

**Secondary School Teachers' Understanding of Gender -
Responsive Pedagogy in Bridging Inequalities of Students'
Learning in Tanzania**

Mariana Manyus Mhewa¹, Eustella Peter Bhalalusesa² and Eugenia
Kafanabo³

Mkwawa University College of Education, Faculty of Education
Iringa, Tanzania
E-mail: mhewamary@yahoo.co.uk

² University of Dar es Salaam, School of Education
Department of Educational Foundations, Management and Lifelong Learning
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Email: ebhalalusesa@yahoo.co.uk

³ University of Dar es Salaam, School of Education
Department of Educational Psychology and Curriculum Studies
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
E-mail: ekkafanabo@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined secondary school teachers' understanding of gender responsive pedagogy as an approach to enhance equitable students' participation in learning. A convergent parallel mixed research design was adopted with convenience and stratified purposive sampling techniques in which 146 secondary school teachers from Monduli district and Mbulu town councils in Tanzania were involved. Questionnaire and interview schedules were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences was then used for descriptive analysis, while thematic content analysis technique was used to make sense of qualitative data. Findings revealed that secondary school teachers have limited knowledge on gender responsive pedagogy as an approach for equitable students' participation in learning which is partly attributed to limited gender content mainstreamed in teacher education.

Keywords: *gender, inequality, participation in learning, pedagogy*

Introduction

Gender inequality in schools remains to be an impediment to inclusive education world-wide. Persistent gender inequalities affect students' participation in learning from both developed and developing countries (Kahamba, Massawe & Kira, 2017; Wanjama & Njuguna, 2015; Zilimu, 2014). The inequalities are triggered by continued stereotypes and biases which influence school and classroom practices to favour boys (Council of Europe, 2015). The stereotypes and biases originate from the long established masculine and feminine societal norms in which most education practitioners including teachers have been exposed to. With masculinity and femininity, teachers are made to believe that boys are brighter and superior to girls. Teachers and students are gendered subjects who may resist or reinforce power relations inside and outside the classroom, which eventually affect the teaching and learning process. Like any other member of the community, teachers tend to carry out such biased norms and traditions into classrooms. This prompts teachers to pay unequal attention to boys and girls, usually favouring the former over the latter.

Paying unequal attention to boys and girls affects the learning of the girl child and maintains the gender disparities even in communities. When teachers act in favour of boys, girls may tend to lose confidence and ability to engage in instructional processes hence giving boys chance to dominate the learning process. Consequently, the instructional practices which kill the confidence and feelings of belongingness of one sex through gender biases and stereotypes constrain the initiative of using the school and classroom as a change agent of the existing gender inequality in the broader community. Based on that, gender - responsive pedagogy has been advocated to

enhance fair treatment between boys and girls in classrooms, which in turn can enhance equitable participation in learning. Gender-responsive pedagogy (GRP) refers to teaching and learning processes which pay attention to the specific learning needs of girls and boys (Forum for African Women Educationist (FAWE), 2005).

Positive changes in teaching and learning processes as well as in the curriculum are embedded in the GRP approach. Aikman and Unterhalter (2007) argue that success in getting girls into school may be sustained if schools could be transformed with positive changes in approaches to teaching and learning and in the curriculum. The GRP approach is centered not only in increasing the number of girls in schools but also ensuring that they are not demotivated along the way. Thus, it focuses on improving the quality and quantity of education. FAWE (2006) put forwards that, considering specific sex learning needs in teaching and learning process intends to transform curricula and classroom practices in favour of both boys and girls participation in the learning process. This approach offers the opportunity for both girls and boys to participate equitably in the learning environment

Transforming the school environment and processes is deemed necessary for effective student's participation in learning. UNESCO (2015) suggests that gender equality should be mainstreamed in the curricula, school culture, teaching materials and methods to avoid reproduction of gender stereotypes and discriminatory values in schools. Education for sustainable development can also be achieved through offering fair learning environment for all students regardless of their sex, social status and ethnicity. As such, different countries including Tanzania made efforts to ensure that the education sector

adopts policies and strategies which foster sustainable development. The Tanzania Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) advocates for GRP to encompass gender-sensitive curricula, teaching and learning materials, classroom practices, examinations and school management systems that take into account the needs of both girls and boys. For effective integration of GRP in schools, the ministry reviewed the curricula and educational materials to ensure gender sensitiveness by eliminating gender stereotype language and examples which reflect male domination and female inferiority (MoEST, 2014). Therefore, with the adoption of GRP in the curriculum, teaching and learning approaches and materials, classroom setup and interactions are expected to accommodate the needs of learners regardless of sex. These initiatives are an attempt to improve the education sector beyond the gender parity outcomes.

