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AWARENESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ON VARIOUS GENDER PERSPECTIVE PROGRAMMES CONDUCTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAM, TANZANIA

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Abstract

Gender imbalance is a common phenomenon in many educational institutions especially in developing countries. To overcome this imbalance, The University of Dar Es Salaam (UDSM) through its Gender Dimension Programme Committee (GDPC) has introduced gender-biased programmes with the aim of increasing female students' enrolment at UDSM. These programmes include Pre-entry Programme (PEP), Female Undergraduate Sponsorship Programme (FUSP) and Lower cut-off points.

A cross section study was conducted in secondary schools in Dar Es Salaam region between August 2004 and July 2005 to investigate student awareness of these programmes. A total of 276 students from 13 randomly selected secondary schools participated in the study. Self-administered questionnaires and checklists were used and the data were analysed by statistical software Epi Info 2002.

The study showed that the majority of the students were familiar with the concept of 'gender' but could not specifically define what it was. They were not even aware that the University of Dar- Es-Salaam (UDSM) had gender intervention educational programmes in place.

It is recommended that University gender programmes and general information on gender issues should be disseminated to society as a way of improving gender relations

Introduction

Gender as a concept refers to the relationship between men and women and not simply biological sexual characteristics by which we identify males and females. Despite this simplicity, the concept of gender is commonly misconceived and many people think gender and women are interchangeable terms (Mshiu, Nyangwine, 2001).

Gender mainstreaming is a process of assessing the implications for both women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is also a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as those of men an integral part of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally. This way, inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality (World Bank document, Report No. 20902-TA).

Gender mainstreaming in education, requires policy makers to analyse all aspects of an education system to ensure that it contributes towards achieving gender equality.

The education situation for females is worse than that for males. Gaps between males and females in enrolment and participation widen at secondary level progressing even more so at tertiary levels (Higher learning institutions) in Tanzania (Mbilinyi cited in Mbilinyi and Mbuguni, 1991).

Effort to expand access to schools includes double sessions, radio education and correspondence courses as well as literacy programmes for adults. Eliminating discriminatory admissions practices and instituting quota reserve places for them in education programmes have also increased education opportunities for females. These strategies are necessary to increase female enrolment, but they are not always sufficient when the demand for female education is low (Swilla, 1995).

The enrolment of women into post-secondary education, university and other tertiary institutions is extremely limited in number as well as scope of subject choices. (Changage and Mbilinyi, 1991). The limited number of females and the poor quality of education which they receive, means that the transformation process is held up.

A review by Mbilinyi *et al.* (1991) identified major problems in secondary and tertiary education system as: lower access and enrolment of female students; lower performance of females at form four and form six levels; gender typing of academic content and straining; authoritarian pedagogy and primitive attitude to adolescent sexuality (Mbilinyi, 1991).

According to Besha et al. (2000) the 1995/96 academic year UDSM female students comprised only 3% of engineering students and 14% of science, 17% of law 19% of commerce and 25% of arts and social science (Besha et al, 2000).

The number of female students enrolment at higher learning institutions, is still low compared to the number of male students in higher learning institutions despite the interventional programmes introduced by the UDSM over the past five years. From UDSM Facts and Figures 2003/2004, it was shown that there is a slight increase of 1.5% proportion of female to male ratio for the past five years, while there are no changes at all for Muhimbili University College of Health Sciences (MUCHS) in these five year period (i.e. the ratio remained at 0.34 (34%) (UDSM Facts and Figures 2003/2004).

The present study therefore aimed at investigating the levels of awareness of secondary school students on various gender perspective programmes, which are conducted by the University of Dar Es Salaam. The programmes' impact on the overall female enrolment at the UDSM were evaluated and key recommendations made.

Methodology

Study Design

The study utilized a cross section descriptive study approach.

