

Youth Empowerment in Kenya

A Policy-Science Analysis of Government Values and Priorities

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Sound decision making, implementation, and evaluation abilities are attributes that define high-performing organizations and even governments.¹ The need and drive to perform are more crucial within newly formed departments, especially those dealing with an ever-present issue. Such was the case at the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs (MSYA) in Kenya, created in December 2005 and given the mandate to attend to youth issues and concerns. Soon after, the MSYA designed and developed the Kenya National Youth Policy (KNYP) with the goal of mainstreaming and coordinating youth programs in the country. Like other policies, the KNYP provided a formal blueprint to notify concerned employees and offer them the necessary direction to make proper decisions for the public good while guiding their behavior to align with the strategic intent, values, and norms as defined by the MSYA and the central government. Besides the sheer number of young people, the KNYP identified the following youth challenges: unemployment and underemployment, health issues, dropouts from schools and colleges, crime and deviance, limited facilities for sports and recreation, abuse and exploitation, limited participation and lack of opportunities in decision-making processes, poor housing, and constrained access to information and communication technology. Additionally, the KNYP identified girls and street youths as groups needing special attention and solutions.

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A careful analysis of this policy, however, revealed no apparent attempt to address, let alone solve, the issues concerning young Kenyans, as identified by the KNYP. Although the policy appeared quite comprehensive, few resources have been committed towards implementation, with no indicators of priority issues deserving of greater funding.

Why do we need to understand the priority values of government officials who deal with youth issues? First, to overcome poverty and institute sustainable development, African nations have to empower their young people. Given the multifaceted nature of empowerment, it is crucial to establish and declare which values the MSYA is more vigorously pursuing to achieve youth empowerment in Kenya.

Second, because public administrators are part of the political system that authoritatively determines societal values, thereby dictating the success of policy formulation, implementation, and even evaluation, it was necessary to understand whether or not the department had defined priority values/issues to guide its employees. Faced with dilemmas and unclear situations, public officials often refer to personal, professional, organizational, legal, or public-interest values for direction.² In a situation in which different value sources compete, decision making becomes complicated. With this in mind, the MSYA should clarify for employees which values/issues have the higher priority and articulate these for the public. An agenda listing particular issues destined to receive urgent government attention and funds not only would alleviate public skepticism of the department's functionality but also would pacify stakeholders, who could learn why particular goals are funded.

Due to limited funding, comprehensive implementation of the KNYP is not possible. This study explores the government's work ethic and identifies possible weaknesses in addressing youth issues in order to inform the political debate. Moreover, since decision making in Kenya takes a top-down approach, studying these issues will expose the fact that different perspectives on youth issues may exist, even at the top, making a clear attack strategy elusive.

This article seeks to determine the values that public administrators at the MSYA consider pertinent in enabling young people to contribute to national development efforts and live better lives. In so doing, it explores the Kenyan government's perspective on this matter and identifies the rel-

evant values/issues emphasized and prioritized by officials as needing urgent government attention.

Background

Studies analyzing government values and prioritization vary from those focusing on the policy-analysis process to those identifying tools to assist in the decision-making process. Since public policy concerns citizens' well-being and involves a wide number of interested parties, several analyses have presented viable tools to assist in problem definition, analysis, and decision making.³ To collect intelligence useful in defining the problem and understanding alternative solutions, some studies elaborate on the role played by narratives while others make use of interviews as a way of addressing the need for openness and transparency in reporting and exploring public values in societal decision making.⁴ Once the problem has been identified and defined, it is put on the government agenda for debate. In his "policy streams" model, John Kingdon discusses how events such as natural calamities, accidents, and human error can focus the public's and government's attention on an issue.⁵ The government also sets agendas by means of the "outside initiative," "mobilization," or "inside access" models.⁶ However, factors such as social values, institutions, power and powerlessness, and resource availability still influence policy outcome.

