

Full Length Research Paper

Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes: Perspectives from Student-Teachers in Higher Education Institutions in Tanzania. A Case of University X in Dodoma

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Abstract

Women continue to earn less compared to men, are less likely to advance their careers as far as men, and are more likely to spend their final years in poverty. Experiences show that there are gender inequalities in educational performance and attainment in higher learning institutions, and in the Tanzanian context in particular. So, the aim of this article was to explore the views of student-teachers from higher education institutions regarding the performance differences in educational achievement between females and males and what needs to be done to assuage the situation. The study employed qualitative methodology and a case study approach. A total of 23 respondents participated in the study: Three participants were lecturers, and 20 were student-teachers, where 13 were males and 10 were females from a higher education institute, in Tanzania. Data was generated through interviews, focus group discussion, and documentary review. The findings from documentary review showed that the performance of female student-teachers was low compared to male student-teachers; again, findings from interviews indicated that the involvement of female student-teachers in learning activities was low compared to male student-teachers. To improve the situation, it is recommended that there is a need for the university management to institute policies that can trigger a gender unit for guidance and counselling to both female and male students. Furthermore, universities need to urgently initiate research, particularly from a gender perspective in order to produce responsive and relevant policy, accelerate gender policy dissemination and translate the policy into tangible actions.

Key words: Gender equality, gender differences in educational outcomes, higher learning institutions, and student-teachers.

Introduction

The aim of this paper was to investigate gender differences in educational outcomes by exploring views from student-teachers in higher education institutions in Tanzania. Specifically, the paper intended to examine to what extent and in what ways gender differences in educational achievement was an issue of concern in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Much of the literature on gender and education in higher education institutions attends to performance differences between females and males (Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), 2010; Mlyakado, 2012). This study is built upon theoretical perspectives on gender inequalities in academic performance and achievement in HEIs. Although gender equality has long been a major goal in Tanzania regarding participation rates in education (Mlyakado, 2012), with regard to education and training, gender differences persist in both achievement and choice of courses of study in HEIs (Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE),

2010). For instance, women remain a minority in the fields of mathematics, science and technology, on the other hand, evidence shows that males are more likely to be amongst the poorest performers in reading ability (EQUATE Project, 2008). These two examples illustrate that gender differences in education must be taken into account when developing policies, programs, and strategies to improve educational outcomes. The current study therefore examines whether such disparities have led to policy initiatives such as proposals for initiating gender units in universities or any other kind of official measures focusing on gender in order to help university students to realize their potential and finally to obtain higher achievements regardless of their gender. The study also attempts to provide a mapping of the policies and strategies in place across HEIs in Tanzania to tackle gender inequalities in the education system today.

Gender inequalities in both learning and earning outcomes persist (Tembon, 2008). Although, graduates from HEIs face significant challenges entering the labour market, males still tend to find employment faster than

women, irrespective of their level of education (Tembon, 2008). For that matter, this paper investigates the gender differences in educational outcomes in higher education institutions, using the University X, college of education in Tanzania, as a case study. Basically, this study was inspired by the current situation of less engagement of female student-teachers in learning activities compared to males in the higher learning institutes in Tanzania. According to the previous studies, females' poor academic performance is one of the major problems in Tanzania and the world in general (Haki Elimu, 2013; Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT), 2012). While the problem of females' academic performance exists in most countries, including developed countries, it is even extreme in developing countries.

Much of the literature on gender and education in higher learning institutions attends to performance differences in academic achievement between females and males (EQUATE Project, 2008; UNESCO, 2010). For example, a study by Mlyakado (2012) indicates that female student-teachers have the wrong assumptions/attitudes that male student-teachers are committed in their studies and therefore females can relax and be assured to get academic assistance from males. This academic assistance sometimes is conditional and ends up with love affairs. On the other hand, male student-teachers argue that females use much of their time for personal issues rather than concentrating on their studies.

