

## **Students' Preparation from Post-secondary to Higher Education and Working Life: Information Gap for Successful Transitions in Tanzania**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aims to explore student's pathways to post-secondary education in terms of trustworthiness of relevant information about university education, working life and respective successful transitions. It is anchored on the boundary crossing conceptual framework to explain the gap existing between secondary school, college and working life choices. Using a case study design, a list of questions collected during 2016 TCU exhibition at Mzumbe pavilion has been analysed and reveals a range of information gap amongst prospective university applicants. In addition, by reviewing relevant literature on students' transition, analyzing relevant documents, this paper offers an understanding of initiatives used by various stakeholders to prepare students for higher education and working life and associated challenges. The review of literature and documents reveal that there are no clear coordinated strategies across stakeholders with regard to preparing students for post-secondary education and career progression on the one hand and there are insufficient welfare*

*support services to students to promote the needed information on the other. Based on the challenges and conclusion, some recommendations have been proposed as a basis for best practices to address the post-secondary transition paradox.*

**Key words:** *Boundary crossing, Post-secondary pathways, higher education, working life, career progression*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Global dynamics, knowledge driven economy and challenges in the labour market have raised concerns for different stakeholders to prioritise higher education in their development strategies (Belyakov et al, 2009, Pillay, 2011). In spite of the role that higher education is expected to play in the society, the participation rate is still limited by some factors such as increasing access to information about higher education programmes and its prospective career choices. Limited access to higher education has historical roots since colonial times when the then education policies fostered training to only limited Africans to assist colonial administration issues (Tefera and Altbach, 2004). Soon after independence 1961 the University of East Africa serving the three East African Countries including Tanzania produced only 99 graduates from a combined population of 23 million people (ibid: 24). This indicates that there are still very low higher education enrollment rates in East African Countries. Compared to Kenya, Tanzania is even lower as per 2014 statistics which indicates only 0.4 percent of population in Tanzania are enrolled in higher education compared to 0.7 percent of Kenyan population (Odhiambo, 2016).

Therefore it is still important to open up pathways for successful transitions of secondary school students to higher education and various careers. There have been initiatives even at family level where the parents and guardians are striving hard for their children to pursue higher education (URT, 2010). However in spite of the increasing number of higher education institutions and the wide range of careers, students still face challenges of “ *how to go about* and *which choice*” they should take and its respective endeavors. Therefore the transition of these students from secondary to higher education and working life is essential and in this case, career guidance and counselling is highly needed to open up prospects for future life (Amani and Sima, 2015).

Kidd (2006) argues that school leavers face many difficulties in further education and career decision making due to inadequate career information, knowledge and skills. Focusing on the status of career services provision and career decision making among individuals in Africa, Biswalo, (1996) reports that inadequate career services available to youth has led to uninformed education and career decision, a situation which has caused unemployment problems in the continent in recent years. This is also one of the reasons for confusions among youth within tertiary colleges. In spite of the Tanzanian government directives for schools to provide these services (Biswalo 1996), there is also no clear education policy framework to assess talents and guide these transitions among youths and across institutions and evidence that indicates the implementation of the directive is also scant.

The paper aims at exploring the information gap, exploring the role of various stakeholders with regard to student’s preparations in terms of information about higher education pathways and

career option opportunities and find out some challenges faced by school leavers while preparing themselves for university education as well as examining strategies employed by universities in orienting the community about their academic programmes. To examine these pathways, the paper reflects the trustworthiness of information about further education opportunities and respective career progression. This core argument is based on the assumption that informed choices on higher education and career expedition is one of the areas that can build an accountable, progressive and sustainable society (Amoah and Kwofie, 2015). It is therefore important for secondary school students to be aware of the transition pathways. The core argument of the paper is that student at secondary education in Tanzania are not sufficiently prepared for informed opportunities towards postsecondary education and career choices which in turn impedes successful transitions (Mugonzibwa, 2000).

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: section two explains and demonstrates the state of higher education in Tanzania. This will be followed by section three that presents the conceptual framework which will be followed by section four which presents the methodology, then findings on information gap that exist among prospective university applicants as well as insights on current practices in preparing students for post-secondary education in Tanzania on section five. The paper will also describe some challenges faced by school leavers while preparing themselves for university education in section six and then the conclusion in section seven. The last section present some recommendations on best practices to enhance successful transition to postsecondary education especially university education and prospective career progression.

## 2.0 State of higher education in Tanzania

Higher education has been considered as a key factor for skills and innovation development within a nation (Odhiambo, 2016). Similar to many other countries, the Government of Tanzania has also realised that human capital development is crucial for improving quality of life. To address the need, some policies have been designed to enhance access and quality of higher education as a means to promote sustainable economy (URT, 2016), so as to deliver graduates with relevant skills for socio-economic development (UNESCO, 2015). Therefore the transition of student to higher education is a crucial matter to be explored. This is because despite the expansion of secondary education, enrollment rates in higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa are still very low compared to other parts of the world (Bloom and Canning, 2006, UNESCO, 2011, Tefera and Altbach, 2004). Compared to other Sub-Saharan countries, Tanzania is even lower as per the year 2005 statistics as shown in the table below;

Table 1 Enrolment in higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2005

Country	2005		
	Total enrolment	GER	%F
South Africa	735	15	55
Nigeria	1289	10	35
Ghana	110	5	34
Kenya	108	3	37
Tanzania	51080	1	32
Sub-Saharan Africa	3506	5	38

**Source:** UNESCO (2007, pp. 130–133).

These statistics indicate a sign that more attention is needed in Tanzania to enhance more enrollment in terms of increasing information access to enable applicants to have informed choices and successfully participate in higher education subject to presence of relevant qualifications.

