

# Efforts Towards Gender Equity in Academic and Employment Opportunities in The Open University of Tanzania

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***Abstract:** Education and employment opportunities are complementary concepts. Education opens the doors of knowledge, skills and empowerment, which in turn unlocks the opportunities for employment. The higher and varied are the educational opportunities, the more enhanced are the opportunities for varied and prestigious job opportunities. Job-opportunities specify educational levels, types and quality, which an applicant must have to secure the job opportunity. As such, one cannot discuss employment opportunities without touching on educational requirements and efforts towards combating HIV/AIDS at national and contextual levels because the latter impact negatively on recipients of education and beneficiaries of job opportunities. This paper describes and analyses how The Open University of Tanzania has endeavoured to bring about progress in narrowing down the gap between female and male university students' enrolment in academic programmes and academics, technical and administrative staff in employment opportunities. The paper starts by highlighting the roles of education as a means of transmitting "knowledge, attitudes and values but focuses on the liberation and the transformative role it plays against physical and mental enslavement because it is dynamic, and the engine that brings about development of oneself and that of the nation at large. The establishment of The Open University of Tanzania was meant to democratize tertiary and university education so that those needing it, the marginalized groups can access it. Measures taken by OUT to reduce gender gap in academic and employment opportunities and students enrolment at non-degree, graduate and post graduate programmes include: the Charter and Rules, other legal provisions, the admission policy, the establishment of gender unit and the technical committee to spearhead its day to day activities. The committee also oversees adherence to the legal and regulatory provisions regarding the composition of decision making organs as far as gender is concerned. Staff development and succession plan, and conditionalities pertaining to the institution; the recruitment and employment policies, institutional and individual efforts all aimed at enhancing female enrolment. There is no doubt that a lot of progress has been made though efforts to realize gender parity in academic and employment at OUT has a long way to go. The legal and democratic instruments, policies and organs are in place, observed and are working relatively well though a lot more determination and practical action are required to fast track the process. There is a*

*need to enhance the national institutions' capacity to perform and deliver quality outputs which constitute the inputs to OUT. It is high time that a study be carried out on how to improve increased enrolment of women in The Open University of Tanzania.*

Descriptors: gender equity, academics, job opportunities, tertiary and higher education and transformative education.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Any analysis of the relationship between education and employment opportunities between men and women must of necessity touch upon the meaning and role of education, which opens up possibilities, which would otherwise remain unavailable as they would remain closed. One must also reflect upon historical and cultural antecedents and perspectives, which account for the inequity and on the need to take deliberate and affirmative action to redress the gender imbalance already existing in the Tanzanian society due to among other reasons historical, cultural and value practices and HIV/AIDS pandemic, which takes the lives of human resources most of whom are at about the height of their productivity. In this paper the author defines the meaning and importance of education, its role in the development process of human resources including social, economic, cultural, technological and political advancement of any nation. The paper analyses the gender state of the art of The Open University of Tanzania from a historical educational and employment perspectives, discusses the challenges encountered and what is yet to be addressed to achieve gender equity and equality.

## **UNDERSTANDING GENDER EQUITY AND MAINSTREAMING**

The term gender is erroneously used synonymously with sex. Epistemologically gender refers to what Kitula (2011) and Muganda (2009) call socially constructed differences between men and women. According to Kitula (ibid) these differences are achieved through socialization processes predicated on patriarchy principles and legitimized through customary and civil laws and practices. Muganda (ibid) emphasizes the social relations in that sex refers to biological relationships of men and women while gender refers to the social relations in societies and communities including cultural practices, roles, positions and responsibilities reflecting the unequal social roles and relations between men and women. Implied in the concept of equity is the idea of fairness and justice and to achieve fairness affirmative measures have to be taken to redress the imbalance. "Mainstreaming" according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary the prevailing trend of opinions or views widely accepted as a way of thinking or acting which are the meanings and understandings adopted in this paper.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER**

The purpose of this paper is to describe, analyse and gauge the degree to which gender equity at the University in academic and job opportunities have been attained and prospects for their parity and sustainability. Specifically, the paper aims at shading some light on:

- (i) Description of the meaning and role of education in the development processes and its relationship with employment;
- (ii) Analysis of institutional efforts facilitating gender equity in academic and employment opportunities at OUT from a historical perspectives.
- (iii) Analysis of mitigating factors thwarting efforts towards gender parity;
- (iv) Gauging the prospects for gender parity and drawing some recommendations.

## **MEANING OF EDUCATION AND ITS ROLES**

### **Meaning of Education**

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary the term education means an act or process of systematic instruction, which in turn implies to inform of a fact (ibid: 706); generally summarized as meaning having information or being knowledgeable about a fact, which can be attained through experience, taught or instructed through the formal education system. Acquisition of knowledge dispels ignorance and enhances an individual's or a nation's capability for improved productivity and efficiency. There is a dictum which reads "Information is power" and therefore education is capable of empowering those, who access it; and so it is worth to be acquired. According to the Human Capital Theory education provides individuals with knowledge and skills for the development of themselves and of their respective nations. Underscoring the importance of quality education Nyerere observed:

“Knowledge is power, and those who have it, within and between nations will always tend to use it against those who do not have it. The instrument of domination in the future is going to be education. Fortunately in the acquisition of that instrument we can all compete and all win with honour” (Nyerere, 1999:3).