Study Area

A list of all secondary schools with A-level students in Dar Es Salaam region was obtained from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoE). Thirteen schools were randomly selected and enrolled into the study. These schools were: Ubungo Islamic High School, Kinondoni Muslim Secondary School, Green Acres High School, St. Marys High School, Kunduchi Girls High School, Loyola High School, Kibasila, Jitegemee, Jangwani, Azania, Tambaza, Benjamini Mkapa and Zanaki Secondary Schools.

Targeted Population

Male and female secondary school students.

Sampling Methods

The sample size ie. Number of students for the study was obtained through the use of the following formula:

$$n = \frac{NZ^2 P(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + Z^2 P(1-P)}$$

Where:

n is the minimum required sample size

N is the estimated population

Z is the percentage point of the normal distribution corresponding to the level of significance. For 5% significance level, Z = 1.96

P = proportion of individuals in the target population (0.25)

d is the maximum likely error taken to be 0.05

Therefore the sample size constituted 300 students both males, and females. For convenience, 320 questionnaires were distributed of which 276 questionnaires, which were correctly filled in with important descriptive personal profiles were used in analyzing data.

Data collection tools and techniques

Self-administered questionnaires and checklist for documents to be reviewed were used. Incorrect information filling on questionnaires was avoided by conducting the procedure under supervision in a class and no student was allowed to leave the class with the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

All questionnaires were assigned serial numbers, coded and analysed by computer using the Epi Info 2002 programme.

Results and Discussion

In this study 276 randomly selected A-level students were interviewed. Of these 121 (43.8%) were males and 155 (56.2%) were females. The study revealed

that 171 (98.2%) were aware of gender differences and 5 (1.8%) were not. Among those who were aware of gender concepts, 242 (89.3%) defined the term inaccurately but only 88 (36.4%) had the correct definition. 22 (9.1%) had a slight idea (Table 1).

Table 1 Proportional distribution of students who were aware of gender by definition or explanation

Aware of Gender	Correct	Wrong	Have idea	Total
Yes	88	132	22	242
%	100	99.2	100	99.6
No	0	1	0	1
%	0	0.8	0	0.4
TOTAL	88	133	22	243
TOTAL %	100	100	100	100

Out of 276 students only 81 (29.3%) students had attended the training/seminar regarding gender issues of whom 31(38.3%) were males and 50 (61.7%) were females. Among males themselves only 31(25.6%) have attended training while 90(74.4%) have not attended any training regarding gender issues, as for females 50 (32.3%) have attended training and 105(67.7%) have not. Out of those who attended the training 72(90%) were changed by the training received and 8(10%) showed no changes of whom 5 (62.5%) were males and 3 (37.5%) were females and one student did not give any option whether she was changed or not. The changes, which ere involved, are 30 (44.1%) students started to know their rights and responsibilities to the society of whom 10 (41.7%) were males and 20 (45.5%) were females. Twenty-four (35.3%) through training realized that both sexes are equal with respect to right and responsibility of which 13 (54.2%) were males and 11 (25%) were females. Also 13 (19.1%) revealed that through training they have gained confidence and know that females can do equally better in education. Only 1 (1.5%) male student realized that development could be boosted through educating females in the society. Two students who reported changes did not say they become changed. Table 2

Table 2 Distribution of reasons for changes acquired from training.

Reasons for your changes	Frequency	%	Cum%
Gained confidence	13	19.10	19.10
Knew their right and responsibility	30	44.10	63.20
Knew that both sexes are equal	24	35.30	98.50
Educating females boosted up society development	1	1.50	100.00
TOTAL	68	100.00	100.00

The majority of the students interviewed were not aware of various educational intervention programmes conducted by UDSM. Thus 175 (67.9%) of 254 students said they were not aware of the UDSM pre-entry science programme of which 95 (54.3%) were females and 80 (45.7%) were males. Only 12 (4.7%) reported that they knew the programme in full details while the rest 67 (26.4%) said they has a slight idea..

