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Explore status of gender mainstreaming in Higher Education Institution, a case of Tengeru Institute of Community Development

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ABSTRACT :

The putting into practice of gender mainstreaming in most public HEIs in most Sub-Saharan African countries was still indispensable lagging behind compared to those in other regions despite the different efforts to guarantee effective implantation from government and international organs. Underrepresentation of women has been a common practice for most of higher Education Institutions. This study explored status of implementation of gender mainstreaming practices in government owned Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Tanzania, concentrating on the familiarity of Tengeru Institute of Community Development (TICD). A total of 39 respondents were convoluted in the study, encompassing of 21 staff members and 18 students. Study findings discovered gender inequality in women's access to top-level leadership and managerial positions, gender disparities were found in students' enrolment, disparities in accessing accommodation facilities, lack of an explicit gender policy, inadequate knowledge and awareness, and patriarchy.

Keywords: Gender Mainstreaming, Gender, Gender disparity, Patriarchy and Gender Based Violence

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of gender mainstreaming in some of public HEIs in most Sub-Saharan African countries was still problematical. This is the circumstance regardless of having explicit legal framework and policy frameworks for endorsing gender equality at all different levels. For instance, there are still conspicuous gender inequalities amongst students and academic staff members in most HEIs in learning, working and accommodation environment (UNICEF, 2016). Similarly, in case of management and leadership positions, there is thoughtful gender inequality in most HEIs (UNDP, 2016). Underrepresentation of female members of HEIs in numerous actions of the institutions is a blockade to realize widespread gender mainstreaming. Gender inequality pragmatic in HEIs is of high apprehension as the problem is still predominant in areas where it was supposed to be addressed and resolved to form epicenter for efforts to bring about gender equality. Effective measures to address the problem of gender mainstreaming in HEIs are imperative to bring gender balance in the institutions.

Gender mainstreaming in Tanzania, HEIs in particular, has become vital due to gender inequality associated with gender practices. According to the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) report of 2018, there were 7647 teaching staff in HEIs in the country, among them 75.4 percent were male and only 24.6 percent were female (TCU, 2019). Also, the rate of female students in most HEIs has largely remained below 30 percent over a couple of years and discriminatory practices still prevail (Kilango et al., 2018). However, in non-university institutions under supervision of NACTE, the number of female students has been increasing and eventually closed the gap giving female students more opportunities than males. This however is not equally good as males are also lagging behind hence gender equality in student recruitment is not adequately achieved. Nevertheless, recruiting students more from one gender relative to the other because of promoting women may lead to non-implementation of the mainstreaming and lead to conflicted gendered policy (Rodriguez & Abocejo, 2018).

The observed lack of an explicit institutional gender policy to address gender inequality at the TICD as well as little attention given to gender issues affecting staff and students, has been worrisome for quite some time. The situation prompted the current study to examine barriers to effective gender mainstreaming in public HEIs in Tanzania, focusing on TICD. The TICD has been given the mandate to produce community development officers who are responsible for implementing gender mainstreaming in the different public and private institutions in Tanzania. Thus, a study was required to understand aspects that perpetuate gender inequality and retard gender mainstreaming despite various interventions promoted by the government.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

HEIs, which are publicly owned, serve as a potent avenue for change and promotion of gender mainstreaming in education and development (Yang, 2016; Cerbito-Abocot, 2018; Rodriguez & Abocejo, 2018). However, national efforts to bring about gender equality in HEIs have not produced expected results due to barriers rooted in stereotypes, cultures and attitudes (Yang, 2016). Although, the establishment of the National Women and

