities to help reduce poverty. Education with special attention to children and youth is the vehicle as it enables the acquisition of knowledge, values, competencies and skills that every individual needs (Singh, 2016).

14.6 The 8-4-4 System of Education

The initial 8-4-4 curriculum began in 1985, and it was considered ideal as the philosophy behind it was achieving self-reliance through education that emphasized acquisition of technical, vocational and life skills (Chepyegon, 2021). Implementation required appropriate physical facilities, equipment, teaching and learning materials and qualified teachers (Republic of Kenya, 1988). However, this did not remain as changes took place due to inadequate teaching facilities and equipment. This was as a result of high costs that came with the construction of laboratories and workshops. The Kamunge Report of 1988, which supported this broad-based vocationalised curriculum, proposed cost sharing between governments, parents and beneficiaries of education to accelerate the expansion of education so that many could benefit (Republic of Kenya, 1988, p. 9).

Parents and communities could not afford this as most of the costs were cascaded to them and many learners left school (Chepyegon, 2021). The report also recommended reorganisation of the curriculum by reducing examinable subjects at secondary level where some subjects were dropped and others combined. The Koech Commission of 1999 did not solve the problem of the heavy workload despite the recommendation of a manageable curriculum and lifelong learning (Republic of Kenya, 1999). Even though the Koech Report recommended music and drama to enhance social and cultural foundations (Republic of Kenya, 1999, p. 66), over time subjects such as art, music and crafts lost centrality from the lower levels of education. The system became exceedingly exam-oriented with teachers and learners concentrating on this, a condition aggravated by school ranking based on performance.

14.7 Multidimensional Approach for Child Poverty

This study bases itself on the multidimensional approach of Roelen et al. (2010). Their study came up with a framework to measure child poverty in Vietnam, arguing that the money-metric measures used for poverty such as the poverty line did not adequately measure child poverty, since children did not work and were affected by many factors. Their multidimensional approach advocates for poverty indicators that should be observable, measurable (Moore et al., 2004), easily interpretable with facts that retain the same meaning over time (Gordon et al., 2003b), adhere to the cultural and social context of the community under study (Thorbecke, 2008) and should be child-specific (Gordon et al., 2003a, 2003b). Dimensions that make up the multidimensional approach include Educational Poverty, Health Poverty, Shelter Poverty, Water and Sanitation Poverty, Child Work, Leisure Poverty and Social Inclusion and Protection Poverty (Roelen et al., 2010, p. 133).

The dimensions can be interpreted using the intersection approach (Atkinson, 2003), where all the domains are included to determine poverty or the union approach (Alkire and Foster, 2008), where one domain is enough to signify poverty. Criticisms of these are that the intersection approach is too inclusive thus excluding

many from poverty, while the union approach is too broad and thus including too many into the category of poverty. The proposed approach used the dual cut-off identification strategy approach where a child is considered poor if they are vulnerable in two dimensions (Alkire and Foster, 2008; Roelen et al., 2010).

14.7.1 Research Methodology

The research was an exploratory study carried out in the informal settlement of the Kibera slum in Nairobi with a sample of 60 youths, half who had a college education and half who did not. Reliability was ensured through using the multidimensional approach (see Sect. 14.8) developed by Roelen et al. (2010) and validated by other researchers who advocate that an instrument's indicators should be observable, measurable (Moore et al., 2004), in line with the context of a community (Thorbecke, 2008) and keep the same meaning over time (Gordon et al., 2003b). In this case, validity was ensured through indicators related to child poverty (Gordon et al., 2003a, 2003b) adapted from the definitions to guide measurement (Roelen et al., 2010) to ascertain that the validity of the instrument tested for child poverty as indicated in the study. Water and sanitation poverty was defined as "children living in a dwelling without a hygienic sanitation facility in the age 0–15" and "children not drinking safe drinking water in the age 0–15." Child work was defined as "that where children aged 5–14 worked for an employer or household production or were self-employed in the last 12 months" (Roelen et al., 2010, p. 142). The study used a questionnaire survey to address the multidimensional approach in determining poverty to address Research Question 1. This study employed the dual cut-off identification approach (Alkire and Foster, 2008; Roelen et al., 2010) where a child is poor if they are vulnerable in two of the domains. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the quantitative data through descriptive statistics to arrive at the percentages given in the findings. The leisure domain and social and inclusion protection poverty dimensions were excluded from this study as they are based on measurements of children between 0 and 4 years of age not included in this study. In-depth interviews through six focus groups were used to generate information covering Research Question 2–4. Thematic analysis was used to generate themes. These were arrived at after familiarization with the audio data, transcribing it and developing codes that were used to generate general themes. The general themes were then reviewed, defined and named as seen in the findings.

