

## **Tanzanian School Women Talking: Are the Traditional Patterns of Thinking Changing?**

*G.A. Malekela\**

### **Abstract**

In this article the author presents and discusses responses given by Form IV students who were about to sit for their Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations. Using focus group discussion method, the school young women were asked a number of questions whose answers form part of this report. The findings show that their attitudes and values are largely embedded within the sexual stereotyped expectations with very few exceptions. The author concludes by saying that attitudes die hard, and it is up to the society in general—and women in particular—to vigorously change the status quo through raising women awareness, and providing opportunities to women in areas hitherto men monopolised to improve the image and the well-being of women so that equality between men and women is a reality in practice.

### **Introduction**

The focus group discussions were held between Form IV students in sample schools in Iringa and Coast regions and two women research assistants in 1993.. Form IV women students were preferred rather than those in lower Forms because they were thought to be mature enough to understand the questions and issues being raised. More than 80% were 18 years and above hence the use of the term women rather than girls. The two regions were purposely chosen because we wanted to see if there would be any differences in the women's responses as Iringa is predominantly Christian (about 60%) while Coast is Muslim (over 90%). Christians are said to have more positive attitudes towards western schooling than their counterpart Muslims.

It was anticipated that the young women's answers would largely reflect what they have been socialised to believe by the various agencies of socialisation starting from the family, the school, the peer group, mass media, religious teachings, etc. Some of the attitudes or values such gained are supportive of achievement motivation in school, while others are prohibitive. The aim was, therefore, to find out what students themselves thought was to be

---

\* Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Dar es Salaam

the mainstream of thinking in society. Out of the discussions, the author intended to isolate those attitudes that seem to act against women's advancement, and suggest possible measures that can be taken practically to improve women's participation in education, and consequently in the higher echelons of the economy, administration and politics because access to these is largely determined by the quantity and quality of education one has attained.

To ensure that the students were free to air their views, men were not allowed to be around so that the discussions could freely be carried out as women, particularly adolescents, are often shy to speak their minds in the presence of men in accordance with African customs prevalent in most African ethnic groups (Kisseka, 1981). Their teachers were not also allowed to be present during the discussions as their presence might have inhibited the students' freedom of expression for fear of repercussions as some of their views could be misinterpreted.

Secondary schools from Iringa region that were included in the sample were Highlands (co-educational), Iringa (girls only), Lugalo (co-educational), Njombe (historically boarding for boys but of late enrolls girls who are day scholars in line with the government policy of increasing girls' educational opportunities), and Mpechi (co-educational). From the Coast region were Bagamoyo (co-educational as Njombe) and Kaole (co-educational). A total of 229 women students participated in the focus group discussions (46 Highlands, 68 Iringa, 35 Lugalo, 10 Njombe, 41 Mpechi, 12 Bagamoyo and 17 from Kaole).

A summary of the major findings is given in the following subsections in accordance with the questions that were presented in the focus group discussions.

### **Parents' Attitudes Towards Their Daughters' Education**

The students were asked what their parents' attitudes were toward their education. Parents in Tanzania have different attitudes toward the education of their daughters. These differences were shown by the girls themselves. Their ideas were more or less similar with minor exceptions.

Several students from Iringa gave a variety of answers with regard to what they considered to be their parents' attitudes. Some said:

Most of the parents feel that it is useless to educate their daughters because they do not expect much from them. But parents who are educated (literate) value education for both boys and girls whereas those who are illiterate believe in educating boys because boys are permanent members of the family and they are sure that they will take care of the family in future.

There is a belief among the poor parents that when an educated daughter gets married their investment in her ultimately goes to the husband. Sometimes parents complain that they educate girls for the benefit of others. They also said that some parents were just too proud of their sons, hence this demoralised their daughters who were not treated on equal footing with their brothers. On the other hand some parents were said to be fair as they sent to school children who were academically capable without regard to their sex.

Bagamoyo students said, "Most of the parents in Tanzania are interested in sending their daughters to school so that finally they can be employed although some are not interested in educating them highly fearing that they might not be married and get a family". Others were however, of the opinion that parents' attitudes toward educating their daughters very much depend on the family and its level of education.

Those from Highlands (a private school charging high fees) said that parents had positive attitudes toward educating their daughters. They said, "Parents expect their educated daughters like us to show differences with girls who have never gone to school or seen a classroom! They expect their daughters to get good jobs in future, live better lives and also have new ideas in life."

Lugalo students were of the opinion that most of the parents had little hope in their daughters as most of them performed poorly academically. This, however, was said to depend very much on the place where parents lived.

The responses given above are quite debatable as some might agree with them and others disagree. However, available evidence shows that parents in general are increasingly becoming positive toward the education of their daughters, as it is for their sons. Though there were historically from the colonial period more schools for boys than girls, thus accounting for their disproportionate enrolment—especially starting from the middle school level (Standard V-VIII) upwards—the pattern has been gradually changing over the years. For example, at independence in 1961, 40% of the pupils enrolling in Standard (grade) I were girls. This rose to 49% by 1994, partly as a result of universal primary education (UPE) that began to be implemented in November 1977. At the Standard VIII/VII level (primary education used to be of 8 years cycle up to 1966 and thereafter 7), it was 23% of the enrolment in 1961, and this shot up to 49% by 1994. This is equally true for the secondary school level. In 1961 the respective female enrolment percentages at Form I, IV and VI were 29, 30 and 9; these went up to 45, 41 and 29 respectively by 1994 (MEC, 1995).

Often people make sweeping statements like "Parents prefer educating their sons to daughters." "Parents have negative attitudes towards education of their daughters." These unqualified statements are sometimes made by academicians as well. If these statements were true, then one should have expected fewer

women enrolments in private secondary schools which charge higher fees than those charged in public schools. For example, the official fees (as there are other unofficial charges, especially in private schools) for boarding private and public schools in 1995 were Tsh. 70,000 and 15,000 (1 US\$:-Tsh. 600) respectively, and the respective rates for day schools were 50,000 and 8,000. Yet, enrolment figures show that women representation has been more positive in private schools than in public ones. Whereas in 1981, 1986, 1991 and 1994 the percentages of women enrolment in private secondary schools (Form I-VI) were: 37.3, 43.1, 45.6 and 45.1, the respective figures for public schools were 31.9, 33.3, 40.2 and 42.3 (MEC, 1995:34).