Gender Policy of 2000 and the National Strategy for Gender and Development (NSGD) has helped to create a conducive environment for gender mainstreaming, but the practical implementation of mainstreaming of gender in institutional programs and policies in some government owned HEIs is still wanting. To-date, only a few HEIs in Tanzania have adopted and implemented gender mainstreaming policies and strategies in their respective leadership and management, as well as training, learning and accommodation contexts; these include the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and University of Dodoma (UDOM). However, there are a few government owned HEIs such as the TICD which are yet to fully mainstream gender in their institutional policies and programmes mentioned above due to barriers that have not been fully investigated through empirical research (Nyoni et al., 2017; Kilango et al., 2018). In the Tanzanian context, very few studies have been conducted that direct their focus on gender issues in relation to HEIs (Nyoni et al., 2017; Kilango et al., 2018). In regard to this, little is known about the levels of understanding about gender mainstreaming among TICD. Therefore, this study explored barriers constraining the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy in HEIs in Tanzania, using a case of TICD.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a case study research design to explore barriers limiting effective mainstreaming of gender in government owned HEIs in Tanzania. First, this particular design was chosen because it was considered one of the most appropriate designs for exploring key issues included in the problem statement. Also, this particular research design was chosen because it has the potential for examining multifaceted and complex issues also stated in the research objectives.

Study Area

This study was conducted at Tengeru Institute of Community Development (TICD) which is located in Arusha region, in Tanzania. The TICD is among five government institutions entrusted with providing courses on Community Development, Project Management as well as Gender and Development. The TICD was selected because it is one of the oldest HEI's providing gender-related courses, as well as activities revolving around empowering women through gender equality and equity.

Sample size and Sampling Procedures

The study comprised of 39 participants included were management staffs, government officials and students' leaders undertaking undergraduate studies at the TICD. This study employed purposive (non-probability) sampling procedure. The respondents for the study were purposively selected based on their positions and knowledge on the topic under study. This technique enabled the study to have respondents with an in-depth understanding of the subject under study.

Data Collection Methods and Data Analysis

This study employed mainly three qualitative data collection methods used for gathering data for a study of this kind, namely in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and documentary review. Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis according to themes that relate to the specific objectives of this research study. Initially, data from in-depth interviews and FGDs were recorded, transcribed, organized, coded, entered in a matrix and then subjected to content analysis. Presentation of sub-sequent data included quotations of respondents' opinions and perception on barriers limiting gender mainstreaming at the TICD.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Patterns and Trends of Women in Key Leadership Positions

Findings confirm that gender inequality in access to top leadership and management positions has remained one of key issue at TICD, as is the case in most HEIs worldwide and Tanzania in particular. In addressing this challenge, TICD management has directed all its units, departments and even committees to include at least some few women representatives. This was affected by reviewing the procedures and process of nominating or electing leaders to various positions.

During Focus Group Discussion (FGD), one respondent claimed that,

In this institution, there are guidelines that define recruitments and promotion to higher leadership positions. However, in spite the guidelines and recognition of gender representation, gender equality is yet to be achieved satisfactorily which led to many administrative positions led by men. Female engagement in top positions is a matter of chance, depending on the institute recruitment scheme or top management decision (Male respondent during FGD held on 17 January, 2025).

The results of this study imply that, the problem of gender inequality still exist as perceived by study respondents. This view was also noted by Morley et al. (2016) in their study, where they found under-representation of women in senior academic positions, and increased gender bias in UK higher education institutions. Likewise, a study by Oladunni (2014) who holds that, women's participation in various management positions in African Higher Education Institutions is relatively low hence hinder efforts of gender mainstreaming.

Another respondent during FGD added,

Efforts on implementing gender equality at TICTD management are promising as the situations are changing gradually. Women of this institute are now seeing light towards gender equality, we have one female Deputy Rector Position which is a milestone for gender equality efforts, and women specific agenda are now getting sufficient voice. (Female respondent during FGD held on 17 January, 2025).

Similarly, another respondent during an interview showed the situations of gender inequality in HEIs by noting that:

There are masculine attitudes in the institution; however, it has little effects on female efforts of seeking for top job as recruitment regulation is open. Inspire of use of fair selection of top officials, women are still few in top management positions. For instance, there are 13 female lecturers against 38 male lecturers. Moreover, in management committee, which comprises head of departments and units, there are only 4 female members against 16 male members. This indicates that, gender equality is still a challenge (Female respondent during interview held on 17 January, 2025).

