**Strategies used by the Institute of Adult Education to promote gender balance in Tanzania.**

**Abstract**

The study assessed Strategies used by the Institute of Adult Education to promote gender balancein Tanzania. Specifically, the study had one objective namely; Strategies used by the Institute of Adult Education to promote gender balance. The study employed a qualitative research approach and was guided by phenomenological research design. The target population was the learners, lecturers and director, particularly from the Institute of Adult Education and the Open University of Tanzania. The study employed 51 respondents sampled from Kinondoni centre. The sample involved 40 learners, 10 lecturers and 1 director. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussion methods. The data were analysed thematically. The researcher found several strategies used by the institute of adult education to enhance gender balance such as a treating all gender equal and exhibited the same features as the female learner. The study also established that Institute of Adult Education used its established gender unit, 50:50 enrolment policy and has mainstreamed its gender programmes and plans and activities towards promoting gender balance. It concluded that appropriate learning strategies that would benefit the learners basing on their characteristics. The study further recommended a need to devise mechanism to ensure that gender is promoted at Institute of Adult Education to ensure a balance between male and female learners in various programmes. Moreover, it recommended that an employment policy that is gender sensitive to ensure that members of academic staff are employed with much consideration of gender to avoid male gender dominance.

**Key Terms:** Education, Adult Education, gender, gender balance, students,

1. **Introduction**

Education for adults is one of the key educational issues to meet the Education for All (EFA) agenda (Thomas, 2024). Adult education refers to all education that takes place outside the formal constraints of formal schooling. It is for people who are biologically (at least fifteen years of age) and socially (can take responsibilities in the family or the community) recognised as adults. Such people may have missed the opportunity for initial education at the youngest and, for this reason, need some form of compensation; they may need to extend their knowledge or learn a trade, a recreational or leisure time activity or just require more knowledge for its own sake (Indabawa 2020).

Recognizing this, all the countries globally continue to emphasize educating adults even during their retirement and beyond to activate their participation in development. Adult education plays a key role in creating social capital, fostering social inclusion, and fighting both immediate and less apparent social exclusion expenses. To enhance active citizenship, adult learning is a significant underpinning. Basic skills and key skills recognized as essential unmet requirements for many individuals in both advanced and poorer parts of the globe (Thomas, 2024).

In Tanzania, Adult Education (AE) was established in 1960 as an extramural studies section of Makerere University College, under the University of London. In 1963, the Institute upgraded into a department and was placed under the Dar es Salaam University College. Later on, it became an autonomous Institution established by Parliamentary Act Number 12 of 1975 under the Ministry of National Education, currently, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. To date, the Institute has become a centre for Learning, Research and Training in the Adult Education area for Certificate, Diploma and Degree courses, Diploma, certificates and post-primary education learners. Its services extend to the grassroots level through regional centres established in 26 regions of Mainland Tanzania with the aims of designing, developing and delivering accessible quality life-long education programs through blended learning for sustainable social-economic development of Tanzania, Africa and the rest of the world (Institute of Adult Education, 2018).

Bhalalusesa (2020) illustrate that at independence, (1961) Tanzania mainland (Tanganyika by then) had an illiteracy rate of 80 per cent. Diseases were rampant and people attributed them to witchcraft and poverty was a best companion to Tanzanians yet people attributed it to the will of God (Bhalalusesa, 2020). In addition, issues relating to political will, resource availability, economy and politics affect the provision of education for older adults. AONTAS (2020) proclaimed that a lack of data that would analyse gender balance, age, sex, motivations, needs, obstacles and participation rates among older adults is also an issue; most reasons responsible for such conditions attributed to the colonial government (British colonial government) (Mpoki et al., (2017). Seeing that situation, Nyerere (a president by then) launched a war against three enemies (ignorance, diseases and poverty) through the Arusha Declaration in 1967 hence; Adult Education in Tanzania has become a major instrument in national development (Mwila, 2023).