Among the issues considered in promoting enrollment by programmes such as Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) in higher education, is to strengthen the Central Application and Admission System (ESPR, 2010/2011), however this system is operating without clear strategies on how to increase its reliability and how best applicants from diverse and disadvantaged environment can be able to use the system. In the same way, the information about other post-secondary colleges which are not in the Central Admission system is also not reliable to every applicant.

According to the Admissions Guidebook for Higher Education Institutions in Tanzania (2013:6), there were about sixty-six higher education institutions scattered in different regions, which would use the Central Admission Systems for admitting students in 2013/14. Though there was an increase of ten more institution in the year 2015/16 (TCU 2015: 9), still there were barriers across diverse applicants who would need to apply, but did not have adequate information.

### **3.0 Conceptual Framework**

This section presents the conceptual framework which demonstrates the boundaries existing between different systems and institutions which can collaboratively harmonise information for post- secondary transition. The framework comprises some concepts which can have different interpretations as they have been used in this paper. These key concepts in this paper have been conceptualized in the following matrix.

#### **3.1 Matrix of Key Terms Contextualised**

There are two (2) key terms that have been frequently used in this paper which are important to understand and contextualise arguments in the paper. The following table summarises the key terms

Post-Secondary Education	In this paper, post-secondary education is contextualised as level of education pursued after secondary or advanced secondary studies. These include university and non-university education programmes provided by universities, University College and non-university colleges. It also includes Technical and Vocational Education programmes.
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<p>Information gap</p>	<p>This paper contextualise information gap as absence or insufficient knowledge about post-secondary education among different stakeholders especially students and other eligible post-secondary education applicants. This information can be categorized in the following groups;</p> <p><b>Admission</b> – This includes processes necessary for applicants to join higher education institutions which include minimum entry requirements as per TCU and specific entry requirements for institutions as well as for particular academic programmes. In the admission process applicants should be aware of the admission requirements, eligibility and admission capacities and competitiveness of some programmes at prospective institutions.</p> <p><b>Scholarship</b> -This category includes clear information about Higher Education Students Loan’s Board and the loan repayment conditions. This category also includes other scholarship options from parents/family, own source of income, banks, companies, embassies, government and religious organisations. Scholarship information also includes tuition fees and other fees as per specific institution like medical breakage fees, student organisation fees just to mention some.</p>
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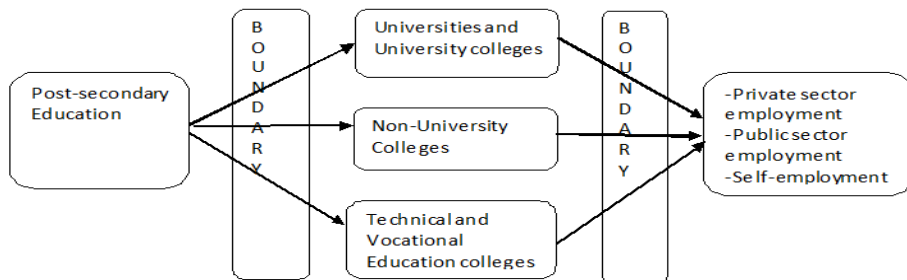
**Career progression**-This includes knowledge about various programmes and the respective future career progression, employment opportunities and status as well as professional bodies relevant to different programmes like National Board of Accountants and Auditors, National Board for Material Management as well as National Board of Engineers to mention some. Career progression also includes awareness, readiness and attitudes to entrepreneurial tendencies across professions. This includes self-employment opportunities. It also includes specific competencies needed for a particular post-secondary pathway.

**Student's college life** is important information for prospective post-secondary applicants. This is in terms of coping strategies with new teaching and learning styles, new in campus and off-campus residence environment, ethical guidelines, and information about effects of strikes.

### **3.2 Boundary Crossing Framework**

It is assumed in this paper that there are boundaries that still exists between post-secondary education through higher education to working life as demonstrated below;

## A Boundary Crossing Framework Across Post-Secondary Pathways



Source: Authors (2016)

The framework demonstrates the boundaries existing between post-secondary educations to working life. These include university, non-university as well as technical and vocation education colleges in terms of information gaps. Boundary crossing is a concept that has been used by authors to mean a gap that destruct connectivity and prevent prospective action to take place smoothly (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011). In the context of this paper, there are challenges that exist in between secondary schools, higher education institutions and working life. Post-secondary leavers sometimes are not aware of where to go or what to do after finishing school according to their talents, pass-mark and requirements of different institutions. They are also sometimes not aware of employment prospects for different courses within diverse colleges.

## **4.0 Methodology**

A qualitative case study design has been employed through collecting empirical data in the form of collected questions that were asked by exhibitors from visitors who passed around Mzumbe University 2016 TCU exhibition pavilion. Convenience sampling was used in which an advantage of the event and situation was taken (Punch, 2009). In the context of this paper, the exhibition event was perceived as an advantage because it made it possible to collect and document some questions from visitors and involve some of them in open ended questions. In this case the sampling plan was based on the accessibility of people (Miles and Huberman, 1994). A total number of sixty-eight questions were conveniently collected and analyzed with the aid of Atlas ti qualitative data analysis software version 7.1. Out of sixty-eight (see appendix i) questions a total number of eleven codes (see appendix ii) were created and three broad categories of information were formulated. In line with ethical concerns, visitors were informed that the presence of Mzumbe university exhibitors goes beyond exhibitions as a purpose but rather, we also intended to conduct a study which can be used to enhance information about university academic programmes and future career progression. Some relevant documents especially strategic plans were also reviewed and analysed.