The results imply that, in spite of open recruitment procedures, the situation of equality in top management positions is yet to reflect gender mainstreaming in TICTD. Similar to this view, Nerisa and Churk (2015) showed that, HEIs in Tanzania have made efforts to incorporate gender mainstreaming in their institutional policies. However, universities in Tanzania have low number of women in leadership positions. These findings are similar to that from a study by Odomore (2015) who reported that, there are low representations of women who are female professors at professorial level due to inadequate representation at the management positions.

In the interviews, one respondent who viewed the institute positively commented that:

In our institute, at least there are women in top management as well as at department levels. There are 13 female lecturers and 3 female head of departments. During a recruitment and employment process, women are encouraged to contest for management positions and it has become our culture. However, leadership positions in various sections at the institute are yet to be equally distributed on gender basis (Male respondent during interview held on 17 January, 2025).

The respondent added that,

Today TICTD is far different from few years back, in every unit, department as well as various Institute committees, there is at least a female member that should never be ignored. The institute has been recognized by the government in promoting gender related programs; for instance, TICTD now co-ordinate NWRDC. (Male respondent during interview held on 17 January 2025).

Findings from the study indicate that, the situation of gender mainstreaming activities at TICTD is progressively being addressed. Inequality associated with top management jobs is decreasing through enforcement of various efforts taken by stakeholders to promote gender equality. This is basically revealed in progress observed in the institute in recent years, where female staff was getting opportunities in holding top management positions.

Assessment of the Status of Gender Equality in Students' Enrolments

It was found that, students' enrolment has been increasing in the past 10 years, with number of students enrolled in 2010/2011 amounting to 228 (Female= 131, Male=97), and in 2020/2021 students enrolments in all levels (NTA level 4 to level 9) increased to 1973 (Female=1301, Male=672), an increase of 765.3 percent (TICTD report, 2022). The increase in female enrolment for the past 9 years was 893.1 percent increase while male students increased by 592.8 percent, an indication that, female enrolment increased slightly more than male students' enrolment (Ibid). In the latest enrolment data, a total of 2145 students were enrolled, where female students were 1465 while male students were 680. In the past 10 years, total enrolment has increased by 665.6 percent with female student enrolment increasing by 1018.3 percent while male students' enrolments increasing by 601 percent. The data indicates that, the rate of female students' enrolment is greater than male students' enrolment, despite TICTD efforts to attract more men. To achieve equality in students' enrolment, the regulatory authorities both NACTE and TCU, should organize collaborative efforts with TICTD and other HEIs to address the gender disparities in students' enrolments through their guidelines and directives (Ibid). During interviews, one respondent gave her opinions on the subject by stating that:

Students' enrolments are under power of NACTE, though TICTD participates in selecting appropriate students. NACTE has full mandate in various decisions on students' enrolments and TICTD takes directives from it. The number of students to be enrolled must be in consultation with NACTE (Female respondent during Interview held on 15 January, 2025).

In pointing the issue of equality in enrolment, one interview respondent claims that:

The enrolment of students in most of our HEIs lacks the context of inequality, making most of our higher education institutions comprised of more male students than female students particularly in science and mathematics subjects. In spite of the existing problem, the situation is changing gradually as the gap is decreasing with time. Thanks to government efforts. (Male respondent during Interview held on 14 January, 2025).

This is supported by Kilango and colleagues (2017) who note that there were serious problems in science courses including engineering, mathematics and computer where female students were very few compared with humanity and social science courses, making the courses dominated by male students. In similar findings, Iwu and Azoro (2017) note that, one of the factors that leads to poor participations of women in college science subjects, included patriarchal culture fuelled by gender segregation where men are considered compatible. This implies that, the problem of inequality in students' enrolment is common and has effect in implementation of gender mainstreaming. However, the problem is met with various efforts from the government to bridge the gap. One FGD participant from students expressed dissatisfaction with enrolment procedure that has gender inequality elements where he said that:

Even during students' enrolment in TICTD there are few male students than female. For instance, in the current enrolment, 930 male students and 1678 were admitted an indication that female were highly favoured relative to male students. Male students are denied equal opportunities during enrolment and thus, creating gender inequality in access to higher learning education (Female participant during FGD held on 17 January, 2025).