The purpose of Adult Education has changed from the learning of skills to the learning of self-reliance and the improvement of life at both individual and national levels for both gender (UNESCO, 2021). For example, in the teaching of literacy, attention is focused on subjects such as health, agricultural techniques, or political responsibilities and literacy is included in response to demand as the learners become aware of its functional importance (URT 2018). The equitable implementation of these strategies and programs was directed to the Institute of Adult Education (IAE), which had the authority for planning and provision of adult education (URT, 2010) and later through decentralization to local governments (Heikkinen, et al, 2022).

Supporting this idea, Musingafi at el., (2019) viewed functional literacy as seen by the government as having a socio-economic and political impact, particularly in rural areas where agricultural production was considered essential liberation of people from constraints. Also, adult education offers computer programmes which assist women to interact with others through the internet and modern cell phones. This enables women to be empowered as a means of connecting and sharing information.

However, the effort done by the Tanzania government, lack of financial resources, led the disparities access of education whereby people who have economic resources have better chances of getting quality education. Poor class, the majority of which are women is kept devoid of quality education due to the resource limitation and inaccessibility to reputed public institution. This phenomenon is believed to be the product of gender inequality in terms of access to resources that has not only turned education into an industry but has also established an apparatus for the reproduction of the same social structure over generations (Greaves, Hill & Maisuria, 2019). By implementing these strategies, the Institute of Adult Education strives to ensure that adult education is a tool for promoting gender balance and achieving gender equality in Tanzania. Thus, this study investigated Strategies used by the Institute of Adult Education to promote gender balance in Tanzania.

1. **Review of Related Literature**

This section presents the review of related literature and studies in related to the topic

The gender equality and empowerment of women are regarded as key crosscutting issues in many societies, and thus every sector including education sector ensure that specific needs of women and men, girls and boys in education are addressed through Open and Distance Learning mode of education delivery (SADC, 2018). In quest for gender balance institution of adult education have launched gender mainstreaming strategy for open and distance learning with the objective of promoting equal opportunity for staff and students (Open University of Tanzania, 2020) as well as providing a framework for mainstreaming gender in Open and Distance programs (SADC, 2018). It should be understood that promoting gender balance through Open and Distance will contribute to the development and deployment of effective and harmonious Open and Distance, equal access and achievement for both men and women to quality education and training (SADC, 2018).

Research evidence has proved presence of strategic actions geared to promote gender balance in IAE. A study by Abiodum (2019) identified an array of techniques that can be used to reduce or eliminate the tendencies of marginalization and improve on the experiences and opportunities of women in an Institute of Adult Education through Open and Distance Learning. The techniques among others include: educating and equipping women to contribute their useful quota to the society and eliminating all forms of illiteracy; institutionalizing greater dimensions of openness and flexibility; whether in terms of access, curriculum or other element of structure, promoting cost-effective, convenient, conducive and efficient Open and Distance; and enhance skills acquisition and capacity building to enable women develop self-awareness and self-esteem.

The Gender Unit of the Open University of Tanzania (GUO) through Open University of Tanzania gender policy guidelines aims at promoting equal opportunities for staff and students as well as mainstreaming gender programmes and plans of Open University of Tanzania (Open University of Tanzania, 2017). Strategic actions used among others include the following: develop greater awareness about the potential benefit and promise of Open and Distance; engage key stakeholders through meetings, conferences and advocacy workshops and online discussions forums.

SADC (2018) developed a gender mainstreaming strategy for Open and Distance. The strategies indorse key strategic intervention areas and strategic actions leading to gender balance in Open and Distance. Below is brief description of two strategic intervention areas related to promotion of gender balance in Open and Distance: intervention area one and intervention area three.

Intervention area 1: policy development, review and harmonization which aims at facilitating the creation of conducive and supportive policy environment for gender mainstreaming in Open and Distance. This initiatives uses the following strategies among others: review or develop Open and Distance policies with a gender perspective; develop a gender policy for education sector with evidence interventions to address gender inequalities in Open and Distance; implement gender policies and affirmative action like 50:50 enrolment policy in Open and Distance to raise female or male participation in tertiary education; facilitate advocacy campaigns targeted at women to enrol with Open and Distance and facilitate utilization of gender mainstreaming guidelines for Open and Distance institutions (Peter, 2016)