The terrain of gender inequalities in educational achievement has seen much change in recent decades. Over the years, education has focused on access and parity that is closing the enrolment gap between girls and boys, although insufficient attention has been paid to retention and achievement or the quality and relevance of education (EQUATE Project, 2008). A quality education is one that satisfies basic learning needs and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living (UNESCO, 2000). Quality education should be the type of education that creates knowledgeable people with a high quality of life: people who are competitive, creative, competent, and can solve problems and come out with solutions for the current development challenges (Mlyakado, 2012). Together with this, gender equality is achieved when people are able to access and enjoy the same rewards, possessions, and opportunities regardless of whether they are a man or a woman. Many countries worldwide, including Tanzania, have made significant progress towards gender equality in recent years, particularly in areas such as education (Mlyakado, 2012). However, access to higher education is influenced by many factors. The report by UNESCO (2010) indicates various factors. The first factor involves those conditions relating to the students themselves and their families, which include academic performance in primary and secondary education, as well as parents' economic situation and the value they place on education. The second involves the government policy for higher education, including affirmative action, the tuition fee structure and scholarship/incentive programmes for female students and other socially disadvantaged groups. The third factor involves the students'

environment, such as the physical distance to educational institutions and the quality of education, which may encourage or discourage people from advancing to higher education. Furthermore, these influencing factors are further reinforced by other elements such as sex, ethnicity, and family background (UNESCO, 2010).

Similarly, proactive promotion of greater and equitable participation of females and males from all social and ethnic groups can have a significant downstream impact (Uwaifo, 2002). More females both in public and private sectors, such as school teachers, health care providers, development workers, bank employees and so on, have a ripple effect, creating role models for women and girls in traditional communities where gender discrimination and sex segregation are the norm. The status and quality of higher education are useful indicators of a country's economic and social development. In addition to generating highly skilled and knowledgeable personnel for economic, social, and cultural advancement, it critically influences the quality and depth of public discourse and policymaking (Tembon, 2008). It is apparent that the presence of meaningful educational opportunities at higher levels pulls children and young people into the educational system. There is also a deep organic relationship between higher education and Education for All (EFA Assessment, 2000). In addition, higher education and teacher training will be central for the realisation of the EFA Goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) serve to equip people with the intellectual capacities required to pursue national and regional development advancement (Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), 2010), yet individual country data illustrates that women continue to be under-represented at all levels of HEIs (EQUATE Project, 2008). The need for women to participate in such processes is well articulated in tandem with the industrious campaign for the effective participation of girls and women in education at all levels. However, as current trends illustrate, women's access to and their performance in higher education remains deeply inequitable (Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), 2010).

To date, in the Tanzanian context, little is known about Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes in Higher Education Institutions, nor what should be done for better improvement of female student-teachers in pedagogical activities. Going through the rich literature on gender and education, it is apparent that the majority of the existing data pertains to primary and secondary education, and to a lesser extent, tertiary education (Mlyakado, 2012). Indeed, in Tanzania, the data around differences in examination performance between girls and boys is coming from low levels, namely primary and secondary schools (Mbelle & Katararo, 2003). Mbelle and Katararo further assert that generally in Tanzanian secondary schools in the form IV final examinations, for many years males performed better than females. The report further explains that the failure rate (division zero) the proportion of females is very high compared to that of males and that this is being caused by various factors including gender stereotypes, classroom approaches of

teachers, lack of confidence of female students, as well as the surrounding environment.

As a result, there is a lack of knowledge of how the female student-teachers can build their confidence in learning activities in higher institutions. More specifically, there is a scarcity of knowledge on how these student-teachers are helped when they face challenges which may involve sexual harassment in learning activities. There is also a lack of national level sex disaggregated indicators in higher education (Miyakado, 2012). There are few research-based studies on gender issues in higher education, an issue highlighted by UNESCO and the development and education community (UNESCO, 2010). The situation is particularly significant in higher education, where there are many students in the diversity of cultures, socio-economic status and gender relations. Anecdotal experiences show that the barriers that maintain girls' poor performance are well known, and solutions for lifting them exist. For example: To address known issues in gender inequality, governments and donor agencies have merely focused primarily on increasing female access and enrolment, with insufficient attention paid to the gender differences and educational outcomes relevant for females and in particular the achievement rates. This paper therefore presents an overview of gender differences and educational outcomes in HEIs. The line of argument will be supported through the discussion of two areas of priority: *Factors that contribute to gender differences in educational outcomes focusing on learning environment of HEIs for female students (Teaching methods, sanitation/infrastructure, sexual harassment, family responsibilities)*; and *Academic issues (The extent to which male and female student teachers collaborate in learning activities, and Challenges and what should be done to improve the situation)*.

Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Identify factors that contribute to gender differences in educational outcomes.
2. Examine the extent of male and female student-teachers' collaboration in learning activities and their academic performances gender wise.

Research questions

1. What are the factors that contribute to gender differences in educational outcomes?
2. To what extent male and female student-teachers collaborate in learning activities and their academic performances gender wise?

Research methods

Design

This study employed qualitative methodology and a case study design (Yin, 2003) because of its potential to collect rich data (Sarantakos 2005) on how gender differences affect educational outcomes and achievement rates for student-teachers in higher learning institutions. Sampling for this study was purposive: suitable participants were selected through

non-probability sampling (Bernard, 2013; Neuman, 2011; Sarantakos, 2005). The higher education institution (the University X) participating in this study is located in Dodoma region, the central part of Tanzania. The criteria for the selection of this university were that the researcher is a lecturer at the university where the study was conducted and she observed the poor academic performance of female student-teachers compared to male student teachers, so she wanted to investigate reasons for the situation; also, the institution was accessible to the researcher and so was cost effective. The author uses a pseudonym for the study university because some information needs to be kept anonymous to protect participants.

Participants

The sample included 23 participants. Three participants were lecturers, and twenty were student-teachers, where 13 were males and 10 were females from a higher learning institute, in Tanzania. There were 11 male and nine female student-teachers, where six were in-service student-teachers and 14 pre-service student-teachers; also, two lecturers were male and one was female. Student-teachers in the sample, selected by the office of the dean using their registration data base which identified in-service and pre-service students and lecturers, were selected by heads of the departments. Lecturers selected from the particular university were teaching student-teachers and willing to participate in the study. The sample size of 23 participants were enough to inform the study because of the methodology used to generate data detailed individual and group interviews that was supported by detailed information from documentary review. Qualitative studies do not need large sample size (Neuman, 2011 & Sarantakos, 2005).

Data collection

The lecturers were interviewed twice; the second time was a follow-up to fill gaps observed after the analysis of the first interview, and each interview lasted for 45–55 minutes. The first and second interviews concerned participant perceptions regarding gender differences and educational achievements, including the learning environment in higher education institutions and the extent of their collaboration in pedagogical practices. The student-teachers were interviewed once individually for 30 to 40 minutes and thereafter the researcher conducted a focus group discussion (FGD) in order to fill gaps identified during individual interviews, and it took 45-60 minutes. During the follow-up interviews, FGD data that were found repeated from the previous generated data were not recorded because they did not provide new information. Data from documentary review reflected the differences in the performances between male and female students. All the study participants gave their consent for the interviews to be recorded with a voice recorder. To obscure the identity of the study participants, no names were recorded on the audio tapes.

Analyses

The researcher transcribed all of the interviews verbatim. Therefore, coding of the transcripts from the interviews with lecturers and student-teachers emerged from the basic question: To what extent and in what ways are gender differences in educational attainment was an issue of concern in higher education institutions (HEIs)? This was explored through perspectives from lecturers and student-teachers in one higher learning institution. The analysis of the data began with open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the process by which concepts are identified and established through asking questions about the data and labelling and grouping similar occurrences and events into categories. With the help of NVivo10 software, developed by QSR International, the researcher coded all the data, addressing the research questions for each separate participant. The data were grouped into themes and analysed for each participant separately. The following were the two main themes that the researcher looked for: (1) *Factors that contribute to gender differences in educational outcomes focusing on the learning environment of HEIs for female students (Teaching methods, sanitation/infrastructure, sexual harassment, family responsibilities)*; (2) *Academic issues (The extent to which male and female student teachers collaborate in learning activities and their academic performances, Challenges and what should be done to improve the situation)*. The main guided research questions helped to address the above themes. The next step was to reduce the data within some codes to a series of matrices within the topical themes. The intention was to clarify information within and between item analyses (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The matrices enabled comparison within cases by comparing the data between participants (lecturers, male student-teachers, and female student-teachers). Each individual was taken as a case, and comparison was made between cases by identifying the similarities and differences amongst cases. To enhance accuracy, the researcher reviewed the data analyses in detail to ensure that she had captured the participants' intended meanings and descriptions.