Some studies address how social values affect decision makers at the workplace. When confronted with ethical dilemmas, these individuals may resort to personal values or agency artifacts as concrete and dependable "text" regarding societal values and identity.⁷ Elizabeth Ravlin and Bruce Meglino argue that work values affect perceptual organization and act as a guide to decision making, whereas Harry Van Buren and Bradley Agle hold that religious values and beliefs significantly affect managerial values and decision making.⁸ Saundra Glover and others examine the influence of gender and the moral intensity of the conflict situation on ethical decision making in light of workplace values, finding that decision makers rely on sources of value other than the organization's.⁹ Other scholars have analyzed how institutions affect the policy process, the effect of feedback on decision makers, and ways of influencing decision making, principally in the United States.¹⁰

Studies analyzing decision processes in Africa have looked at ways of democratizing such processes and the challenges faced by African leaders after the democratization wave of the 1990s.¹¹ Other research attempts to understand how leadership could be transformed to include women and the consequences of such a move on decision making.¹² However, the consistent failure of African leaders to respond to the needs of their people has attracted a wealth of studies on instituting effective leadership that “utilizes the resources available—both natural and human—responsibly.”¹³ Unfortunately, because this kind of leadership has been missing in Africa, development for the common good has proved elusive, even in the most fertile and resource-rich countries. Given that governmental action creates and/or sustains conditions that dictate citizens’ economic well-being, these studies have emphasized the need to revolutionize African leadership and mobilize citizens to hold their leaders accountable for the allocation and use of funds. Deepa Narayan identifies four elements of empowerment that must underlie institutional reform: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, and local organizational capacity.¹⁴ However, since on average, countries in Africa are less efficient than other countries, reform in any governmental sector would require substantial budgetary allocations.¹⁵

The need for beneficial change in African politics and leadership is especially acute because political elites continually undermine development and empowerment by sabotaging policies. Citing specific health policies in Kenya, Joanna Crichton laments how policies relating to contraceptive services often receive weak or fluctuating levels of commitment from national policy elites, thus inhibiting policy evolution and undermining implementation. She also notes the challenge of sustaining support for issues within Kenya’s policy arena even after these problems have reached the policy agenda.¹⁶ Nick Devas and Ursula Grant review some examples of and reasons for good (and bad) decision-making practices in a sampling of municipal governments in Kenya and Uganda.¹⁷ They determined that, despite the importance of committed local leadership, central monitoring of performance, articulate civil society organizations, and the availability of information, success remains far-fetched since the inclusion of stakeholders, especially the poor, is never guaranteed.¹⁸ In particular, Dickson Mungazi criticizes African leaders for not seeking to learn new things from other

people, challenging them to realize and uphold integrity and respect of law—values crucial to their job performance.¹⁹

Studies of Africa have also identified different empowerment strategies that, if provided and financially supported, would prepare Africa for a prosperous future. Some of them address ways of improving education, which would enable young people, especially street children, to compete in the labor market.²⁰ Other research has analyzed the effects of government's failure to provide quality education due to the politicization of decision making.²¹ Some commentators have advocated the improvement of rural areas and opportunities for young people, which would enhance their transition to and stay in the labor market; others have insisted on upgrading health care in Africa.²² Encouragingly, several analyses elaborate on Africa's ability to solve its own problems. These studies emphasize the need for African governments to employ local social institutions such as "harambee" (pulling together) in Kenya to motivate people to institute sustainable development in their communities.²³ Mike Boon hails traditional African political systems, which emphasize interactive leadership, believing that "modern" Africa could learn from this kind of management, which employs responsive, effective policies in addressing socioeconomic challenges.²⁴ Additionally, Jacob Gordon indicates that Africa's leadership will be considered mature and responsive once governments effectively address current socioeconomic and political concerns.²⁵

Regardless of the existence of research on the role of leadership in creating an environment conducive to empowering people, none has explored public administrators' perspectives on youth empowerment in Kenya. This article, therefore, applies a policy-science framework as a means of understanding the values that guide the MSYA in addressing youth concerns in Kenya.