14.7.2 Ethical Considerations

The survey was properly planned with ethical consideration. A consent note was provided to the respondents who were at liberty to undertake the survey and interviews or not, and hence all the ethical issues were taken into consideration. With respect to ethical clearance, the university's ethical regulations and policies were adhered to and clearance letter provided.

14.7.3 Kibera Slum

The Kibera slum, the biggest in Africa, is estimated to account for a population of about 1 million dwellers (Mutisya and Yarime, 2011) ranked among the poorest and largest human settlements in sub-Saharan Africa (Chege and Arnot, 2012). Most of the land is owned by the government, though most of the dwellings there are rented out by landlords. The dwellings measure about 12 × 12 ft, are constructed with mud walls and dirt or concrete floors with corrugated tin roofs. On average, these dwellings, described as shacks, house about eight or more family members (Onyango and Tostensen, 2015). The original inhabitants came from Nubian Sudanese from South Sudan.

The area lacks basic social amenities such as sanitation, clean water, sewage disposal and road infrastructure (Chege and Arnot, 2012) as shown in Fig. 14.1. Under water and sanitation, toilets are not found inside houses and are usually latrines which are unhygienic due to the large number of users, with a ratio of 500:1 toilet (UN Habitat, 2013). The lack of piped water pushes the price up of the available water such that the price is four to eight times that of affluent neighbourhoods (African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC), 2010). Many of the schools are informal and others private with crowded classrooms affecting the teaching standards (Institute of Economic Affairs, 2011). When it comes to employment, the youth in Kibera face unemployment challenges aggravated by these challenging conditions in the slum (APHRC, 2014).



Fig. 14.1 Kibera slum, Nairobi, Kenya. (Reproduced from Ninaras (2015))

14.8 Findings

14.8.1 Demographics of the Youth

The study area comprised of eight villages in Kibera, namely, Makina, Katwikira, Kisumu Ndogo, Kianda, Lindi, Laini Saba, Soweto, and Silanga in the informal settlement of the Kibera slum. The general demographics of the 60 respondents in the study, displayed in Table 14.1 below, indicated that 58.3% of them were male and 48.7% female. All respondents were aged between 20 and 32 years with a majority 38.3% falling in the category 20–21 years and 63.3% of the respondents falling in the age category of 20–23 years.

As shown in Table 14.2, majority of the respondents came from Gatwikira 33.3% and Makina villages 30% in Kibera. All respondents grew up in Kibera with 46.7% (28) studying there up to primary level and 41.7% (25) up to secondary level. The

Table 14.1 Gender of respondents and age of respondents cross-tabulation

Gender of respondents		Age of respondents						Total
		18–19	20–21	22–23	24–25	26–27	30 and over	
Male	Count	2	12	9	5	6	1	35
	% of total	3.3	20.0	15.0	8.3	10.0	1.7	58.3
Female	Count	3	11	6	2	1	2	25
	% of total	5.0	18.3	10.0	3.3	1.7	3.3	41.7
Total	Count	5	23	15	7	7	3	60
	% of total	8.3	38.3	25.0	11.7	11.7	5.0	100.0