## **5.0. Findings**

In this section, analysis of information inquired by prospective university applicants will be presented and the broad categories of inquired information will be identified. Current strategies employed by different stakeholders to inform university entrants

will also be pointed out along with some challenges faced by university prospective applicants while looking for university admissions will also be described.

### **5.1 Information inquired by prospective university applicants**

With regard to information that was inquired by applicants, results indicate that there is a varied gap of information among university prospective applicants. Among others, is the information about academic progression and future career prospects which includes the link between the Advanced Certificate of Secondary Education (ACSE) combination such as EGM, HGL to mention some and the relevant course offered/programme in a specific university. Findings indicated that there is lack of awareness among prospective applicants about the future of their combination in terms of relevant university academic programme. This can be evidenced by some of the recurring questions;

*“If I have taken History, Geography and Language (HGL) can I take applied Statistics?  
If I have done EGM which course can I take at Mzumbe? If someone has done HGL, can he/she take Health System Management (HSM)?  
Which faculty can I take with my PGM?”<sup>1</sup>*

Apart from the information gap about the link between the secondary school combination and the relevant university programme/course, findings also indicated information gap on the link between the university course and kind of job/career that the programme may lead to. It was realised that some

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<sup>1</sup> Code: ACSE combination and MU course link {7-0}

prospective university applicants were wondering who will they be after the completion of a specific programme and it seems the knowledge of career prospects is a reinforcement to choose a certain academic programme. This was realised by the presence of some questions such as;

*“If I want to be a university lecturer, which course should I take?*

*If you finish bachelor of Health System what are going to be?*

*If I have done education, what else can I work apart from teaching?*

*What does it mean by public administration? Who will I be if I enrol in that programme?*

*What about issues of employment related to economics subjects? ”<sup>2</sup>*

The choice of academic programme based on the future career prospects is not a new phenomenon in the economics of education literature in which educationists have concerns on factors to consider before schooling, during schooling and after schooling whose main concerns used to be the returns to education in terms of occupation and earnings out of specific occupation to mention some (Psacharopolous, 2000) Therefore, prospective university applicants have recently been eager to understand the career pathways of different programmes, so that they can understand the future of their earnings in terms of monthly salary and other

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<sup>2</sup> Code: University course VS career prospects {10-0}

benefits. However this kind of information is still not well known to majority of applicants in Tanzania. It is assumed in this paper that the availability of this kind of information has impacts to the choice of a specific university and even enrollment rate because if students who are applicants are not aware of career prospects of a certain course in a certain university, there are rare chances that they can opt to be enrolled in that university as their first choice. There can be some exceptions of students who can be informed by their parents and relatives who can be either alumnae or comprise the elite group who have also passed through the higher education system before. This is in line with a study on factors influencing student's choice of a university in Thailand, which revealed that during student's choice of a university course, there is more of student's consultation to parents and relatives than other available information sources (Kitsaward, 2013).

Another category of information gap amongst university prospective applicants is related to specific university myths and brands. This is related to information regarding historical background of different institutions, location of the university, unique features, and availability of resources such as campus accommodation, stable security systems to mention some. Some of the inquiries included; *“Do you have accommodation or hostel at Mzumbe?; Where is Mzumbe University?”*<sup>3</sup> Different universities have different brands which can be sold out to applicants to enable them to make the right choice because students care about reputation of the university, atmosphere of the

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<sup>3</sup> **P 1: Collected questions from selected tcu exhibition visitors.docx - 1:61 [Do you have accommodation at M..] (61:61) (Super)**

Codes: [availability of important facilities - Family: Specific university myths and brands]

university to mention some (Kitsaward, 2013), because they increasingly care about their status when they graduate (Mazzarol & Geoffrey, 2002). Information gap about university brands and some unique features goes hand with broad based understanding of university courses/programmes. Compared to the three categories of information gap, lack of understanding of academic programmes was realised as the leading category. This was evidenced by numerous questions regarding meaning of the programme, cost of the programme, availability of a specific programme within a specific university, time to finish the programme, minimum entry qualification, cutoff point for specific university and relevant postgraduate progression to mention some; the following are the examples of selected questions;

*“What is the meaning of procurement and logistics management?*

*What is the difference between bachelor of education, in education and with education?*

*Which courses do you have at Mzumbe University?*

*Do you have Bachelor of Economics and Finance?*

*What is procurement and supply chain management?*

*Do you have agriculture at Mzumbe? What are the qualifications?*

*Do you have diploma course in nursing?*

*Do you have programme which combine law and business?”<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Code: Broadbased understanding of MU courses {23-0}

Some questions indicated that some prospective applicants have had some information from different sources, peers, family members, but they do not have full and clear information. In some cases this is a result of some curricular changes that might have happened over time. This was revealed with questions such a follows;

*“What is the difference between private and business sector, I have been hearing it in some of your courses eg PSAF, BSAF”*

*“Tell me about BECA, I have been hearing about BECA at Umbwe Secondary school. Even my brother is studying there.....”<sup>5</sup>*

To summarise, there is a broad range of information gap amongst university prospective applicants. This information goes beyond quality of the academic programme and the brand of the university to issues of learning and welfare facilities, proximity of a specific university and employability of graduates enrolled in a specific programme to mention some. The information gap can be caused by several factors including location of some applicants with limited electricity which is important source of power for media devices such as Television. Some other factors may also include availability of computer and internet facilities. It can also be a result of inadequate Information Technology (IT) skills

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<sup>5</sup> **P 1: Collected questions from selected tcu exhibition visitors.docx - 1:13 [Tell me about BECA, I have bee..] (12:12) (Super)**

Codes: [Broadbased understanding of MU courses - Family: Broad based understanding of academic programmes within a university]



among applicants. This challenge has been mentioned by TCU in the 2015/16-2019/20 Rolling Strategic Plan draft that lack of IT skills among applicants has force applicants to carry out physical consultations with TCU officials. There have also been problems with incomplete applications that hamper enrolment (TCU, 2015).