Only 16 (6.0%) of 265 students reported to know about the FUSP programme while 169 (63.8%) reported to have no idea of the FUSP programme of which 97 (57.4%) were females, that is 64.7% of females interviewed. Also 37 (14.6%) of 253 students were aware of the lower cut-off-point while 131 (51.8%) reported to have no idea of the programme. Amongst of these were 76 (58%) females. The rest had a slight idea of the programme.

About 154 (68.4%) of students (N=225) said the UDSM pre-entry programme is necessary 90 (58.4%) were females and 64 (41.6%) were males, while 9.3% of students said the programme is not necessary. The rest said they did not know. See Figure 1.

The study also revealed that 56.5% (N=237) of the students said the lower cut off point is necessary. This result shows that fewer students support the programme compared to the above two programmes. Thus 45 (19.0%) students said the programme is not necessary 30 (66.7%) were males and 15 (33.3%) were females. Also 11.5% of females did not support the programme compared to 5.7% in UDSM Pre-entry and 7.2% in FUSP program respectively, See Figure 1.

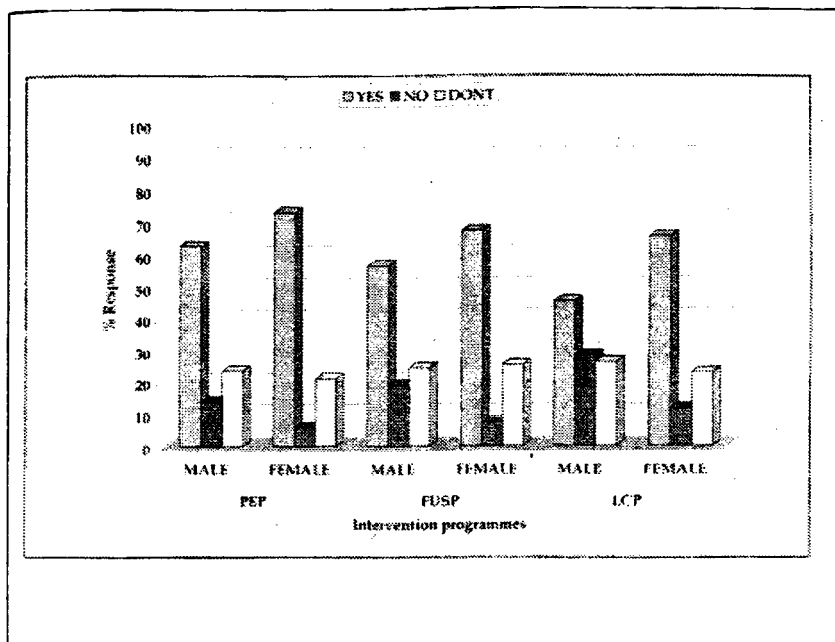


Figure 1. Importance of the UDSM Intervention programme

Out of 21 (9.3%) students who said Pre-entry programme is not necessary 10 of them come out with the reasons for their argument. Thus 5 students said the Pre-entry programme makes female students lazy. The female students also lose or lack confidence and the overall effect is production of low qualified graduates. Also it widens the gap of confidence, thus males work hard and gain confidence. The other 3 of the students [males] said this brings about gender bias and argued that if female students have decided to go to school they should be treated equally as male students. Two students felt that the low cut-off point should be allowed for both arts and sciences subjects.

For those who supported pre-entry programme, 70.4% said the programme is important since it increased the number of female scientists, in the society (i.e Doctors, pharmacists, engineers, Chemists, etc) and also increases the educated females in the society so as to provide service to society according to personal

interest. Eleven (13.6%) said the science subjects are tough and female students have many home responsibilities, therefore they need support to pursue the science subjects. The study also revealed that those who supported the FUSP programme, (71.7%) gave reasons that the programme increases the scientists and educated female professionals in the society so as to boost development and women can also fight for their rights, avoid dependence and participate in decision-making. Twelve percent of the students argued that it helped the poor families. Seven percent said the programme gives a chance for the female students to show that they can do something that male students are doing in education. It also encourages them to go to school. About 5.3% said the programme should be there for female students who are overwhelmed with home responsibility hence their performance is low and therefore need support.

