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Private Higher Education Expansion and the Gender Issue in Tanzania: A Case Study of Women Representation in the Sciences

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Abstract

Communal justice and development in a country depends on the citizens' access and equality to opportunities in all areas, education being the foremost. Education accelerates economic, political, social and cultural growth of nations. However, gender-based landscape that has characterized society and the higher education system perpetuated inequalities in opportunities which generate differential outcomes for females and males students. Subsequent to this developmental challenge, the government of Tanzania (GOT) committed itself to eliminate the imbalances in opportunities for women and men by taking different measures in Higher Education (HE). The important reform was the establishment of Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC) which was succeeded by Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU). The two institutions' remarkable success is the facilitation and accreditation of a number of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI) which led to the increase of student enrollment. Pertinent to this has been gender equality promotion, gender mainstreaming, and bridging the gender gap in higher learning institutions (HLIs- both PHEI and public universities-PU) through different affirmative action and establishment of gender sensitive policies. In ensuring this, the need for accelerating participation, access and ensuring equity required the provision of loans to all needy students in HLIs where special efforts have been made to increase student enrolment with special emphasis on science programs. This has been made by lowering entrance pass marks through Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) and establishment of higher education students' loan board (HESLB). Also, to simplify monitoring of gender representation and access in all programs, TCU enroll all undergraduate students for both public and private universities through the institutionalized central admission system (CAS). The establishment of the CAS system makes it impossible to isolate the discussion of PHE from PU especially in enrollment. Through TCU initiatives, there are a number of HLIs each with an enrolment capacity ranging from five to ten thousand in



their regular programs. However, there is a disproportional representation of the sexes in the programs where men outnumber women in sciences. The reasons for the female low proportion emanates from institutional, socio-cultural and economic factors. The study relied on reviewing of published and unpublished documents accessed from different research and academic institutions and through internet browsing. The significance of this study is to enable national decision makers and other development practitioners working on Education to better understand the impediments to the increase of females in the sciences. Understanding these is critically important to promoting appropriate interventions associated with the disproportional of female representation in the science programs in HLLs in Tanzania.

1. Introduction

Communal justice and development in a country depends on the citizens' access and equality to opportunities in all areas, education being the foremost. Globally, many countries including Tanzania have strengthened their efforts in attaining equality and equity in higher education after acknowledging the numerous impacts generated in societies development. Higher Education accelerates economic, political, social growth and cultural transformation of nations and act as an empowering tool for both females and males. Sen (1999) argue that education lead to social change. Education increases earnings and expands future opportunities and choices for both males and females (URT, 2006). However, the gender-biased landscape that has characterized the society and the higher education system perpetuated inequalities in opportunities which generate differential outcomes for females and males students. Equitable distribution of education is correlated with lower poverty and inequality and faster economic growth (Bruns *et al*, 2003). With education, women are able to participate effectively in leadership, economic, social and political activities and challenge the cultural beliefs that act as the major impediment to their transformation. Indeed educating females produces many additional socioeconomic gains such as increase in economic productivity, higher family income, delayed marriages and reduce fertility rates for infants and children (World Bank, 2005).



Subsequent to the developmental challenge and in the recognition of the importance of education, the government of Tanzania (GOT) committed itself to eliminate the imbalances in opportunities for women and men by taking different measures in Higher Education (HE). The important reform was the development of higher education policy (1998) that facilitated the establishment of Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC) which was succeeded by Tanzania Commission for Universities. The HEAC and TCU have played a remarkable role of accrediting private higher education Institutions (PHEI) that has contributed to the outstanding enrolment in higher education (HE). In addition, the policy advocated for affirmative action towards addressing the under-representation of female in sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Despite the mushrooming of the PHE institutions and an increase in enrolment in HLIs there is a disproportional representation of the sexes in the programs where men outnumber women in sciences.