Education is an important tool for fighting against poverty, and inequality. And for redistributing the national wealth and income because it enhances productivity and quality of outputs.

### **Transformative Education**

Another purpose of education is to liberate humanity; meaning to set humanity free from physical impediments, mental habits and attitudes, which hold them back from developing. According to Nyerere (op.cit.) true liberation implies self-reliance, being free from economic and cultural dependence on others, to develop in a free and equal cooperation with other members. Man must be able to act deliberately, for a self-determined purpose through the expansion of one's own consciousness, one's power over oneself, one's environment, and one's society, and that is what is understood by development (Nyerere in: Lema *et al.*, 2004: 135). In this context ideas imparted and skills acquired through education and training must of necessity be liberating ideas, knowledge and skills such that they enable people to think clearly, creatively, examine possible alternatives or options for action and to make a

choice or take a rational decision out of the alternatives as well as to enable them to translate the decisions into reality (ibid). Entrepreneurship which ignites the process of development is according to Mengi (2003) an idea, which is put into practice; and this is precisely what women must do to assert themselves individually and collectively in bringing about their equity and equality in accessing education and employment opportunities in universities.

## **ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFORTS FACILITATING GENDER EQUITY**

### **Legal Provisions and Frameworks**

The Open University of Tanzania Charter and Rules govern the activities of The Open University of Tanzania. Article 82 of the Charter and Rules reads:

“The principle of gender equity as provided in the Act and Regulations made thereunder and under these Rules shall be observed and implemented whenever a board, Committee or other organ or body of the University including its affiliated and campus institutions, is formed or established to perform a function or functions involving the interest of the university or the public in general, such that at least one third of the membership of the board, committee or other organ or body, as the case may be shall consist of women” (URT, 2007:53).

The Open University of Tanzania came into existence to enhance opportunities for providing affordable quality university education through open and distance learning mode (OUT, 2004). The recent developments in information and communication technologies OUT has found itself compelled to provide more competitive services that meet both national and international standards in line with its mission statement which reads: “To continuously provide quality open and distance education, research and public services for sustainable and equitable social economic development of Tanzania in particular and the rest of Africa” (OUT, 2011). OUT is therefore mandated to provide access to a wider audience especially because it does not have the residential constraints, which other residential universities suffer from whenever they think and want to increase access to university education (ibid).

The idea of achieving gender balance in educational and employment opportunities has been an objective of The Open University of Tanzania right from its establishment as its justification for gender equity concerns are implied in the statements below:

- (i) Offer opportunities for higher education and training to a large segment of Tanzania’s population and endeavour to achieve the educational well being of the society as a whole (URT,1990:62);
- (ii) Provide access to higher education for disadvantaged groups and individuals especially those living in rural areas by bringing higher education programmes to their door steps through open and distance teaching and learning (ibid:62);
- (iii) Unlock opportunities for the continuous upgrading of knowledge and skills to enable the country to cope with the ever advancing knowledge, Science and Technology (ibid:62);

- (iv) Facilitate the democratization of higher education and training through opening up opportunities to a large number of people in rural and urban areas alike and enable those, who might otherwise never have been able to get the chance to develop their potential due to the lack of access to conventional higher education institutions to do so at their own pace (ibid:66);
- (v) Be accessible to all those, who aspire to attain university education such as serving public servants, women, who because of their multiple and overlapping roles in society cannot abandon their responsibilities as well as school leavers with minimum entry qualifications, who could not get admission in the residential institutions of higher learning due to limited residential facilities (Mbogo and Mbwiliza, 2010).

The central message implied in the above statements is broadened opportunities for accessing higher education, training, and technologies for everybody having requisite qualifications; and enabling those without them to acquire them; thus opening the horizons for university education as emphasized by the admission policy (OUT; 2010:2).

The legal provisions as per Act. No. 17 of 1992, which was replaced by the Universities Act. No.7 of 2005 and now The Open University of Tanzania Charter and Rules of January, 2007 coupled with policies as approved by the University Council govern the activity of the University. The organizational structure of The Open University of Tanzania comprising the Council, the Senate, the Undergraduate Students Committee and the Management Committee are in place as democratic organs for implementing the management of the University to attain its objectives. Other organs include the Human Resources Committee, Finance and Planning Committee as well as Management Committee but what is more important is the need of these organs to adhere to the rules, regulations aimed at ensuring that the democratic process of making management decisions is upheld for justice and fairness.