Table 14.2 Education level by residence of the respondents cross-tabulation

Education level		Residence of the respondents							Total	
		Makina	Gatwikira	Kisumu Ndogo	Kianda	Lindi	Laini Saba	Soweto		Silanga
Diploma	Count	0	5	0	0	1	1	3	0	10
	% of total	0.0	8.3	0.0	0.0	1.7	1.7	5.0	0.0	16.7
Bachelors	Count	4	3	1	2	2	0	0	2	14
	% of total	6.7	5.0	1.7	3.3	3.3	0.0	0.0	3.3	23.3
Finished college	Count	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	6
	% of total	5.0	1.7	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0	1.7	0.0	10.0
Never went to college	Count	11	11	4	1	0	2	1	0	30
	% of total	18.3	18.3	6.7	1.7	0.0	3.3	1.7	0.0	50.0
Total	Count	18	20	5	3	4	3	5	2	60
	% of total	30.0	33.3	8.3	5.0	6.7	5.0	8.3	3.3	100.0

study respondents had 50% not in college and 23.3% studying for a bachelor's degree, 16.7% at diploma level and 10% completed college.

At the time of the study, all the respondents still lived in Kibera, and their parents or guardians still lived in Kibera indicating the second generation. Most of them went to school unaccompanied 68.3% and on foot 91.7%.

14.8.2 Poverty in the Lives of the Youth

Research question one on whether poverty was apparent in the lives of the youth was based on the multidimensional approach (Alkire and Foster, 2008; Roelen et al., 2010) to gauge poverty. The findings indicated that the respondents suffered Shelter poverty, Water and Sanitation poverty and Child Work meeting the threshold of at least two domains using the dual cut of approach.

In relation to Water and Sanitation poverty, out of all the respondents 98.3% grew up in dwellings without hygienic sanitation, a prevalent trait of the Kibera slums. There was no piped water to the houses and 45% of the respondents had to go and fetch water from water vendors in the slum, before going to school and from school.

Under shelter poverty as seen in summary Table 14.3 above, 43.3% of the respondents lived in housing without electricity and used kerosene lamps (33.3%) or candles (5%) with 5% having no form of lighting. Houses were made of mud, 78.3% without proper flooring, iron sheets 5%, timber 3.3% and stone 13.3%. Even though some of the dwellings had electricity, the most prevalent means of cooking was

Table 14.3 Summary table on shelter poverty

Respondents electricity at home	Frequency	Percent
Electricity	34	56.7
Paraffin/kerosene lamp	20	33.3
Candles	3	5.0
Other	3	5.0
Total	60	100
Respondents form of cooking		
Gas	6	10.0
Kerosene stove	21	35.0
Charcoal Jiko	29	48.3
Firewood	4	6.7
Total	60	100
Material houses were made with		
Mud	47	78.3
Iron sheets	3	5.0
Wood/timber	2	3.3
Stone/bricks	8	13.3
Total	60	100.0

charcoal 48.3%, kerosene stove 35% with 10% using gas and 6.7% firewood. Other traits of poverty were indicated by the number of rooms the dwelling had, where most families 66.7% lived in one room, and 28.3% in two rooms. Of the 66.7% of the respondents living in one room, 55% of them shared it with four to eight children and over.

Under Child Work, majority of the respondents, 93.3%, had chores before going to school and after school. The most prevalent was fetching water and other work like cooking, washing clothes in the house. Those engaged in work that could be termed as Child Work 30.3% did work that was unpaid or paid for such as washing clothes for others and selling things to make ends meet.

Other poverty traits were seen by the types of food eaten on a frequent basis to that which was rarely eaten. *Ugali* and *sukuma* (posho meal and kales), at 85%, was eaten on a daily basis or frequently followed by rice at 21% and *chapati* at 16.7%. The intake of various types of meat stood at: beef 15%, fish 11.7%, and chicken 3.3%, indicating that they were eaten rarely. Some meals were skipped and only dinner eaten at home 30%, due to them not being available at home 25%, or there was no money to buy the ingredients to make the meal 16.7%. Some of the respondents 21.7% were in schools in Kibera that had feeding programmes which encouraged children to go to school. A good number of the respondents 30% had all meals at home.