The statistics indicate that the gap will soon close up, especially now that social demand for secondary education is very high. Social demand will be augmented by the government policy and plans to attain 1:1 ratio of boys to girls by 1998 through financially (with the assistance of the World Bank) helping 5,000 girls who cannot meet all school costs, increasing the number of girls' schools, and increasing vacancies for girls in existing schools, including those that have been exclusively for boys in the past (Sarungi, 1995).

Lower representation of women at the Advanced level (Form V-VI) has more to do with their poor performance in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations at Form IV rather than to limited vacancies for women. Admission to A-Level requires at least a "C" grade (credit) in all the three subject combinations. Higher failure rate (for both men and women) is always in the sciences, but worse for girls, forcing the Ministry of Education and Culture annually to leave some of the A-Level vacancies unfilled for a lack of women candidates with the requisite entry qualifications. In 1995 the Ministry had to form a committee to look for reasons for the alarmingly high failure rate of girls in examinations, particularly for science subjects and Maths, and come up with recommendations for improved performance.

The higher failure rate in examinations for girls is also reported in Zaire (Wrzesinska, 1982), and their poorer performance in science-related subjects including Maths—where in Kenya for example, over 75% of the girls failed the subject in the Certificate of Education Examinations in 1985 and 1986 (Kinyanjui, 1993)—seems to be a world-wide phenomenon (Finn, Reis, Dulberg, 1982; UNESCO, 1985).

Among poor families, under normal circumstances, the boy is likely to be given the opportunity if the available resources can cater only for one person. However, there are other poor parents who are rational decision makers. They look at the child's school progress and the likelihood of the child succeeding if sent for further education. Their children's teachers are consulted for advice and will accordingly take it. In some poor families daughters have had precedence over their brothers.

If there is a religious element, it is perhaps the response from Bagamoyo students. Bagamoyo is predominantly Muslim, and some students show fear that if a woman is highly educated she may not be married, and thus miss a family. To Muslims, marriage for women is taken to be an important event in their lives, and slightly less so for Christians.

### **African Society's Value Toward Highly Educated Vis-À-Vis Lowly Educated Women**

The question was: "Who is valued more in the African society: a highly educated woman with a big job, or a lowly educated woman, married and with a family?" This question raised a hot debate in all schools in the sample. The majority of the students said that the African society values more the woman with low education and married with a family than the highly educated one with a good and big job. The reasons they gave were as follows:

The educated girls have superiority complex and this cannot be tolerated by men because men in Africa do not want to be dominated. As a result of this, highly educated women do not easily get men to marry and this being the case African society does not value such women. However, women who marry in between their education period, for instance, university students, are valued more than women who continuously study until they complete their degrees without getting married. African society believes that highly educated women are very proud, arrogant with feelings of accomplishment and have no respect for others. Such women also like emulating the urban style of life.

A few women, especially from Highlands, said that the *highly educated* women can also be valued if their reputations are good. Others who were positive on the debate commented that such highly educated women with good jobs are valued because through their jobs they were building the nation.

The message one gets from the above debate is clear. The African woman should be educated, fine. However, her education should not raise her above others, especially men who have always subjugated women. Moreover, what matters most in many African societies is one having a marriage and children. As Savane (1984:217) succinctly summarises it,

On a psychological level, a woman's achievement is measured by her ability to be a good mother. In many African ethnic groups, a successful child is believed to be the product of work performed by the mother in her capacity as a "good wife and mother."

When asked what is given priority between formal education and life of a family to a woman, almost all students said that life of the family is given priority because this is what is valued more by the majority of the African

societies than formal education. This is similar to what Wrzesinska (1982) found in Zaire. If most students also give priority to raising a family than schooling, then there is a danger that they aim low in their studies and hence cannot perform well.

This applies equally to men. Childlessness or sterility for women and impotence for men, were—and still are—lamentable in most African societies. In the past if a married man were proved to be impotent (of course confidentially!), a relative or a close friend helped him get out of the stigma, and when his wife bore a child, society would know it was his as very few would have been aware of his predicament. In the case of a sterile woman, a man was compelled by social pressure to marry a second wife. This social pressure still persists, although some highly educated Christians try to brush it off.

### **Parents' Hope of Their Daughters Completing Studies Successfully**

In answering the question, "Do your parents have hope that you will successfully complete your studies?" students had a variety of responses to this question. The majority, however, said that most of the parents were worried that their daughters might not complete schooling successfully. Parents fear that anything might happen to a girl in between before she completes schooling. They are mostly worried that their daughters might become pregnant and be expelled from school. Sometimes pregnant girls attempt abortions (through crude methods as abortions are illegal) which in some cases lead to death. They are also worried about foreign culture, particularly Western culture. The free mixing of boys and girls, especially adolescents, worries parents that their daughters would be loose and involve themselves in love affairs with boys or men instead of concentrating on their studies. Grown-up girls and women also become avaricious of a lot of things, for instance, competing with women from rich families in dressing up, facial make-ups, behaviour, etc. Those coming from poor families, in particular, may fall victim of men as they may end up being cheated in an attempt to acquire those material things.

Others, particularly from Iringa and Lugalo said that it depended on the girls' reputation and how they performed in class and examinations. If a girl is good-mannered and very conscientious, then parents have high hopes in her academic performance; and are somehow sure that she will successfully complete her studies. Having high hopes on the girl's performance also depends very much upon the family, and where one comes from.

In one study it was found that 81% of parents disagreed that when a girl is old enough she should leave school and get married. However, some remarked:

If a girl is not doing well and someone wants to marry her, better take the bride-price than risk the chance of her continuing and getting pregnant, in which case there will be no cows. She won't pass anyway, so she might as well get married (Cooksey, Malekela, Lugalla, 1993:16).

