

The Role of Social Cultural Factors in Women Access to Higher Education in Tanzania

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Date of publication (dd/mm/yyyy): 11/05/2017

Abstract – Tanzania like many developing countries, there is a wide gender gap between male and women when it comes to higher education. This paper critically examined the role of social cultural factors that affecting the women access to higher education. The statistics shows that there are no real problems of access to pre primary and primary education between boys and girls, the trend towards fewer girls in education starts to appear at secondary school level and accelerates markedly in institutions of higher learning. The study used the documentary review to investigate the role of social cultural factors that hinder the women access to higher education in Tanzania. The study used the statistics from Tanzania Commission of Universities (TCU) and University of Dar es salaam as a case study. The study reveal that some social practice, beliefs in the society affects the women access to higher education in Tanzania.

Keywords – Higher education, Social cultural factors, Women.

I. INTRODUCTION

It has been noted that education system in Tanzania had a fewer women on higher education access,[17]. Regardless that, there are no real problems of access to pre primary and primary education level between boys and girls, the trend towards fewer girls in education starts to appear at secondary school level and accelerates markedly in institutions of higher learning

1.1. Educational System in Tanzania

The current Tanzanian education system consists of 2+7+4+2+3 and above years. [14] Education in Tanzania consist of distinctive levels the first level consist of two years of pre-primary education for ages 5–6 years old ,followed by seven years of primary education for ages 7–13 (Standard I-VII) final examination on the National level marks the completion of primary schools and determines selection for secondary education, where secondary education consist of two cycles: the first cycle is four years ordinary level education for ages 14–17 (Form 1-4) the second is two years advanced level secondary education for ages 18–19 (Form 5 and 6) both levels requires to be tested Nationally and the examination used as a determination for further education. Tertiary (higher) education often takes three years or more years of university education. Normaly in Tanzania the direct students starts the tertiary education with 20 years old. With this education system there are no real problems of access to pre primary and primary education level between boys and girls, the trend towards fewer girls in education starts to appear at secondary school level and accelerates markedly in institutions of higher learning.

1.2. Higher Education

Higher Education is generally referring to as attending any school beyond high school it can be university or

college education. In Tanzania, higher education is defined as that proportion of tertiary education that leads to an advanced diploma or degree. The last decade or so has seen a significant expansion of higher education in Tanzania because of the expansion and additional of private and public Institutions in Higher Education. But the enrolment still imbalance between male and female there are more males than female in higher education institutions [17]. The national Higher Education Policy of 1999 lists the major problems facing higher education in Tanzania: among the problems listed was gender imbalance in higher education in Tanzania.

1.3. Female Enrollment on Higher Education

Less than a quarter of University of Dar es salaam undergraduates are female. Female students comprised 17 per cent of first-year admissions on the main campus in 1992-1993, rising to 26 per cent during the 2000-2001. For Muhimbili University, the comparable figures were 28.3 per cent and 27.0 per cent. Female students accounted for 15.4 per cent of Aridhi University first intake in 1996, falling to 11.7 in the year 2000. Women account for 20 per cent of Open University of Tanzania's new students in 1999.[19] Thus, trends in gender-based selection during the recent period of expansion show some gains and some setbacks for female students.

Of the 804 Tanzanian students obtaining postgraduate degrees between 1992 and 1998, only 20 per cent were female, with large variations between arts and science. Although exact figures are not available, the majority of female students were Christian, with a disproportionate number coming from Kilimanjaro Region.[17] The researcher come out with the question that: why majority are Christian and why from Kilimanjaro Region? Is there any connection with social cultural factors?

1.4. Efforts Done by Government

The Country has already taken some practical measures to promote an increased number of female students: Lowering entry cut-off point by 1.5 points for women, Conducting a pre-entry program for women wanting to join science-based programs, giving a tuition waiver of 20 per cent to female students who join the university under the Human Resources Development Trust Fund scheme operating in the Faculty of Engineering and giving women priority in campus accommodation. [17] The researcher comes up with the question that apart from those efforts done why the percent of female in higher education still low?

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To assess the women access to higher education in Tanzania

2.1. Specific Objective

To explore the social cultural factors that hinder the women access to higher education in Tanzania.

III. WOMEN ACCESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The most of literatures reveals that the problem of educational difference between female and male is an international concern that is more serious in the least developed countries, where Tanzania is included. The international agencies like WORLD BANK, THE UNITED NATIONS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP e.t.c have the most information concerning on the women access to education especially higher education in developing countries like Tanzania.

