

Factors Influencing Prospective Women Students to Enroll at The Open University of Tanzania

Martina K. Rwegelera
Eustellah P. Bhalalussesa
The Open University of Tanzania
E-mail: Martina.rwegelera@out.ac.tz

Abstract: This study examined the factors which influence prospective women students to enrol at The Open University of Tanzania (OUT). The study was guided by distance education ideas drawn from definitions and debates about theories and practice of distance education. These ideas were adopted as major references for theoretical perspective as far as distance education was concerned. Adult education theories were used to highlight on issues concerning women prospective adult learners. In order to identify barriers which prevent women to join OUT, liberal and socialist feminism theories were applied. Qualitative research approach was used in this study. Data collection methods included interviews supplemented with focus group discussion, observation and documentary analysis.

A total of one hundred and sixty participants were involved in the study. Then, OUT managers and Regional Directors were included due to virtue of their positions. The study identified factors included internal or individual disposition factors that reflect personal attitude and perception. Learning at a distance was challenging and complex to prospective students. For most prospective women such a pattern was perceived to be new and an unfamiliar experience different from other learning modes, distance learning is self-directed learning which involves time management. That was a new approach to learning for them. Therefore, they lacked self-motivation and self-confidence in such new learning activity. Apart from internal factors, situational or external factors were identified.

Overall, the study concludes that in a developing country like Tanzania, assumptions about potential benefits of distance learning in widening participation for disadvantaged groups like women should not be taken for granted. The research provides several recommendations in order to solve problems

INTRODUCTION

In Tanzania, distance education is a recent phenomenon. However, it is gaining reputation and momentum to reach as many people as possible. Early forms of distance education were introduced in the country in the 1950's. Their aim/goal was to provide education for those already working in colonial government (civil servants) to further themselves academically so that they could better serve the colonial master and, on the other hand, enhance themselves materially. When Tanzania attained independence in 1961 it badly needed qualified manpower. The

National Correspondence Institution (NCI) attached to the Institute of Adult Education was established in 1970, to serve the literate portion of the adult working population, both in towns and rural areas through correspondence education. This was thought to be an ideal type of education system. The workers did not need to leave their jobs in order to attend the courses they needed Mutangira (1982). As the institute was for manpower development, it taught professional courses like Management, Accounting, Book-keeping, Administration, Teacher in-service courses, Certificate in law and National policies (Mutangira, *ibid*).

National correspondence did not quench people's thirsty for university education. Hence the institute expanded its subjects to secondary school education, Form one to six by distance and after completion of the course they had to sit for the National Examination. Few managed to enter into the University College of Dar es Salaam. Others were left out stranded, joining their fellows from conventional secondary schools (Mutangira, 1982).

In recognition of the potential strengths embedded within distance education, the government of Tanzania decided in 1993 to establish an autonomous and fully fledged Open University to offer degree programmes at a distance. This was counted as a strategic plan of expanding higher education opportunities since by that time, it had proved difficult to satisfy all educational and training needs by the traditional practice of building campuses to provide conventional teaching universities because of the expenses involved (Kuhanga, 1990; Zindi and Robert, 1995). Until 1993, the whole country had only two universities, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) with a capacity of enrolling only about 4,175 full time students (URT, 1993).

Since 1994 OUT has been admitting students in various degree programmes. The current figure for undergraduate degrees admissions from 1994-2011/2012 stands at 39,126: male 29,211 and female 9,915 which is 25% (Directorate of Planning and Development). Despite this tremendous achievement, the University is still facing challenges on how best to attract and reach all potential learners especially the disadvantaged groups (such as women, disabled and those in remote hard to reach communities) who would most benefit from OUT. This study focused on women.

THE STUDY: WHAT IS IT AND WHY?