Context

A sub-Saharan country located on the east coast of Africa, Kenya gained its independence from Great Britain on 12 December 1963 and became a republic on 1 June 1964. Kenya's population has increased dramatically, from 6 million people in 1950, to 9.5 million in 1965, and to 19.65 million by 1985.²⁶ By 1999 it had grown to 28.7 million, and current estimates (2009) put it at 39.4 million, pending the findings of the official census.²⁷ Today, individuals from one to 30 years of age constitute 75 percent

of the population, and those 15 to 30 years old, 32 percent.²⁸ The median age is 18.7 years with a literacy rate of 85 percent.²⁹

Kenya has a diversified economy that includes agriculture, manufacturing, industries, and tourism. For 75 percent of the population, however, the basic economic system is agriculture. The country's gross domestic product has witnessed an impressive growth rate for the last six years or so: 2.9 percent (2003), 5.1 percent (2004), 5.8 percent (2005), 6.4 percent (2006), and over 7 percent (2007).³⁰ In spite of these impressive figures, many people live at or below the poverty rate (e.g., 50 percent in 2000).³¹ Since young people make up most of this figure, about 72 percent of Africa's youth subsist on less than two dollars a day.³²

Upon its independence in 1963, Kenya made a commitment to fight the three enemies of broad-based human development: poverty, disease, and illiteracy.³³ Thus it became necessary to address the role of young people who, at that time, had figured prominently in the success of nationalist movements during the colonial era. Kenya's first attempt to address youth issues came in 1964 with creation of the National Youth Service, an organization given the mandate of looking into young people's concerns and of devising ways of integrating them into the national economy. Due to the National Youth Service's limited scope and success, subsequent development plans such as "Sectional Paper No. 2 of 1992 on Small Scale and Jua Kali Enterprises, the 1997–2001 Development Plans, and the National Poverty Eradication Plan 1999–2015" included policies for dealing with national youth concerns.³⁴ However, these policies failed to meet their objectives due to (1) a high population growth rate that put immense pressure on available resources as the number of young people kept rising, (2) lack of appropriate skills among the youth, (3) unclear and uncoordinated youth policies and programs, (4) resource constraints, and (5) youth stereotypes.³⁵

The most significant attempt to address youth issues, however, came about five years ago with the creation of the MSYA, which, with a great sense of purpose and urgency, designed and developed the KNYP to mainstream and coordinate youth programs in the country. The MSYA "visualizes a society where youth have an equal opportunity, as other citizens, to realize their fullest potential, productively participating in economic, social, political, cultural and religious life without fear or favor."³⁶ Moreover, it has committed itself to "creat[ing] proper conditions for the youth to empower themselves

and exploit their potential,” with the goal of “promot[ing] youth participation in the democratic processes, as well as in community and civil affairs, ensuring that youth programs involve them and are youth centered.”³⁷ Although this policy obligates all members of society to assist young people, it challenges the government to become the lead agent by “providing the necessary framework for young people to fulfill their obligations.”³⁸

Understandably, since young people have the most potential, physical strength, and energy, and since they constitute the largest proportion of the educated population, they should be the main focus of various development and socioeconomic programs, especially in Africa. Because African governments are not likely to embark on gathering intelligence from concerned parties—particularly poor people, of which youth represent the largest portion—any realistic strategy must first explore concerned government agencies in order to identify their values. Only by so doing can a proper diagnosis of government weaknesses lead to improvement in setting agendas and funding allocations. Besides, a need exists to explore Africa’s leadership to understand its weakness and areas for improvement. This study attempts to do so in sub-Saharan Africa, using two narrative studies conducted with two officials at MSYA offices in Nairobi, Kenya.

Methodology and Analysis

A comprehensive tool in the analysis of human problems, Harold Lasswell’s policy-science framework deals “with knowledge of and in the decision processes of the public and civic order.”³⁹ It seeks to provide decision makers with a tool to fully comprehend problems as they exist in a given context in order to “develop recommendations that are both realistic and desirable,” doing so by adhering to three principles: contextuality, problem orientation, and diversity.⁴⁰

Because every problem is embedded in a web of social relationships, policy science seeks to establish *contextuality*, which involves social mapping and the decision-mapping processes. Since the former looks into any social context that exists in relation to a problem, the simplest representation thus emphasizes participants, perspectives, situations, base values, strategies, outcomes, and effects. The decision-mapping process assists in reconstructing possible events, leading to implementation of a particular

policy. This process distinguishes the following power outcomes: intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, termination, and appraisal.⁴¹

Since humans interact with each other and define problems according to values embedded in their personalities as well as their ethnic and national identities, *problem orientation* seeks to understand the issue at hand and invent solutions. At this stage of the policy process, participants begin a self-examination by conducting five intellectual tasks: *goal clarification*, *trend analysis*, *factor analysis*, *predictions*, and *alternatives*.