Family planning services are new. They are mainly available in urban health clinics to married women, or other grown-up women with children out of wedlock. Very few women in rural areas have information about birth control and the use of contraceptives as people believe in having as many children as possible. The use of condoms by men is very slowly gaining acceptance by both men and women mainly due to the AIDS scourge. Some highly placed women regard using the condom with those they trust as an insult as they are being equated to prostitutes who are normally urged to use them.

It is socially abominable for a school girl, even for an unmarried young woman to be found looking for contraceptives or having devices for prevention of pregnancy. Very often it is misconstrued for one being promiscuous or morally lax, as it is equally true elsewhere in Africa (Kisekka, 1981). Access to contraceptives by girls and young unmarried women is vehemently deplored by married women as they argue this would be tantamount to licensing their husbands to disregard their marriages.

School girls are not expected to have very intimate relationships with males. To date primary and secondary school students who are medically proved to be pregnant are expelled from school despite that there is no law which sanctions this long-time practice from the colonial days. In one study, most of the school teachers were found to favour the current practice of dismissing pregnant school girls on the grounds that it instils "discipline" in others, while many members of the Tanzania Women organisation and Tanzania Parents' Association thought that girls should be readmitted after delivery (Malekela, Cooksey, Ndabi, 1990). Those who argued against girls' dismissal pointed out that girls' self-image and equality of the sexes should be enhanced, and that investment made in their education should not be wasted.

Premarital virginity is still highly valued among many Tanzanian ethnic groups. Women found to be virgin by their husbands on the wedding day in some tribes are normally welcomed on the following day by ululation, and presented with gifts and congratulated by their parents and relatives for having led a "clean" life. This sometimes leads to cynicism as men are often compelled to declare to have found their wives virgin to save their face and those of their spouses when they know very well it is untrue.

### **Qualities of a Successful Woman**

Asked to give their views on what they considered to be the qualities of a successful woman, the following were suggested by most of the students.

- A woman who is very highly educated: should at least be a Form VI leaver, and passed her Advanced Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations, and at most be educated up to university level.
- She should have a good and well-paying job.
- She should be married but after getting good education and job, and must have children.
- She should be a woman who lives as a Tanzanian so that society can accept her. A woman who is accepted by the Tanzanian society is one who interacts with people of all walks of life and does not have superiority complex. She should be a well-behaved person, and be able to help and cooperate with all regardless of their social, economic, or political status in society.
- A woman should be hard-working, and be able to keep her house clean and tidy.
- A woman who has had a study tour abroad for at least three months so that she can also be able to see how other people elsewhere live and have advanced themselves.

Some of the attributes given above are modern while others—such as having a family and children, and being a person who is respectful and humble—are traditional. In most African societies the status of a woman is measured not only by her productive role but also by the reproductive roles of wife and mother (Adeyokunnu, 1984; Savane, 1984; Wrzesinska, 1982). Having a family and children is also expected of men, failure to which may place one in the lowest hierarchy, especially when performing traditional rituals. In most tribes having sons among the children gives a woman more status, reaffirms the marriage, and assures her more or less that her husband is not going to be polygamous if he is a devout Christian. Sons are held high in esteem due to the fact that most of the ethnic groups are patriarchal, and it is the male children who are going to perpetuate the lineage.

### **Religious Norms or Teachings**

The students were asked what the religious norms or teachings were about women in society. The majority of the students seemed not to understand religious norms or teachings. A few students said,

A woman is given the lowest status, particularly in Islam. In Muslim societies women are also given very limited opportunities in social activities. For example, women do not attend funerals and are rarely given chances of leadership. Women are supposed to stay at home and raise the family, whereas men are expected to bring everything for their wives, including shopping in the market for foodstuffs.

The practice is prevalent in predominantly Muslim areas. In Zanzibar, for example, where over 98% of the population is Muslim, men do shopping for foodstuffs at the 'markiti' (market). Once out of the compound, women must veil their heads and cover their legs and are restricted from having conversations with male non-kin in public (Kisekka, 1981). These are some of the Koranic injunctions which have been accepted by customs and traditions.

However, students from Iringa pointed out that in Islam women are given equal opportunity with men in "madrassa" (Koranic schools), where the Koran is taught.

In life it is emphasised that every woman must be married and every man must also be married. Therefore marriage is a necessity to all.

In Christianity the place of man is equal to that of a woman. In all the denominations of Christianity, with the exception of Roman Catholicism, women are given equal opportunity in church, for example, there are few women pastors.

It would seem, these students have hazy ideas in some of the issues, particularly with Christianity, and tend to partly contradict themselves. Even among Protestant churches that are progressive, the majority in the top of the hierarchy are men. The students are correct when they point out that the Roman Catholic church does not give equal opportunity to women, as to date it has refused to even discuss about the possibility of ordaining women into priesthood.

When asked what their life expectations were in religion, most of them seemed to find the question difficult because there was no straight forward response. They just remained quiet, and did not ask a question on the subject. Clarifications on the question were made but without success.

It would seem religion is not well-taught in schools today as it was during the colonial period when most of the schools were under religious denominations. During the colonial period "missionaries expected African men to take on the ideal character traits of white women: industriousness, docility, obedience, gentleness, and passivity — of course in relation to Europeans, especially to males. African women were to display the same humility but also toward African males" (Yates, 1982:130). The African wife was thus expected to be subservient to her husband.

Despite the fact that there are two periods of religious instruction a week, the attendance of the preachers, pastors, priests or sheikhs is sometimes irregular. Even when the religious teachers come, the students are not obliged to attend the sessions. Furthermore, since religion as a subject is not examined in secular schools, students do not pay much attention to it. It is only in seminaries that religious instruction is organised, and their students take religion in the examinations.

**Whether the Education System in Tanzania is Equalising**

“Does the education system in Tanzania give equal opportunities to both girls and boys?” This question was tackled. Students from Lugalo, Highlands, Mpechi and Iringa concurred that the education system in Tanzania was not discriminatory, i.e., both boys and girls are given equal opportunities in education.