## **5.2 Current Practices in Preparing Students for Post-Secondary Education in Tanzania**

Recently, there have been initiatives to inform students and other post-secondary education applicants about admission processes which include minimum criteria, various university programmes, fees, and loan and scholarship issues. Different approaches have been used by different key players like Tanzania Commission for Universities, universities and non-university education institutions.

### **5.2.1 TCU initiatives**

The Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) was established on 1st July 2005, under the Universities Act (Chapter 346 of the Laws of Tanzania) to succeed the former Higher Education Accreditation Council which had been in operation since 1995. By its mandate, TCU has regulatory, supportive and advisory roles through students guide book, exhibitions, documentaries and through media.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.tcu.go.tz/>

### **5.2.2 Students' Guide Book (SGB)**

Information about higher education institutions, which have been included in the TCU Central Admission Systems (CAS) can be found in the Students' Guide Book for Higher Education Institutions in Tanzania and the book is usually updated as more institutions join CAS. This comprehensive guidebook has a lot of information about degree programmes offered by all accredited institutions under TCU and National Council Technical Education. However it may not be accessible and/or known to some stakeholders who cannot access services like internet connections, electricity as well as those who are far from the Tanzania Commission for Universities offices in Dar es Salaam. The book is also neither known nor available to secondary schools which cannot access internet.

### **5.2.3 Higher Education Exhibitions**

TCU has been successfully organising Higher Education Exhibitions once in a year since the year 2006. The exhibitions usually take three to four days and attract many academic and research institutions local and foreign, private and public. They use these exhibitions as a forum to market their services and goods. The institutions provide prospective students and other higher education stakeholders with most accurate and straightforward information. Unfortunately, these exhibitions are done in Dar es Salaam city, therefore students, parents and guardians who are outside Dar es Salaam are not exposed to products and services of the exhibitions.

## **5.2.4 Media: Websites, newspapers, radio and television**

Information about admission criteria and accredited institutions which prospective students can apply is usually on the website. Instructions about CAS are usually found on TCU website and can also be read or downloaded from the website. Low level of ICT application and in some instances financial constraints are among factors that hinder effective information handling. Sometimes, information provided in the website adverts does not satisfy the needs of all applicants. In some instances, TCU has been also using media like television, radio and magazines to inform the general public about various postsecondary education issues, list of universities that are operating and those which have been closed for some reasons as well as new institutions that have joined CAS for students to be aware of when making their choices. Again for some remote environment without media reach and still remain behind the timely and relevant information.

## **5.2.5 Universities, colleges and respective centers**

Apart from the TCU initiatives, universities and their respective colleges and centres regularly provides admission information to post-secondary applicants.

## **5.2.6 Media: Websites, newspapers, radio and television**

Universities and their respective colleges and centres in most cases publish their programmes, admission criteria and other requirements through their websites, radio and TV. Some institutions especially the private non-university ones have been using media like Radio and Television to make applicants aware

of the admission processes. However, the focus of their adverts is largely on application form fees, names of programmes and minimum criteria. Thus there is still a need for more information to make applicants aware of the holistic processes with regard to even world of work for respective programmes. However this is not sufficiently and regularly done by institutions, but rather taken as “one shot” event by most of institutions particularly public institutions. Some public institutions in most cases use the media only when the admission cycle for a particular academic year starts but not all the time. In this case the public is not always informed about the nature of programmes available in different institutions.

### **5.2.7 Pre University workshops**

Apart from websites, some other initiatives have been recently noticed at some universities. Such initiatives include pre-university workshops (<http://allafrica.com/stories/201205210860.html>). These workshops are geared to enhance student’ career progression and further education. One of the pre-university workshops for Form Six leavers was organised in 2012 by the UDSM's Business School (UDBS) and was sponsored by the National Microfinance Bank (NMB). This practise is not always done by many institutions.

### **5.2.8 Orientation programmes**

Universities and colleges have also been using orientation programme for preparing admitted students for university and college life. This is normally done within the first week of

reporting to the university or college to familiarize registered students with various issues in the university/college context. During registration, normally within the first three weeks, students can inquire information about their programme choices, be helped and allowed to change their courses if they wish to do so. However, on the one hand, experience indicates that some of college or university officials who are responsible for various information sometimes they either do not attend or they are not well prepared to give as much information as possible. At times, some students do not attend these orientation programmes because they are not aware of its importance.

### **5.2.9 Ministry of Education and Vocational Training**

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training also have played its role as stipulated in the 1995 Education and Training Policy in which among the aims of secondary education is to prepare students for tertiary and higher education, technical and professional training as well as to prepare them for the world of work. Schools are advised to provide guidance and counselling services to students (URT, 1995). Some Government programmes such as Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP) I (2004-2009) and SEDP II (2010-2015) had objectives of increasing youths' opportunities for further education and working life but studies have revealed doubts across stakeholders if at all the programme served its broad purpose (Makombe et al., 2010). The success of SEDP has been judged in terms of number of those entering secondary schools and little attention has been given to the quality of the educational experiences within the phase and the capacity of young people to go through the transition to the next stage of education and the labour market. This indicates that

preparation of student for further education and career progression is narrowly addressed by national policy and programmes. The need for information for successful transitions is therefore a crucial agenda that this paper intends to address.