### **Student Enrolment into Academic Programmes**

The Committee for the establishment of The Open University of Tanzania argues:

öNation stands to benefit if the Open University were to be established as it can greatly facilitate in opening up higher education learning opportunities for women; and that given its flexibility it can take higher education to the door stepsö of the marginalized groups (URT, 1990).ö

Gender inequity was quite apparent from the start. In 1994 women as a proportion of total enrolment was 8.8 per cent. This figure grew to 9.5 per cent in 1995 due to admission in the newly established Faculty of Law while that of non-degree programmes started with 18.4 per cent and grew to 22.9 per cent by the year 2000. The percentage of undergraduates reached 24.0 per cent in 2000 as illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Women as a Percentage of Total Students Admissions by Type of Programme**

Year	1994	1997	2000	2006	2007	2009			
Type of Programme	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013						
Undergraduates	8.8	12.4	24.0	21.3	30.6	24	29.5	27.9	24.4
Non-Degree	-	18.4	22.9	26.8	40.7	33.2	34.0	34.6	47.4
Post graduate	-	-	-	33.0	29.8	26.3	25.4	28.3	28.6

- Programmes had not commenced

*Source*; Extracted and computed from OUT (2010), and OUT (2013).

In 2003 the non-degree programme continued to register fast growth, whereby female students, as a percentage of total enrolment increased to 26.8 per cent while the proportion of females in the undergraduate programme suffered a backslide to 21.3 per cent, which was actually mimicking the total enrolment. Between 2004 and 2011 the percentage growth of female students in relation to total enrolment of each of the programmes was very gradual but in an oscillation manner ranging between 24 and 29.5 per cent for undergraduates, 33.2 and 40.7 per cent for non-degree programmes and 25.4 and 33.0 per cent for post-graduate programmes respectively. Despite the fact that management continued emphasis on attaining gender balance it did not take concrete measures to that end. The Core norms and values of the OUT portrays its commitment to the gender issue of ensuring: 'all staff and students are made aware and sensitive to gender issues through the establishment and support of gender programme with its focus on mainstreaming gender at all levels of operations of the OUT' (OUT, 2009:05).

The 2008/09 to 2012/13 Rolling Strategic PlanOUT expressed commitment to enrolling as many female aspirants as possible so as to ultimately strike a gender balance through sensitization, encouragement and facilitation of their learning throughout the country including publicizing widely the women Education fund internally and externally (OUT, 2009) but these high sounding ideas were not implemented as implementers remained passive possibly due to being overburdened with other pressing duties.

The first graduands from the University was in 1999, five years after the first registered cohort of students. 24.7 per cent of those, who graduated were female students. That percentage dropped to 21.6 in 2000 but increased to 28.6 and 27.0 per cent in 2001 and 2002 respectively; backslid to 23.9 per cent in 2003 and increased again to 43.9 per cent in 2008, backslid to 39.9 per cent in 2009 only to increase again to 49.3 per cent in 2010, all in all amounting to an average of 37.6 per cent for the period from 1999 to 2010, which is an encouraging progress but not dramatic enough as one would have expected. The fluctuations reflect the flexibility nature of studying in an open and distance mode of the University.

Promotion of women enrolment at the University is exercised at two levels; the OUT temporary headquarters under the Directorate of Communications and Marketing, the Directorate of Undergraduate Studies officers through adverts and the Dean and assistant Dean of Students through the advice and; at the various Regional/Coordination Centres under the leadership of Directors/Coordinators respectively. Apart from the abilities of the individual Coordinators/Directors proactive efforts to induce potential applicants, large urban centres seem to have an additional leverage because of having greater opportunities than rural areas due to the fact that such urban centres have large concentration of students, both females and males alike with advanced secondary education who are potential candidates as undergraduates applicants.

### **The Quality of the University Outputs**

The above narration has shown how female students have fared qualitatively but perhaps equally or more important is the quality of the outputs and outcomes. The Open University of Tanzania has taken measures to ensure that the outputs and outcomes from the University compare favourably with other accredited universities in East Africa, Africa and beyond. First, all students must have requisite university entry qualifications albeit the minimum ones and must pursue the programmes stipulated in the prospectus as they are already accredited. Second, students must pursue the subjects upon which they were admitted; because they are the ones which made them eligible for selection; third, students must do all the required tests, annual examinations and have their progress portfolio forms dully filled during the face to face student/tutor interactions to ascertain that the books, which students are required to read are actually read as well as their readiness to sit for the examinations and tests. Included in the first year programmes are ICT literacy and communication skills, which students must pass demonstrating their capabilities to pursue undergraduate programmes and their abilities to access reading materials from the internet, communicate and interact effectively with both study materials and tutors.

All examinations and main tests questions are composed, moderated in advance for quality assurance to avoid last moment hustles, which generally lead to poorly composed and moderated questions; after which they are added to the data bank of questions handled by the Examinations Syndicate Computer and Server to be retrieved when needed, packaged and transported to the Regional/Coordination Centres for their administration. The establishment of the Examination Syndicate has virtually eliminated examinations leakages and minimized other examination irregularities because of the security measures in place. The examinations are strictly supervised and any malpractices or irregularities attempts are heavily punished to deter re-occurrence for purposes of quality assurance. The scripts are marked in a panel, recorded and uploaded into the student Academic Records (SARIS) from which each student can access own results without being able to temper with them or be able to view/temper with those of others.