The intervention area 3 focus on Open and Distance service delivery with a gender lens at secondary, TVET, teacher and tertiary levels. The intervention utilizes the following strategies: conduct robust social marketing programs of courses that are science oriented to attract more females; review curriculum for gender sensitivity; design systems and programs that meet students gender specific needs for example flexibility in school time, modes of delivery in instruction and accessibility of learning for females; promote role modelling in Open and Distance institutions through deployment of academic staff and management structures that ensures equal representation of male and female for both students and staff in Open and Distance; conduct intensive community advocacy and gender sensitization at all levels to encourage girls to study science and participation in technical field and implement affirmative action to facilitate equitable access of male and female in Open and Distance (Peter, 2016).

The study by Msoffe (2016) revealed the importance of Open and Distance in promoting gender balance and women empowerment. The study assets that Open and Distance enable both men and women to pursue course while at work, or taking care against the family. UNESCO (2020) and Njaya (2015) portray similarly that Open and Distance provide an opportunity for empowerment of women as it allows them to study at their own pace and time while attend other commitments especially households’ tasks, family and work. Mwila (2023) found that face to face meeting encourage togetherness. The findings showed that face-to-face sessions (tutorial services) are vital and compulsory due to its role of discouraging specialization of gender. When studying the provision of institutional support services of the IAE, face-to-face sessions become very necessary to complement what is missing in the individuals’ learning through sharing materials, though and exchanging experiences. Conceptually, in the distance education system, it is generally argued that frequent faculty-learner contact is desirable on the assumption that such experiences contribute to the growth and learners’ development (Mlay, 2018).

1. **Methodology**

This section presents the methodology used in this study. Methodology is the approach in which research troubles are solved thoroughly. It is a science of studying how research is conducted systematically (Alok, and Mishra, 2011). It includes research design, population and sampling, data collection instruments and ethical considerations.

**3.1 Study Approach**

The qualitative approach was adopted for this study. A qualitative approach is useful in obtaining detailed information from the informants in their natural settings regarding their various constructed meanings, opinions, values, behaviours and perspectives (Kombo & Tromp, 2006; Creswell, 2009), concerning the strategies used by the Institute of Adult Education to promote gender balance in Tanzania. The qualitative approach takes place in natural settings and involves the interpretation of facts based on multiple meanings that people bring to them (Bulayi, 2018).

**3.2 Study Design**

The study adopted a Phenomenological design. Phenomenological studies examine human experiences through the descriptions provided by the people involved. These experiences are called lived experiences. The goal of phenomenological studies was to describe the meaning that experiences hold for each subject (Donalek, 2004). The selection of the design is determined by its ability to explore qualitatively the different ways in which individuals experience, conceptualize, perceive and understand phenomena in their real or natural contexts (Donalek, 2004). The study intended to Strategies used by the Institute of Adult Education to promote gender balance in Tanzania. Phenomenological design with the use of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions was appropriate to obtain the data needed for the study.

**3.3 Area of Study**

The study was conducted in Dar es Salaam region particularly at the Institute of Adult Education. Dar es Salaam region was purposely chosen as the study area. According to the 2022 national census, Dar es Salaam Region had a population of 5,383,728. With 2,600,018 males (48.3%) and 2,783,710 females (51.7%) (URT 2022). It mainly covered one Institute of Adult Education centre which was in Dar es Salaam region. Dar es Salaam chosen due to the fact that since its establishments in 1975, it has the roots back to embark the strategies of gender balance in providing access to adult learning to achieve the objective of gender equality (Thomas, 2024). In that sense, Dar es Salaam stood a better chance to offer needed information to fulfil the purpose of the study on how institute of adult education in Tanzania especial in Dar es Salaam as a head quote promotes gender balance

**3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The target population for this study was students studying at Institute Adult Education, Resident tutor and lecturers who taught at the Institute of Adult Education centres in Dar es Salaam region. It was anticipated that learners at Institute of Adult Education were to provide relevant data on whether Institute of Adult Education promoted gender balance or not. Lecturers teaching at Institute of Adult Education were involved in the study because they interacted with learners in classes, so had knowledge of the nature of the learners they taught, guided and counselled. Institute of Adult Education Directors were involved since they were the ones supervising Institute of Adult Education centres. So, they had rich information regarding the nature of learners enrolled. They provided data to cross validate information given by learners and other respondents. The study employed 51 respondents sampled from Dar es Salaam centre. The sample involved 40 learners, 10 lecturers and 1 director. The sample size was large enough to yield acceptable results for the study.