In recognition of the role schools and classroom processes have to play in achieving international and national gender policies, efforts have been made to ensure teachers are well trained. However, in both developed and developing countries the gender component has not been a priority in most teacher education programmes. It is reported that, the process of integrating gender in teacher education curriculum was very slow, as a result up to 2010 only one-third of European countries were implementing gender sensitive teaching (UNESCO, 2015). Similarly, Esen (2010) reported that despite the global emphasis on gender issues, it has remained to be of low priority in America and Turkey teacher education. In developing countries, a review of the education policy in 40 countries reported scarcity of policies to integrate gender training into teacher education (Hunt, 2013). With regard to Africa, only Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Senegal have integrated GRP in the pre-

service teacher education training (Wanjama & Njuguna, 2015). As a result, many teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa are conditioned by male-dominated values which affect their ability to provide equal opportunity to girls and boys (Kahamba, Massawe & Kira, 2017).

In most countries, pre-service teachers learn gender as a sub-topic in certain courses. For instance, in Tanzania, pre-service teachers are taught gender issues as topics in the development studies and educational psychology courses (MoEVT, 2014). However, in the respective topics, teachers are exposed to gender concepts and not how to act gender responsively in classrooms for equitable students' participation in learning. Generally, the pre-service teacher education worldwide and Tanzania in particular is still weak in preparing teachers to act gender responsively in schools and more precisely in classrooms. Indeed, transformation of gender inequalities depends on both gender conscious pre-service teacher education and continued in-service training. Esen (2010) further suggests that pre-service training can be supported with the in-service trainings for sustainable gender sensitivity in schools. Indeed, the sustainability of gender responsive practices in schools and classrooms remains at stake once measures are not taken to ensure that gender component is strong in pre- and in-service training.

Several initiatives have been made in to equip teachers with GRP knowledge and skills in Tanzania. The ministry responsible for education in collaboration with different education partners such as FAWE Tanzania, UNICEF, African Initiatives, UNESCO and Action Aid, has tirelessly invested in raising teachers' knowledge. For instance, in 2012 UNESCO conducted training on

GRP and safe school environments to promote girls' participation in education to 120 teachers from three districts, namely Shinyanga Rural, and Kahama in Tanzania Mainland and Micheweni in Pemba Island (Wanjama & Njuguna, 2015). Also, the African Initiative replicated GRP in five secondary schools from six districts, namely Ngorongoro, Monduli, Longido, Karatu, Mbulu and Kilolo (Triple line consulting Ltd, 2014). This was in view of the perception that knowledge could enable them to take their responsibility as change agents towards reconstruction of gender inequalities in schools and classrooms.

Studies on gender - responsive pedagogy conducted in Tanzania are limited to a single subject (Zilimu, 2014), and others on evaluation of certain workshops or trainings (Wanjama & Njuguna, 2015). Some studies have focused on different levels of education like higher learning institutions (Kahamba, et al. 2017). However, it is not well known whether efforts made by the government have succeeded in raising the understanding of GRP approaches among secondary school teachers. Therefore, this paper examines Teachers' understanding of Gender- responsive pedagogy in Tanzania towards effective implementation in classrooms for equitable students' participation in learning. The paper attempts to answer three questions, namely first, what is the level of teachers' knowledge regarding GRP for effective application in the teaching and learning process? Second, how do teachers conceptualise GRP in relation to students' participation in learning? Third, how did teachers get to know about GRP and how it should be applied in classrooms?

Theoretical comprehension of social construction of feminism and GRP

This study is informed by the theory of social construction feminism. Feminist theory has a number of approaches which differ on the origin of gender inequality, why there is persistence of inequalities and what should be done (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004). However, the main concern remains to seek for equal treatment and opportunities between women and men. In respect of that, feminists believe that gender equality is possible though not yet to be achieved (Crawford & Unger, 2004). Thus, a number of feminist approaches towards addressing inequalities have been developed, namely gender reform feminism, gender resistance feminism and gender - rebellion feminism (Lorber, 2010). The social construction feminism falls under gender - rebellion feminism. Feminists within this category believe that there is a room for individual and social change through challenging the basis of the existing gendered social structure and relations. Social construction feminism presupposes that gender inequalities are socially constructed at different social institutions (Butler, 1990), schools inclusive. Hence, the social construction feminism urges teachers to be knowledgeable enough to redress and perpetuate gender patterns that promote equitable interactions. In this case, adequate knowledge on GRP among teachers stands as a deconstructive approach of the gender differences, power and inequalities in classrooms (Henderson, 2015). Henderson's argument is in support of what was raised by Lorber (2007) that reconstruction of gender norms and expectations cannot be realised until when the social institutions and social construction of gender inequalities are challenged through raising individual gender awareness and change of attitudes, as well as restructuring of the social institutions and behaviour. For then, acquisition of adequate knowledge