The paper has relied essentially on secondary sources including books, articles, and reports as well as from internet browsing. The paper establishes the magnitude of women representation in sciences by tracing the endeavours made by the accreditation of the PHEI and the Gender mainstreaming in policies in Tanzania, focusing on the achievements gained and the challenges encountered. The paper starts by an introduction followed by highlighting the historical overview of the higher learning institutions in Tanzania. The third section highlights the Tanzania's initiatives towards the increase of women in higher learning institutions. The fourth section focuses on the state of women in HLIs. The paper ends with a concluding section.

2. The Higher learning Institutions in Tanzania-Historical Overview

The united Republic of Tanzania (URT) is made up of two countries, Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar. The two countries achieved their independence in 1961 and 1964 respectively and became united in 1964. This paper will specifically discuss the higher education of Tanzania. The education system of Tanzania is organized into six structures, the pre-primary level (2 years), primary level (7 years), secondary ordinary level (4 years), secondary advanced level (2 years) technical and vocational education (1-2 years) and higher education that takes three to four or five



years. The technical and vocational training levels have been clearly distinguished from the former after the establishment of HEAC and TCU. The Higher Education system is provided after the completion of A-level Secondary School education or its equivalent. This paper will mainly focus on the higher education system. Other educational systems will be highlighted due to their importance to the higher education requirements.

The higher education enables the community to have positive mind-set towards a revolution thinking that leads to national and personal development. Higher education enables women to become capable leaders to identify the cultural, social-economical and political hindrance of their under-representation in almost all areas of development, including education. Following this perception the demand for the increasing presence of women in education is thus important during this time when the country is evolving in the context of policy development and reformation.

The history of Tanzania's higher education can be traced back to before independence. Before independence, there were no HLIs in Tanganyika. A small number of Tanganyikan's got opportunities to join HLIs in neighbouring countries such as Uganda, Kenya and abroad. During that time many of Tanganyikan's attended intermediate level technical institutions inside the country. Immediately after independence, very significant changes took place in the higher education system in Tanzania. That can be explained in five phases. The first phase was from 1961 to 1974, which mark the establishment of one institution of higher education the university college in 1961 which became the fully fledged University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in 1970. Later a number of institutions were established to cater for the need of the ministries including the teacher training colleges to cater for the Ministry of Education, the Institute of Finance Management for the Ministry of Finance and the Institute of Development Management for the Public Administration and Supervision (TCU, 2005) to mention but a few.

The second phase includes the year 1974 to 1983, where a number of policies were established including the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the Musoma Resolution (1978). The two policies were very instrumental on the increase of a number of people joining primary education that led to the



increase of a number people joining secondary education and the higher education. In addition, it was during this phase when the qualification for joining the HLIs included having an advanced certificate of secondary education attained after form four or other recognized academic qualifications with two years experience after national service (TCU 2005). However, women through the Musoma resolution strategies were exempted from the two year work experience. This strategy led to an increase of women enrolment at different universities in the country.

The third phase (1984 to 1993) included the reformation of Musoma resolution and the establishment of other two public universities, Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA-in, 1984) and the Open University of Tanzania (OUT in 1993) and a constituent college of the UDSM, the Muhimbili University College of Health sciences in 1991 (MUCHS) now a fully fledged university. In addition, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (MSTHE) was established during this phase that coordinated the higher education in the country. MSTHE was transformed to the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) which administers science and technology and development in the technical and vocational education and higher education institutions (TCU, 2005).

The fourth phase began in 1994 to 2004 characterized with a number of education reforms and established a newly education policy, a number of private and public universities, and a council to addressing the challenges of globalizations and the market economy. In 1995 the higher education accreditation council (HEAC) was established as a government agency responsible to the MSTHE essentially for the purposes to overseeing the promotion and quality assurance of higher education institutions, which before was governed and guided by institutional policies and legal frameworks. The establishment of HEAC led to accreditation of a number of newly universities both public and private which were either constituted or standalone colleges. During this phase six universities were accredited including one PU, Mzumbe University (MU) and five PHEL, Hubert Kairuki Memorial University (HKMU), International Medical and Technological University (IMTU), Tumaini University Makumira (TUMA), St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) and Muslim University of Morogoro (MUM). In 1997 HEAC established the Central Admission System (CAS) in