Regarding the third principle of policy sciences, *diversity*, Lasswell challenges those involved in decision making to avoid narrow-mindedness and remain open to various problem-solving methods. He asserts that the methods employed should not be limited to a narrow range; instead, he advocates *content analysis*, *decision seminars*, *silhouette analysis*, and *developmental constructs*, among others.⁴² This study applied the social-mapping process, under *contextuality*, to provide an in-depth analysis of the study location.

The Social-Mapping Process

To understand an issue's past, present, and future, one uses the social-mapping process to emphasize *participants*, *perspectives*, *situations*, *base values*, *strategies*, *outcomes*, and *effects*. Lasswell defines *participants* as those who pursue values that satisfy outcomes and *value* as "a category of preferred events" or outcomes pursued by actors through various institutions.⁴³ He believes that, during the social process, participants seek eight values: *power*, *enlightenment*, *wealth*, *well-being*, *skill*, *affection*, *respect*, and *rectitude*.⁴⁴

Many participants are interested in youth empowerment in Kenya. These include young people, parents, government, politicians, elites, faith-based organizations, and Kenyans in general—each uniquely defining youth empowerment and seeking to maximize a variety of value outcomes. Youth wish to be empowered. They not only want to increase their knowledge base (*enlightenment*) and abilities (*skill*) in anticipation of enhancing future economic security (*well-being*, *wealth*), but also wish to please their parents (*affection*) and enhance their own sense of virtue (*rectitude*). Moreover, young people demand participation in political processes and the sharing of *power* with current leaders. Parents also want their children appropriately equipped to face future challenges and handle adult responsibilities. Presumably, they value having *enlightened* children with skills to harness their

potential and contribute to the family's well-being. Parents also anticipate community esteem (*respect*) that attends educated offspring and the sense of moral worth (*rectitude*) derived from fulfilling parental obligations. Moreover, the Kenyan government, through the MSYA and other departments, wants to equip its citizens with *enlightenment* and *skills* to steer the country into economic prosperity and growth (*wealth*). Most likely, the government's goal is to develop an enlightened community by creating a skilled and knowledgeable labor force and citizenry. Politicians, on the other hand, want to win favor in the eyes of the public (*respect*) and therefore wish to maximize values that would keep them in *power*. Presumably, faith-based organizations, elites (policy analysts, think tanks, and educators), and the general public also want to promote *enlightenment*, *well-being*, *wealth*, *skills*, and *respect* among Kenyans.

However, young people find it difficult to empower themselves due to their limited *base values*. Nevertheless, because these values "include all the resources available to a participant at a given time," young people do have the energy, motivation, and academic qualifications to positively affect the policy process.⁴⁵ In contrast, public officials, politicians, and elites have financial resources, power, and authority. These *base values* have cultivated an attitude of dictatorship that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, marginalizes young people. Among other participants in the policy process, religious leaders have rectitude and morality on their side, academics have knowledge and expertise, and parents have experience and skills in child care—*base values* that each can use to legitimize their arguments or demands on this issue.

The question here is what *strategy* each participant will engage in to affect value outcomes. How can young people employ their energy, motivation, and academic qualifications to have their voices and concerns acknowledged in the policy arena? What should each cluster of participants do to affect the policy, and how would they mobilize their resources to have an impact or a voice? Young people clearly understand their power limitations and continue to appeal for inclusion in Kenya's decision-making processes. Young people can make their demands known by pursuing *strategies* that make use of associations, the media, participation in political campaigns, and so forth. Unfortunately, due to persistent marginalization, they have also engaged in riots and criminal activities to air their frustrations

and concerns. The government's strategy has been to delay, promising to look into the issue but never doing so.

Persistent youth challenges and Kenyan politics have created different *perspectives* on this issue, described by Lasswell as "subjective events experienced by participants in the social process," including value demands, expectations, and identities of the participants in an issue.⁴⁶ Unsurprisingly, young Kenyans identify themselves as today's leaders and are adamant about inclusion in power sharing and any reform that will apportion some influence and wealth to them. Presumably, public officials perceive that their experience as administrators and former youth gives them special abilities to determine and address young people's challenges. By producing the KNYP, the government, through the MSYA, feels that in due time many of these concerns will be addressed, leading to the empowerment of young people. Parents and the general public are skeptical that the government will do so since constructive interactions between these two parties rarely occur. The *situations* or arenas in which interactions with young people take place may well be the home, social gatherings such as religious services, and political campaigns; they may even occur through the media.