This study intended to identify reasons as to why prospective women students (who meet the entry requirements) do not come forward to enroll for degree programmes at The Open University of Tanzania. The study sought to explain from the data collected the factors that pose as obstacles for their enrolment. The argument behind this study is that one of the justifications for establishing an open university in Tanzania was to widen participation in higher education particularly for women who have been (and are still) lagging behind. Given its flexibility, it was assumed that women would be motivated and readily enrol in the different programmes since the distance mode of delivery brings all the necessary tools for learning into the home and into the community no matter how remote and no matter how many want to learn. It was further assumed that women would find it convenient and suitable

since they would be able to study while continuing with other family and work commitments especially for those whom fulltime study outside and away from home is difficult. (Kuhanga, 1990). As a way of motivating and encouraging women to enroll, The Open University initiated in 1996 a special Women Education Fund named against the name of the First Lady of the former President (Mama Mkapa) to assist women who were unable to pay for their fees.

Despite all these opportunities, very few women are turning up to enroll at The Open University of Tanzania (Twenty years after establishment of OUT) only 25% of the total number of students enrolled at OUT is women (Directorate of Planning and Development 2011/2012).

Therefore, it was anticipated that successful execution of this study would come out with suggestions that would enable OUT to lay strategies for motivating and attracting more women to join the University in future. Furthermore, it was expected that the findings of this study would also help higher education policy makers and planners to take the necessary action to improve the status quo while at the same time laying basis for further research in this area

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this research were therefore to:

- (a) Investigate prospective women students' characteristics and their expectations for higher education and how this contributes to their non-enrolment at OUT.
- (b) Assess the extent to which the prospective women students are aware of OUT entry procedures and opportunities.
- (c) Examine prospective women students' preference of the training institution and how this contributes to enrolment into degree programmes at OUT.
- (d) Examine the extent to which socio-cultural factors also contribute to prospective women students' enrolment into OUT degree programmes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To be able to meet the objectives and answer the research questions, this study was informed and shaped by the ideas developed from distance education; adult learning and feminist theories. With regard to distance education, we have taken early prominent writers; (Keegan's, 1996) ideas on definitions and debates about theory and practice were adopted together with other ideas from various prominent scholars who have written on distance education (Daniel, 1988, Garrison and Shales 1987; Knapper, 1988). Their ideas were adopted as major references for the theoretical perspectives in distance education that informed this study. This helped to analyze the practice of distance education at OUT and particularly in the Tanzanian context to which OUT can be viewed as an open institution. This study is dealing with adult prospective students. Therefore (Knox's, 1977) early famous work on developmental stages of adult life and the importance of understanding an individual's contextual situation as an important contributing factor to the ability and willingness to participate in a learning venture during adulthood was also adopted by this study to inform the process of analysis and discussion. Finally, since this study is mainly focusing on women as a special group, it was therefore shaped by ideas from feminist theories.

Within the family of feminist theories this research adopted the liberal and socialist theories. Liberal feminists, advocates equal rights to an individual and views gender as an equal opportunity issue. It ignores the gender inequalities within the social system (Meena, 1998). Socialist feminists on the other hand argue that gender is socially rather than biologically constructed. Hence, the feminist theory draws widely from cross-cultural and historical studies which provide the empirical raw material for rigorous theorization of gender relations. Therefore the concept of “differences” for socialist feminists recognizes the impact of disabilities on how women are differently marginalized or oppressed in society. Within this framework, barriers related to women low enrolment at OUT were illuminated.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The study sought to explain from the data collected the factors that pose as obstacles for prospective women students’ enrolment at OUT. Hence it had to adopt a qualitative research approach based on its strengths especially on studies of this nature. The approach deals with totality of all socio-cultural and psychological aspects of an individual. These aspects are so interwoven that not one can be understood without taking into consideration all the others. In this approach, participants give their own accounts (inner perspectives, opinions and feelings) which lead the researcher to discover reality through key actors own words (prospective women students). Through this approach triangulation was also made possible and this helped to verify the information gathered through different qualitative data collection methods which were in-depth interviews, observation and documentary analysis.

Study Area

The study was conducted in five geographical zones of the country of Tanzania, namely, Eastern, Central, Northern, Western and Southern Highlands. From each zone, two secondary schools were selected based on the following criteria:

- (i) Location with respect to OUT Regional Centre
- (ii) Either an exclusively girls’ secondary school or a co-education secondary school.
 - Location of a secondary school in relation to the regional centre had a bearing on awareness of OUT prospective students.
 - It was expected that a prospective candidate who was living near the regional centre was more informed of OUT than the one living far from the centre.

