



# Analysis of Affirmative Actions and Gender Equality in the Policy of Education Institutions: The Selected Cases in Tanzanian Universities

Zaujia Shemahonge <sup>a\*</sup> and Newton M. Kyando <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *The Open University of Tanzania (OUT), Tanzania.*

## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

## **Article Information**

DOI: 10.9734/ARJASS/2023/v21i4492

## **Open Peer Review History:**

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/107782>

**Policy Article**

**Received: 12/09/2023**

**Accepted: 17/11/2023**

**Published: 23/11/2023**

## **ABSTRACT**

**Aim:** Gender inequality in leadership positions is a tragedy in Tanzanian Universities. Thus, universities are resorting to developing gender policies to address the imbalance between males and females in leadership positions. Nevertheless, it is unclear at this time what do policies say about the issue of gender imbalance in leadership and what affirmative measures the policies propose to take to fix it.

**Methods:** This research used thematic analysis technique to analyze four universities gender policies in order to understand the embedded affirmative actions aimed at reducing gender inequality in leadership positions in universities.

**Results:** The affirmative actions identified in the policies related to recruitment, outreach activities, special entry and scholarships for girls, searching leaders and capacity building and support.

\*Corresponding author: Email: [zaujiashemahonge@yahoo.com](mailto:zaujiashemahonge@yahoo.com);

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that gender policies just include the intention to take affirmative actions against gender inequality but it is unclear from the policies whether the actions were implemented and how effective the actions are.

*Keywords: Effectiveness; affirmative action; gender policy; Tanzania; university; gender equality; females.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality in leadership positions is a tragedy in Universities in Tanzania. To give an example, just 13 of the 34 department heads at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS) in the 2009–2012 triennium were female, and 30% Deans and Directors. Although the number of female leaders increased slightly in the following triennium, from 2012 to 2015, the increase was negligible. Out of the 36 department heads, 14 were female. Of the 23 deans and directors, 11 were females. By 2013, there were no women in top management of the university [1].

Other universities are experiencing a similar scenario. For instance, among the senior management of the University of Dar es Salaam for the current triennium, which began in 2019, there is just one woman [2]. Six of the 15 members of the council are female, as are 18 of the 44 members of the university senate. Statistics also indicate that eight of the university's 31 academic units are headed by women [2]. This demonstrates unequivocally the underrepresentation of women in university governance.

Lack of academic credentials is the main factor contributing to the gender gap in leadership. In institutions of higher learning, qualifications serve as a filter for leadership roles. Most female academics have less academic qualifications compared to their counter parts [3,1,4,2]. For instance, only one of the 23 full professors at MUHAS in December 2012 was a woman. Only six women out of 28 associate professors were female. In addition, out of 86 lecturers, 28 were female, including 15 of the 70 senior lecturers [1]. The University of Dar es Salaam has noticed a similar pattern. One female professor out of ten full professors, out of 45 associate professors nine are female and only 25 female senior lecturers were present in the academic year 2020–2021 out of the total 120. In addition, only 107 of the 408 lecturers were females [2]. What do the data signify in terms of university leadership positions? The existing statistics

indicate that men will continue to predominate in leadership roles in universities because they have the necessary credentials, unless institutional measures are made to change the situation.

This tortuous trend calls for the need to study the universities' gender policies to understand their commitments in addressing the gender gap in leadership positions. Policies are planned set of rules intended to direct choices and produce logical results. They are intentional declarations that are put into practice. Furthermore, policies may state various issues of concern and be of indicative on how the organization is committed to rectify and improve the existing unfair circumstances such as gender inequalities. But, it is unclear at this time what they do say about the issue of gender imbalance in leadership and what affirmative measures the policies propose to take to fix it. In order to better understand the embedded affirmative actions aimed at reducing gender inequality in leadership positions in universities, this research examined gender policies. Gender inequality in leadership positions is a tragedy in Universities in Tanzania. Thus, universities are resorting to developing gender policies to address the imbalance between males and females in leadership positions. Nevertheless, it is unclear at this time what do policies say about the issue of gender imbalance in leadership and what affirmative measures the policies propose to take to fix it.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Affirmative action referred to voluntary effort undertaken by the government, private employers and school to combat discrimination and promote equal opportunity in education and employment [5]. The goal of affirmative is to eliminate discrimination against women and ethnic minorities and redress the effects of past discrimination. The president John Kennedy in the United State of America first introduced affirmative action in 1964 with the aim executive order number 10925 [6]. His aim was to redress the discrimination that still persisted in spite the constriction of civil right which guarantees that

has been put in place to ensure that applicant are treated equally regardless the colour, religion ,national they come from and gender differences. However, the act of 1964 ordered the non-government employers nearly all the employment discrimination is illegal on the basic of gender color, religion or any other group [7].