Narrative Studies

Guided by the need to gather subjective opinion and to explore government officials' perspectives/values concerning youth empowerment in Kenya, this research project conducted narrative studies to collect data to analyze, using Lasswell's eight social values.

As a qualitative research strategy, a narrative study involves interviewing a subject (normally an expert) with the hope of attaining better understanding of a topic. In June 2008, two narrative interviews were conducted at MSYA offices in Nairobi with two male government officials (GO-A and GO-B) at the MSYA who had the time and willingness to participate in an intensive one-on-one interview about youth issues in Kenya (table 1). Although narrative studies are not representative, they were deemed appropriate and adequate for the study because they offered the opportunity to examine the respondents' subjectivity and the meaning they attach to youth empowerment; they also captured the discussions as provided. Because of the exploratory nature of this study, unstructured questions (generated from the KNYP) were posed to these officials.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics and perspectives of the subjects

Subject	Marital Status	Education	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Assumption 1	Assumption 2
GO-A	Single	College	32	Male	Abaluhya	Empathetic	Skill
GO-B	Married	College	47	Male	Agikuyu	Out of Touch	Wealth

The interviewees were encouraged first to analyze ways that public institutions could empower the youth in Kenya, allowing them to lead better lives and contribute to the well-being of the nation. Next, the officials were asked to identify issues that should be the government's highest priority with regard to empowering young people effectively. Given the subjects' qualifications and experience in dealing with young people, they provided insightful information on youth empowerment in Kenya. Regardless of the potentially unlimited number of perceptions that the officials could have had concerning youth empowerment or the lack of it, this study assumed that (1) they would have similar perspectives since they work for the same department and have most likely read the KNYP, and that (2) their prioritization of the issues would vary.

Analysis

Data transcription from the hour-long interviews yielded dozens of indicators on youth empowerment. Statements that addressed the research question were correlated to Lasswell's eight values (table 2).

Table 2. Values sought in the social process

Value	Definition
Power	Victory or defeat in fights or elections. To receive power is to be supported by others; to give power is to support others.
Enlightenment	Scientific discovery, news. To receive enlightenment is to obtain knowledge of the social and natural context; to give enlightenment is to make such knowledge available to others.
Skill	Instruction, demonstration of proficiency. To obtain skills is to be provided with opportunities to receive instruction and to exercise an acquired proficiency; to contribute to the skill of others is to enable them to have corresponding opportunities.
Wealth	Income, ownership transfer. To obtain wealth is to receive money or other claims to the use of resources for production or consumption; to give wealth is to transfer money or claims.
Well-Being	Medical care, protection. To receive well-being benefits is to obtain the assistance of those who affect safety, health, and comfort; to contribute to well-being is to assist others in the same way.
Affection	Expression of intimacy, friendship, loyalty. To receive affection is to be an object of love, friendly feeling, and loyalty; to give affection is to project these sentiments towards others.

Value	Definition
Respect	Honor, discriminatory exclusion. To receive respect is to obtain recognition from others; to give respect is to grant recognition to other people.
Rectitude	Acceptance in religions or ethical association. To receive favorable evaluations in terms of rectitude is to be characterized as an ethical or religious person; to evaluate others in terms of rectitude is to characterize them correspondingly.

Source: Harold D. Lasswell, *A Pre-view of Policy Sciences* (New York: American Elsevier, 1971), 18.

The fact that the interviewees' responses reflected differences in their attitude and analysis of the youth situation refuted the study's first assumption, mentioned previously, that they would have similar views since they work for the same department and are conversant with the KNYP. GO-A had considerable empathy for the youths' plight, but GO-B's attitude and tone revealed his lack of sympathy for them. According to social constructionist theory, such differences could well stem from an individual's history, culture, and experience.⁴⁷ GO-A's age (32) puts him closer to the youth experience than his 47-year-old counterpart—explaining his apparent empathy. GO-A seemed to understand where the government has gone wrong in regard to the quality of education in Kenya, expressing his ideas about introducing technological courses into the education curriculum and decentralizing institutions to create more jobs. Furthermore, as a graduate of the 8-4-4 education system, he had experienced the problems associated with Kenya's education system.⁴⁸