on gender sensitivity will enhance change in attitude as well as restructuring of institutions.

Based on the social construction feminism, addressing gender inequalities requires collaborative efforts. According to Lorber (2010) a movement to change gendered social relations needs collaborative efforts from individuals, informal social actions and formal organisations. In this case, effectiveness of the GRP as a strategy for gender equality in education and classrooms in particular depends on the extent to which education stakeholders', teachers' inclusive and the government's readiness to intervene in the traditional practices. In this regard, it is expected that teachers, who are knowledgeable in gender responsive practices and passionate in the approach, will plan lessons with a gender perspective in mind and become more capable of handling gender differences and establishing a class environment which is free from gender biases (UNESCO, 2015). Also, they are more likely to behave gender responsively in classrooms through avoiding the kind of instructional materials adopted, language used, classroom set up and classroom interactions which express the status of being male or female and/or being assertive or submissive. This may offer a favourable learning environment for equitable participation of students regardless of gender or other disparities. In turn, application of GRP will have positive influence on students' development of gender identity and to the wider society.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Monduli district and Mbulu Town council located in Arusha and Manyara regions respectively. The two districts were purposively selected based on their participation in two gender - related

projects where GRP was among the topics covered. The study adopted mixed methods research approach which enabled the researcher to establish rich and comprehensive information about teachers' understanding of GRP through triangulation of methods. The convergent parallel design which urges the researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data concurrently was adopted. According to Creswell and Pablo-Clark (2011) convergent parallel design allows qualitative and quantitative methods to have equal weight, analysed independently, and the results interpreted together.

A total of 146 teachers were conveniently selected from eight secondary schools to participate in the study by filling a questionnaire measuring their knowledge on GRP. On the other hand, convenience and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 27 teachers (9 who attended in-service training and 18 who did not) who were interviewed to capture their conceptualisation of GRP in relation to improving students' participation in learning. Quantitative data were subjected to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 for descriptive analysis. The programme enabled the researcher to calculate total scale scores for each respondent which determined whether a particular person had high, moderate or low level of knowledge. With regard to qualitative data, thematic content analysis technique was used. The analysis process followed six steps as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), namely data familiarisation and organisation, creating initial codes, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and presenting the findings. During analysis, a teacher was considered not knowledgeable once his/her conception had not articulated gender sensitivity requirements at all. Those who managed to

capture gender consideration in only few instructional dimensions, namely lesson plan, classroom set up, interaction, materials and language use were considered to have limited knowledge. On the other hand, those who spelt gender issues for all dimensions were considered to have adequate knowledge. Initially, analysis was done for each case then cross-case analysis was conducted to establish similarities and differences in their conceptions.

Findings

This section presents the findings that encompass the demographic characteristics of participants, teachers' knowledge on GRP and teachers conception of GRP. The latter has also been presented in relation to three aspects which consist of GRP as enabling equal participation in classroom interaction, GRP as a means towards girls' empowerment and GRP as consideration of students' learning needs in lesson plan and delivery. The section concludes with the findings on how pre-and in-service teacher training has contributed to the level of knowledge of teachers.

Participants' demographic characteristics

The study was done with 146 teachers, composed of 98 males and 48 females. The higher number of male participants reflects the gender imbalance which exists in most schools. Additionally, out of 146, only 11 teachers confirmed to have had an opportunity to participate in gender related in-service training. However, all teachers who had opportunity to participate in in-service training and were on duty were interviewed. Table 1 summarises the study *participants' demographic characteristics*.