Walker et al. [8] argued that affirmative action is the policy that entered consistent superior in rewarding and promoting women, is the prejudices against women persist especially in-group of bias [9]. In addition, problems such as gender stereotype treat and disengagement of the minority group have the consequence of depressed assessment and thus underutilization of the disadvantage group [10].

Affirmative actions have been very effective at increasing the number of women at the education organization such as university since it gives the opportunities for more women to join university. Mathur and Sharma [11] also argued that the policy prepared students for future interaction in the society, which help in interchanging of skills and knowledge. Wazin [7] and Nakayama [12] when preferences play a visible part in allocation of good both the direct beneficiaries of the preferences and others in the situation are affected. Affirmative action is understood to operate as a system of preference rather than monitoring. The policy brings the question out the ability of women and who are admitted to schools or to education leadership of affirmative policies. However the policy undermining the confidence of women admitted but affirms native action in educational leadership or university study

Longman [13] confirm that employing affirmative action help the vulnerability group in the society in gaining admission. He also emphasize that various institution government have the program of expanding the promotion of women in higher education. Affirmative action provides role models since the successful women encourage and motivate other women to be confidences in knowing that excellences can be achieved [14]. This was supported by studies conducted by Openjuru [15] and Choge [16] who said that affirmative action promote diversity and encourage public welfare for common [17] good by increasing opportunities for previously disadvantage group including women.

Affirmative action has produced relatively minor changes in higher education institution [13]. The

studies done by Kagoda [9] said that some people example women are obtaining rewards to opportunities that exist in short supply and ought to be given to other people such as men or who are perceived or more deserving of the rewards or better able to famous legal challenges to affirmative action programs in education [18,19,20]. However [21] argued that affirmative action constituted reverse discriminative that lower the odds of admission for better qualified leaders. They also said in which the policy creates a mismatch between the skills of the leader and the abilities required for success.

Fortado et al. [22] show some discontent with the usage of affirmative action to promote visibility of female in higher education. This is because the beneficiaries of the policies are labeled as an objective and viewed as individuals who cannot make it in their own More ever the prevailing opinion among the scholars is that using affirmative action to enhance women leadership position is perceived as the myth that women are inferior. White and Burkinshaw [18] also accused affirmative action policy that it is lowering the self-esteem and self-confidence of the female leaders and make women continues to be misconception to what is affirmative action. Women have risen into position to run higher learning institutions. Some are appointed from an affirmative action point of view while others, in numbers, are in their position by merits. There are mixed pictures on which approach is yielding better experience for women leaders.

### **3. METHODS**

This study used qualitative methods to explore the proposed affirmative action in gender policy documents relating to leadership in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. A thorough digital literature search was done to find the country's higher education institutions' gender policy documents. The following search terms were used: gender, gender policy, higher education institutions, and university gender policy. Nine policy documents in all were obtained; three gender policies were chosen from this group since they were gender policies for universities. The University A's gender policy was manually added because it wasn't available online. As a result, the universities with the names: University A, University B, University C, and University D were represented by the gender policies that were chosen.



Second, target percent recruitment levels are also stated in the gender policy documents. Target percent, the study found, is putting a specific number of percent for which females are expected to be recruited. The aim is to ensure that more females are recruited to bridge the existing gap between men and female staff in universities. A typical gender policy statement from the University C is, "To put in place affirmative action at the recruitment level to support an increased number of female employees in academic/technical and administrative positions by defining female and male target percent levels." University C. This is also stated in gender policy by University A. The statement reads, "Put in place affirmative action at recruitment level to support an increased number of female employees in academic and administrative positions by defining female and male target percent levels." University A.