According to Lema *et al.* (2009) study the quality of OUT outputs have an average GPA, which has been improving from 3.062 in 2005 to 3.517 in 2007 demonstrating an improvement of their quality. Genderwise, the average GPA for males steadily increased from 3.040 in 2005 to 3.480 in 2007 while that of females demonstrated some fluctuations from 3.156 in 2005 to 3.073 in 2006 but improved to 3.582 in 2007 (Lema *et al.*, 2009:55). The overall mean GPA for all was 3.517 implying that the GPA for females is of higher quality; thus demonstrating females superior performance over males and so, the gender parity gap cannot be based on academic performance in favour of men.

### **Staff Recruitment, Employment and Development**

From the late nineties to about mid-2005 there were literary no recruited staff except for the very badly needed ones as there was Government ceiling; despite the existence of acute shortages of staff at OUT. OUT has transparent policies and procedures for employing staff once the Government grants permission. Recruitment is based on clear OUT policy (OUT, 2000). Through Academic Appointment Committee, applicants must have the requisite qualifications obtained from accredited institutions. Short listed candidates are interviewed and must be ICT literate if are to be employed on permanent terms and those on contract must sit for an ICT examination, administered by the Institute of Learning Technologies at the OUT at the cost of the university and pass it otherwise the contracts cannot be renewed.

### ***Employment opportunities***

In terms of employment the university had the opportunity of recruiting and employing a total of 489 staff between 2004/05 and 2009/2010 as per Musika, *et. al.* (2010). Out of the total employed staff; 215 (44 per cent) are females; and the rest are men. Of the total staff employed, 218 of them are academics of whom 81 (32.2 per cent) are females. The administrative staff are 226 out of whom 125 or 55.3 per cent are females, a very impressive figure, which can be explained by the fact that the majority of them constitute the lower levels of the administrative cadre mostly personal secretaries and registry assistants. The 45 technicians employed during the reported period 9 of them (20 per cent) are females. It seems that the category of academics and technicians are difficult to get sufficient number of females largely because computer technicians are relatively few because the programme is relatively new and academics take a long time to train until they attain the requisite quality level of qualifications. Currently, of the 25 Administrative staff, pursuing further studies (8) are taking first degrees, 16 are taking Masters and Postgraduate Diploma courses and one is taking Ph.D; 14 (56 per cent) are females and the remaining 11 (44 per cent) a males; while the one studying Ph.D is a female.

Administratively, the proportion of females in the various organs in 2011/2012 period as calculated from the secretariat information are 25.9 per cent at the Council level, 19.0 per cent at the Senate level, 26.7 per cent at the level of Human Resource Management Committee and 26.3 per cent in the case of the Undergraduate studies Committee.

Proportionally, females are under represented in the organs because of the composition eligibility and the incumbent Dean or Director of faculties and Directorates respectively. As far as Directors/Coordinators of Regional/Coordination Centres are concerned 42.9 per cent of them are female Directors/Coordinators as of November, 2011. Concerning the students organization, OUTSO, the proportion of female student leaders is 33.3 per cent of all leaders in the OUTSO Government a figure that is in compliance with the demands of the Charter and Rules (2007) (compiled from the lists of members by the author). During the 2010/ 2011 period a total of 78 academic staff were undertaking postgraduate studies 50 of whom were pursuing Ph.Ds. and the remaining 28 Master degrees. The proportion of females for the Ph.D courses is 30.0 per cent as compared to 39.3 per cent for Master degrees students. Female postgraduate students as a percentage of total post graduate students are 33.3 per cent, which concurs with the figure stipulated by the Charter and Rules. For the same period the number of administrative and technical staff undertaking training were 39 out of whom 27 (69 per cent) were women, and the remaining 12 (31.00per cent) were males (Directorate of Human Resources, 2012).Table 3 shows OUTø Staff by qualifications.

**Table 3: Female Staff as a Percentage of Total Academic Staff per Qualifications per year.**

YEAR	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
HOLDE RS												
Ph.D	5.6	4.8	7.1	15.2	18.9	18.9	18.0	17.4	16.4	18.6	21.3	22.4
Masters	22.8	25.5	22.9	19.2	18.3	22.0	23.4	30.9	35.0	40.7	41.7	42.7
1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.4	35.3	35.3	33.3	34.2	33.8

Source: OUT, 2013:52

As Table 3 shows female staff compare reasonably well with their male counterparts at the level of Master and first degrees but not at Ph.D. level.

At Professorial level female staff compare unfavorably with their male counterparts, as reflected in Table 4. Towards the end of 2012 two female staff were promoted to associate professors and several others attained their Ph.D degrees which is highly commendable. At Senior lecturers, Assistant lecturers and tutorial assistants levels females seem to be reasonably well represented. The long period taken by trainees to complete their masters and Ph Ds is due to heavy administrative responsibilities as most of them were directors/coordinators of regional centres which consume most of their time.