**3.6 Data Collection Methods**

Data collection refers to the gathering of specific information to serve or prove some facts (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Interview was administered to Institute of Adult Education directors and lecturers. The questionnaires were designed using English language. A structured interview was also used to access opinions from students, lecturers and centre director. The interview schedule was designed in English. It comprised a list of structured questions/ topics that guided the interview sessions. During the interview sessions a researcher requested consent from participants to record the conversations to assist later analysis. However, findings from the interview were translated in English during analysis process. In addition, in focus group discussion, the researcher reputed specific guided questions for discussion and research reports.

**3.7 Data Analysis Plan**

Data analysis is a process that implies editing, coding, classification and tabulation of collected data (Kothari, 2014). In this study, data will analyse thematically and direct quotation from the participants’ views focusing on research objectives. Thematic analysis will fit this study because it analyses classifications and presents themes (patterns) related to the questions. Stewart (2020) illustrates that analysing qualitative data involves a systematic process of interpreting non-numerical information to discover patterns, themes, and insights. This process involves different steps. The first step is data familiarization, where researchers dip themselves in the data by reviewing transcripts, notes, or other materials multiple times. This initial phase helps researchers gain a holistic understanding of the content and context of the data. Thus, the researcher will read and re-read the data to be familiar with in order to generate a great understanding.

Stewart said, once familiar with the data, the next step is coding. Coding involves identifying and labelling specific segments of the data that are relevant to the research questions. These codes represent key concepts or themes that emerge from the data. Researchers may use manual coding, where they highlight and annotate the data, and software tools can assist in organizing and categorizing the information. In relation to this context, the researcher will generate summaries of the main themes of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question.

After coding, researchers group similar codes together to form broader themes or categories. This step involves identifying connections between different codes and understanding how they relate to each other. The goal is to create a logical narrative or framework that captures the main ideas within the data. In this study, the researcher will organize relevant data and reviewing the sustainability theme themes and grouping them in relation to the questions.

The final stage of qualitative data analysis is interpretation. Researchers interpret the themes and patterns identified during the coding process, linking them back to the research questions and theoretical frameworks. This interpretation involves drawing conclusions about the meaning and significance of the data, often resulting in new insights or theories. Thus, the researcher will be checking the candidate themes against the questions, to determine the reality against the asked questions. In this phase, the researcher will develop themes, which sometimes involves divided themes, combined themes, or rejected. It helps the researcher to determine the relevant or irreverent themes as provided by participants through checking or reviewing them again and writing up the complete report by weaving together the analytic description and data extracts, and contextualizing the analysis in relation to existing literature and theory used to guide the current study.

**4. Ethical Consideration**

Ethical consideration refers to the code of conduct that directs how the research can be conducted (Gray, 2014). The research participants were treated following standards and norms, which confirmed their humanity. In this study, the researcher adhered to all ethical issues relating to human rights.

**5 Finding and discussion**

# 5.1Strategies used by Institute of Adult Education to Promote Gender Balance

This part focused on the findings of strategies used by the Institute of Adult Education to promote gender balance**.** The strategies were identified through examining actions or initiatives done by the Institute of Adult Education which were geared towards enhancing gender balance. The following strategies were identified as commonly used at Institute Adult of Education: Establishment of gender unit of the Institute of Adult Education, enhance enrolment equality to 50:50, gender mainstreaming in all Institute of Adult Education activities as explained below;

## 5.2 Establishment of gender unit of the Institute of Adult Education

It was strongly affirmed that determined to ensure gender balance Institute of Adult Education had launched gender unit whose aim was ensuring that Institute of Adult Education observes and maintains equal opportunity for all. Interview with one lecturer at Dar es Salaam centre revealed the following:

Institute of Adult Education has always committed to promote gender balance. Practically to reach this end it has launched a gender unit with a motive to promote equal opportunities for staff and students and also mainstreaming gender programmes (Interview with a lecturer at Dar es Salaam campus on 13th May 2024).