To ensure inter-rater reliability of the coding, the qualitative information was coded by two researchers using NVivo 10 software; thereafter, using a coding comparison query in NVivo, the Kappa Coefficient and inter-rater agreement were established. The Kappa Coefficient was 0.78 while percentage agreement was 95.45. This indicates that there was substantial agreement between the two coders (Viera & Garrett, 2005).

Results

The results presented in this section are mainly based on analyses from documentary reviews and interviews with lecturers and male and female student-teachers, since their points of view are the main focus of this study. To achieve comparable information, the interview themes are overlapping and similar for all study participants (i.e., lecturers, male and female student-teachers). Furthermore, representative quotes have been included to clarify the points under discussion.

Research Question 1

Factors that contribute to gender differences in educational outcomes

The findings from student-teachers indicated that various factors contribute to gender differences in educational outcomes and were based on the learning environment of HEIs for female students, such as: teaching methods, sanitation/infrastructure, sexual harassment, and family responsibilities. The findings indicated that such learning environments in one way facilitated learning activities while on the other hand hindered student-teachers' performance. The subsequent sections discuss the various factors for learning environments:

Teaching Methods

The findings from the interviews with student-teachers indicated teaching approaches as a major impediment to their attendance, especially in the science and technology courses. Students commented that teaching methods can limit students' ability to understand the content and limit their participation. For example, one of the pre-service student-teachers reported:

Teachers mainly are teaching through lecture methods and some of them use power points; during teaching they are too fast and it becomes hard to take notes. When we request him/her to lower the speed, normally we get harsh answers such as this is University if you are a slow learner you do not deserve to be here, or if I go slowly when do you think I will finish the syllabus. So, I would suggest the lecturers use participatory teaching approaches in order to engage every student in the classroom (Pre-service Male student-teacher, 2016).

Furthermore, when lecturers were asked whether males or females participate more in classroom's learning activities, two male lecturers gave the following responses:

You know, female students have to be forced to talk. They are shy and have no confidence. They are sometimes overwhelmed by how fast the males think. Although during seminar discussion groups when I point females to contribute, some of them present nicely, so they lack confidence. Therefore, measures such as giving more chance to answer questions in the classroom should be taken to enhance female students so that they become confident as well as to provide them group work exercises (Male Lecturer, Arts edu. 2016).

Many questions in classrooms are asked by male students; only three ladies try in a class of 15 ladies. Many female students have an attitude that science subjects are tough; however, I try my best to motivate them so that they love science subjects. I think the University

management can invite female scientists to talk with young female students as a kind of motivation to them (Male Lecturer, Science edu. 2016).

As female students are more likely to lack confidence to speak in public, the analysis of the above quotes may imply: this situation might be a result of cultural and social constructs, and the question and answer method of teaching and learning which is dominant in most universities (and at secondary and primary levels as well) is not suitable for them, and therefore, it limits their involvement and opportunities to enhance their understanding of the content. Consequently, it is more effective to combine this teaching method with other gender-sensitive approaches. For instance, an increase in the use of group work exercises presents increased opportunity for females to participate. While gender-responsive pedagogy advocacy has been directed towards pre-primary, primary, and secondary teachers (Bartlett & Mogusu, 2013; Mligo, 2016), the need for it is also evident at university level.