### **5.2.10 Secondary schools**

Secondary schools in Tanzania are also assumed to play the role of informing students about their own psychosocial development, post-secondary education progression and future life in general. This role is assumed to be addressed through subjects like psychology, guidance and counseling which are among the education subjects by student teachers at diploma, degree and Master's level. It is a concern of this paper that in spite of having these subjects in the teacher training colleges, its application in serving the current and dynamic student's needs is still questionable. A recent study conducted in six secondary schools Dar es Salaam indicates that international schools had more access to career services than the government based schools (Mabula, 2012). The private schools appear to pay more attention to students' preparation for further education than the government schools.

### **5.3 Challenges of Preparing Students for Post-Secondary Education**

The current initiatives in preparing students for postsecondary education in Tanzania face various challenges. The challenges include lack of relevant career guidance and counseling in both schools and at family level, boundaries existing between different systems, application of ICT, culture of dependency among

students, inadequate resources and inadequate research on this area to mention some.

### **5.3.1 Lack of relevant career guidance and counseling services**

Ideally each education institution is expected to provide career guidance and counseling services (URT,1995) but evidence shows lack of relevant career guidance and counseling services in education institutions at different levels even higher education (Imani and Sima, 2015). At secondary school level, recent studies indicates that career guidance and counseling services is inadequate especially in government schools (Mabula, 2012). However, this study is limited in terms of coverage as it was conducted only in few secondary schools in Dar es Salaam. Therefore the conclusion should be taken with caution.

Evidence from Ghanaian Schools indicates that some schools have counselors who are not professionally trained to be counselors and thus their presence provides limited support to students regarding their future career (Amoah et al., 2015). Besides, there is insufficient programmed or time-tabled system of guiding and counseling students in education and career issues in secondary schools in Tanzania (Shayo, 2008). Even at family level, much is not done to assist students psychologically and prepare them with all important information to transit to postsecondary education with exception of few families which are aware of some postsecondary pathways. Which competences do one need to develop to successfully transit to next level of education is well written in most of syllabi and education plans/ but not well shared and natured among the stakeholders, students in particular. School guidance and counseling is a challenge even

in other countries like Zimbabwe where the services are not effective in schools due to lack of human resources and unclear policy directives by the Zimbabwean Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (Chireshe, 2006).

### **5.3.2 Boundaries exists between different systems**

Another challenge is based on boundaries that exist between different systems like secondary schools, universities, non-governmental organisations, employers, National Council for Technical Education, Tanzania Commission for Universities and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. Garraway (2010:217) put forward this idea of boundaries between systems referring to the *“Differences between knowledge in different communities of practice which under normal circumstances prevents the easy passage of knowledge between the communications”*. For example linking secondary schools and postsecondary prospects and pathways is very important. There is disconnection between secondary and post secondary education that goes beyond being merely structural but deeply rooted in functional differences in which, secondary schools focus on transmitting of content while postsecondary environment seek to use content to stimulate ways of thinking (Conley, 2007). The structural and functional differences between different institutions ignore the harmonisation between them in terms of roles, commitment, and perceived responsibilities with regard to preparing students for post-secondary education. The question remains, *who takes a lead in coordinating, appropriate transition for secondary school leavers?*



### **5.3.3 Application of Information Communication Technology**

Application of Information Communication Technology for postsecondary education opportunities is another challenge. Students, teachers, parents, education officers and other stakeholders can utilise the available web-based information to be aware of important information about postsecondary education. While most of the information is available in various websites, in some places there are problems of mobile phone networks, internet and electricity availability, accessibility and connectivity. Even in those institutions which have managed to develop their websites, evidence shows that many of these websites are not up to date and they do not contain rich and timely information for students. A website of a faculty for instance, may not have the all relevant information about the programmes and courses contents as well as clear objectives and competence outcomes.

Currently we have witnessed massive application of Information and Communication Technology in various aspects of postsecondary education. They include for example:-

- Almost all academic institutions use their websites for adverting various information i.e events, admissions, vacancies, short training, programmes, and application forms e.t.c
- TCU has managed to develop and maintain CAS in which a prospective student will have to apply online either through internet or mobile phones.
- HELSB Online loan application for prospective loan beneficiaries for higher education

The challenge on this matter remains on the extent to which secondary school leavers can apply ICT for obtaining information on post secondary education and how much are they guided and prepared to apply for various postsecondary opportunities, the matter becomes even serious with students from remote areas with no electricity, internet and mobile connectivity.

The ICT application challenge is to a large extent imposed by inadequate knowledge and resources necessary for ICT application in the country in general as Nyagawa et al. (2009) argued. Thus the ICT expertise and infrastructure is still not well advanced within the country. This impedes the capability of post-secondary education prospective students to equitably and effectively incorporate and use ICT.

### **5.3.4 Culture of dependency among students**

Moreover in terms of challenges, is the culture of dependency among students themselves in terms of reading and searching for relevant information with regard to their further studies is rapidly growing among the recent school leavers. While the empirical data on this tendency is unavailable, experiences of working with students shows that most of secondary school leavers have no personal plans for their education and career development and in most cases they put less effort in searching for right information timely. This connotes lack of self-determination and responsibility among students. Contrarily, this obligation given to students has been argued as schools responsibility by some scholars. Samoff (1981:23) articulated that;

*Young people- new citizens-also-, need to be socialized into the world view and values of the new society. Indeed as I have noted, schools may have to create those values, rather than simply transmit and reinforce them.*

This call upon the need for open discussions and awareness creation across all education stakeholders with regard to the question “*who is responsible*”.