order to create equity in enrollment which was to be facilitated at the particular university meaning that the HEAC ensured that all HLIs implemented CAS. The system created a fair ground for females who were under-representation in HLIs in Tanzania as most of the universities established policies and strategies to address the gender inequality at HLIs. Among the reasons for its establishment included the challenging situation of girls emanating from traditions and cultural issues that hinders the competitive leverage with male students. However, during this phase the PHEI did not manage to enroll a large number of students as the Higher Education Students' Loans Board (HESLB) was not yet established and the government sponsored students who were only qualified to join public universities and with certain set marks.

The fifth phase was from 2005 to date where HEAC was succeeded by Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU). The TCU was established in 2005 to coordinate the proper functioning of all university institutions with the aim of fostering a harmonized higher education system². Among initiatives towards realization of the education policy and the vision 2025, TCU aims at: improved quality assurance management systems; improved equitable access and coordination of student admission; improved student enrolment in science related programmes; enhanced internal and external linkages and university support systems; improved ICT resources and higher education management information systems; enhanced diversification of sources of funding; improved staff development activities, welfare and working environment; and enhanced mitigation against HIV/AIDS pandemic³. In creating a fair environment for both men and women enrollment in HLIs, TCU has strengthened the Central Admission System (CAS) which is guided and implemented by TCU itself and not HLIs as before. The CAS system has led to a number of landmarks including the development of university level quality assurance tools including the University Qualifications Framework (UQF), minimum guidelines for the harmonization of awards offered in Tanzania and minimum standards for postgraduate Training and Credit Accumulation and Transfer General Guidelines⁴. In addition, TCU instituted the use of principal passes as

² <http://tcu.go.tz/index.php/about-us>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid



eligibility into HLIs. The TCU lowered the pass marks to 2.0 meaning any student with two principal passes can apply for a university. Under the current system, female enrolment in HLIs has risen from 23% in 1998 to 36% in 2010. According to TCU (2013) the initiative of lowering pass marks creates an equal playing field for women, assuming that females will also meet such a requirement. Despite the initiative, the overall low enrolment rate for females in the HLIs specifically in sciences persists.

Since its establishment, TCU has managed to accredit 25 universities, where 8 are PU and 17 PHEI. Currently, there are 34 fully fledged universities in Tanzania, where 11 are PU and 23 PHEI and 15 university colleges (2 public and 13 private) scattered all over the country accommodating thousands of students in different courses. The accreditation of PHEI led to an increase of HLIs that has led to an increase in students' enrolment for example between 2008/09 and 2012/13 students increased by 113.7 % from 95,525 students to 204,175, of which 36.5 % were female students (TCU, 2013).

The other landmark in this phase was the establishment of the Higher Education Students' Loan Board (HESLB) in 2005. The HESLB provide loans to eligible students joining first degrees in HLIs (both PU and PHEI) in Tanzania. The HESLB has managed to provide loans to a total of 98,772 students in 2013 from 93,176 students in 2011/2012. However, the HESLB priority is to student enrolled in sciences courses, in education courses and to students from low-income families including orphans who are assessed through the means testing criteria. However, not every student is entitled to the full amount of money needed for fees but the HESLB distribute the money according to the need of the student where others receive 90, 80 or 70 to 10 per cent. Cost sharing policy in Tanzania dates back in 1982 where students in HLIs were provided with full funds for fees, accommodation and living expenses though during that time there were few students joining HLIs compared to now.

All in all, the initiatives towards improving the HLIs' enrolment reflect the development transformation towards gender equality and equity and meeting the vision 2025 other developed policies. However, to translate these into practice there are still big challenges. The section below explains the initiatives that the government of Tanzania has taken towards



addressing the factors that account for the under-representation of women in HLIs.