Table 1: Study Participants Demographic Characteristics

| Demographic variable | Categories | Filled Knowledge Scale (N=146) | Interviewed (N=27) |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| School | A | 16 (11%) | 3 |
| | B | 18 (12.3%) | 3 |
| | C | 13 (8.9%) | 3 |
| | D | 28 (19.2%) | 3 |
| | E | 18 (12.3%) | 4 |
| | F | 15 (10.3%) | 4 |
| | G | 21 (14.4%) | 4 |
| | H | 17 (11.6%) | 4 |
| Sex | Male | 98 (67.1%) | 22 |
| | Female | 48 (32.9%) | 5 |
| In-service training | Attended | 11 (12.3%) | 9 |
| | Not attended | 135 (87.7%) | 18 |

Teachers' knowledge of gender - responsive pedagogy

This study was keen on examining teachers understanding of GRP with the understanding that one cannot effectively implement what is not fully comprehended. Understanding of GRP is thus significant for the performance of teachers in applying GRP approaches, which ultimately impacts on the learners. A scale measuring teachers' knowledge level had 35 items, hence, the minimum scale score was 35 whereas the maximum score was 175. In respect to this, three levels of knowledge were determined by dividing the maximum scores by the number of levels required (3) to get the cutting point for the three levels. Based on that, teachers who scored <58.3, 58.31-116.6 and >116.6 were considered to have demonstrated high, moderate and low level of knowledge respectively. Descriptive analysis of the quantitative data revealed that the majority of the teachers (73.3%) demonstrated moderate level of knowledge having scored 58.31-116.6. Also, 26.7% of the teachers

demonstrated high level of knowledge, while none of the teachers scored above 116.6 indicating low level of knowledge.

The findings imply that the majority of the teachers (107, 73.3%) had limited knowledge on GRP, as they demonstrated moderate level of knowledge. This presupposed that each teacher may be knowledgeable on some GRP key areas, not on all aspects. On that basis, it was considered essential to measure teachers' knowledge level for the five key GRP dimensions. The findings reveal that 124 (84.9%) and 105(71.9%) teachers demonstrated moderate level of knowledge on classroom set up and instructional materials respectively. It was further noted that 82 (56.2%) teachers demonstrated higher level of knowledge on lesson planning and 80 (54.8%) teachers had higher knowledge on classroom interaction than the other three GRP areas. With regard to language use, 82 (56.2%) teachers demonstrated moderate level of knowledge. However, only few (<5%) teachers demonstrated low level of knowledge on all GRP dimensions; lesson planning, classroom set up, classroom interaction, language use and instructional materials. Consequently, having fixed knowledge on certain aspects could limit ability to act gender responsively in classroom, especially on some key areas which an individual is not much conversant with. In other words, limited knowledge on GRP among teachers could affect its integration in instructional practices for equitable students' participation.

Teachers' conceptions of GRP

The limited knowledge demonstrated by the majority of the respondents was reflected in the conception of GRP. Despite, having varied conceptions of the

gender - responsive pedagogy in relation to students' participation in classroom, conception was narrowed to some few GRP aspects rather than encompassing the five aspects, namely classroom set up, classroom interaction, lesson planning, language use and instructional materials. Three groups of GRP conceptions which emerged are explained in the subsequent section.

GRP as an enabler of equal participation in classroom interaction

Teachers who conceived GRP in terms of student's participation in the lesson had an assumption that for a lesson to be gender responsive, it should avail equal opportunities for participation of both boys and girls. This conception was bound to giving boys and girls equal chances in terms of contribution of number of questions regardless of the level of difficulty. For instance, Chemistry teacher from school D said 'Aah! I think it is how I involve boys and girls equally in the learning process....actually it means not discriminating whether a girl or a boy when teaching.' Similarly, Mathematics teacher from school F had this to share 'gender responsiveness in teaching means when teaching boys and girls, it is vital to give both sexes an equal chance of participation.' Another teacher expressed his understanding:

The term gender... in teaching, of course, is all about involving the whole class in terms of boys and girls in sharing knowledge! Not basing on one sex in terms of asking or answering questions. So, the focus is giving equal chance for boys and girls to respond to the questions or even in raising their concerns (Mathematics teacher, School G).

It was further thought provoking to realise that even teachers who had opportunity to attend gender - related in-service trainings expressed a narrow conception of GRP. Below is an example of the conception as provided by one of the trained teachers:

Gender responsive teaching refers to the process of considering girls' and boys' participation when teaching to ensure that no one is ignored in terms of questions directed by the teacher and benefiting equally from the opportunities to answer these questions without favouring one gender over the other (English teacher, School F).