### **5.3.5 Inadequate resources in terms of funds and human resources**

The availability of resources have also become a serious constraint among education institutions like universities and Commissions like TCU which would have designed ways to make majority, if not all students informed about their transitions to postsecondary education. Universities needs money to market their programmes and advertise the admission processes with regard to the specific fields of study. With the diverse nature of over four thousands Tanzanian secondary schools, it becomes practically impossible to reach them all through physical visits.

### **5.0 Recommendations on best practices for students’ successful transition to postsecondary education**

Based on the challenges facing the initiatives currently in place, this paper put forward several recommendations, which can be used to enhance the smooth transition of students to post-secondary education.

## **6.1 Guidance and counseling programmes**

These should be broadly carried out in secondary schools, they can be associated with campus visits when funds allows. In this practice, arrangements can be made to enable students to go around various universities including Mzumbe. During the visit, universities can prepare some talks about programmes and their future career prospects and entry requirements. It is expected that students can be informed and motivated. Academic programmes specialized in guidance and counseling should be emphasised at different levels like diploma and degree so as to produce enough human resources for the guidance and counseling services in schools. Much of guidance and counseling practices in primary and secondary schools focus much on issues of STDs and early pregnancies, while less attention is given to education and career guidance and counseling. Secondary schools cannot be exempted in this responsibility because it is at secondary education where students are prepared for tertiary and higher education (URT, 2000). Thus, increased attention of the role of secondary schools in preparing students for successful transition into postsecondary education is very crucial. Guidance and appropriate advice to the secondary school students should be in its holistic way to assist the transition process to postsecondary pathways. Teachers should mainstream career guidance and counseling into various school activities such as inviting guest speakers from academic and employing institutions which can also motivate and inform students about some postsecondary prospects, carrying out career days at least once or twice a year. School administrators should make sure that schools do not operate in the *'business as usual'* mode, but rather they should execute their role entrepreneurially. Resistance to innovation is a very critical problem in schools and

of course many other organisations. Lack of resources is taken for granted to compromise creativity relevant to the context as Samoff (1981) that “*many schools are still operating under the past realities*”. We therefore think that guidance and counseling services in schools should be prioritised in a holistic way. The holistic approach of guidance and counseling at various levels of education particularly at primary and secondary may directly and positively affect students’ individual awareness, personal advocacy, and informed decisions and choices not only for life skills but also for postsecondary opportunities. Therefore, guidance and counseling should be part of education process.

## **6.2 Regular Use of media**

Radio, television, magazines can be useful for spreading information about post-secondary pathways. This can be done centrally by the commission like TCU which may give guidelines about eligibility, requirements and criteria to be considered before making application. It can also be through individual post-secondary education institutions like colleges and universities which can elaborate different kinds of programmes that they offer, including the future career path of the respective programme. As it was possible to use the then “Radio Tanzania” to advertise the former Institute of Development Management (IDM) as “*Ijue IDM Mzumbe*” (get to know IDM-Mzumbe), it will be very fruitful to utilise hundreds of radios scattered throughout the country to disseminate information about post-secondary education and pathways. Some efforts have been seen with the private institutions mostly vocational education colleges in cities, but this practice is hardly used by public universities and colleges.

### **6.3 Conferences and/or study tours**

In addition, universities in collaboration with secondary schools can arrange school visits conferences and/or study tours of students to various universities and colleges. In this way, they can physically see the future institution that they could join if they work hard and pass their exams. Through this, they will get to know all the necessary and correct information about the choice of courses, options, future career progression and campus life in general. This practice not only reveals further study information, but also motivates them to study harder and aim higher in meeting their life goals. Experiences show that study tours are very useful to secondary student future plan for further education. It is practiced elsewhere in countries like South Africa in which secondary school students visits some universities like the University of Pretoria before they sit for the Metric exam which selects students for university education. The purpose of these visits is to expose students to the university in general and make them aware of various faculty requirements and activities. The following video link shows an example of a visit conference in 2011.

[http://web.up.ac.za/flvmovies/movie.asp?movie=Gr\\_12\\_Preparati\\_on\\_Conference\\_2011](http://web.up.ac.za/flvmovies/movie.asp?movie=Gr_12_Preparati_on_Conference_2011).

Example of the information given in those visits or conference among others includes: a creativity workshop; teambuilding activities; visits to the faculties where learners will be given the opportunity to ask faculty-specific questions; assistance by staff members from the Client Service Centre regarding awards, bursaries, loans, residence placement, security on campuses,

student affairs and student financial readiness as well as visit to the Main Library (Grade 12 Preparation Conference, 2011).

#### **6.4 Universities/colleges outreach activities**

On the other way around, universities and colleges can arrange outreach activities to attract secondary students in a form of professional guest speakers, career days, university challenges as well as questions and answers sessions. Lecturers can be used in these outreach activities throughout the country during the supervision to interns/field practice. Sound evidence through research must serve as the foundation action to identify needs, develop human resource development, technical assistance and improvement efforts (Plank, 2001). Therefore, more research is needed on the effective mechanisms and connecting activities to prepare students for post-secondary education in Tanzania. Stakeholders like students, parents and others in urban and rural areas can be interviewed to get their perceptions on how better students can be prepared for higher education.