Third, the gender policy document from University A proposes for instituting a mechanism for enforcing the implementation of one third recruitment in all levels of the university. The policy reads, "Institute affirmative action measures to enforce the provision on one third female recruitment...at all levels of decision making including top levels at UDSM." University A.

Fourth, the gender policy document in University D highlights not only ensuring equity in the recruitment processes but also stresses the need to involve females during the process. Involving females will ensure that their needs are included in the process of recruiting. This is indicated in the following statement from University D, "Increase women's involvement in all affairs related to recruitment, staff development and promotion." University D.

## **4.2 Outreach Activities**

The gender policy documents of the three universities suggest carrying out outreach activities as part of affirmative action's for encouraging females to enroll in various university programs and readiness to hold various leadership positions in higher learning institutions. So what do gender policies say about outreach activities?

First, the policy requires the universities to actively participate in various exhibitions for intention of encouraging and motivating girls' enrolment in higher learning institutions. The

exhibitions are expected to involve female and male students as role models to others; the role modeling approach is aimed at easily convincing girls to study sciences in lower level education and join higher education. For example, a gender policy from University B states, "...shall participate actively to encourage female students to study sciences thus apply to study health related disciplines at MUHAS. The university shall take part in relevant exhibitions to market the programs and shall use MUHAS students to advocate the university programs." Similarly, University D policy document reads, "Take part in relevant exhibitions to market the programmes and shall use MoCU male and female students to advocate the university programmes..." University D.

Second, outreach programs are also mentioned in the gender policy documents to be used as part of gender mainstreaming programs across the university communities. The university community outreach activities aims at promoting gender sensitive organization culture. For example, the University C policy reads, "Conduct gender sensitization programmes for the entire university community and make this a continuous process." University C. Furthermore, through the gender policy, the university commits itself in mainstreaming gender sensitivity as the policy reads, "OUT shall organize and conduct gender sensitive outreach programmes with view to mainstreaming gender sensitive." University C.

Third, the universities, via their gender policy, are also pledging to design and execute outreach programs that will involve society and secondary schools. The secondary schools are the places where potential university students are prepared and gloomed. As part of the policy reads, "Design outreach programmes with communities and secondary schools that will contribute to the national emphasis on mentoring girl students for STEM professions." University A. The policy also mentions some of the existing efforts in making sure more girls are enrolled in science university courses. This is confirmed in the following excerpt, "Some STEM-based institutions such as the CoICT have projects focusing on 'reaching females'," University A.

## **4.3 Special Entry and Scholarships Girls**

Special entry and scholarship for girls is another affirmative action identified in the gender policy document of the University A. The university promises to establish special entry programs in

science subjects to boost the enrolment of girls as an effort to redress the imbalance of enrolments between boys and girls. The policy document reads, "Develop and implement special female enrolment programmers in the STEM specializations." University A. Furthermore, the policy states, "...Consider a cut-off point in the admission process." Besides promising to have special entry programs, the university through its gender policy is aiming to expand the university scholarship to facilitate equal opportunity. As the University A policy reads, "Expand the ...student scholarship programme to enhance the equal opportunity platform." University A.

#### **4.4 Searching Leaders**

The gender policy documents also take into account how leaders in higher learning institutions are appointed. To have gender equity in leadership, through the policies, the universities make several affirmative action promises to address female underrepresentation in leadership. First, through the gender policy the University A is promising to have gender equitable operational procedures in searching for leaders to hold various positions of its units. The procedures, once developed, the study found are expected to provide clear steps that will help to solve the existing imbalances in leadership. As part of the University A gender policy reads, "Develop clear gender equitable operational procedures for searching and appointing individuals for leadership positions and in decision-making organs..." University A.

Second, the policy documents the desires to have equal representation in all managerial positions that is 50/50. To achieve 50/50, the university is promising to have affirmative actions during search process. However, the policy does not explicitly mention the actions. As a section of University B reads gender policy reads, University B shall work towards realizing equal representation of males and females at all managerial levels in order to attain the national goal of 50/50 male to female ratio. The university shall institute affirmative action during search for leaders to facilitate attainment of equal number of male and female at all managerial levels. University B.