14.8.3 Perceptions of the Youth on Generational Poverty

In relation to the second research question on the perceptions of youth on generational poverty, various definitions came about from the in-depth interviews. When asked to define poverty, two female informants plainly put it as: “Inability to fend for oneself” and “being unable to provide the most basic needs.” Three themes from the in-depth interviews saw generational poverty as that which runs from generation to generation or runs within two or more generations or is constant from one season to another. The themes aligned around one being born in poverty and then things did not change in life and then the children born also joined the poverty line. The simplest view described it as “grandfather, myself, my children.”

One informant succinctly put it as: “the type of poverty that has been in there in your family since the era of your grandparents and has been passed on to their kids.” Others described it as “one that runs in your family line” and “being in poverty for seasons” and “poverty is constant in the different generations.” An interesting view described it as “the kind of poverty that takes after every birth cycle.” Generational poverty from one view occurred when “the previous generation is unable to alleviate the current generation from poverty, then it passes on and on.” Generational poverty was an ongoing process, building from one generation after the other, year in, year out. Generational poverty was aptly captured by an informant and can be summarized as:

This is poverty that runs in the family. It runs from one generation to another. Most of us do not know where the poverty comes from, we find people are like that. For example, in a certain family in the rural area, you find the parents are at home and have nothing to do. When the father gets some money, he goes to drink alcohol and does not bother to provide for the family. Sometimes, the mother can get casual jobs of cultivating people's farms. The kids are then not able to think outside the box and see that there is another life out there. For the boys when they get money they know they can just drink alcohol and for the girls they just think all they can do is wash other people's laundry and get casual farm jobs. Therefore, poverty continues (Youth group 2 informant).

From the demographics, the youth saw some of the characteristics of generational poverty as having parents who had no work (mothers 40%, fathers 25%). Another trait was that of parents with low-paying jobs due to the type of occupation where 26.7% of the fathers were engaged mostly in skilled jobs such as mechanics, tailors or security guards while 30% of the mothers were in small-scale informal businesses. They saw this translated to them where 55% of them missed school frequently due to lack of fees (68.3%). This state of affairs meant that 36.7% had no hope of finishing school. Other perceptions of generational poverty were remaining in Kibera slum and being unable to move themselves from the location. During this study, majority of the respondents were still living in Kibera like their parents.

Situational poverty was described as poverty that occurred due to a specific prevailing situation such as the 2007 post-election violence or the current COVID-19 pandemic with various restrictions that have pushed people into poverty. However, the informants felt that one could come out of this type of poverty when the situation improved. Situational poverty was described as:

Poverty that is brought about by situations. This is like when you were employed and all of a sudden the job ends and then you have no income for the time being. You can then get another job and bounce back. You are therefore in that state because of the current situation (University group 1 informant).

14.8.4 Suggested Solutions from the Youth on Breaking Generational Poverty

Research question three dwelt on the suggested solutions on how generational poverty can be broken. The seven identified themes circled around empowerment, mentorship to develop business and life skills, talent identification and realization, sharing of ideas, scholarships, projects, and innovative thinking put into action. A strongly supported theme in breaking the cycle of poverty was innovative thinking through changing one's mindset. The informants felt that the cycle could be broken at some point by changing one's mindset and not giving up in life. Some views included:

The first thing is people should change their mind-set that they are poor since they are living in Kibera (University group 3 informant).

One can motivate yourself and do something creative because when we wait for help and it does not come we will become demoralized. Therefore, the motivation starts with us to make a change. Take advantage of upcoming local projects, for example the Kibera town center project. Get out of your comfort zone and stop being ignorant and do something meaningful with our lives. Have a positive mind-set and believe you can (Youth group 1 informant).