Sanitation

The findings indicated that the lack of access to clean toilets, easily accessible, well-functioning and private sanitation facilities and sanitary towels remains a problem at higher education levels, as females are negatively affected, especially during their menstrual periods. For instance, the findings showed that female students spend a lot of time looking for clean toilets in times of water shortage. One female student commented *'infrastructure here are not conducive; sometimes I fail to attend classroom when I am in menstrual period for reasons such as no water in the toilets'* [Pre-service Female student-teacher, 2016]. Furthermore, another female student reported, *'students from poor households cannot manage to buy monthly supplies of sanitary towels, affecting their attendance and academic performance'* [In-service Female student-teacher, 2016].

Security

The findings showed that limited on-campus accommodation, together with evening classes, often affects female students' ability to attend classes due to fear of being attacked on their way to and from evening classes. The following quote illustrate these points:

My last period ends at 8.00 pm and thereafter I have to rush into the town centre where I am living, about 25 kilometres from the main campus. I missed out on the on-campus hostel because I have a child and the hostels do not allow students with a child to live in hostels. So sometimes I miss lessons due to fear of being attacked with *vibaka* (bad people). It would be good if the university management could build hostels around the university specifically for those with families (Female-student teacher, 2016).

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment was explained as a factor by female students. Females reported gender-based violence as affecting their academic participation. They further reported that females are excessively victims of physical and sexual abuse in HEIs, and they are raped, sexually harassed and sexually assaulted by male students and even by their lecturers. The findings indicated that gender policies which aim to inhibit sexual offences are in place in the universities. The policies describe students' rights and responsibilities, and the steps to follow in cases of sexual harassment. However, students confirmed that sexual harassment was still a reality, especially for first-year students. Furthermore, a majority of students interviewed indicated they were unaware of the existence of such policies. One male student-teacher reported that *'I am not sure if there are policies guiding sexual harassment in this university; many female students claim to be harassed and they get no help from the management'* (Male student-teacher, 2016). This was supported by a female student-teacher who confirmed that, *'I was faced with sexual offence by two male students; I went to report to the management, unfortunately up to the moment nothing has happened'* (Female student-teacher, 2016). The threat of sexual harassment results in irregular attendance, bad performance and low self-esteem and creates an environment which may push out females from HEIs.

In addition, the researcher of the current study employed documentary review method in order to find out information regarding policies and strategies for gender issues, and if there is any coordination unit/centre for gender-related issues at the University of Study unfortunately the author did not find any. The findings indicated that there was no gender unit; instead, the university management were in the process of establishing the gender unit. Basically, such a situation indicates that the university management does not seem to be serious about the commencement of the gender unit. Apart from that, the findings showed that sometimes female-students were forced to engage in sex without using protection and when they become pregnant it leads to absenteeism in class. On the other hand, students reported that although contraceptives such as condoms were available in the hostels, female condoms and morning after pills had to be obtained from a facility situated a long way from the hostels. Furthermore, it was also reported that students seen going to this facility were labelled as *loose females*, meaning they were of poor moral standards.

Family responsibilities

Another sub-theme which emerged from the student-teachers was family responsibilities. It was reported that while pregnant students have to take time off from university for medical check-ups, those with young children miss classes when they attend to their children. This is particularly an issue for married and/or women with children while studying. Thus, the lack of mechanisms to enable females to fulfil both their family and academic responsibilities acts as a restriction against good educational outcomes and it negatively

affects their participation. The following quote illustrates this point:

Of course ... it became hard for me to attend class frequently due to pregnancy, which had a lot of complications. My husband told me to postpone my studies but I did not like to do it because my study leave could end without me completing my studies. So, my friends tried to give me notes and other related help. However, at the end of the semester, my results were not good; indeed, I was psychologically affected. I suggest the government should create favourable maternal policies that could support women with families to attend their studies peacefully (In-service Female student-teacher, 2016).

The above quote indicates how much female students may be affected psychologically and fails to perform well in their studies due to lack of maternal support from the government. The government needs to put forward favourable maternal policies in relation to women when they choose to study and have families. The above argument was supported by a pre-service student who reported that '*policy initiatives such as proposals for initiating gender units in universities or any other kind of official measures focusing on university students to realize their potentials and finally to obtain higher achievements regardless of their gender is very important*' [Pre-service Male student-teacher, 2016].