**Table 4: Female Academic Staff as a Percentage of Total Academic Staff by Rank and Year 2002 – 2013**

Year Rank	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Professors	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Associate professors	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1	14.3
Senior Lecturers	0.0	50.0	33.3	25.0	25.0	22.2	22.2	22.2	22.2	33.3	41.7	35.7
lecturers	18.2	0.0	15.4	24.2	26.2	19.1	28.0	27.7	26.8	23.1	23.4	
Ass. Lecturers	26.9	22.9	25.5	17.0	21.1	26.0	31.5	36.3	41.9	43.0	41.1	
Tutorial Assistants	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.7	35.7	33.8	33.3	34.6	33.8	

Source: OUT (2011:52-53)

### ***Staff Recruitment Policy***

The importance of employment policy and operational procedures is to avoid favouritism and nepotism. OUT has an employment policy, which provide guidelines to be followed whenever, a post falls vacant; or when one is to be developed after being employed. At the top is Chancellor and Chairman of the University Council. These are political posts and for public universities they are appointed by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania upon the advice of the Honorable Minister of Education and Vocational Training, who oversees the management of the universities. In practice the Chancellor is appointed from among prominent politicians of the Rulling Party. The tenure of office in the case of OUT is 6 and 5 years for the Chancellor and Council Chairman respectively; renewable for one more term upon satisfactory completion of the first tour. The posts of the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Deans and Directors are academic posts which are contested. The posts are advertised and academicians with requisite qualifications and experience apply. The Council of the University appoints a Search Committee usually of three eminent academicians, who short-list applicants and interview those, who meet the requirements. The Search Committee rank-orders the top three candidates in terms of their performance during the interviews and demonstrated working experience and submit the list to the University organ charged with responsibility of overseeing the recruitment process; who in turn selects one of them to the post.

Female academics have succeeded in being appointed Deans or Directors. This is also the level, whereby affirmative action can be taken with regard to the rank-ordered three candidates, where they happen to tie between a female and a male candidate for the contested post if the female candidate can be affirmatively selected on gender equity considerations. The VCø, Deputy VCø, Deanø or Directorø tenure of offices are five, four and three years respectively renewable for one more term upon successful completion of the first tour provided the incumbent is willing to continue to hold the post. The posts of associate Deans and Directors are under the mandate of the Vice Chancellor, who appoints them whenever appropriate. Currently, there are two female Deans one Director, one acting Director and one coordinator. The posts of associate Deans and; directors, coordinators and Heads of Departments are not contested because they fall under the mandate of the Vice Chancellor as per the OUT Charter and Rules (2007).

The Council of the Open University of Tanzania has devolved the recruitment and employment of other academics, technical and administrative cadres to the Human Resource Management Committee, which is responsible for the HRM-related issues especially recruitment/appointment of new staff, disciplinary, promotion and conditions of services. When these posts fall vacant they are advertised getting permission from the Government to fill them and the applications are processed by the committee interviewing those with requisite qualifications and those, who pass are rank-ordered and the required number of staff are counted from the top to the cut off point, where the required number of employees is attained. At this level affirmative action can be taken, where points for male and female candidates tie in favour of the disadvantaged gender; the female aspirants.

#### ***Staff development and succession plan***

The OUT has a policy for staff development after being employed so as to ensure sustained quality and up-to-date staff, who are abreast of technological developments and, who deliver. The staff development and succession plan is meant for fairness to all employees. Every Faculty, Directorate, Institute, Department is required to have it in place and that it is updated every year transparently and participatorily. When opportunities occur it is used to select candidates for training in line with the field in which the opportunities emerge. The policy covers both short and long term course programmes so long as the focus is to enhance performance of staff members through capacity building. It provides objective criteria for the selection of those earmarked for training and development. The criteria are to be strictly observed for the selection of staff including conditions stipulated in the policy including eligibility for the next capacity building. The efficacy of the policy has not been demonstrated because of financial constraints limiting the number who go for training.

#### **The Influence of the Rolling Strategic Plan**

RSP aimed at implementing the following to boost gender balance over the period of five years. However, by the time the 2008/09 ó 2014/2015 Rolling Strategic Plan was being prepared OUT observed that the issue of gender imbalance at OUT was still self evident, in terms of student enrolment and in the recruitment and employment of staff (OUT, 2009). Female staff recruitment was reported to be 24.5 per cent of total recruitment during the academic 2008/2009. OUT planned to improve that figure to 30 per cent during the academic year under review (ibid). What seemed to have happened is that the progress and action plans reports were treated routinely with little or no critical review of the progress, serious monitoring and follow up of reasons for the non-attainment of the targets. A proposed study to identify factors which hindered female students from enrolling in large numbers at OUT and proposal for ways of alleviating the problem; was not undertaken although through both individual and institutional efforts some aspects have continued to be addressed during the period. Another observation concerns the issue of staff recruitment, promotion and retention, which need to be addressed as the ratio of recruited females to males staff is 1: 3. At senior level the

representation of female staff continued to be low; but recently (2012/13) there is noticeable progress and that the number of females occupying the posts of a Dean of a Faculty or Director of Directorate is increasing following increased graduation of Ph D female students. What is surprising is that one would have expected female academics with qualifications from other universities to apply for the post of Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellors but they did not; could be they expect applicants to come from in-house; in which case there were no qualified potential applicants.