It was assumed that most girls’ secondary schools were staffed, with more women teachers than either co-education or boys’ secondary schools. Thus, it was expected that there would be more women diploma teachers in girls’ secondary schools than in the other two categories. Co-education secondary schools were also selected because prospective women diploma teachers were expected to be found there, while in exclusively boys’ secondary schools, one might not find any prospective woman OUT student diploma teacher. Within this context the following schools were earmarked; refer to Table 1.

Table 1: Study Area

Geographical Zones	Secondary schools
Eastern	Jangwani - girls Kibiti - co-education
Northern	Kibosho - girls Arusha - co-education
Western	Kigoma - co-education Kibondo - girls
Southern	Loleza - girls Mbeya – day, co-education
Central	Msalato - girls Mwenge - co-education

The reality in the field was not totally the same as in the initial plan. The assumption that most girls' secondary schools are staffed with women teachers than co-education and boys secondary schools proved wrong. In some girls' schools, for example Msalato, Kibosho and Kibondo, the number of women teachers could not reach eight, which was the intended number to be interviewed from each secondary school.

Table 2: Prospective Women Students who Participated in the Interview

S/No.-	Name of Secondary School	Expected Sample	Actual No. of Participants
1.	Arusha Secondary School	8	8
2.	Mbeya Day Secondary School	8	8
3.	Msalato Girls Secondary School	8	3
4.	Mwenge Secondary School	8	5
5.	Jangwani Girls Secondary School	8	8
6.	Kibiti Secondary School	8	8
7.	Kigoma Secondary School	8	4
8.	Kibosho Girls Secondary School	8	6
9.	Kibondo Girls Secondary School	8	5
10.	Loleza Girls Secondary School	8	8
	TOTAL	80	63

Sampling

Sampling was purposeful. The selected sample was categorized in four groups. The first group included 63 prospective women students with diploma in education, selected from ten secondary schools as main actors in the study. Though the anticipated number was (80) prospective women students with diploma in education, the reality in the field was not so, only 63 prospective women students were available for interviews (See Table 2). Gender was considered to be an important valuable in sample selection for comparison purposes. It was to see whether the barriers which hinder women teachers with diploma in education to enroll at OUT were similar to those of men in the same category. Hence twenty (20)

prospective men students participated in the interviews. The second group included (8) continuing women students and (10) men. The number of participants depended on the availability of continuing students in those secondary schools. This group was to contribute to the study on how they managed to enroll at OUT notwithstanding similar barriers as they are operating in similar settings. It was hoped that they would contribute rich experience on how prospective women could disengage from barriers and enroll with OUT. The third group was composed of OUT managers while the fourth group was of OUT Regional Directors.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Influencing Prospective Women Students to Enroll with The Open University of Tanzania

Reasons for non enrolment of prospective women students at OUT are not only multiple but also complex. They are complex because no single reason stands on its own and able to explain why prospective women are not enrolling at OUT.

Accordingly, some of the reasons are ambiguous and contradictory such that when they are subjected to critical analysis they lead into other reasons. For example, a person may claim to have been refused permission by her husband to join studies while in reality she is not self-motivated to learn. Therefore, by arriving at a more complete understanding of why prospective women students do not enroll at OUT, “checklist” approach should not be the end. It has to be taken into account what participation in learning means to an individual woman and the total context within which these women live and are expected to study. Within this complexity, the reasons why prospective women students do not enroll at OUT may be discussed under three main factors.

- (i) Internal or individual disposition factors,
- (ii) Situational or external factors and
- (iii) Institutional factors

Internal or Individual Disposition Factors

These reflect personal attitude and perception. It has been evidenced even in previous studies at OUT that the main issue involving all students regardless of whether they were active or not active was that learning at a distance is challenging and complex (see Bhalalusesa, 1998). It was and still challenging to date as revealed in this study conducted in 2010.