3. Tanzania Initiatives towards Women Representation in Higher Learning Institutions

Since achieving its independence in 1961, the government of Tanzania has placed great emphasis on community's access to education. Equity and equality in access to education have thus been ingrained in the country's development policies, strategies and legal frameworks. The education policy for self reliance emphasized the role of education in empowering all citizens towards combating the great Tanzania's enemies namely poverty, disease and ignorance. The 1967 education for Self Reliance Policy in Tanzania act as a base on emphasizing issues of access, quality, equality and equity where by later policy reports further develops on the 1967 document. These include the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (1977), the Education and Training Policy (ETP-1995), Technical Education and Training Policy (TETP-1996), Higher education policy (1998), Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP-2008), Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) and the Secondary Education Development Programme (SEDP). All of these policies have contributed to the positive results of the HLIs particularly on the establishment and accreditation of PHEI in Tanzania despite some challenges.

The amended constitution of the united republic of Tanzania guarantees equal rights and opportunities for men and women in all spheres, including the access to education (URT 1977:20). Article 11(2) stipulates that every person has the right to access education, and every citizen shall be free to pursue education in a field of his (her) choice up to the highest level according to his (her) merits and ability. In addition, Article 11(3) stipulates that the government shall make efforts to ensure all persons, men and women are afforded equal and sufficient opportunity to pursue education and vocational training in all levels of schools and other institutions of learning. Looking at the two articles, the constitution provides special consideration to both men and women in accessing education and selecting a degree course without prejudices towards building a nation free from gender inequality. Therefore, equal representation in education is well articulated in policies and legal frameworks.



The landmarks which have been very instrumental in creating equality and equity to higher education include the development of higher education policy of 1998. Among the reasons that led to develop the higher education policy includes the persistence gender imbalance in enrolments where girls were unfavoured; improving female participation rates in science, mathematics and technology; creation of a higher education council for accreditation purposes; and, establishment of private institutions/universities. This initiatives are clearly supported by the development of vision 2025, poverty reduction strategy 2015 aspirations (National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP 1&2), PEDP (1&2), SEDP 1&2, Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC-1995) now Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU-2005) and in the international and regional conventions of which Tanzania is a signatory.

The government of Tanzania (GoT) strives to achieve a greater human resource outcome that passes through a well-educated and learning society as articulated in the vision 2025. According to the Tanzania development vision 2025⁵, the country will attain creativity, innovativeness and high level of quality education in its initiatives towards responding to development challenges and effectively compete regionally and internationally if it will adhere to:

- Attaining self reliance driven by the psychological liberation of the mindset and people's sense of confidence in order to enable the effective determination and ownership of the development agenda with the primary objective of satisfying the basic needs of all the people-men, women and children;
- Being a nation whose people have a positive mindset and a culture which cherishes human development through hard work, professionalism, entrepreneurship, creativity, innovativeness and ingenuity and who have confidence in and high respect for all people irrespective of gender; and,
- Being a nation with high quality of education at all levels and which produces the quantity and quality of educated people sufficiently equipped with the requisite knowledge to solve the society's

⁵ <http://www.mof.go.tz/mofdocs/overach/vision2025.htm>



problems, meet the challenges of development and attain competitiveness.

In this regard, the GoT has ratified the following international stipulates that provide for the rights of people to education with a gender focus, namely: the Jomtien Declaration (1990) on Education for All (EFA); The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC-1989); The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW-1980) that emphasizes on equity to education through Article No 10; The 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education, Access and Quality and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948); The EFA Dakar Framework for Action (2000); the Millennium Development Goals (2000) where goal two identifies education as a key to development; the Convention on the Rights of Persons Living with Disabilities (2006); and, the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) that identifies education as a priority for women/girls. In addition, the GoT is also a signatory to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convention against discrimination in education.