### **Financial Support**

School fees can be a critical hindrance factor to one's advancement if one is financially constrained. Many higher education students in Tanzania come from poor families, who cannot pay higher education fees regularly and in time. The first source of financial support was established in August, 1994 and was known as 'students Assistance funds' from the university. The Second facility is gender specific and is known as 'Women Education Fund'. This was established in April 1996 and was aimed at availing higher education for female students. In 2003 fund raising was organized and led by Hon. Asha-Rose Migiro (MP) the then Minister of Community Development Gender and Children through charity walk (Kilimanjaro-reporter, 2003). The third source is the Higher Education Student loan Board, which is supposed to facilitate the disbursement of loans to Students. It has not demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency in discharging that role especially to OUT students. Shemwetta and Nchimbi (2009) contend that OUT students are disadvantaged in many ways: preference is given to form six leavers with Divisions I, II and III in that order which is irrelevant to OUT students because OUT admits students, who qualify for university irrespective of the division including those, who qualified to join OUT through passing the Foundation Course programmes.

The fact that OUT academic year started in January to December of each year, OUT students found themselves left with the last six months, of interacting with the HESLB when the bulk of the loans are already disbursed to residential university students, who commenced their academic year in line with the financial year June/July of the following year. OUT had to change the commencement of the academic year to match the financial year of the Government.

### **Miss Excellence OUT**

In 2009 OUT initiated an idea of holding an annual event designed to enhance the visibility of the University as a means of increasing the number of female students at The Open University of Tanzania, and taking message across to the general public that affordable quality higher education offered by OUT is not meant for old people directly from work places in Ministries, and the private sector only but also for young people from A-level secondary schools with requisite qualifications for university entry. Initially, OUT participated in the 'Miss Tanzania Beauty Contest in 2009 as a means of marketing its programmes with the 'Pageant branded Miss Excellence OUT' carrying the motto 'where Beauty Makes Sense'. The third one was held in 2011 and was graced by Hon. Bernard Membe (MP), Minister for

Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Compared to the previous two it was colourful and successful pageantry it exhibited growth in stature, dynamism and popularity thus hitting the target of visibly marketing OUT and its affordable quality education programmes. Contestants had to complete their respective first degree programmes within a period of three years of distance learning with The Open University of Tanzania, pass their respective first degrees examinations at the qualifying level for Master degrees, at least lower second honours; to respond well to academic questions which had to be assessed. Presents ranged from Tsh. One million for the winner; Tsh. 800,000 for the first run up and Tsh. 600,000 for the second run up plus a master degree scholarship for all the three including free Open University of Tanzania computer training course. The other contestants received Tsh. 200,000 for their participation. There are positive trends that OUT has increased the number of young females and males studying with the university but it is difficult to attribute the increases to the impact of 'Miss Excellence OUT.' The popularity of the innovation may hinge on celebrity more than necessarily inducing higher education aspirants to join OUT. The most sure way of having potential students to join the OUT is efficient delivery of the curriculum, healthy interaction between tutors and students prompt resolution of challenges, efficient record keeping of examinations and availability of study materials both in hard and soft copies.

### **National Celebrations**

OUT actively organized national celebrations with the aim of inducing potential higher education aspirants to take advantage of opportunities available in The Open University of Tanzania. During SabaSaba National festivals OUT take advantage to market herself. Nationally, SabaSaba celebrations are held at Nyerere grounds in Dar es Salaam, where OUT head office displays its programmes, performance, outputs, products and opportunities; and application forms for potential applicants for admission into the University are displayed so that those in need can fill them on the spot. The same is done at the regional levels and Directors / Coordinators of all OUT Regional/ Coordination Centres are encouraged to actively participate and display what OUT does so as to induce potential applicants to apply for their educational advancement through OUT.

### **In-house Celebrations**

In order to visibly accord the Open University of Tanzania its importance its commencement was earmarked by a ceremony officiated by highly esteemed personality; His Excellency, Federico Mayor, the then Director General of UNESCO, who unveiled the plaque. The handing over of the very first study materials to registered students was done by the Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania Hon. John Samwel Malechela, Dr. of humanities (honoris Causa) (OUT, 2004: 2). The next subsequent Academic Years were graced in turn by His Lordship Barnabas Samatta, the Chief Justice of the High Court; Hon. Frederick Sumaye, (MP); the Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania, the Chief Minister, the Ministers of Education in charge of Higher Education until 2001 when the commencement exercise was devolved to the Regional/Coordination Centres,

where Regional Commissioners or other prominent personalities graced the occasions.

OUT graduations are very colourful events, which attract a lot of people. OUT used this strategy to induce potential enrollees to effect their interests and enroll with the University. At intervals OUT confers honorary degrees to prominent political leaders, scientific researchers or other personalities for their outstanding works or distinguished themselves in one way or other. Among those, who have been conferred honorary degrees include: the late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, (Dr. of Letters (honoris causa); His excellency, the late Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, (rtd) President of the Republic of South Africa; Dr. of Letters (Honoris Causa); His Excellency, Benjamin William Mkapa, (rtd) third phase Government President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dr. of Letters (Honoris Causa) Jane Goodal; the scientific researcher of the Gombe Chimpanzees in Kigoma, Dr. of Science (Honoris Causa); Koichiro Matsuura, former Director General of UNESCO, Dr. of laws (Honoris causa); His Excellency, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, (rtd) 2<sup>nd</sup> phase Government President (rtd) of the United Republic of Tanzania and David Millor Dr. of laws (Honoris causa). These prominent people, command high respect both nationally and internationally and associate them with OUT which gives the University an air of esteem, prestige and vibrance, an appealing situation for potential students to associate themselves with the University and finally register with it.