Based on the international agencies there are many factors in the society that influence women's access to higher education in Tanzania like policy factors, academic factors, and economic factors social cultural issues e.t.c. This study therefore examined the influence of the social cultural issues to the women access to higher education in Tanzania.

[15] did a research in Kilimanjaro region, in her study focused on gender and schooling. When collecting data she spent most of the time in teaching secondary school. Her book highlights the cultural significance and relevance of education for women. She shares the feeling thoughts and ideas with the village members on education for women. She realizes that most of older women in the community do not see the importance of education for girls.

[12] made a study on higher education in Uganda. The article written by Mama [13] revealed that Kwesiga's book is perhaps the most substantive source available on women's access to higher education in Africa. Her study begins by outlining human capital theory and social theories of gender inequality and its builds by outlining the gender gap in access to education. The study focuses on familial influence, parental attitude, social economic status and gender differentiated roles. It identifies how the combination of those factors impacts women's persistence in education.

Generally literatures show the reality on issues of women's education in Africa –Tanzania in particularly. They presented the context for the overview on the issues facing women in Tanzania today specifically on the issue of women's access in higher education.

The literatures revealed that the issue of education gap and access between female and male has a long history. It has contributed by many factors in Africa from before pre independence, colonialism and after independence among factors includes policy, colonial, academic, economic, human, social, culture e.t.c. This study therefore examined the social cultural issues as the factor that hinders the women access to higher education in Tanzania.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This is a review study on the roles of social cultural factors affecting the women access to higher education in Tanzania. In context that the enrolment of women in lower education level in Tanzania are high but at high education

level the number of women accessing higher education are very low. The study relied on the different literatures on the educational access and retention using the search words women education access, roles of women in society, women education development, women education retention and women social roles. Also the education policies in Tanzania were reviewed. Basically the criteria of inclusion were used based on the relevance of literature that reflecting the women education access on developing countries where Tanzania is included. The Tanzanian commission of Universities (TCU) and university of Dar es salaam enrolment statistics were used as a study area in Tanzania.[19,20]

V. THE ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1. The Social Cultural Issues in Tanzania that Hinder Women Access to Higher Education

5.1.1. Domestic Roles

Beoke-Betts, [1] said that primary role of women is to participate in agricultural and take responsibility for domestic labour and care giving: The young girls bear burden of cooking, taking care of the needs of children, looking for water e.t.c; Due to these the academic carrier became lower and lowered in priority, as a result the female will not perform the exams to go for higher education as boys do. So in this case female are more disadvantaged than boys as Bourdiu et al [4] suggests. Even if the boys are participating on domestic activities yet the girls played big roles than boys, then girls always do not have good environment preparation for higher education as a results fewer female attending higher education.

5.1.2. Status of the women in the society

Sutton [16] argued that most of parents do treat their children as a form of investment: where boys are treated as investment for the future, while girls are treated and invested as a potential future wives and mothers. Bhalalusesa [5] acknowledges the historical oppression of Tanzania women by stating that girls remain of circumstances just as their mothers and grandmothers, generation before them. These circumstances do not allow the society to think the women education as investment as used to Boys, as a results most of women do not have a chance to higher education.

5.1.3. Religion

In Tanzania religion in one way is not a barrier for the access of women in higher education due to the fact that they provide their own nice school for girls, the problems is what they belief and practice in the society Kwesiga [12] Islamic religion in sub Saharan Africa for instance tend to have rigidly defined gender roles norms and practices which affect access and participation rates for women in education system (higher education).Beoku-Betts[1] Islamic schooling system does not allow the interaction between men and women in educational settings, This widen the gender gap and reducing women participation in education. Kwesiga [12] Christian religion tend to preach the role of women in the society as the one who suppose to know and rescue men's life also they preach that God

creates women from men so without men no women existence this type of beliefs made the women inferiority over men as the result religious ideology influences how society views women's as a second creature in all aspects of life particularly in education and finally impact on women access to higher education

5.1.4. The beliefs on women education in labour market.

[7], argued that another factor that contributed to access of women higher education is parents believe in the myth that there are no jobs for women in the labour market. As a result Parents are questing about their female children education from their beliefs that investing to women education is the wastage of time and money particularly from rural families. When financial decisions are made, girls are more likely than boys to be held back or withdrawn from schools due to the fact that female is in the disadvantaged group according to [4]

The number of girls enrolled in primary schools in Tanzania had increased by in the mid 1990s [12]. Although girl's enrollment has increased in primary schools, most of them do not finalize their primary, secondary school education in order to gain a credit to join higher education. More girls in Tanzania drop out of schools than boys. The consequence of this drop out is fewer women meet the criteria for higher education. This drop out contributed much with social cultural issues.