Distance learning requires students to work independently without direct guidance and support from tutors and the teaching institution. For most prospective women this was received as going to be a new and unfamiliar experience. Being a distant student would require them to assume a different social role. Their past school life as students was centered around classroom teaching where it was possible to get assistance, clarification and support from colleagues as well as teachers. In the distance learning situation, each student would be required to be self-reliant and take charge of his/her own learning. However, as it has already been noted elsewhere (see for example, Bhalalusesa, (1998) not all learners are able to direct their own learning. Readiness and ability

to engage in self directed learning is defined as traits which individuals possess in varying degrees. These observations were also reflected in this study for the few women students who acted as a control group and from the prospective women students. Some of them were skeptical and unsure if they were really able and could make it in this type of learning. Therefore, they gave a number of reasons such as being too old to learn, being discouraged to take science subjects while studying in previous levels, being tied up with family commitments and lack of money to pay for studies. Notwithstanding these reasons, it is also interesting to note that within the same group, there were other women with similar age profile, educational level, working environment and family commitments but who were industrious and deeply engaged in learning. This called for the need to examine further into the internal factors that can better explain personal reasons which prospective women were putting forward. These internal personal factors are discussed in the following section.

Lack of self-motivation

Learning is personal and natural process. No one can learn for another. It takes place within an individual himself/herself. It is the process by which people have moved every step of the way since they first breathed. According to Smith (1981), in learning, the individual is the agent, even though the agent may be subject to the social pressure of the group. While it is true that learning is affected, even controlled to some extent by society or other collectives, but for learning activity to introduce changes, it is personal. Therefore, the decision to enrol or not to enrol has much to do with self-motivation. Motivation is referred to an internal process which activates the learner to willingly put efforts into learning. It includes aspect of self-esteem, locus of control, motivation and ecological environment. In ordinary language as observed by Slavin (1997) motivation is what gets one going, keeps him/her going and determines where she/he is trying to go. Students' accounts in this study revealed that it was one of the reasons why some women were not eager to undertake further studies beyond the Diploma qualification. They had no desire to do it.

When I think of having a degree in education I become discouraged completely I am not motivated at all. Yes, I like teaching very much only that they pay us a little salary. Teacher's salaries de-motivate us. The difference in salaries between diploma teachers and degree holders is minimal. It cannot encourage teachers to study for degrees. In my case I could not waste my time for many years just for a minimal increase in my salary. I better do other activities which will give me something tangible within a short time.

This conclusion was arrived at because there were other women in similar situation but with different views. They got the same salary and they were aware that the value of university education was not only money-based but also self-fulfilling as can be seen in the following interview extract:

I want to have a degree and that is all. I am not expecting substantial increase in my salary after obtaining it. I have a purpose. When I finish my degree course I want to employ myself. I want to do business. I hope that I will succeed in that line of business. I think it is of no help for me to

sit there with my Diploma lamenting about low salary. I think even if I will have a degree I will continue lamenting for low salary. The degree will help me to be a good business woman. This will improve the life standard of my family.

Going through the findings, one can note the problem of lack of financial support, which also featured out as a reason for non-enrolment among some prospective women. Again, this needs to be taken with caution because these women were employed and had their own salaries. If they had a serious intention of acquiring university education they would have initiated the process and demonstrated failure on the way. Men and women who were eager to learn were receiving similar salaries. Even for those who perceived themselves as being aged and hence, unable to learn could be grouped in this category. They lacked self-motivation to make this happen.

Connected to self-motivation is lack of self-confidence. There is enough evidence from findings of this study that majority of prospective women students lacked self-confidence to make their own decisions. They did not believe in themselves, while studying was a positive and valuable activity to undertake.

Inability to Manage Independent Learning

It should be noted here that self motivation is not the sole contributing factor to successful learning at a distance. Another important factor which is closely linked with self-motivation is the extent to which the student is capable of managing the learning process itself. Experiences show that this requires skills in reading for understanding, writing to a required level and time management. Time management is a great problem for many women who have to balance multiple roles and responsibilities. Distance learning can be very threatening and can be much more demanding because students have to take on more responsibility for learning.