On the whole, the above quotes imply that teachers' acknowledge the need for applying GRP in the teaching and learning process. However, because of limited knowledge, they thought of GRP as referring to only giving boys and girls equal chances for contribution in classrooms. In other words, their conception of GRP was only fixed to classroom interaction which is among the five key areas of GRP. It was further found out that sometimes teachers tend to offer equal opportunity for participating in class to boys and girls, not because of being gender conscious but because both are considered as students with ideas to share. In respect of that, teachers assumed all students are responsible for what goes on in the classroom regardless of their sex. In other words, it is not always that gender responsiveness in classroom interaction occurs because teachers are conscious, but sometimes it may be because learners, irrespective of their sex differences, are considered as students who must participate in discussion equally. This was noted when one of the trained chemistry teacher stated: 'I believe every student in the class has something to share that is why I struggle to give everyone equal opportunity to express whatever he/she has regarding the subject matter.'

Assuming GRP is all about offering equal opportunities in classroom interaction has implications on how teachers take into consideration sex - specific learning needs. In this case, as all learners are considered equal '*students*' then teachers may unconsciously fail to think of girls and/or boys when preparing a lesson plan and other instructional actions. For instance, a teacher with this thinking may fail to reconsider the kind of language, classroom set up and the instructional materials to use in classrooms which suit participation of both boys and girls. In turn, despite teachers' effort to engage both boys and girls in the lesson, it may not be achieved efficiently if the language, classroom organisation and instructional materials still carry gender biases and stereotypes. Indeed, failure to consider sex - specific learning needs in all classroom dimensions may affect learners' participation in the lesson even when efforts are made. In turn, the participation of boys and girls in the lessons continues to be unequally distributed.

However, some teachers put forward that gender responsiveness in classroom interaction is dependent on students' courage and eagerness to participate. Teachers thought of GRP as how students are eager to participate in the lesson and not what a teacher is doing. This kind of thinking has implications on teachers' instructional behaviour as they are likely to do nothing to enhance equitable students' participation in the lesson. Consequently, teachers are likely to interact and/or engage only few students who are eager to participate in the lesson. As such, other students would remain as passive learners. For instance, Physics teacher from school C said, 'I think GRP is how students regardless of their sex are serious and have courage to participate in the lesson, especially to respond to questions

raised by a teacher or by asking questions.' Teachers with this conception deny the fact that they are responsible for equitable students' participation in the lesson. Hence, it is assumed that the way boys and girls participate in the lesson can only be attributed to their capabilities and activeness. In turn, the classroom interaction is likely to be biased by favouring some few students who are capable and active, while denying learning opportunities to others especially girls who are brought up to be of quiet nature.

GRP as a means towards girls' empowerment

There were few teachers who thought of GRP as a strategy for girl's empowerment. Teachers with this view represent many others who assume that gender is all about women issues. In this regard, to them GRP was meant to uplift girls participation in academics through various kinds of favours. This ideology has an impact on teachers' instructional practices as they are likely to be biased by focusing on girls' participation at the expense of boys. Thus, boys are likely to be left unattended. For instance, Physics teacher from school D said, 'I think gender responsiveness is how the students especially girls engage in the lesson through asking questions or offering contributions.' Similar view was reported by a Physics teacher from school E who disclosed: 'Gender responsiveness is a way in which teachers are required to ensure that girls are no longer left out of science subjects....so a teacher should ensure that with gender - sensitive teaching, girls get a chance to participate in the lesson.'

Based on the above quotes, teachers thought that the implementation of GRP would enhance girls' empowerment. Gender responsiveness was considered as a means to close a gender gap in the education and learning

process by favouring girls to participate quite often in class than boys. For instance, one teacher had this to say 'I only give girls priority to answer when I ask questions and by providing some learning activities to ensure that the lesson is gender sensitive (Mathematics teacher, School D).' Assuming that being gender responsive is favouring girls has a negative implication on boys' learning opportunities. For instance, when a teacher gives more attention and opportunities to girls, boys are deprived of learning opportunities. Consequently, such conceptions and practices affect the main target of students helping each other through gender responsive pedagogy as they might think learning is all about competition.

GRP as consideration of students' learning needs in lesson planning and delivery

This conception shows a broader understanding of GRP than the previous conceptions. Teachers with this view showed that GRP starts when one is preparing a lesson plan by considering individual student learning needs and ensuring that the way a class is designed/arranged favour such diversities. In the present study it was realised that only civics teacher from school A had this view. He said 'gender responsiveness is achieved when a teacher considers the learning needs of boys and girls in lesson planning, classroom arrangement and sitting plan and then gives equal opportunities for both to participate when teaching.' Considering the fact that in the secondary school curriculum, Civics is the only subject where students are exposed to gender issues including gender inequalities, perhaps the broader conception provided by the Civics teacher was directly linked to his subject of specialisation. This may indicate that persistent reading on gender issues

from different sources may have exposed the teacher to better understanding of gender sensitivity compared to others.