Changing one's mindset included taking small jobs and seeing them as a bridge to bigger jobs and income and therefore youth should not be discouraged when they got low-paying jobs. Changing mindsets also involved innovative thinking. One informant phrased it as:

The current situation where someone is at can be an eye opener for you to invent something and can create employment or attract investors. So when you do something innovative, you get yourself out of poverty (Youth group 3 informant).

The theme of empowerment of youth involved creating awareness on social issues that could help the growing youth, mainly done by NGOs. This was framed as:

The NGOS are reaching out especially to the young ones to be able to create awareness on different social issues as well as providing information on the services they offer and if may be it can help you in one way or the other, you can reach out to them (University group 3 informant).

Empowerment entailed aiding the youth to think about starting businesses in basic education and not waiting until university for this to start. NGOs were seen to play a role in this as they could be involved in projects that helped the youth start businesses even while in school, thus teaching both life and entrepreneurial skills. An informant felt that "when you empower ten women to start a business, ten households will be fed."

Nurturing talents and promoting these talents to higher levels were seen as a way out of poverty credited to projects run by NGOs. Projects were important sources of breaking poverty cycles as they were seen to offer mentorship programs to the youth and even gave short courses which offered certificates that could act as credentials. Practical skills were gained through short-term training which provided jobs and an income. An informant reflected:

Most of the organizations carry out needs assessment before starting a project. Some of the recommendations for the projects are; educate people instead of giving them handouts so that they can be independent in future (University group 1 informant).

Government projects were also important in addressing poverty. An example that came up was the National Youth Service (NYS) which had improved the lifestyles of the youth as they could get some income and the crime rate had reduced. Projects were critical in preventing situational poverty in Kibera especially during the corona pandemic through food distribution and meeting health needs. They acted as a stop-gap preventing some people starting the cycle of generational poverty.

The theme on sharing of ideas was seen through youth giving each other ideas to start businesses like artwork as a group from an early age and earn an income. Sharing of ideas with peers was a way of reducing poverty and captured in:

People should also be selfless and have the thought that if I am gaining by doing something I can also help out a brother or sister to do the same. Share ideas with others and come together and work as one. In case opportunities arise, share with others. An example here in Kenya, many Somalis are doing well, reason being they help one another especially in businesses and as a community (Youth group 3 informant).

The informants felt that scholarships were an opportunity to go to school. Going to school was a good thing where the majority of their siblings went to school with the free primary education and subsidized secondary education in Kenya. Despite this, most of the respondents who had made it to college had done so due to scholarships and bursaries they had received. As such being given scholarships was an opportunity to go to school and a way out of poverty.

14.8.5 The Role of Education as a Solution to Generational Poverty

Research question four addressed the role education plays as a solution to generational poverty. Five themes emerged from this discussion. These were education credentials for employment, mentorship with talent identification and promotion, altruism, application of financial literacy education, and the application of critical thinking and communication skills as a result of being educated. These themes revolved around internal players in the schools such as teachers and school heads who had an important role in providing solutions to generational poverty and the students themselves.

In mentorship with talent realization and promotion, teachers played a role as stated:

Through social media, as a teacher you can open a page and you post students work there. You can also engage them in community service early which may open their minds and spot a role model and may want to become like that person. The teachers can monitor students and spot a talent that a child has and encourage them to work on that skill especially with the new curriculum. The teachers can also find more openings for the bright students who are not able to pay school fees and connect them to sponsors who can help them with their education. Teachers can also help the students through mentorship. (Youth group 1 informant)

Altruism through helping others was upheld by various informants. This was through tutoring services to others needier than oneself as a result of having an education. Some views were:

Gaining education can also help others even if it is not yourself. In case you have a neighbor who is not able to take the child to school, you can have an opportunity to teach that child

in the early stages of school, the child or parent may help you in future in case you have a situation. (Youth group 3 informant)

Because of the skills you acquire from the 8-4-4, you can teach or educate children who do not have the opportunity of going to school. (Youth group 2 informant)

External players involved motivational speakers engaged by the school to come and mentor pupils and students and in so doing encourage them to do better. Sports, scouts and coaches played the role of identifying talent gained through extracurricular activities such as sports. Help from these external sources enabled one to improve and finally make a living from sports. Education could improve this as one view reflected:

Introduce strong co-curricular activities and make them serious to help those who are not into class work but are good in for instance football and focus on that to start earning even while young (University group 2 informant).