Students from Kaole, Njombe and Bagamoyo said that in the formal education system there were more boys than girls, and usually boys performed better than girls. Those from Njombe further added that in primary schools, girls and boys are given equal chances, but in public secondary schools girls are given better treatment as more chances are allocated to them because of the quota system (although this also applies to boys from low performing districts — author’s observation).

In a survey carried out in 1989 (Malekela, Cooksey, Ndabi, 1990), it was found out that in some regions, girls would have lost half of the vacancies allocated to them to boys if merit alone was used as the criterion in selection to Form I public schools. In some “backward” districts like Mafia in the Coast region, not a single girl would have been selected if the quota system was removed. The quota system in Tanzania does not, however, provide academic counselling or remedial courses to the intended beneficiaries who are academically weak.

According to the comments above, and the legal system in Tanzania in theory there is no discrimination in the education system in Tanzania. However, due to cultural values and societal expectations, women find themselves at the lower end as they climb the educational ladder as already demonstrated above. Furthermore, textbooks have been found to be gender-biased. Illustrations portray women as passive, engaged in non-remunerative or poorly-paid and less prestigious occupations. Verbal discussions, jokes, innuendoes, attitudes and other interactions in the classroom, and the school in general, are often the acting out of gender-stereotyped roles which have been internalised from society.

Research has revealed that teachers tend to encourage boys to be more expressive and creative while fostering an inferiority complex in girls. In co-educational classrooms, boys demand and get a greater share of the teachers’ attention. Teachers show preference for boys in the classrooms because boys are said to be more active and hence more rewarding to teach, while girls are over-concerned with their physical appearance (Mbilinyi, Mbughuni, 1991). A study of textbooks in Zambia is also reported to have contained many more male than female characters and female characters, who appeared “... were primarily in domestic roles and were presented as passive, stupid and ignorant. Men’s activities were admired, women’s ignored” (Hyde, 1993:123).

### **Subjects They Like and the Reasons**

The women students were also asked about the subjects they liked and why. The subjects which were favoured were almost the same, and this also depended on the kind of subjects taught at a particular school. Most of the students said that they like arts subjects which included Kiswahili, English, History and Geography. They also said that they liked Commerce, Bookkeeping, Home Economics, and Biology.

The reasons they gave for liking these subjects were that these were subjects are easy to them, and also they could easily be explained by their teachers. Therefore their scores in examinations in these subjects were higher. They further said that they liked Biology because "it teaches us how a human being develops and how his/her body works." They were particularly interested in the topic on the reproductive system.

Besides the subjects mentioned above, students from Njombe added Maths and Chemistry because these were the other subjects they selected to specialise. This was an exception from the norm. In most cases arts subjects were favoured because they do not require extensive time for reading and preparation like the science subjects. The students themselves admitted that they did not have enough time to devote to serious studying.

Asked which subjects were hard for them, the majority of the women students mentioned Maths, Physics, and Chemistry. The reason they gave for their difficulty was that girls do not have enough time to do private study. They spend most of their time cooking, washing dishes, fetching water and firewood, etc., in the case of day scholars; and also beautifying themselves. In addition to the above reason, Bagamoyo students said that fear among girls toward these subjects was created by the society. Most of the people believe that science subjects are hard or difficult.

In Tanzania, the problem could be exacerbated by the fact that women students lack female-role models, as most of the science and Maths teachers are men. For example, in 1995 out of 165 student-teachers enrolled in B.Sc. Education at the University of Dar es Salaam, only 46 (28%) were women. Very few of these were taking Maths and/or Physics. A few were in Chemistry, but the majority of the women who took science education were concentrated in Botany, Zoology (and end up teaching Biology and Geography in secondary schools, if at all they report).

Women are poorly represented at university and technical colleges. In 1995, for example, women constituted 9%, 17%, 23%, 28% and 6% at the Open University of Tanzania, University of Dar es Salaam, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Muhimbili College of Health Sciences (part of the University of Dar es Salaam), and technical colleges respectively. Their representation is

more conspicuous in faculties that offer humanities or other subjects with a combination of Biology, as is the case with Medicine. Courses, such as B.Sc. Engineering, B.Sc. Agricultural Engineering, B.Sc. Electronics, and B. Computer Science that require a strong Mathematical and Physics background were represented by 3% and below, or by none at all as in electronics and agricultural engineering (MSTHE, 1995).

This is more or less similar to what happens in other developing countries where women enrolment at higher levels is heavily skewed toward the humanities, home economics and the arts (Hill, King, 1993). UNESCO (1985: 11) also reports this phenomenon, which seems to be the general trend in most countries where women lag behind men in enrolment in scientific, technical, and vocational education: and the higher the level of that education the greater the gap. In the same report it is said that a study by the French Association of University Women found that 75% of women students were studying arts and humanities subjects, and only 25% were studying science. Within science, the favourite subject was physiology. This was a matter of fact despite having only 14% more men than women. The situation does not seem to have improved by 1995 as the United Nations (1995:98) reports that the "numbers of women in scientific and technical fields at college and university level are much lower than in health, education and law." Women are also less represented in senior scientific positions despite the presence of well-qualified women.

Reasons advanced for the status quo are societal, psychological, limited female-role models, misguided career counselling, or what others put as rigid stereotypes carried by both sexes as what constitutes sex-appropriate adult roles (Finn, Reis, Dulberg, 1982).

The intended government policy of reviewing school curriculum to strengthen and encourage participation and achievement of girls in Maths and science subjects; and that of eliminating gender stereotyping through the curricula, textbooks and classroom practices (MEC, 1995a:20) are steps in the right direction to improve girls' participation and quality performance in these subjects. But how it is going to be implemented to achieve these noble goals remains to be seen as currently the education industry in Tanzania is greatly underfunded.

### **Sex of Teachers Teaching Favourite Subjects**

Students were asked "What type (sex) of teachers teach your favourite subjects?" The question was answered depending on the curriculum bias (there are four: technical, domestic science, agriculture and commerce) of the school, and also on the availability of the teachers at a particular school. Bagamoyo and Lugalo students said that men teachers taught the most difficult subjects, i.e.,

science subjects and Maths, while arts subjects were taught by women. Iringa students had a similar pattern, but sometimes had a combination of both men and women teachers teaching them science subjects.