Research question 2

The extent to which male and female student-teachers collaborate in learning activities

The findings from the interviews indicated that the participation in studies and performance of female student-teachers was low compared to male student-teachers. The findings from the interviews were supported by data from the documentary review results data sheet, which indicated the poor performance of female students compared to male students. Due to security reasons, the results data sheet was not allowed to be displayed in public. Furthermore, the findings have shown that apart from student-teachers studying individually, a large number of student-teachers prefer learning activities through mixed groups' discussion, consisting of males and females. However, some males reported that they prefer discussion groups without females. They gave various reasons, including lack of commitment of female students, laziness, using too much time for their personal issues rather than studies, poor attendance of female students in group work, and in mixed groups some male-students start making love with female-students as a result it reduces the concentration in the group. The following quotes illustrate this view:

Yes.... To me a mixed group discussion with male student-teachers makes me active and I contribute some ideas in the discussion group. Discussing with females alone, the

concentration is poor as many females use much time for chat using their smart phone, going to the saloon, much time for their make-up and laziness. During my first year, our group discussion included only females and as a result our performance was not good, so this time I am in year two I found male students are very helpful. I suggest the university management to initiate a gender unit/office for guidance and counselling (Female student-teacher, 2016). Basically, I prefer group work with only boys because females are not serious with studies; they are too shy and cannot contribute ideas and concepts, have poor attendance and much of their time you find them not settled and stressed. At least in-service females seem to be serious compared to pre-service females. Sometimes, female students collude with a group chair to include their names in the given assignment and they pay money or love. But when I am with only boys, we do a lot of study. It would be worth it if the university could have a schedule for seminars and workshops in regard to learning in universities [Male student-teacher, 2016].

Of course I prefer a mixed group; however, in some groups, male student-teachers do not trust the contribution of ideas from female-student teachers. One of my groups I attended, the chair person was so biased, he did not choose females to contribute and he had negative attitudes towards females. One day, he said females are wasting our time; their arguments are not strong because they do no preparation before coming for discussion. So, this kind of attitude causes many females to remain silent in the group, even if they have something to contribute. So, these are among of the challenges we face in mixed groups. So, University management should provide education to female students because some of them entertain love affairs, they are lazy and do not like to study hard hoping that their boyfriends will do so on their behalf [In-service Female-Student Teacher, 2016].

From the quotes above, the findings indicate that learning style through groups has many challenges regardless the kind of groupings. However, on the other hand the findings showed that female only groups have many challenges compared to a mixed group. This was evidenced by female-students interviewed, they said during discussion females do not concentrate; females use much of their time for personal issues such as to do make-up and decoration of their bodies, attending to the saloons, and others seem to be lazy naturally depending on their background in attending studies. However, on the other hand, findings showed that some female student-teachers were good academically and very committed but when they attend group discussions which need to be mixed with male-students, male-students tend to seek love for females while female-students do not like, as a result they feel uncomfortable to participate in discussion groups with males. When

they decide to discuss with females alone the concentration becomes poor because some females use much time for chat using their mobile phones.

This implies that even male students get bored with less participation of females in their groups when mixed and in some circumstances males cannot tolerate with such less participation of female-students, as a result they show negative attitude towards females. It could also be argued that females themselves are not happy with their fellow females who are not committed to their studies as they make all females to be treated negatively by male students.

Furthermore, some male student-teachers clearly appreciate the opportunity to share ideas with obtain the views from female students because some of them are active and committed, especially in-service female student-teachers. However, males reported that females are at risk because when male students are in groups they tend to fall in love with them and when they refuse males tend to resist in collaborating with them. Yet, it could be argued that in-service female student-teachers seem to be strong and not entertain love affairs probably due to their age and work experience. For example a male student-teacher reported how love affairs contribute to poor performance of female students:

You know females are always in risks, sexual harassment, sexual auscultations, rapes are still a reality. When females are in mixed group discussion males develop love on them, and when females show their stability males tend to dominate the discussion. As a result some females leave the group and become affected psychologically; I personally evidenced the situation in several times in various group discussions. The situation is bad to pre-service female student-teachers compared to in-service female students. In-service females are good and stable. The best way is the university to initiate a gender unit where both male and female students can attend for counselling sessions [Male student-teacher, 2016].