The ability to think critically and well-articulated communication skills was a solution to breaking generational poverty. As explained:

Education has enlightened me a lot through ideas. First with culture. The more you advance with education, the more you meet with other people from different tribes and regions so you tend to see how they run their life and therefore you expand your mind-set. Education has helped me in the way I express myself and someone can know I am educated. You can also reason well and have a right way of choosing. (University group 1 informant).

Education gave confidence to form partnerships with organizations. As an informant said:

By having education, you are able to have courage to approach an NGO and share the idea you have and they can be able to give you, for example, tanks to start a car wash and grants to buy the machines (Youth group 3 informant).

Financial literacy was seen as an important tool if part of the school curriculum. This is because the youth would have learnt from an early age to save for a rainy day when one has made some money especially through small jobs done during the school holidays. Other roles that education played as a solution to generational poverty was provision of credentials from the school such as certificates that could facilitate either further studies or employment. Despite the role that education played in poverty alleviation, many of the informants felt that the 8-4-4 curriculum was wanting especially in lifelong learning and business skill development.

14.9 Discussion

Generational poverty was apparent in the lives of the youth in this study. Although not from the original sample, they had similar characteristics of the original sample and went through the 8-4-4 curriculum described earlier on in this chapter and would be the same age currently as the initial sample. Majority lived in the same villages in one-roomed mud houses with no electricity for lighting, using kerosene or charcoal to cook. They had no access to water and sanitation in the dwellings they lived in, and had a staple diet of *Ugali* and *Sukuma* and on rare occasions ate meat. In both studies, poverty was widespread in Kibera and took various forms of income and food poverty. There was a similarity with the study by Roelen et al. (2010) in Vietnam with the multidimensional approach where the children in Vietnam and in this study qualified as poor on the basis of vulnerability in two poverty domains with water and sanitation as the common area of deprivation.

It is expected that as youth now, maturity in the way of thinking has developed after a secondary or college education. Generational poverty was defined using the quantitative poverty line as a measure but also qualitatively with examples that brought out the cycle of generational poverty. This was in line with definitions given in other studies as well examples that painted the picture of generational poverty (Ashworth et al. 1994; Payne 2005; Corak 2006; Marger 2008).

In reference to solutions on breaking generational poverty, changes were apparent in the thinking of the youth living in Kibera as compared to the study of the younger children 20 years ago. A recurrent and strong theme in all the focus groups was change of one's own mindset as a way to break out of generational poverty. A change of mindset through innovative thinking was a key solution on how generational poverty could be broken. Embracing the skills from education and applying them to self, taking advantage of the NGOs and projects in Kibera were ways to get oneself out of poverty. The youth believed that though education had a role to play, an individual had to make the decision to change, think out of the box and not believe that just because they lived in Kibera they had to be poor.

A second theme was altruism through using one's own skills gained in education to uplift another member of the community worse off than yourself. This could be a neighbour's child or other youth through sharing of ideas and working together so that improvement of one's circumstances was a collective rather than individual effort. This was a far cry from the *serikali sadia* (Government help us) mentality apparent in many communities struggling with poverty or other challenges where people look to the government first for help even when it is not forthcoming. This way of thinking coupled with the youth's views on generational poverty indicated that they have faith in their ability to break the poverty cycle if they think innovatively and out of the box.