Third, the policy also demands the university to state female targets in leadership positions. To achieve 50/50 representation in leadership position, the University C gender policy is

proposing for clearly coming up with target percent of the females to be part of the leadership team. The policy states, "Define female target percentage with a view to moving OUT to a 50/50 gender ratio, in leadership positions and membership in decision making organs." University Fourth, the university pledges to make sure that there are parity management positions between male and female employees. For example, in the University D policy document, a statement reads, "Ensure parity in promotions and appointment to management positions without prejudice to merit..." University D.

#### **4.5 Capacity Building and Support**

The gender policy documents of the selected Universities also describe capacity building action strategies for supporting females in various areas in respective organizations. So how does capacity building becomes an affirmative action? What does it help in reducing gender disparities in the universities?

Fig. 2 is a word cloud made with Nvivo 12Plus to show how the words used to describe capacity building and support as affirmative action in gender policy texts. The frequency increases as the text size increases. As they move from the center to the periphery, the font size shrinks, indicating that they were referenced less frequently.

First, the three Universities recognize capacity building as key in attaining equal representation in leadership positions in higher learning. Leadership positions are based on the academic qualifications; one is appointed not because she is a female but she has the required qualifications. Therefore, to address the disparities in academic qualifications between males and females, the gender policy of the universities describes capacity building efforts are needed. For example, University A policy document states, "...Strengthen capacity building programmers for female academic staff in the University for developing their academic careers." University A. Similar emphasis on capacity building is described in a policy document from University C. The policy states, "To develop and operationalize effective mechanism for supporting female employees for training, research and promotion," University C.

Second, building capacity in networking among female academics and others is also considered





Carr et al. [24]. In their study Recruitment, Promotion and Retention of Women in Academic Medicine: How Institutions Are Addressing Gender Disparities, found that policy imbedded diversity and inclusion polities. But, they found that there were no efforts like special programs for recruiting, promoting or retaining women.

The in-depth thematic analysis also found that policies also highlights that the universities must have outreach programs as a way to encourage girls study sciences in the secondary schools. The programs consist using girls from health sciences to participate in various exhibitions that involve secondary school students. Also, having gender mainstreaming programs in universities for promoting gender awareness and sensitization. However, this paper argues that those are just policy statements that indicate a desire of having outreach programs. The analysis was unable to find that those desires were realized. The results support earlier scholars who analyzed policy or published journal articles on gender policy [25;23]. In Danish university, policy required the universities to have open recruitment but that was rarely implemented and sometimes the university departments modified the recruitment qualifications to suit their selected candidates [23]. Similarly, in the US, scholars found that no programs to help in promoting female recruitment. The programs were considered irrelevant and eventually affecting female senior level promotions [25].

Repeated reading of the policies also revealed the insistence of special entry and scholarships for girls. Special entry and scholarships are meant to increase the number of girls in higher learning institutions. Yet, it was impossible by just reading the policies to understand whether it is practically implemented in the universities and how effective is it? However, the related literature indicates that some of the statements in the policies are not implemented. For example, [25] concluded that most medical schools in the United States lack programs to promote gender parity among medical faculty.

The study further found that the policies highlight the needs of having equitable operation procedures in searching for various candidates for leadership positions. The policies also demand for equal representation between male and females in managerial positions. This is an interesting finding as the policies are formal

documents that indicates the desires of the organizations. This is partly relates with what [25] found in the USA medical schools. In order to implement the policies, they found that the schools had to conduct training to the search committee members. A handful of institutions required bias and policy training for members of recruiting and promotion committees. The training for the promotion committee focused on comprehending policies that assure equal treatment of women. For the recruitment of diverse applicants, search committees focused on unconscious bias training [25].

The policies also document the need to have capacity building and support to female academics in the form of career development, training and workshop for imparting skills and networking among them. Capacity building aims at helping the female academics acquire the academic qualifications that will make them the right candidates for various senior positions. Conversely, this study could not establish the effectiveness of the strategies. The current study analyzed gender policy documents that do not tell whether the policies were effectively implemented. However, the policies as noted elsewhere tell the desire of the university management to create equitable environment.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The study conclude that gender policies just include the intention to take affirmative actions against gender inequality but it is unclear from the policies whether the actions were implemented and how effective are the actions. From the policies, it was possible to thematically identify themes pertaining to affirmative actions in addressing female academics underrepresentation in Universities. However, the analysis shed little light about implementation of the policy.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