At the national level the GoT has formulated the women development policy which was later reformed and resulted to the formulation of the women and gender development policy in 2000. Further, the national strategy for gender development was developed which is clearly linked to the vision 2025 to address the education challenges. These policies are guided by the ministry of community development, gender and children (MCDGC) an institution that aims to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women at all levels, education being the foremost. In realizing this it has mainstreamed gender in all government sectors through gender focal points at regional, district and ward level and works with international and local partners towards the removal of barriers that hinder women's access to education and training at all levels. The ministry's initiative is also embraced by a number of HLIs as a number of HLIs has formulated gender policies and centres towards addressing the gender gap in student enrolment and staff recruitment.

Further, following the under-representation of women in sciences there are strategies put in place by a number of institutions including the "*Jukwaa linalosimamia ubora wa Elimu Tanzania*" a Platform formed by six members



including TCU. According to TCU (2013) the platform is geared towards addressing the women under-representation in the sciences by focusing on:

- (i) Reviewing the teaching curricula on the Science subjects from lower levels of education;
- (ii) Looking into programmes that favour the rights ways of educating girls and enabling them to achieve the qualifications that can make them eligible for the sciences;
- (iii) Looking into programmes in technical education that could be more attractive to females;
- (iv) Conducting occasional visits to Female Secondary Schools to encourage girls to opt for Science and Engineering specializations.

Despite the fact that, the Tanzanian government which is a signatory to international and regional conventions and agreements and has established educational reforms and programs in order to address the education concerns the increase of women in HLIs particularly in the sciences have remained comparatively low.

4. The State of Women in Tanzania Higher Learning Institutions

According to the 2012 Tanzania population census women outnumber males (URT 2012). However, there is a gender inequality in all areas of development, education in particular. On the other hand, the gender inequality in education persists more in higher learning institutions level. In addition, female students' enrolment trend is higher in Non-degree courses than those in degree courses, being 39.6 % and 35.2 % respectively (URT 2009). Looking at the education structure of Tanzania the enrolment rate lowers as the level of education goes up (see Table 1).



Table 1: Tanzania Education Enrolment from Primary Level to Higher Education

No	Pre-primary	Primary level	Secondary education O-level	Secondary education A-level	Technical & vocational education	Teacher's college	Higher Education
1.	8.1	76.2	12.7	0.6	1.4	0.2	0.9

Source: URT (2009)

The enrolment however is characterized by a gender bias as male outnumbers females at the HLIs (see table 2).

Table 2: Higher Learning Institutions Enrolment Trends in Tanzania by Sex

YEAR OF ENROLMENT					
Sex	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
Females	31012	42239	51860	60592	74498
Males	64513	76712	87778	105892	129677
Total	95525	118951	140379	166484	204175
%age of Females	32.5	35.5	36.9	36.4	36.5

Source: URT (2009-2013)

Nevertheless, the female proportion at HLIs is slightly lower in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) specializations than in other courses. According to different reports reviewed the proportion of females in HLIs and particularly in the sciences is low compared to males (URT, 2010; 2011; TCU, 2013).

A number of factors have been identified for the fewer women at higher learning institutions and in science courses. These include institutional, economical and socio-cultural reasons. The institutional reasons include the abolishment of pre-entry programmes for female students in some universities and lack of a gender policy at TCU that can help in establishing a strong monitoring mechanism of targets set in its strategic plans and the MoEVT targets. In addition, many of the policies and plans developed by the GoT and other institutions have overlooked the issue of living environment for teachers and students especially in the rural areas which act as among the major factors in academic performance. The rural context has



been identified as an impediment to pupils and students' access in education. The reason identified is the poor access probabilities to all levels of education due to inadequate supply of facilities (URT, 2011).

Additionally, lack of capacity to most of science and mathematics teachers has led to poor performance of students from lower education level which led to fewer students particularly girls to move from one education level to another. According to URT (2010) the poor performance of science subjects at secondary level stands at 54% for females, where in physics stands at 40% and 80% in mathematics. This situation has a negative impact to female enrolment in the sciences despite the cut-off points introduced by TCU.