In this study most women demonstrated less capacity to learn independently and therefore had fears and worries that they would not cope with the demands of distance learning (self direction in learning). It became evident that these women had external locus of control. They believe that learning was only possible in a classroom situation with the teacher (as an external person) imparting skills and knowledge. This made them unsure whether they could really make it if they enrol into the programme. They could focus some problems ahead. They did not know how to approach the study materials and use texts. They wished to be taught. The situation seemed to be more complex for women because naturally women are social beings and like to study in groups. This opportunity is not readily available in distance learning study. There is isolation. Bandura, (1977) asserts that social learning theory is based in the idea that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context. Bandura's ideas apply in a conventional social context. Prospective women students are products of conventional schooling. They do not expect to find that experience in distance learning mode. Hence the mismatch between prospective women students' experience and the actual demands of the distance mode of delivery contributed

greatly to non-enrolment of some prospective women students who would have enrolled had they had some clear guidance of what constitute open and distance learning.

These findings fit well with Cross, (1981) chain of Response Model which was developed to explain who participates in adult learning and why. According to this model, participation in learning, whether in an organized class or self-directed, is not a single act but the result of a chain of responses each based on an evaluation of the position of the individual in his or her environment. The model further emphasizes that the forces of participation in adult learning begin with the individual and move to increasingly external conditions.

As the model indicates, the decision to participation begins with self-evaluation. Individuals who lack confidence in their own abilities are unlikely to volunteer for learning which might present a threat to their sense of self-esteem, John (1992) elaborates this point when she states:

Readiness to take on a learning opportunity ... reflects a self-assessment that includes being in a position to engage with learning. The influence of these particular points in time may propel someone into the learning experience.

There is little doubt that some prospective women students evaluated themselves and decided not to enrol because of the belief that they were unable to pursue independent learning.

Apart from internal or disposition factors, also situational or external factors play a significant role on women enrolment at OUT as we shall discuss below.

Situational or External factors

Cross (1981) defines situational factors as those arising from one's situation in life at a given time, for example, lack of time due to job and home responsibilities, lack of money, geographical location, lack of support and the like. Challenges which women experience in trying to achieve their educational aspirations were also situationally oriented.

This study focused on women teachers with Diploma in Education. This is a qualification one acquires after completion of Form VI (sixth year of secondary education) and it takes two years training. Assuming that the starting age at standard One is seven years it would therefore imply that one would graduate from the college with a Diploma at the age of 20 – 21 and would start working at the age of 22. According to Harvinghust developmental stages (Cross, 1981) this is the age when individuals leave home and establish new living managements as well as starting first full-time job and select mates. For majority of women, this is the time they even start planning for establishing a home through marriage. This was true with the findings of this study. The profile of the women who were sampled for the study show that their age ranged from mid twenties to late forties. All were married except five who were not married but were single parents.

Therefore, they were all adults with a range of activities, commitment and responsibilities.

Engagement in learning would have meant an additional responsibility within which they would have had to divide time among these roles. While this may be typical for any adult learner, the situation in the distance learning context and specifically for women is different. Distance learning students live and learn within a community which has its own cultural norms, values and assumptions about learning. In the African context it is more acceptable for a man to withdraw from social activities to fulfill his academic ambitions than for a woman to withdraw from her traditional female social activities, as one teacher narrated.

I have no time to rest like my husband; I wake up at 3.30 a.m. to prepare tea for my husband and children. I warm water for my husband's bath. Thereafter I prepare myself for work. When I come home from work in the evening, I embark on household activities. I prepare supper. My husband doesn't want to eat the food cooked and served by the housemaid. Since we married he hasn't eaten food prepared and served by the housemaid. Worse still he doesn't want the housemaid to wash or iron his clothes. I am always busy all the year round. My husband's demands add on to my tiredness from teaching and households activities. I fail to think about my advancement in higher education with these terrible conditions I am living in. For me there is no point in the day at which I know for sure that I have stopped working. After supper I help my housemaid to wash dishes, clean and arrange my kitchen. After evening prayers my husband goes to sleep. I remain behind to make sure that everything is in order. This includes shutting windows and doors. I normally go to bed around eleven O'clock. If I have to prepare lesson plans for the following day's classes then I sleep at midnight and by this time everybody is already in bed.