5.1.5. The women belief on marriage issues

Most of women in Tanzania belief that marriage is among the important issues in life, also they belief that women are there to make sure a man needs are fulfilled by her, then they belief that marriage is all about staying at home or near with husband look for him. They belief also that man want to marry a girl with a certain age not more that. They belief that marriage product is children no children no marriage. They belief that they have to bear children in a certain age not more that than because of their health, they also belief that, men wants to marry women with a moderate level of education and not higher education. The combination of women beliefs above make them contradicted on sphere of the higher education. Most of women opted to invest in social capital in lower education than higher education. In contrary to this both boys and girls given the same opportunity but some women themselves beliefs make them drop out as [4] said the policy itself (education for all) has nothing to do than the issues of production and privilege in society.

Referring to the above explained women beliefs on marriage is the fact that the higher education has a contradiction with social capital especially marriage in terms of time and timing, in sense that the time of preparation of higher score for higher education women start thinking about marriage, children. e.t.c as a results low credit gain which became an obstacle to higher education access. In other hand immediately after marriage the women loses the almost 90% of the chances of taking on with higher studies due to the fact that the need time to bear children time to care them time to take care husband in other way round so many responsibilities on her. Generally you find that most of women did not attend higher education in Tanzania.

5.1.6. The men beliefs on educated women versus time and timing in marriage

In most cases in Tanzania the men is the one who decide to marry or not. Most of men want to marry a women with the age of 18 to 25 years old also they want to marry a women with medium education with a field of teacher and nurses with belief that they can take care their children and family in generally. The age of 18-25 according to Tanzania education system is the age of been at university education studies [14]. However some men belief that, those women with higher education are irrespective to their husband due to their education status. With this most of women struggle with medium education in order to widen the chance of marriage as a social need and respect in the society. So the struggle of the government to increase the enrollment in primary and secondary schools ends at vein due to investment of social capital of women themselves

Marriage is a social need in the society also is a respect in the society. In religion also they preach that marriage is important and good thing that makes women to reach heaven.(men are not mentioned) . However most of men in the society would like to propose marriage issues to the lower education level when it comes to higher education the trend change women propos and the men run away, finally you find out women are in disadvantaged group in the issue of the access of higher education.

5.1.7. Beliefs on girls as good caregivers

The rapid expansion of cities (town) go together with high demand of domestic labour market with the belief that girls are good family caregivers lead to high demand of them. The poor parents from rural areas have responded by sending their daughters into the domestic labour markets in return for regular income. This new trend takes many women and girls away from school because they must live with families that they provide labour services in the cities [8]. Those who remain at home while performing domestic labour, are at the same time expected to continue performing their traditionally designated roles at home, even as they attend school. They will not manage to have enough time to prepare themselves for the exams to higher educational access. As results most of them ends up with standard seven, form four and few of them form six secondary education levels and for higher education remains as a gold chance for them.

5.1.8. Beliefs of virgin in marriage

[9] argues that, some Tanzanian ethnic societies make emphasis on girls remaining virgins until marriage. It is encouraged that two people who are engaged wait to consummate their marriage until all the traditional ceremonies have taken place. Which is not bad any way but Parents worried that if their daughters attend school, they will forget this part of their cultural values and engage in premarital sex. So the parents prefer to send their girls in school to a medium level of education only not in higher education with the worry that they will be engaged in premarital sex while boys are engaged in higher education smoothly. After marriage, the women will be engaged to social and family activities where the higher education became almost impossible for them as a result fewer chances of women to access higher education.

5.1.9. Cultural beliefs on educated women

The Tanzanian beliefs and practices regarding education, and the place of women in society make up the basis for discrimination against gender in education at all levels. In most rural Tanzanian communities, educated woman obtain negative comments from community members. Some believe that educated women acquire western knowledge and have forgotten their own. From this attitude, some parents believe that education leads their daughters to prostitution and being unfaithful in marriage [2]. I believe that it is fair to consider, perhaps that Tanzanian women feel that once educated, the need to stay in a marriage that lacks equal structure is absurd. Traditionally, social norms and patriarchal values limit the expectations of women, especially in careers. Women's employment positions in most African (Tanzania) countries are still very confined to the typical roles of teachers, nurses, and secretaries" etc. while positions such as CEOs Manager's and other decision making jobs are unfamiliar to most African women because these are stereotyped as male positions. It will take persistence, hard work, collaboration and motivation for women to begin holding positions that are male dominated. These leads to fewer women access in higher education in Tanzania.