It is uncommon in most of HEIs in Tanzania to find few female students taking science related subjects than their male counterparts. Tamtik and Guenter (2019) found that in the Canadian universities, equity, diversity and inclusion are given higher priority in the institutions' action plans to ensure that gender equality is achieved.

Another respondent from FGD discussion said that:

TICD has done exceptionally great work of increasing number of students enrolled by introducing lower course (NTA LEVELS 4,5,6) as well as Masters' programs, credits go to TICD management for the efforts. However, gender gap is still there despite efforts undertaken by the management of decreasing the gap. Having more men studying gender is a key to amplifying efforts to promote gender mainstreaming (Male respondent during FGD held on 17 January, 2025).

This demonstrates that there are ongoing efforts to implement gender equality though more needs to be done. In similar outcomes, Oladunni (2014) holds that problems of gender inequality during students' enrolment continue to be manifested in composition of females in various top positions in the HEIs institutions. Kilango et al. (2017) found that, affirmative action policy interventions adopted by the UDSM have been showing positive impacts on increasing the number of female students recruited for higher learning studies.

Status of Students Accommodation at TICD

According to TICD reports in academic year 2018/2019, a total of 510 female and 168 male students were accommodated in the institute facilities; the number increased to 514 females and 195 males in academic year 2019/2021. Moreover, in the latest accommodation capacity, academic year 2021/2022 accommodated 592 females and 114 male students. Further, 144 students were accommodated outside in hostels recommended by the institute. The data show that, in students' accommodation, female students are favoured in preference to male students.

However, the study results show that, more male students stay outside the institute accommodation, compared to female students, as a result, in 2021/2022 about 84 spaces from male accommodation facilities were left unfilled. Further in the institute, there were only 25 toilets pits (in use) for all female students and 10 toilets for male students living in the hostels. Meanwhile, the institute is undertaking new hostel construction project that is expected to house 568 female students to solve the problem of accommodation among female students. There are no warden and drivers' facilities in the institute, in regard to the scenario, at night hours students are out of guardians and quick service in case of emergency.

During interviews, one respondent claimed that:

Our Institute has been showing great efforts in increasing accommodation for students. There are on-going hostels' construction projects and the fund are already in place and work is on progress. Knowing the problems of students' accommodations and associated challenges, the institute is working with the government to ensure the problems are settled and students learning environment is improved (Male respondent during interview held on 19 January, 2025).

This implies that though student accommodation is still a challenge, there are deliberate efforts by the institute to increase accommodation facility for students. TICD is undertaking construction of new hostels and rehabilitating the existing ones. In conversant with the argument, Burkinshaw et al. (2017) claimed that, gender mainstreaming is well achieved if students' learning environments are made friendly and compatible to the learning activities.

To show that there is a problem, during interview one respondent commented as follows:

In most institutions including TICD, problem of students' accommodation is a serious issue, and in the past couple of years, there have been no increase in accommodation infrastructures in spite of rapid increases in students' enrolment. As a result, students end up seeking accommodation outside the compound. This affects female students further as they are forced to find facilities outside institute compound, an aspect, which increases their upkeep costs dragging them into immoral practices (Male respondent during interview held on 15 January, 2024).

This implies that, despite establishing new accommodations, for long there have been a problem of students' accommodations which render them difficulties to stay in the institute compound. In such cases, students seeking accommodation outside the institute are experiencing some insecurity in their environment.

In consolidating the argument of the fellow respondent, during FGDs, a student participant commented that:

We, female students meet a lot of challenges by staying outside Institute hostels, first of all nearby rent houses are very expensive for us to afford. There is no guaranteed security in the accommodation outside the institute; this poses more danger for younger female students. Such challenge makes our learning environment difficult and unbearable (Female participant FGD held on 19 January, 2025).

This implies that, there are problems with the learning environment associated with students' accommodation problems. Lack of sufficient accommodation facilities makes student learning more challenging, particularly to cope with lessons schedules since students have to walk long distance from outside accommodation facilities. This argument is conversant with study by Walby (2005) in which it was pointed out that, unfriendly learning environments within institutions hinder gender mainstreaming thereby engulfing.