Highlands students said that men taught them the arts subjects they liked most because there were very few women teachers in the school. At Kaole (a private school), it was not easy to get a clear demarcation because most of the teachers were part-time from Bagamoyo. The school had only one woman teacher on the permanent staff list. She was an English teacher, and all said that they liked her very much.

It is difficult to say here whether the women students like the arts subjects primarily because they are mainly taught by fellow women, or because they find them easier. Could the presence of more women teachers teaching the difficult subjects tilt the balance in favour of science subjects? Are there any studies on this from any other country to see what women students say about it?

### **The Sex of Teachers Students Would Like to Have**

The responses to the question, "What type (sex) of teachers would you like to have and why?", were very interesting, varying from one school to another. A few of the most popular remarks from Iringa (single sex and boarding) students should be instructive to show students' views and interests. The majority of the students said that they liked to be taught by men rather than women teachers, and gave the following reasons:

1. Women teachers are very hot-tempered. For example, if you annoy a woman teacher she can lose temper and stop teaching, punish students, etc.
2. Sometimes women teachers share boyfriends with their students, and this annoys them very much.
3. Sometimes women teachers hate students indiscriminately embodying those who have annoyed them and those who have not.
4. Women teachers are usually lazier than men teachers.
5. Women teachers often go for maternity leave (it is normally 84 days paid leave) and sometimes during the examinations period when their services are badly needed.
6. Women teachers also waste a lot of time in taking care of their children, husbands, sick, relatives and other members of the family.

There was only one student who had a different view. She said,

In understanding the subject matter, both men and women teachers are equal. Therefore, the option of having both men and women teachers is recommended.

Students from Bagamoyo said that they wanted to have an equal number of

men and women in the list of their teachers because some of subjects are well mastered by women teachers—such as economics—and others, such as Physics and Maths are well-mastered by men teachers. Kaole students preferred a mixed staff with inclination toward more women teachers because they had only woman teacher in the whole school.

Students from Highlands preferred history and Kiswahili be taught by women teachers, while Physics, Chemistry and Maths by men. They said that the latter subjects were very difficult and women teachers do not understand them well. In addition to that, they said “women teachers are irascible, jealous of women students who have better things than themselves. Men teachers do not care about these things.”

Some of the remarks given by these women students show the already embedded societal attitudes that women cannot easily succeed in “difficult” subjects like Maths and science subjects, which are considered to be better handled by men. There is a mystification that only women can teach subjects like Home Economics. It is perhaps a result of horizontal stereotyped sexual stratification of some courses and occupations. Cannot a man receive training in Home Economics and be able to teach it? The word ‘home’ often scares men and women alike as it is generally construed to be for a woman who is a wife and house keeper.

The roles of reproduction and taking care of the children, husband and relatives for a working woman were reproduced in the students’ discussions. Some of the women teachers are consequently less efficient in production (i.e. teaching) due to the multiple roles they play. These multiple roles affect most working African women employed in other occupations as well.

The teaching force at the secondary school level is dominated by men. In 1994, only 2018 (35%) of the teachers in public schools were women while in private schools there were only 69-9 women teachers (14%) out of 4794 teachers (MEC, 1995:30). It would seem women students will for some time have to continue relying on men teachers, particularly so in the private schools where the problem is serious. This situation makes it difficult for them to have appropriate models as they might think that women are incapable of achieving what men have attained.

### **Teachers’ Assurance Of Passing Science Subjects And African Outlook**

When students were asked, “Do your teachers assure you that you can pass science subjects without any problem?”, the majority of them said, “Yes”. Students from Kaole and Mpechi said that their teachers told them repeatedly that they could pass science subjects if they studied hard. Those from Iringa said that their teachers told them that they could be very successful determined.

The next question was, "What is the African outlook of women who excel in science subjects?" From their answers it seems that the African society has a different outlook toward the girls who perform very well in science subjects both theoretically and practically. Students from Highlands and Mpechi said that the African society sees such girls as exceptionally intelligent. Students from Lugalo said that such girls were valued and praised, although the majority of the girls would not like to do jobs requiring a solid science background. Bagamoyo students said, "Such girls cannot take care of their family, and they do not become good mothers."

Iringa students did not seem to understand the question immediately until after clarification. One student said, "A woman scientist is well respected in the Tanzanian community. For example, one woman was doing electrical wiring along the road, then a man who passed by said, 'I will marry from your family'."

Those from Njombe said that some people saw such women as unusually gifted, and others were happy with them. One of the students said, "I would be happy to have a daughter who is capable of science subjects theoretically and practically." Students from Kaole had no experience on this issue as they just kept quiet despite clarifications given for the question.

From the preceding comments, women students seem to be caught in a dilemma. Despite their teachers (who are mostly men) being positive in assuring them that they can do well in science if they were subjects, yet the society is divided between those who see girls doing well in science as being intelligent and praising them, and those who think such women are strange, and do not like to see such women doing jobs requiring a science background for fear that their families will suffer in the future. This might be true if such women are going to spend a lot of time in laboratories or in factories. If most of the women students believe in the latter school of thought, then it may be that the majority of them set low aspirations and motivation to succeed in science subjects as it socially signifies that they are not likely to become good mothers, contrary to African expectations of a woman being a good mother in spite of her other achievements.

### **Is Girls' Abilities Equal to That of Boys?**

The students were asked another question, "Do your teachers see your academic ability to be equal to that of boys and how?" Njombe students said that their teachers normally saw boys as more capable than girls. Those from Kaole said that most of their teachers expected boys to perform better than girls. Bagamoyo students said that their teachers saw the girls' and boys'

academic ability to be the same, although sometimes girls' ability becomes poor because they fear boys in class.

Lugalo students on the other hand said that teachers saw that the academic ability of girls was equal to that of boys, and the reason they gave was that both boys and girls answered questions in class, and also performed well in examinations.