In such kind of social system, once a person is labeled a member of a sex category, she or he is morally accountable for behaving as persons in that category do. Practically in the African context, women as a group have a lower status than men. Mackenzie (1993); Doyle and Paludi (1991); Kirby *et al* (1997); and Lorber (1994) argue that gender is an entity in and of itself that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders, social processes of every day life and built into all the major social organizations of society. They went further, however to argue that gender differences is socially constructed and yet is universally used to justify stratification. That means a person is expected to do gender. The ease of interactions depends on it. To behave according to one's gender is taught from infancy through socialization process, how to behave in a certain category. Therefore, the prospective woman student in the quotation is fulfilling her gender role by accepting her husband's demands.

Hardling and Sills (1999) and Mackenzie (1993) argue that girls and boys are brought up to accept the social system in which they live. This includes gender subordination. As we have seen above, a woman is busy throughout the day till midnight serving the family. A man has a lot of leisure time. He watches TV and listens to the radio. From these media, he can pick up academic opportunities and move forward. This system puts prospective women at a disadvantage. They have little time to think on their own development especially education. Such social system nurture subordination which places one sex to an inferior position or subordinated to the other.

Spronk (2001) comments that it is difficult to name the issues that arise for women in the developing world. Three issues are paramount; the number of roles required of women by society, the separation of roles which means women's only issues, the lack of support for women's education both from the community and the family. A prospective woman student illustrates her experience:

My mother-in-law was not happy to see me sitting reading newspapers in the sitting-room. She was bitter about it. The situation irritated her. She said, "Is it proper to read a newspaper before serving your husband's food? A woman should be busy in the kitchen that's her right place not reading." I was disappointed!

The effect of Patriarchy Social system on women

Under patriarchy social system the society constructs gender norms for their members. Women's lives operate within a system of gendered power (Egan, 2004). The norms are rigid. There is no decentralization of power in the family. The decision is made at the top. The household head is the decision maker. Once the decision is made it is delegated to the wife and other family members if the issue is general. Elements of such kind of relationship were evident in this study.

Women were seen as less capable in making decisions for the well being of the family. Thus they largely depended on men's decision making as can be noted in the flowing interview extract:

I would like my husband to decide in the issues concerning our household. His decisions are more important than mine. I believe in him. He can plan for the family's better future. He knows our needs. He knows we need a permanent home. He has to plan the pattern of life we have to live. I like it that way. He is the head of the family and the father of my children. I have to respect and obey him. When I was a child my mother told me that when I get married I should not be aggressive. I should obey my husband and take his word. By doing that I would have a happy and respectable marriage life. I have followed her principle. I have been living happily since I got married.

Age difference issue in marriage also came out strongly as another contributing factor to non-enrolment of prospective women students. It is almost a rule in the patriarchy social system, especially when forming a married couple; the bride

should be older than the bride groom. Experience demonstrates that parents and relatives would not be satisfied for their son to marry a woman above his age. This has further implications in later life. Beginning of marriage at a younger age than men also perpetuates women's weak authority within marriage. Therefore a woman has to be polite and take all decisions from the husband. In this way women usually become contented with their husbands' decisions. They take them even if the decisions are not favorable to their lives as we have seen in the women accounts. In this study, it was interestingly revealed out that some prospective students were hesitant to enrol at OUT because they were denied permission by their husbands.

From the women's accounts some husbands threatened their wives to marry second wives if they would decide to go back to school. One husband went to the extent of claiming to have five children and linked education as a stumbling factor to that end. Implicitly he did not want his wife to have further education; number of children was coverage of his inner ideas. A woman with many children will always find it difficult to think of further education. Family commitments as a mother will always come first.