Similarly, GO-B's age and the fact that he went through the old British education system could account for his opposing views and disconnection with the experiences of young people.⁴⁹ Vivien Burr maintains that experiences dictate perceptions and that history and culture, ever-dynamic concepts, mold people and explain cohort dichotomies in ideas and values.⁵⁰ Moreover, as is widely known, politics in Africa and affiliation with political parties are consistently defined along ethnic lines. The fact that the president of Kenya, Mr. Mwai Kibaki, is an Agikuyu, like GO-B, may suggest a correlation between ethnicity and GO-B's unwavering support for the government.

With regard to the study's second assumption, the respondents did indeed differ in their prioritization of youth issues that need urgent government attention. GO-A suggested updating the 8-4-4 education curriculum to make it compatible with current market needs by adding desirable skills such as computer technology. In the context of Lasswell's eight values, GO-A preferred the prioritization of skill (enlightenment) in Kenya's youth

empowerment process. GO-B, however, believed that the government should focus on employment creation, commenting that “jobs are the single most important empowering opportunity . . . because if you provide employment to young people, then all the other empowerment areas fall into place.” Inherently, he selected wealth as his preferred value.

Discussion

The interviewees’ apparent prioritization of different values may well have revealed the kind of decision-making processes adopted by Kenya’s public organizations and the government at large. These officials’ confession that Kenya’s youth remain unaware of the MSYA indicated that government decision making and implementation reflected an inside-access model—one in which proposals arise within government units, and then the issue expands to identification and attention groups in order to create sufficient pressure on decision makers to put it on the formal agenda.⁵¹ However, at no point does the public become greatly involved. As eager as young people are to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives, the interviews make clear that intelligence, crucial in the formulation of the KNYP, was not collected from the prime stakeholders—youth. Thus this study has served to expose Kenya’s weakness in attending to youth issues.

Moreover, since the two interviewees prioritized different issues, one may justifiably conclude that the MSYA has no defined order or values regarding youth empowerment. Insofar as values determine what is right and what is wrong, murkiness and lack of clarity in organizational values “[invite] unnecessary ethical dilemmas and [encourage] an environment in which ethical lapses flourish.”⁵² Other implications include “well-meaning but out-of-step individuals, diminished team spirit and camaraderie, organizational turmoil, . . . poor integration and communication with the values of the public.”⁵³ Since a lack of prioritization may result in conflicting attention and implementation of goals within the MSYA, Kenya should clearly indicate which area, among those discussed in the KNYP, has priority in empowering young people. Such openness would serve to combat building skepticism that the government does not care about youth, causing many people to question the MSYA’s role. Additionally, because the MSYA has received few resources to achieve its objectives, it is in no position to address

all of the identified issues simultaneously. The current funding is too limited for such a comprehensive approach. As GO-B said, “There is a lot to be done.”

This study also discovered that other youth issues needing urgent attention supposedly do not fall within the MSYA’s jurisdiction, bringing into question its functionality and capacity to fulfill stated goals. Although collaborating with other departments, such as the Registrar of Persons, Ministry of Education, or the Ministry of Health, may offer a solution, the autonomy of government agencies, bureaucratic infighting, and difficulties experienced in soliciting their cooperation on any given issue compromise the MSYA’s strategies and effectiveness. Together with the ministry’s stated objectives, which offer only a list of youth challenges that are quite vague about how exactly to empower young people, lack of jurisdiction to attend to most of the identified issues puts Kenya’s development and its chances for sustainability in jeopardy.

If the Kenyan government had asked its officials to prioritize youth issues identified in the KNYP, responses would have varied greatly. To a significant degree, this study has revealed government’s weakness in attending to youth concerns and empowering them by showing that, although both interviewees worked in the same office at the MSYA, each has his own way of defining youth issues and each holds a theory about addressing them—theories laden with their own personal values. Hence, exploring this problem has significance because it indicates that the objectives outlined in the KNYP are diagnostic at best and do not reveal a concrete plan of action to empower youth.