In addition, economic difficulties also contribute to the poor performance of students, particularly girls who have multiple responsibilities at household level (academic and domestic) where merging the two becomes difficult. According to a study by Laddunuri (2012) a number of factors for the failure in examination at the secondary level include poor infrastructural facilities, insufficient books in the libraries, frequent changes in the curriculum and high costs of relevant books. Further Laddunuri observed lack of trained teachers has a consequence in pupils/students performance (2012).

The economic factor includes the emerging competing professions in the community which are better paid including law, commerce, Information technology and management. These courses have been attracting female students especially those who science is their major subjects at advanced secondary level and performs well.

The socio-cultural reason include the conceptualization of gender in problem solving as it is still perceived as a female issue and not as a analysing tool to be used within the systems and structures in uncovering the issues that exclude and discriminate certain groups in society. Following this perception, gender disaggregation and analysis tend to focus on women and men with their similarities and not their differences and discrimination in access to and control of resources.

Thus we see a number of policies; strategies and programmes implemented in education but the outcome do not relate the set targets. In Tanzania there are still cultural and traditions that prioritizes marriage than education



towards poverty eradication. Receiving a dowry and a marriage certificate is better than receiving education certificate. Thus early marriages are increasing leaving behind few girls enrolling in higher education. In addition, teenage pregnancy has been a major contributing factor to low proportional of female students reaching HLIs. Further, truancy caused by domestic roles and poverty in households leads to poor performance and high drop-out of girls. Additionally, the science courses have been more perceived as male courses making few women to be attracted. Further, lack of gender empowering skills to majority of women has led to most of women continuing living in patriarchal domination making it difficult for them to change and see education for girls as an important mean towards poverty eradication.

Given few women in the sciences there are few or no role models from lower education levels to attract girls for science courses. The GoT initiatives will succeed if these factors are not overlooked during the development and reformation of policies and legal frameworks. In addition, following a few women decision makers and gender sensitive personnel at higher education institutions it become difficult to develop policies and programmes that are women friendly and including their different development and context challenges. However, it does not mean that the GoT through its institutions, international and national partners cannot address the challenges to the under-representation of women in the sciences. The areas that the GoT can play a greater role in enhancing the gender equality in the sciences include:

- *Developing of new regulations and reform policies that address women issues according to context, class and other differences.*
- *Research on gender have to be expanded and conducted across the country to identify the socio-cultural dynamics towards building a nation free from gender inequality in all areas.*
- *Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of the policies and programs.*
- *Ensuring that the content of teaching, learning materials and language used is pupils/students friendly.*
- *Ensuring of well trained teachers at all levels.*
- *Regular monitoring of education challenges at all levels in rural and urban areas and taking urgent response.*
- *Ensuring of gender sensitive plans and programmes from the lower education level.*



- *Creating an environment friendly to women scientists by developing a legal mechanism on dealing with their issues such as salary, working hours and opportunities and sexual harassment at work.*
- *Change of mind-set to perceive gender as a tool of analysis to uncovering systemic and institutional issues towards gender equality at all levels.*
- *Promote women scientists to higher academic positions who will act as capable and gender sensitive decision makers and thus become role models to girls and the community at large.*

5. Conclusion

Through the GoT initiatives we observe the establishment and accreditation of private universities towards increasing the number of HLIs in meeting the goals set in the vision 2025 and other development policies and plans. Yet, the HLIs continue to be clearly identified with the gender inequality in enrolment and in courses where we observe the male-dominated and female-dominated courses. This means that there are courses that either female enrolment surpasses men or men enrolment surpasses females. However, gender inequality is more observed in the science degrees or courses where male enrolment rates are higher than those of female. Female lower proportion in enrolment increases as the level of education continues up, meaning that at primary level the enrolment is higher and continues decreasing to the secondary level and more to HLIs. Nevertheless, gender mainstreaming as an effort to address the gender inequality in education is evident in a number of policies and legal reforms. Therefore, in addressing the gender inequality at the HLIs there is a need of extra and innovative efforts. As observed, multiple factors contribute for the low female proportional in HLIs and in the sciences. In addition, other factors are overlooked.

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