Teacher education and GRP

Knowledge on GRP is believed to be acquired through training and social interaction. In this regard, it was considered essential to ask teachers on how they got to know about the GRP approaches. Findings indicated that 112 (76.7%) of teachers had exposure to gender related issues during their pre-service teacher education programmes, while only 18 (12.3%) had an opportunity to attend in-service training in which GRP was among other topics which were covered. Majority of those who had learnt gender issues during their teacher education programmes were exposed to gender discrimination in education (61%). On the other hand, 11 out of 18 teachers who had attended in-service training had learnt issues related to gender sensitive classroom set up, measures for gender balance in teaching and learning process and gender discrimination in education. Table 2 summarises the number of respondents who were exposed to diverse GRP topics during their pre-service teacher education programmes and/or in-service training.

Table 2: Teachers' Exposure on GRP Topics

| GRP topics | Teacher | In-service |
|--|----------------|-------------------|
| Gender sensitive classroom set up | 41 | 11 |
| Gender sensitive language use | 30 | 4 |
| Measures for gender balance in | 54 | 11 |
| Gender sensitive classroom interaction | 48 | 10 |
| Gender discrimination in education | 89 | 11 |
| Gender based - lesson planning | 21 | 5 |

NB: Analysis based on multiple responses hence column tallies exceed 'N' value

The findings in Table 2 discern that the teacher education curriculum is designed in a way that teachers are prepared to play a vital role towards addressing gender issues in education and in the wider community. However, it is not clearly known the extent to which the covered content was linked to classroom context and particularly students' participation. On the other hand, only few (18) teachers had an opportunity to participate in gender related in-service training. This implies that, pre-service teacher education curriculum remains to be the most potential arena for addressing gender inequalities, as all teachers have opportunity to learn rather than the in-service training which has limited participants. However, teachers' ability to address existing gender inequalities in learning process depends on how the topic on gender equality and equity was covered during training in relation to students' participation in learning.

Generally, most teachers demonstrated moderate level of knowledge implying that they were conversant with some few GRP areas and/or little is known for each area. Limited knowledge demonstrated in scale scores were then reflected during interviews as most of them conceived GRP as mainly bound to classroom interaction and only few went further to include lesson planning and classroom set up. However, nothing was mentioned about gender responsiveness in language use and instructional materials. The findings further showed that even those who had an opportunity to attend GRP in-service training could not be differentiated from those who did not. This raises doubts on the effectiveness and efficiency of the pre-service teacher education and the in-service training geared towards integration of GRP in classrooms.

Discussion

This paper was set out to examine the teachers' understanding of gender - responsive pedagogy towards bridging gender inequality in students' participation in learning in Tanzania. The findings showed that most teachers had limited understanding of GRP as an approach for equitable students' participation in learning. This was also reflected in the diverse perceptions that teachers had on what GRP entailed. It was further revealed that GRP was conceptualised differently by teachers and this was influenced by the training each of them had received. The following discussion will focus on the limited knowledge of teachers of GRP and its implications for learning outcomes.

Limited knowledge of GRP as demonstrated by this study finding is not an alien challenge in most countries even in developed countries. For instance, Risberg, Johansson, Westman and Hamberg (2008) reported that most physician teachers at the University teaching hospital in Sweden understood gender as a question of differences and inequity between women and men, hence it was considered as an issue of women only. In Zimbabwe which is one of the countries where FAWE implemented GRP and the curriculum articulate gender responsive practices, Chikunda (2013) reported that only 26% of teachers were aware of sexist bias which could be portrayed in learning resources such as books and handouts, while 66% were aware of sexist bias in language. Chikunda noted that teachers were using examples of masculine and feminine nature and reported that most science teachers in Zimbabwe were not aware of the gender - responsive classroom practices, hence assumed that introducing gender issues into the classroom is all about giving favour to one sex. This implies that little was known among the science teachers about GRP and its benefits in regard to students' participation in the lessons.