At the level of Regional/Coordination centres, are held mock graduation ceremonies of previous graduates from the region during which they dress in their academic costumes and walk in a procession to the venue of the event, where the guest of honour, officiates the events. These celebrations raise awareness of the OUT and what it can offer academically. The impact these celebrations cannot be assessed precisely but what is quite vivid is that the University has grown tremendously in both male and female enrolment, in employment and in structure.

### **The Institute of Continued Education**

The Institute of Continuing Education of the Open University of Tanzania offers two programmes aimed at enabling students with marginal passes to acquire qualifications for undergraduate and degree programmes. These are Foundation Courses, Certificate Course in Distance Education, Commonwealth Youth Programme Diploma, Diploma in Distance and Open Learning and Diploma in Primary Teacher Education. The foundation course is of one year duration aimed at preparing students without requisite qualifications for admission to the University provided that the candidates attain an average of a B grade, which is, 50 per cent and above of the programmes thus qualifying for an undergraduate programme. Students, who enroll for and graduate with a diploma qualify for undergraduate programmes. Since its establishment the Institute for continuing education has had a total of 6,075 Graduands of whom 2,645 (44%) are females and 4,010 (56%) are males a goof propotion towards gender equity.

### **Individual Efforts**

#### ***Assertiveness to Graduate Early***

Female students at The Open University of Tanzania have demonstrated their assertiveness to graduate earlier than the duration stipulated in official documents. Although OUT Students can take up to 8 years to complete a degree programme, Lema et Al. (2009) in their study of the 2005 to 2007 graduands cohorts have shown that female students complete their study programmes faster than their male counterparts. The average female graduates spent less time to complete their studies with the mean of 3.52 years than their male counter parts; with a mean of 3.74 years.

#### **5.11.2 Reflections on secrets of success**

Lema (2006) in an article titled "Reflections on Students' Personal Experiences and Secrets of Success at The Open University of Tanzania" analyzed 15 papers of "Success Stories" 10 of which were written by female graduands and the remaining 5 by their male counterparts respectively. Lema (ibid) decided to include twice as many papers prepared by female success stories due to, according to his own words:

It is the policy of OUT to increase the number of female students in all of her programmes. Offering this opportunity for many students to share their experiences on how they have succeeded may have positive effects on females currently undertaking their programmes at the OUT and those planning to do the same in future (Lema, 2006:55).

According to the analysis the factors accounting for the success stories of both females and males at The Open University of Tanzania include:

- (i) Setting clear intentions from the beginning and have the inner power to endure the demands of the programme;
- (ii) Studying in groups, which constitute sources of peer encouragement, counseling and stimulating interactions;
- (iii) Using private tutors, who teach them for some payment;
- (iv) Managing time through setting aside time for studying and doing homework and;
- (v) Believing in God, who gives them strength, encouragement, confidence and plays a positive role in their lives.

The impact of Lema's paper in enhancing effectiveness and efficiency in learning is not yet known first, because it is not known how many continuing students have read the article or how many potential enrollees have joined the University as a result of being motivated by the reasons, which enabled fellow female students to succeed so that they could adopt them for their own successes. Persistent and continuous exposure of such experiences to continuing and potential students may finally induce potential applicants especially from secondary schools to apply and therefore to have an impact on them. The article can have an impact if it is distributed to A level secondary school students free of charge all over the country.

## **MITIGATING FACTORS**

### **Factors Emerging From Studies**

According to Mhehe (2003) among the factors which act as barriers to women university education include domestic chores, difficulties in getting all the study materials they require for studies, relatively high fees compared to their low salaries from, which they must meet their children's education and health care as well as their own costs of education; experiencing difficulties with their spouses, who refuse them permission to study after paying the initial school fees, limited freedom to participate in tests, examinations and face to face sessions because they have to live in rented rooms in guest houses at the Regional Centres, where the functions take place, which are not considered to be respectable enough including the possibilities of being approached for Personal favours from some staff to access their rights, which can tarnish their dignity and respect. To these hindrances Bhalalusesa (2003) adds the challenges between traditional values versus education the former having the approval and support of the community, the learning environment at home, which seem to disadvantage education and the need for females to develop determination to succeed in education against all odds and to demand all support and encouragement from the society. All these problems make their lives difficult resulting in their dropping out from studies, postponing their studies or joining other more convenient institutions. Other factors, which mitigate against retention are examination irregularities which tend to lean against females and to some extent over staying in the programme, which leads to their deregistration.

### **HIV/AIDS Pandemic**

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been working against all efforts towards developing human resources and capacity building them. Apart from the fact that HIV/AIDS kills and therefore reduces the country's efforts to develop its human resources it has a stigma which discredits an individual in the eyes of others. According to Mugoyogo (2003) stigma is harmful as it leads to a feeling of shame and guilt on the part of people, who live with HIV/AIDS or whose parents died of the pandemic, leading people to discriminate them and themselves having a feeling of unworthiness. Aware of these negative effects OUT has joined national efforts to fight the pandemic. By the year 2000 OUT had formulated a technical AIDS Subcommittee (TASC) to pioneer the fight against the deadly disease at the university and its regional/coordination centres.