The debate as to whether boys and girls should study together is controversial. During the whole colonial period, only at the lower primary school level were schools co-educational. The rest were segregated by sex, and were mainly boarding. Christian missionaries in particular, insisted on the separation believing that mixing adolescents would groom immorality. Today the policy is to make most secondary schools, day and therefore co-educational. However, some people are of the view that girls are better off when they are separate, and made to compete among themselves than with boys. A review of research on girls' achievement in Sub-Saharan Africa has shown more positive results when they are in single sex than in co-educational schools (Hyde, 1993).

The government policy seems to lean toward the latter view as it encourages the establishment of girls' schools, and is not going to deboard existing girls government boarding schools. The government also intends to establish special financial support schemes for girls and women in education and training institutions (MEC, 1995:19-20). These measures in themselves may not be sufficient if remedial instruction or academic counselling is not given to the girls; teachers are not motivated, learning materials, chemicals and equipment are not adequately made available; and job opportunities in the public and private sectors are non-existent, among other things.

### **Opportunities for Rich and Poor Girls**

Another question that was discussed was constraint. "Are girls from rich and poor families given equal opportunities in education?" Most students said that they were given equal opportunities although they could not show how. However, Njombe and Bagamoyo students had a different view and categorically said, "No." Njombe students said so because they alleged that usually girls from rich families were given priority. This could, especially, be seen during selection for A-Level. Those selected to enter A-Level were mainly from rich families. Equally, Bagamoyo students said "No" "because girls from rich families usually get more opportunities in education due to corruption. People in charge of selection for Form I are bribed by the rich parents, and therefore the academically incapable ones are selected instead."

Corruption in selection cannot be totally ruled out in a country, which, in the words of Mwl. Julius Nyerere, the retired first president, "is stinking of

corruption.” However, studies on selectivity show that girls from high socio-economic backgrounds tend to be disproportionately represented than their counterpart boys (Malekela, 1987; Weis, 1979). Furthermore, girls (as well as boys) from rich families have an added advantage of attending private tuition sessions where high fees are charged besides attending conventional classroom sessions with the poor (Malekela, 1994; Guranywa, 1995).

Once in school, the plight of girls from rich background is different from that of poor background. Many students from various schools mentioned a lot of problems faced by girls from poor families. They said, “such girls cannot afford to pay school fees in time, cannot also afford to buy the necessary items required at school because their parents or guardians do not have the money.” Students from Kaole said that some girls were given loans by their relatives which covered school fees only. In such cases, as well as cases of parents who can pay school fees only, girls do not have money to buy other things like soap, vaseline, exercise books, pens, sweaters in cold areas, etc. Girls with such problems cannot concentrate on their studies. Njombe students said that at one time such girls had to be helped by their teachers. Students from Lugalo added the following:

1. Girls from poor families are usually frustrated, and do not pay attention in class.
2. They are usually physically weak because they do not get good breakfast or have none at all before coming to school.
3. They usually waste time on thinking what they are going to eat when they go back home. They mainly think of the kind of dinner they are going to have.

Students from Highlands added the following:

4. A poor girl is forced to work for their richer girl friends so that they can get money. They can wash and/or iron other girls' clothes, for example.
5. Sometimes such girls are forced to become promiscuous. They run with men in order to get money and other necessities.
6. Very often such girls spend a long time working at home. This could involve gardening, petty businesses, etc., in order to get money and in this case they waste most of their time which they could have used for private study.

The above reasons partly explain the comparatively poor performance by girls from low socio-economic background, and their low participation in education systems that are selective, particularly at the higher levels.

### Conclusion and Policy Implications

Mainland Tanzania has a surface area of 881,100 square kilometres (excluding Zanzibar with 2,460 sq. km.), and had a population of 22.5 million in 1988 of whom 51% were women. With population annual growth rate of 2.8%, it was estimated that by 1995 there were 27 million people. Life expectancy at birth was 49 (50 for women and 47 for men). Literacy rate by 1992 was estimated to be 84; and it is on the decline as there are no follow-up reading materials, and literacy programmes have almost come to a halt.

There are more than 120 ethnic groups speaking different languages. However, Kiswahili, the national language, unites all the groups as it is well-understood in over 95% of the country. By 1988, 85% of the population lived in rural areas and largely depended on cultivation using the hand-hoe. The majority of the people (79%) are peasants. Agriculture forms the backbone of the economy. There are very few industries, and the bulk of the urban population is concentrated in services sectors. The estimated per capita income by 1995 was US\$186, making it one among the lowest in the world.

Disaggregated by sex, one finds that the majority of the women were in the agricultural sector according to the 1988 census. Whereas 71% of the economically active men were in agriculture, the percentage for women was 86. In the professionals category, men comprised 5.7%, while women comprised 1.6%. In the administrative category—which might be considered as the highest level of occupation—men constituted 0.7%, while women constituted only 0.1%. Similarly, women are a minority in politics. In the 1990 cabinet of 25 ministers, only 3 (12%) were women. Out of 248 members of parliament in 1990, only 28 (11%) were women (Bureau of Statistics, 1992). It can therefore be safely concluded that most of the key positions in Tanzania are monopolised by men.

Despite the fact that by 1988, 15% of the population was urban, it is primarily rural in background as by 1978 census only 8% was urban. In 1967 census the urban population constituted only 5% of the total population. In the 21 year period, i.e. 1967-1988, the urban population increased three-fold, most of it being a result of rural-urban immigration.

The mass media are concentrated in Dar es Salaam, the *de facto* capital (the *de jure* capital is Dodoma). Television broadcasting was first introduced in 1994, and is largely confined in Dar es Salaam, and in homes of very few rich individuals. The national radio is hardly heard in distant districts from Dar es Salaam and by peasants who rarely own radio sets, and if they do, very often their sets are not functioning as they are without batteries because they cannot afford to buy them whenever they run down. Newspapers are printed in Dar es Salaam, municipalities, and rarely reach district headquarters (towns) with small populations as their demand and market are limited. One can hardly see

them in rural areas, and the population in general does not have a reading culture. The few available libraries are often frequented by students who are preparing for examinations.