Apart from the family commitment and lack of immediate support and encouragement, prospective women students' economic position and inability to make self-decision also contributed to their non-enrolment for further education. Women economic status is expected to be below that of men, though some few women have deviated the norm (Bhalalusesa,1998). Ideally, a woman should depend on man to prolong the status of her subordination.

This makes a woman to experience financial constraints. Women accounts revealed women's weak economic position. A family burden was imposed on women by men. Such a move made women crazy. They had to do extra work on top of teaching. They did business (small projects and petty businesses) in order to make their families ends meet. They were systematically impoverished; did not enjoy the fruits of their work. Sometimes husbands even demanded a share from women's salaries. This was purposefully weakening women's economic power. One prospective woman said:

My husband is a difficult man! He makes sure he gets my salary and takes some amount of money from it. The remaining amount he arranges, how I should use it in the family. When I ask him about his salary, he becomes furious like an angry lion. I have decided to keep quiet.

In such situation, the chance to enrol in higher education is indeed very minimal.

Institutional Barriers

Institutional barriers consist of all practices and procedures that exclude and discourage prospective women students to enroll at OUT; like lack of information and inadequate funding. The University is under-funded; this makes it unable to

adequately publicize itself and its programmes. The budgetary constraint is a major factor for OUT which is just taking off. The government should provide funds for creating an administrative unit that will be responsible for publicizing OUT and its programmes. Severe budget cuts are a very powerful factor in limiting OUT publicity. Without publicity the University paints a different picture to different people in society.

From the research findings, almost all prospective women knew OUT through their friends and not from any reliable source like radio, TV, newspapers, or the University itself. Unreliable information has a negative impact for prospective women students' enrollment at OUT. Interviewed prospective women students were not aware of the programmes offered at the University as well as its status as a university. Some of them thought OUT was not like other universities and worse still, they thought that it is not recognized internationally.

I can't study for a degree which is not recognized. My friends will laugh at me. At this age, I am forty now, I can't waste my time on the so called degree of OUT instead of doing tangible things for my life. A degree from the University of Dar es Salaam yes, it is a prestige to have it. Everybody in the country and abroad can not cast doubts about it. I think also, the degree from SUA have the same status with those of UDSM. The Open University of Tanzania degrees quality is below standard.

Publicity is important to enable someone to make a choice. In this case, lack of publicity denied prospective women's chance to join the University. Distance model of learning at university level is a very new phenomenon in Tanzania, hence it will take time people to understand it. Therefore, publicity is very important to remove the stigma attached to distance learning at university level in Tanzania. A stigma attached to distance learning at university level is not only in Tanzania. For example in Asia, while colleges and universities embrace distance learning, there is still a stigma attached to distance learning. For example, the tradition of getting education by going to school and university still has a strong hold in Asian society. It is rare to see social recognition bestowed upon individuals who study on their own part-time. Only a few graduates from distance learning speak proudly of themselves as being "distance learners".

Worse still, the Accreditation Board of Malaysia, which evaluates programmes of study at private universities and colleges in Malaysia does not recognize the fact that individuals can study on their own (without face to face classroom contact with instructors) and acquire "quality" education. Not only that but also the Legal Professional Qualifying Board and the Medical Council, have not recognized distance learning as a mode for professional qualifications (Moreira, 1998). Such perception can affect student's participation in distance learning. Therefore publicity is fundamental for distance teaching universities in order to motivate and attract prospective students to enroll especially women in Tanzania context.

Technology also presents many problems. One issue is inadequate telecommunications facilities. The existing telecommunications are inefficient

and/or expensive to use so the University is indeed unlikely to place too much reliance on them for teaching, support, or information searching. That is the reason why it still uses print, cassettes and radio delivery methods. These delivery methods have an effect to student's learning where post offices are not efficient and radio broadcasts are not heard effectively in remote areas in Tanzania. Students have to travel to regional centers to get their study needs. This has cost implications which may discourage prospective students to enroll at OUT. In this study no OUT woman student was found in remote secondary schools.