Between 2008 and 2012 OUT accorded high priority on fighting HIV/AIDS through raising a high level of awareness among students and staff. During the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OUT organized a very successful HIV/AIDS day highlighting "new infection" "deaths from AIDS" and "stigma and discrimination by 2015. Other activities for fighting HIV/AIDS was the creation of HIV/AIDS clubs in 25 Regional/Coordination Centres each with seed money worth Tsh. 500,000 for running the clubs for holding awareness seminars and OUT staff were trained on how to mainstream HIV/AIDS in the University curriculum and it has been done in all subjects. Another important activity that has been done is the inauguration of an OUT HIV/AIDS webpage where important HIV/AIDS awareness messages are

uploaded and can be accessed. At the temporary head office of the OUT a big poster cautioning students to graduate with A $\phi$ s not with AIDS is displayed driving the message home.

### **PROSPECTS FOR GENDER EQUITY AT OUT**

At national level gender imbalance in university education remains a challenge having dropped by 0.1 per cent from 32.2 per cent to 32.1 per cent in 2008/9 in public universities and university colleges (URT, 2010:12). One of the disturbing features of The Open University of Tanzania is that not all admitted students turn up for registration to commence their respective programmes and not all students who commence their/respective programmes are retained until completion.

Prospects for gender parity can improve if the sources of potential students- the A-level secondary schools and the foundation courses improve their performance implying efforts to improve the quality of education must be approached from national, institutional and personal levels.

Already there are good signs that at primary school level quantitatively gender parity has been attained but qualitatively more pro-active action needs to be taken. At secondary school level both quantitative and qualitative progress need to be stepped up both at O and A levels. The foundation programme is a highly potential source of undergraduate studies due to many secondary school graduates in various professions and career options, who can qualify for undergraduate programmes through the Foundation course.

### **SUMMARY**

Gender equality and equity at The Open University of Tanzania was low in the early stages of the growth and development of the University. The legal instruments which govern the establishment of the university made it clear for gender balance in the process of the growth and development of the university as it is enshrined in the Universities Act No. 7 of 2005 and in OUT Charter and Rules of January 2007. In 1994 women as a proportion of total enrolment of the University was 8.8% by the year 2000 that proportion reached 24% for undergraduate programmes. Between 2004 and 2011 the percentage growth of female students in relation to total enrolment oscillated between 24% and 29.5% for undergraduates. 33.2% to 40.7% for non-degree programmes and 25.4% to 33% for- postgraduate programmes respectively.

The year 1999 witnessed the first graduation ceremony in which females comprised 24.7% of the graduands. The percentage increased from 28.6% in 2001 to 49.3 per cent in 2010 attaining an average of 37.6% between 1999 and 2010.

In term of employment 489 staff were employed between 2004/5 and 2009/10 out of whom 44% were females and rest were males. Academic females comprised 32.2% while female administrative staff were 55.3%. In terms of management of The Open University of Tanzania female staff are under- represented in the administrative organs but they are gaining ground as more females with PhD have

been graduating in the recent years. In terms of status the ratio of females to total employment has been improving as there are now two associate professors while we had none two years back, 35.7% senior lectures are females while then there were 11.7% in 2012. These attainments are a result of institutional efforts including the preparation of gender balance policy and operational procedures enhanced by strong determination to attain gender parity.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

According to Tanzania Commission for Universities the proportion of females, who qualified for university admission in 2012 is 36 per cent. At The Open University of Tanzania the percentage of females of total admissions for the Academic year 2011/2012 is 43.3 per cent for non-degree programmes, 31.6 per cent for undergraduates and 30.1 per cent for postgraduate admissions with an overall average of 36 per cent for all programmes as computed from actual admission figure from the University statistician. Although the figure is an improvement over previous years more efforts are required in the future to attain gender parity in student enrolment and job opportunities on the national level. Given the above situation gender equity at OUT, needs both national and institutional interventions at primary, secondary and university levels respectively.

#### **At Policy Level**

At primary and secondary educational levels the teaching and learning environment needs to be improved, improvement of teacher education with emphasis on learner-centred teaching and learning strategies, child friendly schools, embarkment on school feeding programme to raise the quality of education to about 90 per cent, train the stock of existing teachers in secondary schools to professional levels, encouraging students especially girls to study science subjects including Mathematics, and to encourage females to work with confidence, take initiative to advance themselves, be allocated good supervisors at graduate studies levels; the need for the management to take affirmative measures, where appropriate and necessary; remove the unnecessary qualification hurdles for the placement of staff for some of the posts, which delay them from rapid advancement. Directors of regional centres, who are studying for their Ph.Ds to be assisted by strong administrators, who can relieve them of some of the administrative duties so that they can spend more of their time on academic pursuits so that it takes a shorter time to complete their studies.

#### **At Research Level**

There is need to carry out research on how to increase women participation at OUT recommendations of which must state categorically what concrete steps must be taken to ensure there are qualified potential applicants for undergraduate candidates.

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