Without setting limits, this research should prove useful to various institutions within Kenya and Africa as a whole in terms of assessing various viewpoints, prioritizing them, and reaching an amicable conclusion on how to empower youth. Additionally, it will serve to challenge policy analysts to become more comprehensive when searching for alternatives to solve youth problems. It offers a needs-assessment tool—policy science—to those stewards of public service interested in understanding human problems and analyzing alternatives. Moreover, the study has shown that it is possible to have clear insight into the thought processes of all concerned. One hopes that this study will begin to nourish a healthy, needed dialogue in Kenya and in the distressed continent of Africa concerning youth empowerment and will lead to an improved decision-making process. (Since this research

applied narrative interviewing to collect data, the results cannot be generalized to Kenya as a whole and are limited only to the sample itself.)

Recommendations and Conclusion

To build on this study, future researchers could choose to compare public officials' perspectives with those of young people and thereby illuminate differences in their perceptions and explain why policies formulated by the Kenya government have yet to serve youth well. Additionally, more research needs to be conducted—for example, establishing a working definition for youth empowerment. Doing so would lay the groundwork for creating measurements to gauge youth empowerment, or the lack of it, in this region. Such an effort must involve young people themselves, not to mention effort and intelligence.

This study sought to understand the prioritization of certain values among government officials given a mandate to address youth issues and institute their empowerment in Kenya. Members of the MSYA are responsible for defining problems experienced by young Kenyans and formulating viable strategies; they also are expected to coordinate the efforts of other departments so as to provide the necessary tools and framework for youth to discover and harness the power within themselves. Granted, creation of the MSYA is appropriate, but it remains to be seen whether that organization can attain its goals.

The viewpoints of this study's two subjects revealed that working for the same department and sharing its vision, mission, and goal do not necessarily mean that officials are in synch on how to go about achieving defined objectives. The findings indicate that individuals, influenced by such factors as age and varying life experiences, differ in their estimation of their agency's priorities, a fact that emphasizes a need for government to set an agenda for departments authorized to deal with youth issues. Can this research then correctly surmise that the officials' prioritization of different values exposes a potential weakness in the government's decision making and implementation agenda and its ability to institute sustainable development? The answer is yes. Several concerns support this response.

Even though the interviewees' divergent values and perspectives certainly advance our understanding of the complexity of youth empowerment or development, they also reveal the different paths and values that subjects

advocate while pursuing a similar goal—in this case, youths' well-being. Thus, it is possible that policy-making elites have difficulty agreeing on what value/issue to pursue in the first place. Of more concern is the view, held by GO-B, that youth know nothing and are biased. Intentionally or not, public officials and leaders have upheld the belief that only adults can make sound decisions to satisfy everyone's needs. To continue the practice of having adults prescribe and enforce their decisions on young people is unfair and mutes the voices of young people, stifling their economic and political growth and inevitably nourishing poverty and its vices.

Furthermore, this study disclosed the potential benefits of including Kenya's youth in the policy process and harnessing their intellect, energy, and aspirations for economic growth. As in other African countries, the fact that this process—from initiation, analysis and decision making, implementation, and even evaluation—takes a top-down approach hinders the successful inclusion of young people in Kenya's policy arena. This suggests that only those in power make and implement decisions that affect the rest of the population without necessarily soliciting its support. Regardless of the MSYA's stated priority of enhancing youths' well-being, the unrelenting marginalization of young people in important spheres of community life illuminates deficiencies in the policy arena. In such a scenario, one may justifiably argue that only policies which uphold the elites' interests and status are approved.

Moreover, the study discovered that the problem of sustainable development, under which youth empowerment falls, may be not only logical and ideological but also empirical. More than likely, Kenya's policy makers, like their African counterparts, lack the appropriate tools to deliberate on complex issues such as youth empowerment and development. Since public policy and economic development strategies in general, and youth empowerment in particular, require consideration of explicit and implicit causes of problems (e.g., young people's idleness and poverty), this study recommends applying a well-tested policy-analysis tool, such as policy science, to address such a daunting task because it offers dependable, comprehensive, rational, and integrative information on an issue.

To fully understand Kenya's failure to achieve sustainable development, one must understand the government's prioritization and agenda-setting processes. When considering alternatives and making decisions, public ad-

ministrators should not only establish dialogue with young people but also set up a system that considers their views as well as analyzes and incorporates their values. Doing so will empower them to become better people, friends, and citizens.

Notes

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