The centre Lecturer similar confirmed that the establishment of gender unit of The Institute of Adult Education has greatly contributed to Institute of Adult Education motive of enhancing gender equality thorough its support to gender related activities. This what he had to say:

…the gender unit of Institute of Adult Education has really been instrumental in bringing equality. Take for example, it has been supporting both female and male staff members in terms of recruitment, leadership, promotion as well in knowledge and skill advice and counselling about gender related issues that may affect their academic life…the unit has been implementing several activities geared to promote gender balance for example coordinating and facilitating the eradication of gender based violence and engage stake holders through meetings, conferences and advocacy workshops (Interview with a Resident tutor at Dar es salaam centre on 12th May 2024).

The above results depict practically that Institute of Adult Education has been very sensitive to gender issues. The findings confirm what SADC (2018) recommended if at all gender balance is to be promoted. SADC (2018) asserts that Gender Focal Points need be established in Open and Distance institutions. These however, need be trained, with core gender responsibility functions that are part of their performance appraisal.

## 5.3 Enhance enrolment equality to 50:50

Institute of Adult Education has also been committed to reach gender balance through raising the number of both male and female students to 50:50 ratio. Focus group discussion with students studying at Institute of Adult Education revealed that Institute of Adult Education has made commendable efforts to increase female enrolment. This is what one female student commented when sharing her experience with a researcher in a FGD session:

…for many years since the establishment of Institute of Adult Education, enrolment of male students outstripped that of female. Following the establishment of gender policy Institute of Adult Education has been quite sensitive to 50:50 policy that target to raise women enrolment to equal that of males. The effect of this policy has been a notable increase in enrolment of female learners enrolled with Institute Adult Education. However, this a long journey since enrolment has not reached to 50:50 (FGD with learners at Dar es Salaam centre on 5th may 2024).

The same findings were confirmed by a centre Resident tutor who was taking part in an interview session. This what he remarked:

…unlike the past years, Institute of Adult Education has recently experienced increased enrolment due to sensitization on gender related issues and improved access to internet…the percentage of female has increased on average from 18.6% to 26%. We are now witnessing a good number of females enrolling into various programmes (Interview with a centre Resident tutor at Dar es Salaam centre on 12th May 2024).

Implied from the above findings is that the past gender gap has been narrowed with increase of female enrolment in Institute of Adult Education related academic programs. The findings echo those of Swamy (2011) which depict that enrolment has been increasing steadily in Open and Distance with annual growth rate of about 20% in the last two years. More specifically the enrolment of women and girls 32% from socially weaker disabled and geographically weaker sections have improved.

## 5.4 Gender mainstreaming in all Institute of Adult Education

Study findings indicate that Institute of Adult Education has ensured gender mainstreaming in all its activities in bold attempt to promote gender balance. Participants in an interview session depicted that in almost all Institute of Adult Education activities the concept of gender has been incorporated to sensitize Institute of Adult Education community with gender issues. Take for example most programs at Institute Adult Education, communication, information sharing and networking and Institute of Adult Education gender policy are gender responsive geared to address gender inequality at Institute of Adult Education. Study findings indicated that Institute of Adult Education has ensured gender mainstreaming in all its activities in bold attempt to promote gender balance. In almost all Institute of Adult Education activities the concept of gender has been incorporated to sensitize Institute of Adult of Education community with gender issues. The findings are similar to the report of Institute of Adult Education (2017) that Institute has mainstreamed its gender programs, plans and activities.

**6. Conclusion and Recommendation**

It concluded that appropriate learning strategies that would benefit the learners basing on their characteristics. The study further recommended a need to devise mechanism to ensure that gender is promoted at The Institute of Adult Education to ensure a balance between male and female learners in various programmes. Moreover, it recommended that an employment policy that is gender sensitive to ensure that members of academic staff are employed with much consideration of gender to avoid male gender dominance.

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