Also, a previous study in Tanzania, although with focus on a different category of participants had also acknowledged limited knowledge in GRP. Kahamba, et al (2017) reported that academic staff at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) had partial knowledge on GRP, despite long period of the sensitisation in GRP. For instance, while academic staffs at Sokoine were not aware of the appropriate teaching methodologies for a gender sensitive teaching, in the current study secondary school teachers were not conversant with gender consideration on diverse GRP key areas. Hence, the conception

of GRP was bound to certain area leaving others. In this regard, both secondary school teachers and university academics in Tanzania could not effectively and efficiently conceptualise GRP. Lack of adequate knowledge of GRP is not a challenge to developing countries only but developed ones as well. Notably, inadequate knowledge compromises learning outcomes. Limited understanding of GRP by teachers has several implications for the teaching and learning process. It may inhibit teachers' ability to act gender responsively in classrooms leading to perpetuation of gender inequality. This may be manifested through biased lesson plan, classroom set up, language, materials and interaction. As Kahamba, et al (2017) commented that the application of gender pedagogy cannot be effective if instructors are not gender conscious.

Additionally, as put forward by Lambert, Perrino and Barreras (2012) some teachers tend to believe that science subjects are for boys who are assumed to be brighter than girls. This assumption may lead to science teachers who assume boys are brighter than girls not to see the necessity of being gender sensitive when teaching. Ultimately, limited understanding of GRP may result in most teachers moving on with few students who are deemed capable, while denying others the right to learn. As Chikunda (2013) reports, teachers with limited knowledge on gender sensitivity did nothing to ensure both boys and girls got chance to participate in the lesson, assuming that considering sex specific learning needs could be practising in gender discrimination. One needs to add that limited understanding of gender sensitivity practices in classrooms among teachers inhibits the efforts to use school and classroom

processes as a change agent of the gender stereotypes and inequalities in the wider community.

Application of GRP in school and classroom practices stands to be a significant step towards achieving gender equity and equality in the broader community. According to Wanjama and Njuguna (2015) effective adoption of GRP in classroom practices improves girls' retention and performance in school, who are in most cases victims of gender - irresponsible practices even in homesteads. GRP is also recognised as a means towards achieving gender equality in the wider community. Additionally, Aikman, Unterhalter & Challender (2005) put forward that achieving gender equality in classrooms is very important as it connects schooling with citizenship. Gender equity and equality in education and in a broader society cannot be achieved if the classroom practices are not transformed to reflect international and national commitments.

Inadequacy of GRP knowledge among teachers may be attributed to a number of factors, including inadequacy of gender related content in teacher education curriculum and little attention on gender issues during in-service training. Inadequacy of the teacher education to equip teachers with GRP knowledge was also reported by other researchers. For instance, Wanjama and Njuguna (2015) had found out that only four African countries have managed to implement GRP in the pre-service teacher education. This has resulted in limited knowledge on gender issues among most teachers as they were not exposed to it during their teacher education.

With regard to the in-service training, the findings show that most of the training was project based or donor funded hence was offered to only few teachers thus its contribution towards sufficient knowledge among teachers remain questionable. As such, those who had opportunity to attend in-service training failed to differentiate themselves with those who did not in terms of GRP knowledge as they both had limited knowledge. This presumes that, GRP might have not received adequate concentration and focus during both pre-and in-service training. Unplanned in-service training and lack of frequent training for teachers is one reason for the failure of curriculum implementation. In this context, unplanned in-service training might have resulted in the majority of teachers having limited understanding of the GRP and how it can enhance equitable participation in classrooms. Limited understanding may also be attributed to the gender biased norms and traditions within the society. Based on the social construction feminism, persons gain knowledge on gender sensitivity through social interaction and imitation. Hence, the strong gender biased norms and tradition of pastoral communities for instance might have influence on the knowledge demonstrated by most teachers. Lorber (2007) argued that the process of gender construction starts naturally at infant stage and it continues to be reflected in other social institutions including schools and classrooms in particular.