Status of Female Staff and Students' Gender Injustices

Study findings reveal that, some female students were facing gender related injustices. Moreover, it was noted that, there were claims of rare cases of sexual harassment. These claims were revealed by respondents who participated in interviews as well as those who engaged in FGDs. Due to sensitivity of this issue and unreported incidents, the data on the extent of the problems of sexual harassment was difficult to obtain. However, based on respondents' experiences and opinions, it was evident that, the problem exists in the institute. One respondent during interview pointed out that:

There are challenges experienced by some female students especially those who get pregnancies. In fact there are no programs of supporting such students to take their studies smoothly. In spite of their conditions, they face the vigorous school timetables which make them to experience multiple responsibilities. Though they access reproductive health services, but that is out of institute support (Male respondent during interview held on 19 January, 2025).

A student participant, who participated in FGD, commented that:

There are cases of sexual relationships between male lecturers and female students, the relationship, which is basically based on offering of higher marks in examinations. However, this is largely contributed by lazy students who seek-short cuts towards achieving good marks. However, the cases are not common, and none have been reported rather than speculations. (Male participant during FGD held on 17 January, 2025).

This implies that there are unreported rare cases of irresponsible intimacy relationships between male lecturers and female students, motivated by academic credits offers. In addition, it was found that, some exploitation incidences were fueled by the female students themselves. However, the existence of such incidents is generally low in TICD according to study results.

During interview, in responding to students claim during FGD, one respondent noted:

Sexual exploitation is not common issues in our institute as it is illegal and unacceptable. The code of conducts states them clearly and the consequences are also clear. No incidents of sexual harassments have so far reported and if it happens, the reaction is severe as stated by our regulations. There might be sexual relationships among teachers and students, however, this might be secret and out of reach of disciplinary committee. But in general, any kind of intimacy relationships is discouraged in the institute (Male respondent during interview held on 15 January, 2025).

The results imply that, the institute has clear regulations on how to deal with such inappropriate conducts. A study by O'Connor and Irvine (2020) claim that, there are various initiatives installed in HEIs to address sexual harassments against female individuals and has gender awareness programs to address exploitation incidents. According to institute, it is illegal and intolerable and such incidents are met with immediate reactions. There were no reports of student-teacher sexual relationships otherwise the incidents are personal.

Another respondent gave her experience:

Yes, there might some sexual harassment and injustices, but the cases are rarely reported, except some years ago when such cases were identified. Appropriate measures were taken. We always encourage students to report any harassment so that actions are taken immediately. The problems might be students themselves who usually create environment for such exploitation for their own reasons but any exploitative is met with disciplinary measures (Female respondent during interview held on 15 January, 2025).

Respondents reported that female students sometimes become victims of exploitation in some occasions but there are immediate assistances available. Creating of any environment for such exploitations is not tolerated in the institution.

The findings establish that, TICD has specific rules and principles of handling disciplinary issues among staff and students, and that sexual exploitation among students is strongly discouraged and monitored. The incidents of exploitation and injustices are common in most HEIs, and each institution has its ways of addressing the problems. The study findings indicate that in spite absence of reports on sexual exploitations, TICD has specific guidelines of handling such incidents. Furthermore, it was noted that irresponsible female students may have initiated such irresponsible behaviours in the institute.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that gender mainstreaming faces challenges at TICD. It was revealed that, more female than male students are enrolled at TICD, also, there is problem of student accommodation at TICD; for many years students were facing difficulties to be fully accommodated at the institute. It was revealed that, there are some few cases where female students were subjected to challenges associated to accessing reliable and comfortable accommodation facilities. These accommodation challenges have further increased the sense of insecurity among most female students. The study also concludes that, gender-based injustices treatment particularly female exploitation is rarely reported at TICD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Higher Education should develop gender policies for ensuring smooth gender mainstreaming implementation and make equality mandatory for sustainable development

Furthermore, government and other development actors should allocate adequate budget due to fact that gender mainstreaming require investment for substantial positive impacts

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