

Peer Mentorship to Support Female Learners in STEM in Kenya

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Abstract

Globally, women make up approximately 1/3 of STEM graduates (UNESCO 2024) with Kenya broadly aligning with this statistic. The 'Use of peer neighbours to improve gender balance in HE STEM subjects' was a collaborative project between Kenyatta University and Nottingham Trent University supported by the British Council. The aim of the project was to raise awareness of female STEM students in Kenyatta University on gender issues within STEM courses and train them as ambassadors (peer neighbours) to mentor junior school girls to embrace STEM subjects. The project was premised on the belief that female STEM undergraduate students are best positioned to advise and encourage teenage girls as their 'peer-neighbours.' The approach adopted was the training of 50 Kenyatta University female STEM students on coaching and peer mentorship by Spotlight Inclusion and SLS 360 consultants (UK). The trained students embarked on peer mentorship of 400 teenage girls in 10 junior schools. The project achieved the following: Strengthened capacity as peer mentors among Kenyatta university female STEM students; successful use of peer mentorship as university students served as relatable role models who inspired and motivated the junior school students; increased curiosity and awareness of STEM career opportunities among junior school girls propelling them to consider the STEM pathway in their future academic and career decisions.

Key words: coaching, peer mentorship, peer neighbours, STEM