The above quote indicates that some female students, probably their performance is low due to unfriendly learning environments. It is well known that in the universities much of the learning are in discussion groups due to the group assignments they get from their Lecturers, so when they participate in groups they face challenges as we have seen in the above quote. So for those who are not stable they end up with either leaving the groups or accepting love affairs unwillingly. The situation was also reported by a Lecturer:

Learning activities in universities is different from the low levels; here we provide more group work so that it helps students to exchange views and ideas in order to enrich their knowledge. We Lecturers prefer the work to be done in mixed groups, because the university has both males and females. However, we get many challenges from both female and male students. Males usually claim that females are either not participating or come late to the group

discussion while females claim that males in groups entertain love affairs and sexual harassment as a result females are not enjoying learning activities. So I recommend education through workshops should be provided to both male and female students as well as to staff [Female Lecturer, 2016].

The findings have shown that the extent to which male and female student-teachers collaborate in learning activities is constrained by a number of challenges which include: Love affairs, sexual harassment, abusive language, lack of commitment to participate in group discussion and domineering system. However, the findings indicate that the female student-teachers especially pre-service female students are at higher risk compared to male student-teachers. Probably, in-service female students have a long experience at the work place with males and are aged compared to pre-service students. There is a need for pre-service students to utilise such an experience from in-service students; interestingly, the findings did not reflect higher performances from in-service student females. Again, the issue of some Lecturers promising to give free marks to female students in exchange for sexual favours seems to be critical in HEIs; both male and female students repeated the same story frequently. For example, some of them reported:

Look here..... sometimes we male students think that some female students are not studying hard because it is said that some Lecturers are making love with female students and are given free marks in their examination [Male student-teacher, Interview, 2016].

This argument was supported by female students. For example one female student commented:

On the last semester, I and my friend had a supplementary but during the day of examination I did not see my friend in the examination room, thereafter I asked her why she did not attend the examination, she said that the Lecturer requested her love and she agreed and the Lecturer told her not to attend the supplementary. My friend further said that she agreed not because she loved him but rather she feared to carry over the course [Female student-teacher, Interview, 2016].

The problem I see in this University is; the management do not take trouble to seat down with students in order to identify the various challenges facing us. Sometimes I can even think of leaving the studies because male students want love from me and lecturers also want love from me. Oh my God!! What can I do?On the other hand, some Lecturers demand love from female students while others demand lots of money from both female and male students so that they do not fail or turn up for supplementary. I think the University management need to arrange a kind of seminars and workshops so that such

challenges can be discussed. Also, I suggest that some elder female Lecturers can seat down with us, female students and educate us how to live and behave in the HEIs [Focus group interview, 2016].

The above quotes indicate how love affairs in HEIs may cause dropouts of some female students. Lecturers are like parents and or guardians of students one would expect them to take care of them as parents to their child but clearly some Lecturers are abusing this trust. Parents and or guardians may lose their respect and trust to the Lecturers and may think HEIs are not good place for their children to learn and grow academically. Interestingly, when the researcher interviewed Lecturers for more clarification, Lecturers seemed to locate complains to the students. For example, one Lecturer reported:

Here in the University is a big compound, probably these issues are happening, but students need to be stable and to report the issues to the University management for more actions for those Lecturers who have such bad habit rather than remaining silent. Sometimes female students are not working hard and they try to become closer to the male Lecturers as a result if Lecturers themselves are not abiding the professional code of ethics, may end up with making love with students [Male, Lecturer, Interview, 2016].

The above quotes indicate how critical the situation is at the University, of focus in this study in regard to learning environment of students. The situation signals the need to set up a gender unit at the university to support both staffs and students so that each side can understand its boundaries and responsibilities. If Lecturers fail to abide the professional code of conduct, the situation would perhaps discourage student-teachers to love the teaching profession. Furthermore, one Lecturer commented *“Female student-teacher’s ability to regularly attend in the classrooms and participate within class activities as well as their engagement in group work was fairly low”* [Male, Lecturer, Interview, 2016]. The findings indicated how difficult for female students to balance the competing priorities of family and academic responsibilities.