Road transport is improving and most of the regional headquarters are accessible. However, most of the roads going to rural areas are accessible during the dry season, and rarely in the rainy season. Railway transport reach only a few areas, and air transport is irregular – where it is available, it is found in the major towns. Telephones are in urban areas, and mainly found in government offices, commercial areas, and in residences of highly placed people and the rich. Often they are not working.

Taking the above facts into consideration, Mainland Tanzania is therefore largely a traditional and very poor developing country where diffusion of ideas for social change is bound to take a slow and long process. The bulk of the population is rural, peasantry and traditional. The few elite living in urban areas today have a rural origins, and it is there where they received their first socialisation. Whatever socialisation they pass on to their offspring, is most likely dual: traditional and modern. There are values and attitudes which have already been internalised, and these are automatically passed on to the children; and there are others which have to strike a balance between the traditional and the modern (or western) ones. It is also well-known that peasant societies generally tend to be conservative. Due to the fact that a higher proportion of women than men is in the traditional sector, i.e. agriculture, women's attitudes are likely to be more traditional than their men counterpart.

Due to the facts that there are many ethnic groups in the country, different literacy rates, beliefs (mainly Christian, Muslim and traditional), incomes and opportunities for access to the mass media, coupled with the rural-urban dichotomy, there is bound to be cultural heterogeneity. Accordingly, not all the observations given by women students above will be the same across all ethnic groups in Tanzania due to cultural diversity, although more similarities may be the norm than the exceptions.

Having briefly contextualised the general position of women and men in Tanzania, it may now be easier to understand the young women's thinking. Some of them think that parents favour their brothers' education than theirs. This was largely true when opportunities for secondary education had stagnated. However, with current opportunities of access broadening, such attitudes may disappear in the near future since the gap is closing up, as it has been at the primary school level.

Investment in children's education is treated as a contribution to an insurance policy toward one's old age given the fact that there are no pension or social security schemes for people once they are old, especially among the

rural masses. The preference for sons in case of scarcity is partly due to this. Since women are married through bride-price—and educated ones normally fetching higher dowry due to investment incurred by the bride's parents—one is not sure if once married the daughter would continue remitting her contributions as she will be under the control of the husband. To other parents who are afraid of taking risks, the possibility of their daughter getting pregnant while at school, and thus being expelled is a scare. The son remains part of the family, and is not rusticated from school even if he impregnates other people's daughters. Furthermore, parents have more freedom to demand part of their sons' incomes than those of their married daughters (Smock, 1981).

When people see the material benefits of educating a woman, some start having positive attitudes like one woman who was quoted as saying,

If my young sister had got married instead of continuing with her studies, she would never have seen the University of Dar es Salaam. Today she is a marketing manager. She has built good houses in town, and has a lot of money. She helps finance our children in secondary schools. All this would not have materialised if she were married in the village by a farmer (Cooksey, Malekela, Lugalla, 1993:17).

Regarding qualities of a successful woman within the Tanzanian context, it is interesting to note that students acknowledge the importance of one being highly educated, and getting a good job. However, these achievements in themselves are inadequate if one is not married and having children. The thinking is typical of peasant societies where children are valued because they form part of the production units for the survival of the families. Furthermore, the fertility rate of 6.2 children per woman (Bureau of Statistics, 1992) might exacerbate the necessity of every woman having children. Women are prepared to quit school or a job for the sake of raising a family. Probably with improved technology in production and more women joining white collar jobs, these values might slowly change to value marriage and children as secondary rather than as a primary goal in a woman's life. Despite the few examples of successful women they see in society, it would seem old attitudes die hard even in the minds of these slightly enlightened women.

Religion does not seem to be a serious inhibiting factor toward young women's schooling. Past practices are not enforced in secular schools today. Young women's acceptance that there is no discrimination in the education system should inspire them to work harder. The system at the moment favours girls as through the quota system, for example, girls with lower grades in examinations are selected to address equity concerns.

The other policies, such as retaining existing boarding government girls' schools, building hostels for day scholars, providing special financial assistance to needy girls, reviewing curriculum in order to strengthen and encourage

participation and achievement of girls in Maths and science subjects, elimination of gender stereotyping through the curricula, textbooks and classroom practices, provision of special in-service training programmes designed and implemented for women teachers; and enrolling some girls in formerly boys' schools only (MEC, 1995a) should enhance their increased access and participation in education. Their success will, however, depend on the government being committed to the policies by ensuring that enough resources are given to the education sector in order to implement these paper policies.

Women students' liking of humanities rather than Maths and science subjects may be detrimental to them in terms of attaining jobs that are well-paying and of higher status. It is a misconception in some women's and men's minds that hard subjects can be handled more successfully by men, or men have greater abilities than women. They are not to blame anyway. Historically science subjects have been monopolised by men as well as jobs requiring a sound scientific background, such as for pilots, engineers, astronauts and computer programmers. The few women who initially penetrated "these men's spheres of influence" were always regarded by society as specially talented, or others saw them as abnormal. The society's thinking that only men are talented may force women to internalise low expectations, and if not careful, contribute to a self-fulfilling prophesy of underachievement. This happens even when students admit that their science teachers are positive in their ability of doing well provided they work hard. The prevalence of men science teachers might be a factor in thinking that women cannot do well in sciences. "If not, how come that there are very few women teachers in science or none at all in some of the schools?", these students might question.

Women's underachievement is not only recorded in sciences, but in all subjects starting from the primary level. Explanations for their poor performance include,

... societal stereotyped attitudes on women and low expectations for women, low self-concept, belief by girls that they do not have to work hard as eventually husbands will take care of them, overburden of household chores, biased curriculum, learning materials and teaching methods, and teachers' expectations of girls (Malekela, 1995:71).

The students also admit that girls from poor background face double problems: that of being a woman, and that of poverty. As young women who need special items unlike their counterpart brothers, girls from poor families need special attention to enable them pursue their educational careers.

The policy implications out of the focus group discussions with the young women are multiple if we would like women not only to gain access, but also

to acquire quality education to help them climb the social ladder and be able to change the society's image that women are better-off pursuing careers that lead them to be better wives and mothers in the home. In the case of Tanzania, the following is important.