The role of education in breaking generational poverty was perceived differently in this study. The younger aged sample in 2001 valued education and saw it as their way out of poverty. However, most of the children aspired for lowly paid jobs such as a driver, clerk, carpenter, watchman and a teacher being the highest of the aspirations. The youth in the current study had much higher expectations on the types of

jobs they had aspired to which covered the fields of medicine, architecture, engineering, law, accountancy, journalism and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship entailed them coming up with ideas for businesses or using their talents and skills to earn them a living. Although they may not end up having these exact professions, they still believed that they could make a way for themselves if they are facilitated through mentorship and life skills which do not fit into subjects per se.

The children had indicated that education would improve their lives in the future even though it did not address their needs as poor children. The question was whether education had contributed to achieving or helping the youth achieve their aspirations now that they were older and had the benefit of at least a secondary education. A majority of 61.7% of the youth felt that education contributed to them achieving this. However, just as the study in 2001, the youth concurred that the education curriculum at basic level did not address the needs of poor children (53.3%). The basic education curriculum needed to be revamped to emphasize life skills and mentorship from those who had come out of poverty, include poverty reduction strategies, emphasize subjects that promoted talents (art, crafts and sports) and introduce entrepreneurship skills.

On the other hand, education though a vehicle out of poverty had to have both the internal facilitators partnering with external facilitators such as NGOs in projects that actively supported poor children realize their talents and embrace the opportunities that came with talent. However, one had to put in the effort to improve in their talents. The education curriculum was inadequate where much emphasis was on passing examinations. Youth saw the value of education added to by other co-curricular activities such as sports, drama and music, a point raised by the Koech Report of 1999 (Republic of Kenya, 1999, p. 69).

The local studies by Chege and Arnot (2012) and Onyango and Tostensen (2015) brought out the poor physical conditions in the Kibera slum which are still the current situation. Chege and Arnot (2012) brought out the finding of young women wanting to get out of Kibera not through education but through marriage as a means of upward mobility. This was different in this study as the female informants did not talk about marriage as a vehicle out of poverty, rather their ability to think for themselves and grasp opportunities. Although the men in this study did not talk about having to stay in Kibera and raise up families there, there was a similarity in the belief that they could use their educational credentials to improve their lives.

Employment as a result of education is an expected outcome; this did not come out as the major reason for one to be educated. There were more intangible benefits of education that were evident. From this study, a key finding is the conceptual skills that education builds in a person, such as critical thinking, decision-making, networking, taking initiative and problem-solving. In building these skills, education offered a solution to generational poverty.

14.10 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the perceptions of the youth on the role of basic education in breaking generational poverty. In Kenya, many individuals from poor communities depend on the government to pull them out of poverty as the phrase *serikali itusaidie* (Government help us) reflects. The youth are more positive about creating their own ways to get out of poverty through their own innovations, talents and abilities, not depending on the government to do everything for them. They are not poor just because they live in Kibera. With the benefit of education that enhances their communication and critical thinking skills, what they need is not handouts from NGOs, but facilitation of the development of their skills to be independent. The independence seen at a young age seems to have translated to wanting to be independent and self-reliant at an older age.

Benefits that can be drawn out from this study lie in recommendations that can be given towards policy implementation and review as the competence-based curriculum is being rolled out. As this is an exploratory study, other broader and more in-depth studies building on this study can be carried out to dig deeper into strategies that can be used to incorporate the youth as catalysts of change in slums like Kibera. The youth have the capacity and mindset for change. They understand what is needed to get out of generational poverty which they have lived in, but yet have had a college education, thus understanding not only intellectually, but experientially the role that education can play in breaking the cycle of generational poverty. This is vital in avoiding the pitfalls that affected the 8-4-4 curriculum despite its good intentions, and thus beneficial to the implementers of the competence-based education in communities steeped in poverty. Limitations of this study would be in the small sample size, as well as selection of only one slum. However, other studies can build on this with a larger sample size and multiple slum locations for a more robust study. Education as a vehicle out of poverty is still valid but needs to address generational poverty which is harder to address due to the generations affected. However, all is not lost. This study gives evidence that the youth given the right skills have the capacity to transform their lives and make the desired change.

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