Those who said that the programme was not necessary had the same reason as those for pre-entry programme. In the case of lower-cut point programme for females, the study revealed that the same reasons prevailed for the above programme in both cases.

On the way forward the students suggested different ways whereby about 42.5% of the students suggested the introduction of gender sensitization to secondary school levels as the way to increase awareness and hence increase the number of female students at higher learning institutions. About 27.8% argued for the introduction of gender sensitive remedial strategies.

The majority of students 61.4% (N=264) said that they were not aware of the intervention strategies. On suggesting extra measures for the information to be well disseminated, 105 students (63.7%) out of those who gave suggestions (N=157), emphasized on educating the society by: training teachers to provide such information, start a programme which will be launched in secondary schools to talk about these programmes in all secondary schools in Tanzania with high emphasis for rural areas. About 37 (22%) of students said the use of mass media might also help ie. televisions, radios and newspaper. 23 (13.9%) students suggested the use of UDSM members to spread the information of various programme from UDSM to secondary schools in Tanzania.

Table 3 Measures to be taken to make sure information reaches the stakeholders as suggested by students.

Extra measures	SEX		
	Male	Female	TOTAL
Educate the society via trained people, seminars	44	54	98
%	62.9	62.1	62.4
Use mass media to spread information	14	15	29
%	20	17.2	18.5
Use UDSM members to spread information	8	14	22
%	11.4	16.1	14
Argued for first and second option	4	3	7
%	5.7	3.4	4.5
Argued for second and third option	0	1	1
%	0	1.1	0.6
TOTAL	70	87	157
TOTAL %	100	100	100

It was also found out that from this study, 68.4% (N=250) said that the academic performance for female and male students is not the same. Similarly 54% of the response from co-education supports the above finding. From this study it was also found that 46.4% of participants said female students lack self-confidence.

The findings of this study were comparable to those from UDSM- up country publicity visitations by GDPC in Mbeya and Rukwa. Thus most students do not have sufficient information about UDSM. While results from FUSP outreach publicity Report in Shinyanga region by R.S Malele et al (October, 2004) conducted in five schools revealed that students in those areas have no idea about these programmes (Malele R. S. et al, 2004).

Conclusion

This research revealed that the majority of students are aware of gender, but there was misconception on the definition of the word *gender* as the majority

failed to define it. Also it was strongly noted that the majority of the students are not aware of the educational intervention programmes conducted by UDSM. It was also found that a significant number of students said that these programmes are necessary. The majority of students have never attended any training regarding gender issues and those who ever attended (almost all) came out with a changed mind towards gender issues. There is a difference in gender concepts on the students attending co-education school when compared with those attending single sex schools. Report signifies that students are not aware of minimum passes/criteria for them to join UDSM..

Recommendations

Students need to be informed on what gender is all about than just to mention it or to hear about it.

Information about educational interventions programmes conducted by UDSM should be disseminated through well-trained people or from UDSM members to all secondary schools in Tanzania.

All the programmes should be encouraged and be given support to accommodate many students from art and commercial courses for both males and females.

Training/seminars regarding gender issues should be conducted in all schools in Tanzania as a step towards gender perception and attitude change in the society and this should be taken seriously.

Female students should be encouraged to know that they can do equally well as males in education, and the society should be well educated on equal distribution of home activities among males and females.

Requirements for students wishing to join UDSM should be advertised and the information should be provided as early as when the students join secondary school education (form one) so that they can set their goals as early as possible.

Use of mass media like television, radio and newspaper to address gender issues and UDSM intervention programmes needs to be encouraged.

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