5.1.10. Patriarchy

The system of patriarchy still practiced in Tanzania where makes the women to be ignored in most decision making bodies in the society including education patterns. [10] the decision making process, which begins at the household level and extends through business and government frequently ignores women's voices. Women continue to be distance from legislative and decision making bodies and other position power which prevents them from creating social policies in a society to decide to continue with the higher education, rather than practicing what is exiting in the society [12]. [4] recommended that "Not only can a man stoop without degrading himself to certain tasks that are socially defined as inferior (not least because it is unthinkable that man should perform them) but the same task may be noble and difficult, when perform by men or insignificant and imperceptible, easy and futile when performed by women"

According to [11] gender determines how power, property, prestige and educational opportunities are organized regulated and distributed. This begins at the smallest unit the household and extends to larger societal patterns including the access of higher education although literacy helps provide opportunities for women, it does not necessary enhance their social standing and decision making especially in the access of education (higher education)

5.1.11. Distance to schools vs domestic work

Location of schools inhibits women from pursuing primary, secondary (O, A level) education [6] which is the important stages to higher education. [12] children who do not live near a school are subject to greater absenteeism, again girls are responsible for more of the domestic work load than their male peers and their duties require a higher investment of time, after this long day the girls will prepare the evening meal, water, cleaning and take care for young

family members. With all this the girls (women) cannot be able to prepare themselves for next day schools activities, self study, home work and prepare for the final exams that will make them to have access to higher education compared to boys (men). This is why women are fewer in higher education.

5.1.12. Teenage pregnancy

This is another issues related with social cultural issue that hinder women access to higher education in Tanzania, because once a girl got a pregnant in studying that is the end of schooling to her according to the Tanzanian school system as a result no further chance for them to reach higher education. According to [5] she said that the pregnancy violets fundamental right to education and contradicts Tanzanian's constitution and educational policy that "equal opportunities for all individual who want to pursue education" the current practice is to expel pregnant girls from school at both levels (primary & secondary) which is a very important levels to reach the higher education. Since boys had no problem on this, the number of girls in higher education decreases as a result fewer women access the higher education. In this with Bourdieu ideas we can place girls as a disadvantaged group in accessing higher education.

Bourdieu said that the game of schooling is discriminatory. Since pregnant girls assume responsibility for the situation while men who impregnate them go through no consequences. (This is unfair). [5] frequently these girls suffer doubly because they shoulder the burden at child care at a young age and their social status becomes lowered. While men had to selves their studies smoothly until higher level for sure this is unfair game.

[12] said that some parents became so worried about a possible teen pregnancy that they may remove their daughters from school once they reach puberty. [3] estimated that approximately 3000 Tanzanian girls in primary and secondary became pregnant annually. [1] noted that about 18 percent of Tanzania women from the ages of 15-19 give birth (which is the schooling age) those girls be removed from school system cause a very huge gap on the women access to higher education in Tanzania.

VI. CONCLUSION

The impact of social cultural issue on the women access to higher education in Tanzania is not simple to be understood and it is impossible to work on it as a single phenomenon, it has a connection with other issues. The impact of this in women access to higher education has a very connection and translated from primary and secondary school education. Even if the boys and girls are in the same academic, economic, political, and social conditions (life spheres) women are disadvantaged with their gender. The social cultural practiced in the society still preventing the women access to education especially higher education in Tanzania. [4] argued that the issue of access in higher education is the question of social, political and cultural privilege. He said it is a complex matter of the way that social system work which has a focus on the habitus.

However the access of women education in higher education does not operate in vacuum. It has a link with many issues, the policy, the education system and international ideas of education for all it cannot be understood simply by writing in words and announcement, there is a need to make a clear link with all life spheres (social cultural economic, political) in the society. [4] said that the issues of inequitable differences in society are not produced by chance is a historical combination of many things

Therefore the gender gap in higher education and the struggle on the women access in higher education in Tanzania needs to consider the roles of all spheres of life in the society. [4] Suggest that the struggle on the access of higher education need to observe about the kind of education system, the world we have and what we want.

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