1. The current policy of the quota selection for girls in Form I public secondary schools should be continued. However, if girls who are selected with poor scores are to benefit, then academic counselling and/or remedial courses have to be introduced, unlike now when they are treated as if their background ability were at par with those scoring passing grades. This should, however, only be a temporary measure. Measures have to be taken not only to improve the quality of education from primary through tertiary levels by increasing resources and using them efficiently, but also looking for a more appropriate technology to alleviate women's burden in the production sector as well as in the home.
2. Women who are doing well in education should be helped by the government to get jobs in its sector, private sectors and non-governmental organisations; or be given soft loans to start self-employment ventures in the informal sector so that others can see the benefits of schooling. Society can change its attitudes when it sees more and more women being successful as experience is the best teacher.
3. There is a need for society in general to be conscientised that women and men are equal partners in development, and each depend on the other. Laws that discriminate against women, such as inheritance rights should be got rid of. Heavy reliance on customary law is dangerous as in many ethnic groups it undermines the rights of women. Women scientists and few others who have to the top through education should organise themselves in such a way that they visit women students in schools, tell them about their life histories, the hurdles they had to face and how they overcame and are still overcoming them. The awareness campaigns should be a process: through regular visits, meetings and video shows not only of "successful" Tanzanian women, but also of other women world-wide. This can be a great inspiration to the young women to follow the footsteps of their sisters who have made it. It will enable them to change their attitudes and values; and set their motivations and aspirations in the right direction. Patience and time are needed as attitudes and values do not change overnight.

If these recommendations and the government's policies are well-implemented, women's image and standing in the Tanzanian society could be improved. The possibilities are there: each should play her/his part.

**References**

- Adeyokunnu, T. 1984. Women and Rural Development in Africa. In UNESCO, *Women on the Move: Contemporary Changes in Family and the Society* Paris: UNESCO.
- Bureau of Statistics. 1992. Women and Men in Tanzania. Dar es Salaam. Salaam: Planning Commission, President's Office.
- Cooksey, B., G.A. Malekela, J. Lugalla. 1993. *Parents' Attitudes Towards Education in Rural Tanzania*. Tanzania Development Research Group. TADREG), Research Report No.5.
- Finn, J.D., J. Reis, L. Dulberg. 1982. Sex Differences in Educational Attainment: The Process. In G.P. Kelly, *et. al.*, *Women's Education in The Third World: Comparative Perspective*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Guranywa, T. 1995. The Private Tuition Phenomenon in Urban Primary and Secondary Schools in Tanzania: The Case of Dar es Salaam. M.A. Dissertation, University of Dar es Salaam.
- Hill, A.M., King, E.M. 1993. Women's Education in Developing Countries: An Overview. In E.M. King, M.A. Hill, (eds.) *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits And Policies* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.
- Hyde, K.A.L. 1993. Sub-Saharan Africa. In E.M.King, *et.al.* 1993
- King, E.M., M.A. Hill, (eds.) *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits And Policies* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.
- Kinyanjui, K. 1993. Enhancing Women's Participation in the Science-Based Curriculum: The Case of Kenya. In J.K. Conway, S.C. Bourque,(eds.) *The Politics of Women's Education: Perspectives From Asia, Africa, and Latin America*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Kisekka, M. 1981. The Role of Women in Socio-Economic Development: Indicators as Instruments of Social Analysis. In UNESCO, *Women And Development: Indicators of Their Role* Paris: UNESCO.
- Malekela, G.A. 1987. Secondary Schools Girls In Tanzania: What Do We Know About Them? *Taamuli*, 17, 1&2, 1-24.
- . 1994. Parents' Attitudes And Strategies Towards Education in Tanzania: Are They Changing Over Time? In Takala, (ed.) *Quality Of Education In The Context Of Culture In Developing Countries*. University of Tampere, Finland.
- . 1995. Equality and Equity Concerns in Primary Education. *Papers in Education and Development*. No. 16, 65-74.

- Malekela, G.A., Ndabi, D., Cooksey, B. 1990. *Girls' Educational Opportunities And Performance In Tanzania*. Tanzania Development Research Group. TADREG. Research Report No. 2.
- Mbilinyi, M.J. and Mbughuni, P. 1991. *Education In Tanzania With A Gender Perspective: Summary Report*. Stockholm: SIDA.
- Ministry of Education and Culture. (MEC). 1995. *Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania. BEST. 1990-1994*. Dar es Salaam: Govt. Printer.
- . 1995a. *Education and Training Policy*. Dar es Salaam: Govt. Printer.
- Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education. (MSTHE). 1995. *Higher and Technical Education Statistics in Tanzania 1990/91-1994/95* Dar es Salaam: July.
- Sarungi, P.M.(1995. *Hotuba ya Waziri wa Elimu na Utamaduni Mh. Prof. Philemon M. Sarungi. Mb. Kuhusu Makadirio ya Matumizi Fedha kwa Mwaka 1995/1996* Dar es Salaam: Wizara ya Elimu na Utamaduni.
- Savane, M.A. 1984. Women as Industrial Wage-Earners and Changing Family Structure in Africa. In UNESCO, *Women on the Move: Contemporary Changes in Family and the Society* Paris: UNESCO.
- Smock, A.C. 1981). *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Opportunities and Outcomes*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- UNESCO. 1985. *Ten Years Towards Equality: UNESCO's Programme For The Advancement of Women*. Paris.
- United Nations. 1995. *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*. New York.
- Weis, L. 1979. Education and The Reproduction of Inequality: The Case of Ghana. *Comparative Education Review*, 23, 1, 41-51.
- Wrzesinska, A. 1982): *Contemporary Attitudes In Studying Young African Women: Studies on Education and Socio-Cultural Changes in Zaire*. Roma: Istituto Italo-Africano.
- Yates, B.A. 1982. Church, State and Education in Belgian Africa: Implications for Contemporary Third World Women. In G.P. Kelly, C.M. Elliot. eds.. *Women's Education in the Third World: Comparative Perspectives*. Albany: State University of New York Press.