With this understanding, it can be deduced that pre- and in-service training adds on what an individual might have acquired since infancy. Inadequacy of GRP knowledge among teachers may be a reflection of the gender biased society from which teachers are brought up or interact with. Hence, teachers' social background together with inadequate training may result in

perpetuation of gender inequalities in schools and other spheres of life. In support of this, Lorber (2010) puts forward that schools and classroom practices may unconsciously contribute to creation and recreation of gender inequality. Overall, the findings reveal that there was a limited understanding of gender - responsive pedagogy among participants. Limited understanding of GRP is partly attributed to the inadequate gender content in the pre-and in-service teacher training. The findings imply that limited understanding of GRP may result in partial application in classroom hence persistence of gender inequality in students' participation in learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that secondary school teachers understanding of gender responsive pedagogy is partial, the situation which is more likely to affect their practical part of applying it in the teaching and learning process. Teachers with limited knowledge of GRP are more likely to plan lessons without considering sex-specific learning needs, hence the actual teaching and learning process will be in favour of some few students. Indeed, partial understanding of GRP among secondary school teachers would have made them to perpetuate gender inequalities in classrooms by favouring some students while denying learning chances to others through gender irresponsible language, stereotyped teaching materials, unfavourable classroom set up and biased interaction. Partial understanding of the gender - responsive pedagogy can be attributed to the inadequacy of gender content in the pre-service teacher education and limited opportunities for in-service training.

Therefore, the study recommends, first, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to extend the in-service training to tutors for them to think beyond raising gender awareness to equip teachers with knowledge of how to integrate GRP in teaching and learning processes. Second, the school managements should insist on self-initiatives among teachers of seeking GRP knowledge and skills while strengthening school-based gender related training. Indeed, social interaction and learning from peers could have significant contribution towards raising individual teachers' knowledge and ability to apply GRP for equitable students' participation in learning.

References

- Aikman, S., & Unterhalter, E. (2007). Gender equality in schools. In Aikman, S. and Unterhalter, E (Eds) *Practising gender equality in education: Programme insights series*, (27-38). Oxford: Oxfam.
- Aikman, S., Unterhalter, E., & Challender, C. (2005). The education MDGs: Achieving gender equality through curriculum and pedagogy change. *Gender and Development*, 13(1), 43-55.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversive of identity*. London: Routledge.
- Chikunda, C. (2013). Assessing the level of gender awareness of science teachers: The case of Zimbabwe's two education districts. *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 14(3), 110-120.
- Crawford, M., & Unger, R. (2004). *Women and gender: A feminist psychology* (4th ed). New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Creswell, J. W., & Pablo-Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Esen, Y. (2010). Making room for gender sensitivity in pre-service teacher education. *European Researcher*, 61(10): 2544-2554.
- Haralambos, M. & Holborn, M. (2000). *Sociology: Themes and perspectives*. London: Harper Collins.
- Henderson, E.F. (2015). *Gender pedagogy: Teaching, learning and tracing gender in higher education*. United Kingdom, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hunt, F. (2013). *Review of national policies on learning and teaching*. Background paper prepared for the Education for All global monitoring report 2013/4. Paris: UNESCO.
- Kahamba, J.S., Massawe, F.A. & Kira, E.S. (2017). Awareness and practice of gender responsive pedagogy in higher learning institutions: The case of Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Sciences*, 6 (2), 1–16.
- Lambert, M., Perrino, E.S., & Barreras, E.M. (2012). *Understanding the barriers to female education in Ghana*. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9c9f/037f589b6c38f377fec8ec794ebf0793e0e.pdf?_ga=2.201552274.2059475581.1596054366-92289022.1596054366
- Lorber, J. (2007). "Night to his day": The social construction of gender. In Rothenberg, P.S. (Eds.), *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study* (7th ed), (pp. 54-65). New York: Worth Publishers.
- Lorber, J. (2010). *Gender inequality: Feminist theories and politics* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT). (2014). *Education for all (EFA) report for Tanzania mainland*. Dar es Salaam: Author.
- Risberg, G., Johansson, E.E., Westman, G. & Hamberg, K. (2008). Attitudes toward and experiences of gender issues among physician teachers: A survey study conducted at a university teaching hospital in Sweden. *BMC Medical Education*, 8 (10), 1-10.
- Roelens, K.; Verstraelen, H.; Egmond, K.V. & Temmerman, M. A. (2006). Knowledge, attitudes, and practice survey among obstetrician-gynaecologists on intimate partner violence in Flanders, Belgium. *BMC Pub Health*, 6, 238. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-6-238>
- Triple Line Consulting Ltd (2014). *Girl's right to education in Tanzania: quality assurance visit report*. London.
- UNESCO. (2015). *A guide for gender equality in teacher education policy and practices*. France:
- Wanjama, L.N., & Njuguna, F.W. (2015). *Documented Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) good practices - Case study*. Nairobi: Kenya.
- Zilimu, J.D.A. (2014). *Exploring the gender gap in Tanzania secondary schools mathematics classrooms*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois: The Graduate College, USA.