#### **6.5 Students and Parents**

Furthermore, students should also play their role to search for relevant and timely information about their post-secondary education. This is because successful transition requires that the student himself/herself to be an active participant in the transition process from secondary to postsecondary setting. Many students act blindly as they lack certainty over their transition to postsecondary level. This paper offers the following tips to students;

- *Do not wait for the information, search for it.*
- *Search for timely and right information from reliable sources; do not rely on hearsay or grapevines.*
- *Master your own destiny: have plans, seek guidance and advice from experienced individuals such as parents, teachers, fellow schoolmates who are already in higher education.*
- *Make an informed decision, avoid acting blindly.*
- *Act timely, do not wait for deadlines.*

Parents should also strive to make sure that their children are getting reliable and timely information about post-secondary education. A family's involvement in their child's education is recognised as one of the most important factors in school success and achievement. Research has shown that not only does family involvement increase academic achievement, as reflected in higher test scores and graduation rates, but it also increases the likelihood that youth will move to the next level of education (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

## **6. 6 Non-Governmental Organisations and agencies**

Apart from government based efforts, the role of Non-governmental organisations/private organisations can be significant. The fact that students often lack information on the educational requirements for particular career or education opportunity (Schneider, 2006), private organisations and employers may engage in relevant activities for supporting students. Relevant activities include, for example, paid and unpaid internships, guest lecturers from the business community or



company, career days, youth apprenticeships, and job shadowing. One-on-one contacts with organisations or employers onsite are more helpful in creating career awareness that can further motivate students to have postsecondary plan of their own. The career awareness and career exploration, activities help young people make the informed decisions necessary for successful transition into next level of education.

Agencies that deal with linking secondary school leavers to postsecondary can be outsourced to enhance successful transitions. For instance Global Education Link and other education link agencies. Though most of efforts done by these agencies is linking students with universities and colleges abroad, if well involved they can also do a lot locally. On the one hand these agencies can be used to market the programmes and on the other hand they can sponsor the coordination and organisation of conferences to secondary school students/leavers where academic institutions or universities can utilise the forum to inform and guide the audience about the transition to postsecondary.

## **6.7 Government and its organs**

TCU or individual universities can think about establishing a leaflet or a small handbook as a summary of the admission guidebook. TCU can also think of establishing regional centers or zonal offices which may serve students physically especially those who cannot access internet or who need more clarification on the admission process. While internet and mobile telephone is believed to be most useful tools of communication even in rural areas, there are still peripheries of the periphery areas in which it cannot be accessed. While 37% of higher education institutions

are in Dar es Salaam, there are many other institutions scattered in more than 15 other regions in Tanzania (Students' Guide Book for Higher Education Institution in Tanzania, 2013: 6). With the low level of technology in Tanzania, students from other regions than Dar es Salaam may be facing problems in dealing with their transition to higher education.

As a responsible government organ, the Ministry of Education should play its role in terms of broad policy formulation and implementation as well as harmonisation role. As articulated in the Strategic Plan of 2012/13 -2015/16, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is responsible for providing equitable and quality basic, higher, technical and vocational education and training. In this sense it is responsible for harmonisation of strategies necessary for improving transition of students from lower levels of education to the higher levels. This can be done through formulating policy relevant for enabling smooth transition of students across education levels. The policy should provide a common and shared framework to help schooling systems identify what students need in order to achieve not only successful transition but also effective participation in postsecondary education and training.

In sum, addressing challenges associated with transition to postsecondary education and carrier choices requires that we engage a much larger audience and stakeholders at different levels in our discussions on how best we can proceed to bridge the information gap. This process cannot successfully be accomplished by for example, TCU alone but rather should include the academic institutions, young people (students themselves), parents, general education teachers and

administrators, and probably employers. Achievement of needed improvements in transition services will require a broad-based commitment to take all stakeholders on board, and to promote meaningful collaboration at all levels.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

This paper explored the information gap with regard to post-secondary transition pathways in terms of the link between their advanced secondary school combination and the relevant university course, the link between the university course and prospective career prospects. Some practices by different stakeholders and challenges encountered in enhancing smooth transition to post-secondary education have also been pointed out along with some recommendations. It is the concern of this paper that the knowledge with regard to this transition is explicitly addressed and all key players and relevant stakeholders are made aware and/or reminded of the responsibility to enhance the transition in terms of relevant information provision. It should be noted that apart from the increasing enrollment trends in East Africa, the participation is still low especially in Tanzania. Low participation in higher education implies that the stock of human capital with higher education is also low and thus the high skilled workforce in the global economy will still be a challenge (Odhiambo, 2016). In addition, timely and reliable information about higher education across diverse groups of applicants is a way of giving the benefits not only to elite's children but also to socio-economically disadvantaged groups of students (Morley, Leach and Lugg, 2009). This paper stresses the importance of information to some higher education applicants who sometimes

lose their life dreams through uninformed decisions or wrong choices of academic programmes.

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## **APPENDIX 1: LIST OF QUESTIONS COLLECTED FROM VISITORS**

1. What course can I take if I have done EGM in your university?
2. What is the meaning of procurement and logistics management?
3. What is the difference between bachelor of education in education and with education?
4. If you want to study higher and higher which career should I take?
5. If I have taken HGL can I take applied statistics?
6. How many principle passes/credit does Mzumbe University agree?
7. How do you calculate minimum credit points?
8. If I want to study education which criteria do you follow?
9. If I have done EGM which course can I take at Mzumbe?
10. Do you have accommodation or hostel at Mzumbe?
11. How much is tuition fees per year?
12. Tell me about BECA, I have been hearing about BECA at Umbwe Secondary school. Even my brother is studying there, it seems Mzumbe is my mother University
13. How long does it take to finish a programme?
14. What is the difference between private and business sector, I have been hearing it in some of your courses eg PSAFI
15. If someone has done HGL, can you take HSM?
16. If I want to be a university lecturer, which course should I take?
17. If I want to be selected at Mzumbe University what should I do during application?
18. Which courses do you have at Mzumbe University?