1. MUHAS. Gender Policy. Dar es Salaam; 2013.
2. UDSM. Gender Policy. Dar es Salaam; 2021.



3. MoCU. Gender Policy. Moshi; 2020.
4. OUT. Gender Policy, Towards balanced OUT community. Dar es Salaam; 2008.
5. Chun EB, Feagin JR. Rethinking diversity frameworks in higher education. Routledge; 2019.
6. Mukolwe JO, Michaeland O, Ajowi OJ. Strategies for Enhancing Participation of Female Teachers in Management of Public Primary Schools. *European Journal of Education Studies*; 2018.
7. Wazin A. Relevant and current issues faced by American institutions of higher education as they attempt to design and implement affirmative action plans vis-à-vis admissions and faculty/staff hiring policies and practices. *Journal of Underrepresented & Minority Progress*. 2019;3(2):66-98.
8. Walker Laurie A, Apryl Williams, Jason Triche, Lola Rainey, Madison Evans, Rebecca Calabrese, and nicole martin. # StayMadAbby: Reframing affirmative action discourse and White entitlement on Black Twitter. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*; 2021.
9. Kagoda AM. Gender and education at makerere University, Uganda. In *Gender and Practice: Insights from the Field*. Emerald Publishing Limited; 2019.
10. Mayimele RR, Ndudzo A, Ndlovu C. Towards closing the gender gap in higher management: Gender Analysis Of Education Management Policies In Zimbabwe. *Gender & Behaviour..* 2020; 18(1).
11. Mathur P, Sharma R. addressing gender parity in higher education. *Empowering Marginalized Communities in India: The Impact of Higher Education*. 2021;239.
12. Nakayama Don K. *Affirmative Action. Black Surgeons and Surgery in America*. 2021:285.
13. Longman KA. perspectives on women's higher education leadership from around the world. *Administrative Sciences*. 2018;8 (3):35.
14. Nakitende MG. Motivation and perseverance of women in education leadership in the United States of America. *Journal of Science and Sustainable Development*. 2019;6(2):75-101.
15. Openjuru GL. Gender and transformative education in East Africa. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*; 2021.
16. Choge JR. Gender factor in decision making: Challenges facing women leadership development in primary schools' leadership in Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 2015;12(6):30-37.
17. Chitsamatanga BB, George A., Mbvizo D. Does the implementation of affirmative action promote female academics to positions of leadership? Evidence from two state universities in Zimbabwe.e-Bangi. 2020;17(2).
18. White K, Burkinshaw P. Women and leadership in higher education: Special issue editorial. *Social Sciences*. 2019;8(7) :204.
19. Kilango NC, Qin YH, Nyoni WP, Senguo RA. Interventions that increase enrolment of women in higher education: The University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 2017; 8(13):21-27.
20. Aiston SJ, Fo CK, Law WW. Interrogating strategies and policies to advance women in academic leadership: the case of Hong Kong. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*. 2020;42(3):347-364.
21. Chitsamatanga BB, George A, Mbvizo D. Does the implementation of affirmative action promote female academics to positions of leadership? Evidence from two state universities in Zimbabwe.e-Bangi. 2020;17(2).
22. Fortado JV, Moreira AC, Mota J. Gender affirmative action and management: A systematic literature review on how diversity and inclusion management affect gender equity in organizations. *Behavioral sciences*. 2021;11(2):21.
23. Nielsen MW. Limits to meritocracy? Gender in academic recruitment and promotion processes. *Science and Public Policy*. 2016;43(3):386–399. Available:<https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scv052>
24. Carr PL, Gunn C, Raj A, Kaplan S, Freund KM. Recruitment, promotion, and retention of women in academic medicine: How Institutions Are Addressing Gender Disparities. *Women's Health Issues*. 2017;27(3):374–381. Available:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.whi.2016.11.003>

25. Araujo CL, do Carmo EA, Fraga RG. Describing the experience of young researchers in interdisciplinary qualitative research based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Using NVivo®. *Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing*. 2019;86:1–11. Available:[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01406-3\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01406-3_1)

---

© 2023 Shemahonge and Kyando; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

*Peer-review history:*  
*The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:*  
<https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/107782>