Discussion

This case study examined gender differences in educational outcomes by exploring perspectives from student-teachers and Lecturers in one HEI in Tanzania. The findings indicated that the participation in studies and performance of female student-teachers was low compared to male student-teachers. In line with this argument, Uwaifo (2002) observed the cause of poor performance of students as a combination of personal and institutional factors. Uwaifo further asserts that the personal factors include the level of individual’s intelligence, maturity, knowledge, commitment, and ability while the institutional factors are family matters or environmental influence. A numerous of literature

indicate that female education is essential for economic growth and poverty reduction (EQUATE Project, 2008; Tembon, 2008); it helps to generate additional income and breaking the vicious cycle of poverty (Tembon, 2008).

Women’s access to higher education has therefore, more and more, become a priority in several African countries as part of the agenda of building more equal and unbiased societies (Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), 2010). However, the findings of the current study showed that females were not utilizing this agenda effectively when they are in the higher education institutions. Access has been viewed as an end in itself, while it contributes to closing the gender gap, it cannot be seen as the key indicator for good performance of female students. The focus on access could stimulate female students to be active in higher learning institutions which would help the young females to be motivated to attend higher education. Unfortunately it does not. The data indicated many female-student teachers to be irresponsible and leave male student-teachers to do work for them, the situation which seems to promote unacceptable behaviour such as love affairs.

To avoid this situation of institutions themselves serving as impediments to the effective participation of female students, institutions need to focus on ensuring that they create a gender-responsive environment, attending equally to the needs of both males and females and hence contributing to effective, efficient, and human-centred development.

Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) (2010) advocate that where gender policies do exist, enactment and monitoring is problematic. Without bodies or persons designated to ensuring that the strategies in these policies are acted upon, and their effect monitored, they often remain reference documents that are used to illustrate commitment that efforts have been made to address gender issues rather than an actual commitment to doing so. Positive interventions in recognition of this issue need to be developed in HEIs. Taking into consideration the above argument to address such challenges it will improve the learning experience of the female students by creating an environment which addresses female students’ needs and ability to fully participate as students within the university. Thus, the failure to do so obviously affects their experience, illustrating that while they may have access to HEIs, they face challenges within the institution which negatively affects their ability to fully participate, engage, and perform well in their studies.

With this in mind, there is a need for HEIs, to conduct a situation analysis that informs the development of context-specific policies and interventions to address issues affecting female students’ performance. Addressing these inequalities effectively requires a solid evidence base and is facilitated by mutual learning and exchange of good practices among lecturers and student teachers. I believe that this study provides a valuable overview of policies tackling gender differences in education and that it will be of major interest to policy-makers.

Conclusion

Overall, using documentary reviews, individual and group interviews this new line of research has generated important findings that have practical implications for government policy planners and university management to institute gender policies and monitor their implementation. This study suggests that student-teachers believe that in order to achieve higher performance, female students in particular; there is a need to establish a gender unit for guidance and counselling of both male and female students. Again, university management should establish bodies/committees to implement and monitor the impact of gender policies within institutions. Furthermore, in regard to the Higher Education Institution where the study was carried out, there is a need to urgently initiate research on HEIs, particularly from a gender perspective in order to produce responsive and relevant policy, accelerate gender policy dissemination and translate the policy into tangible actions.

Essentially, deliberate efforts need to be made and targeted initiatives developed so that African females can assume positions of responsibility in greater numbers within academia, as an end in itself, but also to increase the number of positive role models for female students. Education is universally acknowledged to benefit individuals and to promote national development. Educating females and males produces similar increases in their successive earnings and expands future opportunities and choices for both males and females. Although, educating female produces many additional socio-economic gains that benefit entire societies. These benefits include increased economic productivity, higher family incomes, reduced fertility rates, delayed marriages, and improved health and survival rates for infants and children. Therefore, higher achievement in education for a girl child is a matter of necessity.

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