The Need for Government Support

Institutional leaders and the Government should be committed to distance education programmes, without this support distance education is at risk of becoming a peripheral activity. The Open University of Tanzania as an institution needs help and financial support from government and leaders to fund its publicity and its programmes. Support needs are at two levels. Firstly, there is general support and commitment by the government to the University. OUT is the only institution that can democratically reach every Tanzanian, even those in remote areas and those who cannot attend full-time due to work, family and other personal commitments. However, it needs adequate funding especially on material development, production and distribution. It needs to market itself. At second level there is specific support and commitment of the Institution itself to the Regional Centres. The Regional Centers sell the image of the University, its activities and ability to offer degree programmes at a distance.

CONCLUSION AND LESSONS

What do we draw from this study and how can this big picture and lessons explain the reasons why prospective women candidates do not enroll with OUT? The overall picture and lessons we get from this study lead us to conclude that in a developing country like Tanzania the assumptions about the potential benefits of distance learning in widening participations for disadvantaged group such as women should not be taken for granted. While it is true that women share common characteristics across cultures, the way they experience these characteristics and the way they shape their personality and decision to participate in learning is different, given the uniqueness of the contexts within which learning takes place. The geographical location of the prospective women combined with inadequate funding to enable OUT to market itself and reach prospective students is one of the main contributing factors to non-enrolment of these women.

Basing on this conclusion, the following recommendations are provided:

The Need for OUT to Devise Strategies of Reaching Prospective Students

It has been observed throughout the study that not every Tanzanian is aware of the existence of an Open University and its potential opportunities and advantages especially for women who cannot afford to study full time because of family commitments. There is a need therefore for OUT to devise strategies of reaching all prospective students and raise their awareness about the institution itself, its programmes, method of study as well as its potential strength of enabling one to combine studies and other family/work/personal commitments.

One of the strategies is for the University to establish a clear and comprehensive student guide with all the necessary information one needs to know about it. These can be disseminated in secondary schools, district centres and other possible places chosen by OUT regional directors. Apart from raising awareness about OUT, the student guide will also assist to promote understanding about what it means to study using this mode of delivery.

Another strategy is for the Regional Directors to visit secondary schools and talk to the students as well as the teachers (prospective students) on viability of getting a degree through open and distance learning as well as the opportunities available for women.

The Need for Gender Sensitization

In this study, some women lacked self-confidence which acted as a stumbling block to their enrollment at OUT. They did not believe in their capabilities to manage university studies at a distance. It has also been noted in the study that some women are unable to enroll themselves because of discouragement from their immediate family members like husbands. There is a need, therefore, for OUT to design gender sensitization programmes like popular theater and run them through media. The programmes should help to sensitize women and men on the value of women education in the society. This will help to reduce or wipe out the stereotype and negative attitude toward women higher education in the society

The Need to Document Experiences of Successful Women

Experiences of successful women who passed through OUT ought to be well documented and distributed to regional centers for prospective students to read. Experiences of successful women graduates from OUT act as good role models for other prospective women students who are hesitating to make decision to enroll with the University. It is believed that by seeing those successful women who have made it through OUT they might be encouraged and motivated to join the University.

The Need for Increased Government Support

There is a need for the Government to commit itself to expand OUT's budget. The University is failing to accomplish its objectives due to constrained budget. A fair budget will help to boost OUT's objectives: one of them being to serve the disadvantaged groups like women. The government money will help the University to publicize itself from towns to remote areas. Proper information on the University will attract prospective women to join it.

Areas for Further Research

The central focus of this study was on the factors influencing prospective women students' enrolment at OUT. The study adopted a qualitative approach. Another study could be conducted focusing on a large sample and adopt a survey design so as to establishing the magnitude of the problem and be able to generalize the findings.

The findings of this study provide a picture of the schools visited and it cannot be generalized or claim to be conclusive. Tracer study could also be conducted to document and analyze the experiences of successful women students: where they are currently, how they managed to study successfully through distance learning as well as the strategies they used to combine work, family and other social responsibilities. Findings of a study of this nature will form valuable lessons for other prospective women students.

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