19. Do you have Bachelor of Economics and Finance?
20. Which among the courses that you have are priorities of loan board?
21. Do you have faculty of education at Mzumbe University?
22. If you finish bachelor of Health System what are going to be?
23. What is procurement and supply chain management?
24. Do you have logistics at Mzumbe?
25. Do you have agriculture at Mzumbe? What are the qualifications?
26. Do you have linguistics at Mzumbe?
27. If I have done education, what else can I work apart from teaching?
28. Is there any change of MA criteria at Mzumbe?
29. What faculties do you have at Mzumbe?
30. Which faculty can I take with my PGM?
31. I have heard that Mzumbe there is night preparation, how is it done?
32. Do you have Bachelor of Arts education?
33. If I want to do master of laws, which programme do you have?
34. With my HGL combination can I take faculty of education??
35. The question of priority and non-priority, what does it mean?
36. I hear about human resources, what does it mean?
37. I want to be a lecturer, what course should I take?
38. Do you have degrees in agriculture? What about land use ones?
39. Do you have diploma in education?

40. What about issues of employment related to economics subjects?
41. Do you have brochures related to faculty of economics?
42. I hear that education students are getting study loan, is it the case?
43. If I study education, what kind of a teacher will I be? Teaching which subjects?
44. If I want to apply diploma at Mzumbe, how can I go through, where will I apply?
45. What about study loan? If you are not in the priority does it mean I will not get loan?
46. Where is Mzumbe University?
47. Do you have postgraduate programmes at Mzumbe?
48. What is the cut-off point of Mzumbe University?
49. I have studied EGM, what about economics courses?
50. What does it mean by public administration? Who will I be if I enrol I that programme?
51. Do you have diploma course in nursing?
52. I have done bachelor of political science and public administration, then Msc (HRM) now I want to do corporate management, is it possible??
53. If I have done diploma in procurement and supply chain, can I join project planning and management?
54. How much are the fees per programme at Mzumbe?
55. If I have ATEC one and the postgraduate diploma in accountancy, can I take bachelor of education in commerce and accountancy?
56. How much is the tuition fees for the year?
57. What does the bachelor of education comprise? What is the difference between Bsc and BA with education

58. Which faculty can I join or take or be enrolled with my HGL?
59. Do you have engineering at Mzumbe?
60. If you have lower than 4.5 which programme can I take at Mzumbe?
61. Do you have accommodation at Mzumbe?
62. If I have passed as follows, DDE in my EGM combination which course should I take?
63. If I have BDDS in my HGL , will I be selected at Mzumbe University? Which programme?
64. Do you have programme which combine law and business?
65. If I study entrepreneurship who will I be when I finish the programme?
66. If you have S in mathematics, can I apply for accounting and Finance?
67. If you have passed economics, can you apply for Economics and Finance?
68. If I want to apply for a diploma how many credits should I have?

## **APPENDIX II: CO-OCCURRING CODES**

HU: COLLECTION OF QUESTIONS FROM TCU EXHIBITION VISITORS

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Codes: 11

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ACSE combination and MU course link {7-0} [0]

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Application process {1-0} [0]

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Availability of important facilities {2-0} [0]

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Broad-based understanding of MU courses {23-0} [0]

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Location of MU {1-0} [0]

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MU admission criteria {14-0} [0]

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MU myths and brands {1-0} [0]

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Postgraduate progression {1-0} [0]

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Study costs per programme {7-0} [0]

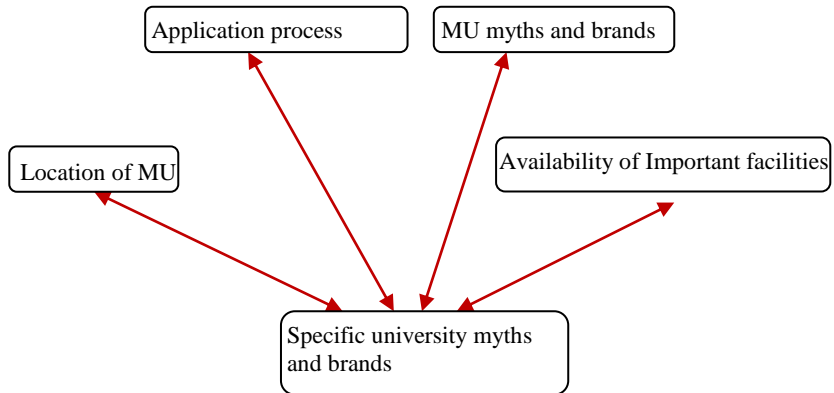
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University course VS career prospects {10-0} [0]

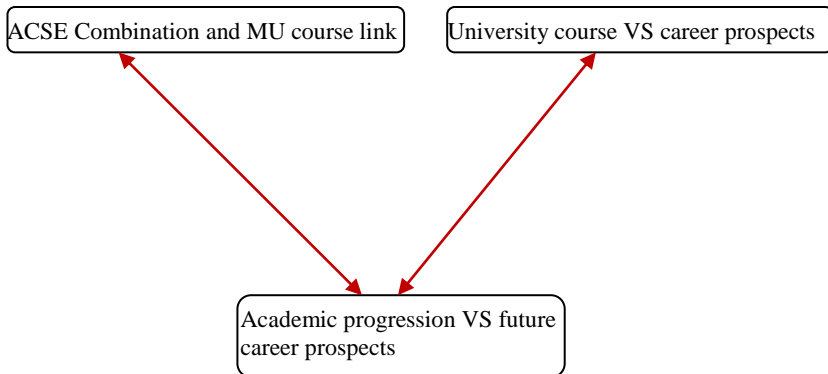
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### APPENDIX III: NETWORK VIEWS

#### 1: SPECIFIC UNIVERSITY MYTHS AND BRANDS



#### 2: ACADEMIC PROGRESSION VS CAREER PROSPECTS



### 3: NETWORK 3: BROAD BASED UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

